

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N°442

JANUARY 2022

The publication of this Bulletin is supported by grants from
French government and Paris City Hall

This bulletin is issued in French and English
Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €
Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €

Monthly review
Directeur de la publication : Mohamad HASSAN
ISBN 0761 1285

INSTITUT KURDE, 106, rue La Fayette - 75010 PARIS
Tel. : 01-48 24 64 64 - Fax : 01-48 24 64 66

www.fikp.org
E-mail: bulletin@fikp.org

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TURKEY: ECONOMIC CRISIS WORSENS, ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS OF KURDS CONTINUE...

With eighteen months to go before the presidential election, the Turkish president, who is predicted to lose in the polls, maintains his position: in economic matters, Islamic precepts prohibit usury. Even when the currency collapses and the population is driven to poverty, Mr Erdoğan imposes the lowest possible interest rates on the theoretically independent Central Bank. As a result, "Turkey is flirting with economic disaster" (*La*

Croix) and on the 3rd, annual inflation reached a rate not seen for 20 years: 36%... officially. For the inflation research group *ENAGrup*, the consumer price index exceeds 80%, especially for foodstuffs: +86% for oil and +54% for bread... According to Iris, electricity has jumped by 120%. The *TürkStat* institute indicated that the producer price index had increased annually by 79.89%. "Before, we had dreams. Now we just hope to have enough bread for the day", explained a mother who has long sup-

ported Erdoğan (*Liberation*).

But the government is silencing critical voices: in 18 months, 2 ministers of the economy and 3 governors of the Central Bank have been replaced. The new economy minister has even called for complaints against economists and journalists who mention the collapse of the pound! On 29 January, the director of *TürkStat* was sacked for refusing to disguise the figures collected by his services...

The middle class, the traditional supporter of the government, is being hit hard. Employees change their salaries into euros and buy back Turkish pounds in dribs and drabs for their purchases... Others buy cooking oil by the glass (*Orient XXI*) or bread subsidised by their municipality, as in Istanbul, a city run by the CHP (Kemalist opposition). The currency plunges with each of Erdoğan's televised speeches... Demonstrators spontaneously assemble to shout "Government resign!". Even the AKP strongholds on the Black Sea are getting restless. In the latest *Metropoll Research* poll, the President has only 38.6% support, and the AKP 27%... (WKI)

In response, Mr Erdoğan uses his usual method: diverting citizens' anger towards scapegoats: the Kurds. This is all the more unfair as it is the Kurdish provinces, which have long been economically discriminated against, that are suffering the most from the crisis.

But the AKP is taking advantage of the situation to continue its criminalization of the HDP. It is also a revenge against this party which had helped the CHP to take the mayoralties of Istanbul and Ankara from the AKP by refraining from presenting candidates...

Significantly, on 3 January, the judiciary released the author of the attack on the HDP office in Bahçelievler (Istanbul), Eren Sütçü. A member of the fascist Grey Wolves movement, Sütçü had burst into the office on 28 December, making death threats and armed with two pistols and a knife with which he injured two people (*Duvar*). The attack sparked protests in Istanbul and the Kurdish provinces on 4 December, and the authorities finally had to place Sütçü in custody on 10 December.

On the same day, however, in front of the Law Faculty in Ankara, about 30 ultranationalists armed with machetes and knives attacked and in-

jured three Kurdish students, one of them seriously in the thigh. The two main attackers were released from police custody after a few hours. Also on the 10th, a 19-year-old Syrian refugee was murdered in Istanbul by a masked group who had entered his room armed with knives.

The HDP denounced the responsibility of the government in increasing the threat of fascist lynchings: not only do the hate speeches of those in charge incite aggressions, but once the worst has happened, the perpetrator, sometimes called "My brother" by the arresting police officers, benefits from the leniency of the justice system... Already on 17 June, Onur Gencer, also close to the Grey Wolves, shot dead young female HDP worker Deniz Poyraz in the party's office in Izmir. Questioned in court on 24 June, he said he regretted not having been able to kill other people! In the presence of his victim's relatives, he asked for an investigation against her family, accusing Deniz Poyraz of being "responsible for the murder of some intelligence agents" (*Kurdistan au féminin*). When HDP co-chair Pervin Buldan testified as a prosecution witness that the killer had "trained to use weapons in Manbij" [Syria] and that he was a "supporter of ISIS", the court called for an investigation against her for "inappropriate behaviour" (WKI).

Furthermore, the situation in Turkish prisons remains extremely worrying. Earlier this month, numerous demonstrations in Istanbul and in the Kurdish provinces of the country demanded the release of former HDP deputy Ms. Aysel Tuğluk, who has been imprisoned for five years. She has been suffering from dementia and her health has been worsening irreversibly for months, but the authorities refuse to release her on medical grounds. When HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan visited her on 24 December, she found that she had difficulty recognising her visitors, expressing herself and even eating alone. On the 10th, one thou-

sand women launched a petition to demand her release and that of other sick prisoners (<https://aysel-tuglukicin1000kadin.org/english/>), recalling that "The release of sick prisoners is a requirement of national and international legislation and conventions" and that "Last month, seven prisoners died in Turkish prisons". On the 11th, the HDP launched an "Urgent Appeal" with the same demands, recalling that human rights organisations have been counting "more than 1,600 sick prisoners in Turkey". On the 24th, twenty bars, including those in Izmir and Antalya, launched an appeal for the release of Tuğluk.

The case of Garibe Gezer remains emblematic of the horror of the situation in Turkish prisons: the 28-year-old female Kurdish political prisoner was found dead in her isolation cell on 9 December. The prison administration claimed it was suicide, but Gezer had said she had been sexually abused... On 11 January, 14 inmates of the Kandira women's prison who had protested against her death were denied visits for a month. They had chanted slogans such as "The murderous state must be held to account" or "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi" ("Women, Life, Freedom"). Among them were several HDP cadres, such as Figen Yüksekdağ, Gülser Yıldırım and Edibe Sahin. Their lawyers have challenged the sanctions in the administrative court. Unfortunately, other Kurdish prisoners have recently died suspiciously. On the 21st, it was reported that Ramazan Turan, a 70-year-old peasant imprisoned for 6 years and 3 months for "belonging to a terrorist organisation" and kept in solitary confinement, had died in Van. The authorities attributed his death to a heart attack, but the son of the prisoner, Hüseyin Turan, declared that his father had been in good health and that he would file a complaint after the body was returned (*Kurdistan au féminin*). On the 31st, a prisoner from Bingöl, Mehmet Hanifi, who was to be released in

June, was also found dead in his cell in Bolu. Again, his death was attributed to a heart attack. He had suffered a heart attack 3 years ago.

At the same time, arrests, judicial proceedings and convictions continue unabated. While on the 6th, former HDP MP Abdullah Zeydan, imprisoned in November 2016 for “terrorism”, was released after 5 years by decision of the Court of Cassation, his cellmate in Edirne prison, former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş, remains imprisoned, as well as his female counterpart Figen Yüksekdağ, despite a decision to the contrary by the European Court of Human Rights (*Ahval*). On the 24th, Demirtaş was even given an additional 11 months and 20 days for allegedly “insulting” then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in a speech in February 2016. The latter, now in opposition and critical of the President’s “personal power”, has not withdrawn his complaint... (*Turkish Minute*)

On the 11th, police arrested two local Kurdish politicians, Mustafa Kuşman and Cemal Aslan, in Van. At the same time, two members of peace organizations, Nebahat Işçi and Hüseyin Inedi, were arrested in Cizre. On the same day, the AKP Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Mustafa Şentop, declared that he was in favour of withdrawing the parliamentary immunity of HDP MP Semra Güzel. Recently released photos of Güzel show her in 2014 with Volkan Bora, a PKK member killed in 2017 by security forces. The MP said the photos were from the period of the peace process initiated in 2013 between the government and the PKK. Withdrawal proceedings are currently underway against 186 MPs, the vast majority from the HDP (*Bianet*). Once deprived of her immunity, Güzel faces prosecution for “terrorism”. Another HDP MP, Remziye Tosun, from Diyarbakir, has

her immunity threatened because she asked a musician to play a Kurdish song at a wedding in 2019: for the prosecution, this is “propaganda for a terrorist organisation”! An activist of the “Free Women’s Movement” (*Tevgera Jinên Azad*, TJA), Tosun survived the attack on the old town of Diyarbakir (Sur district) by the Turkish army in 2015-2016. Incarcerated with her youngest daughter, aged one and a half, she had to fight for her three other children to be entrusted to their grandmother and not placed in a children’s home... Released in 2017, still subject to judicial control obligations, she had been elected MP for Diyarbakir in 2018 with the aim of giving a voice to all those affected by the destruction of Sur.

On the 17th, the court ruled in favour of the continued detention of Turkish patron Osman Kavala, setting the next hearing for 21 February. Imprisoned for over 4 years, Kavala faces life imprisonment on fabricated charges of “espionage” and involvement in the 2016 coup attempt. As for Demirtaş, Turkey has ignored the European Court of Human Rights’ (ECHR) binding release order. It now faces sanctions such as the suspension of its vote in the Council of Europe.

At the end of the month, the police arrested six people in Mardin on the 26th, as well as 4 members of the HDP Youth Council in Van and a DBP (Democratic Regions Party) official in Diyarbakir, where they also searched an HDP office. In addition, the HDP leader of Iskenderun was sentenced to 2 years and 1 month in prison for “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” for a 2014 speech (*WKI*). On the 28th, a police armoured vehicle rammed and killed a 23-year-old Kurd in Şırnak (*Turkey Rights Monitor*).

Finally, journalists remain targets.

On the occasion of “Working Journalists’ Day” (*Çalışan Gazeteciler Günü*) on 10 January, *Atölye BİA* published a damning assessment of their situation (<https://atolye-bia.org/haber-odasi/turkiye-gazeteciler-icin-bir-cezaevi-konumunda/>), turned into English by *Bianet*. According to the 2021 edition of *Reporters Without Borders’* annual “World Press Freedom Index”, Turkey is 153rd out of 180 countries, with Kurdish journalists particularly targeted: according to the co-chair of the “Tigris-Euphrates Journalists Association” (*Dicle-Firat Gazeteciler Derneği*), Serdar Altan, in 2021, 54 journalists were targeted for investigation, 47 were sentenced to a total of 133 years’ imprisonment, and 2 were murdered. At the time of the interview, 62 of the association’s journalists were still in prison. Abdurrahman Gök (*Mezopotamya Agency*) and Derya Ren (*JinNews*, an all-female agency) also testified. A journalist for 17 years, Gök faces 20 years in prison for covering the police killing of an unarmed Kurdish citizen, Kemal Kurkut, during the 2017 Newrouz festival in Diyarbakir. For his photos and articles, he is accused of “belonging to” and “propaganda for” a terrorist organisation. Derya Ren testified about discrimination against women journalists, especially in the Kurdish provinces.

Finally, on the 26th, the Turkish President promised to “punish” the well-known journalist Sedef Kabaş, accused of having “insulted” him live. Kabaş had been arrested at her home on the night of 21-22, a few hours after quoting live on *Tele1* (and then, aggravatingly, repeating on *Twitter*, where she has 900,000 followers) the proverb that “*When the ox goes up to the palace, it does not become a king but the palace becomes a stable*”. The Journalists’ Union of Turkey (TGS) denounced a “serious attack on freedom of expression” (*Ouest France*).

ROJAVA: TURKEY COULD BE INVOLVED IN THE JIHADIST ATTACK ON HASAKAH PRISON

The news in Rojava this month was largely dominated by the jihadist attack on the Al-Sinaa prison in Hasakah on 20 January, and the violent fighting that followed until the end of the month.

Already on the 12th, the Kurdish Red Crescent had announced the shooting of one of its relief workers in the camp of Al-Hol, killed according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) by two jihadists who had gained access to the medical centre using false identities. Since the beginning of 2021, the SOHR has counted 91 killings in Al-Hol, mostly of Iraqi refugees, but also of humanitarians... (AFP) The week before the attack, the AANES had proceeded to a new release, 217 Syrian jihadist prisoners entrusted to tribal officials who had confirmed that they had not participated into blood crimes...

So it was on the 20th that ISIS launched a large-scale attack on Al-Sinaa prison in the Ghwayran district of Hasakah, one of the largest facilities, housing around 3,500 inmates. This is *“one of the largest operations by the jihadist group since it was defeated in 2019”* (SOHR). The entrance to the building was first broken into by two truck bombs, then nearly 200 jihadists with heavy weapons rushed into the breach. Inside the prison, mutinous inmates seized an armoury to join the attackers in extremely violent fighting...

US forces, 700 strong at a nearby base, supported Kurdish forces by firing flares, striking the prison from the air and deploying armoured vehicles to try to prevent escapes. The death toll quickly rose to at least 20 *Asayish* (Kurdish security) and 16 jihadists killed, while escaped prisoners in the chaos took refuge in houses near the prison, killing residents or taking them hostages.

The SDF announced that it had recaptured 89 escapees, with the total number estimated to be in the hundreds.

On the 24th, the death toll rose to 154, including 102 jihadists, 45 Kurdish fighters and 7 civilians, and nearly 45,000 people displaced by the fighting, in freezing temperatures. The city was placed under curfew. Some neighbourhoods would remain without electricity and running water for more than a week... Announcing the surrender of 300 jihadists, the SDF deployed reinforcements around the prison area in preparation for an assault, raising serious concerns about the fate of hundreds of children aged 12 to 17 who were there with the mutineers. According to the SDF, some of them were being used as “human shields” by the jihadists... On the 25th, the SDF announced more than 850 surrenders, and on the 26th, declared that it had regained total control of the prison and its surroundings, with an even higher death toll: 181 dead, including 124 jihadists, 50 Kurdish fighters and seven civilians. There were no details on the fate of the children among the mutineers. On the 27th, the previous day’s announcement proved to be premature when fighting resumed, with 60 to 90 armed jihadists discovered hiding in a wing of the prison. On the 28th, some 60 jihadists entrenched in the basement of the northern part of the building, difficult to reach from the air and likewise difficult to access from the inside, still refused to surrender. While searching the prison, the SDF found the bodies of 18 of their fighters and Kurdish policemen. On the 29th, new fighting broke out, this time in the area surrounding the prison. It was not until the 30th, ten days after the attack, that the fighting really ended, after a house-by-house sweep. The latest SOHR death toll was 373, including 268 jihadists, 98 members of the Kurdish forces and

seven civilians. But the NGO estimates that the death toll could rise further, as many Kurdish fighters were seriously wounded during the fighting...

The presence of children in the prison quickly became controversial, with UNICEF’s head of Syria criticising the SDF for leaving them in the same facility as jihadists. Other NGOs also criticised the SDF and Autonomous Administration (AANES) for keeping minors in detention without charge. On the 27th, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, called for the evacuation of the children still present in Al-Sinaa during the monthly Security Council meeting devoted to the humanitarian situation in Syria (AFP). The AANES replied that it had been sounding the alarm for months about the situation of its prisoners and their relatives, warning that it had neither the resources nor the capacity to run secure prisons and detention camps. For years, it had been asking without success the countries of origin of its prisoners to repatriate them. One of AANES’ foreign policy officers, Abdelkarim Omar, blamed the attack and the situation on *“the failure of the international community to take responsibility”*. *“This is an international problem that we cannot solve alone”*, he told AFP. The SDF also denounced UNICEF’s criticism. On the 26th, AANES renewed its appeal to the international community, supported on the 31st by the United States, which reiterated its request to its allies to *“urgently repatriate”* their nationals (AFP). Finally, the SDF renewed its call for the creation of an international tribunal to determine the guilt of the detainees.

Moreover, SDF officials claimed to have evidence that the attack had been planned in Turkish-occupied areas. On the 27th, while fighting

was still going on in Hasakah, Nuri Mahmoud, spokesman for the YPG ("People's Protection Units", the main component of the SDF), said in an interview with SOHR that the SDF had received information about a possible ISIS attack on Al-Sinaa several months in advance. According to this information, the jihadists preparing the attack had logistical and financial support from MIT, the Turkish intelligence service, which reportedly allocated up to \$15 million to the operation. The operations room from which the attack was prepared was reportedly in Urfa and Gaziantep... According to Mahmoud, Hasakah was chosen as a target because it hosts the SDF headquarters. Thus, a jihadist takeover of the city from the areas surrounding the prison, Ghuwayran and Zohour, would have seriously disrupted their operational capabilities. According to Mahmoud, the cooperation of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, who helped to capture the jihadists, made the project fail.

On the 25th, the SDF had already indicated in a statement that the attack on the 20th had coincided with ground and air attacks launched from Turkish-occupied areas, which had been repulsed, but had left 3 civilians dead and 11 wounded... In a dispatch dated of the 22nd, the SOHR noted that Turkish forces had resumed their artillery fire on the vicinity of Ain Issa, north of Hasakah, and on the M4 road, to cover a (vain) attempt by their Syrian mercenaries to infiltrate the SDF's position north of Raqqa. On the subject of this intensive firing, which coincided with the ongoing clashes in Hasakah, the NGO wrote: "It should be noted that this is the most violent attack carried out by Turkish forces for more than two months" ...

Throughout the month, Turkish military harassment of the AANES never stopped. According to a report published on the 17th by the SDF Press Centre, during the first half of January, the region experienced 225 attacks using mortars, heavy

artillery or tanks, which resulted in one civilian death and 31 injured. As evidence of the recent increase in Turkish attacks, the Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* reported on the 13th that more than 1,500 Kurds from Syria had arrived at the Bardarash camp in Iraqi Kurdistan since late December. In Hasakah, the incessant Turkish heavy artillery fire on the Zirgan district, which had been going on since the end of December, seems according to the SOHR to have been aimed at intimidating the inhabitants to force them to leave. Hundreds of terrorised families have left...

According to another SDF report, published on 6 June, the whole of 2021 saw more than 700 civilian kidnappings by pro-Turkish mercenaries, and 134 wounded by Turkish attacks, which also killed 148 SDF fighters (*Rûdaw*).

While the SDF fought jihadists around Hassakeh prison, Turkish attacks continued. On the 22nd, clashes pitted the Turks and their mercenaries against the SDF around the M4 highway, and heavy rocket fire hit villages near Ain Issa, north of Raqqa, killing 5 civilians and wounding 4 others. Early the next day, four more civilians were injured, two of them seriously. Taking advantage of the artillery shelling, the pro-Turkish mercenaries attempted to advance into AANES territory. Turkish artillery also disabled the Hiesha water treatment plant on the Raqqa-Tall Abyad road, depriving the town of the same name of drinking and irrigation water.

In the Syrian territories they control, the Turkish occupiers, assisted by their Syrian mercenaries, continue their abuses. On the 18th, the human rights organisation *Human Rights Watch* published its World Report 2022, which devotes a section to these abuses. According to the report, the "Syrian National Army" (a name that disguises a Turkish mercenary militia) has arbitrarily detained at least 162 people in Syria and illegally transferred 63 others

to Turkey, where they have been tried and sentenced to life imprisonment (*WKI*). In Afrin specifically, according to a report published on 11 by the NGO *Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)*, in 2021, more than 580 people were arrested, including 46 women and 16 teenagers, some "simply because they were Kurds" (<https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-584-persons-arrested-in-afrin-over-2021/>). STJ concludes that the purpose was to intimidate people into leaving, a form of ethnic cleansing. According to the Afrin Human Rights Organisation, in just the first two years of the occupation, the Kurdish population there had in fact fallen by January 2020 from 97% to 34.8%. The UN counts more than 150,000 displaced Kurds from Afrin, mostly to the Shahba camp in Tel Rifaat (*Rûdaw*).

In parallel with ethnic cleansing, Syrian factions continue to destroy agricultural property and historical heritage in the region. In both cases, the aim is to sell for money, whether it is historical artefacts or felled fruit and olive trees sold as firewood. No one seems to care about stopping these war crimes. In early January, the SOHR renewed its "call to international organisations and the UN Security Council to make efforts to pressure the Turkish government to stop the daily violations [...] in the Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch and Source of Peace areas". In particular, the NGO notes that "Since Turkish forces and their loyal factions control the city of Afrin, they have destroyed dozens of archaeological sites, the most important of which is Tal Ain Darah, which had already been subjected to Turkish air strikes in 2018. Turkish forces then destroyed the site and stole its basalt lion to transfer it to an unknown destination".

Further abuses by Turkish gendarmes (*Jandarma*) were also reported on the Turkish-Syrian border. On 5 December, a young Syrian man seriously injured by *Jandarma* on 29 December while tending sheep near Hassakeh died

of his injuries in Qamishli hospital. On 11 December, the *Jandarma* beat a civilian from Amouda who was trying to enter Turkey near Derbasiye, breaking his leg. The next day, they beat three Syrian youths near Hassake, leaving two with broken ribs, before sending them back to the Syrian side. On the 25th, a civilian died of his

wounds after being shot at near the border in Kobanê. On the 30th, a child working in an agricultural field near the Hatay border, west of Idlib, was killed by their gunfire. According to the SOHR, since 2011, more than 500 Syrian civilians have been killed by Turkish gendarmes, including 91 minors and 45 women. On the 31st, a

video posted on social networks showed several *Jandarma* beating up young Syrians...

For the first time in years, senior Turkish and Syrian officials met in Moscow to discuss their relations. In particular, they discussed “*the possibility of working together against the YPG*” (WKI).

IRAQI KURDISTAN: THE DISPUTED TERRITORIES BETWEEN ISIS, TURKISH STRIKES AND ANTI-KURDISH DISCRIMINATION

While the Kurds are fully participating in the negotiations for the formation of the new Iraqi government, in the so-called disputed Kurdish territories under Iraqi administration, they continue to be victims of jihadist attacks, discrimination by the authorities, with the creeping resumption of the Arabisation policy dating back to Saddam Hussein... On social networks, various media or journalists are constantly broadcasting praises of the former dictator, so much so that at the beginning of the month, nearly 50 organisations called for a new law criminalising the denial of the Kurdish genocide committed by him.

On 2 January, the Iraqi army's 61st division, responsible for the security of Kirkuk, launched for the second time in a week an early morning raid on the Kurdish neighbourhood of Azadi. The removal of the Kurdish language from new road signs recently installed by the municipality has angered residents. A municipal official claimed that the absence of Kurdish from the new signs, manufactured in Turkey, was the result of a “technical error”... Meanwhile, the Ankara-backed Turkmen Front issued a statement supporting the renaming of two Kirkuk districts from Kurdish to Arabic or Turkish. This is a return to the Ba'ath era designations – already implemented by the interim governor Rakan Al-Jabouri.

On the 5th, the Federal Court of

Cassation ruled in favour of the Kurdish owners of 4,000 *donums* in Daquq in a procedure initiated by the Department of Agriculture in favour of Arabs settled in 1993 by the Ba'athist regime as part of its Arabisation policy. Two other procedures are underway for 14,000 *donums*. This did not prevent the court in Daquq on the 13th from changing its signs to remove the Kurdish language...

In Makhmour, also on the 13th, residents demonstrated against the Iraqi army's blockade of the town, which prevents the delivery of food and medicine. At the same time, residents of the nearby refugee camp protested against new security measures put in place by the army: only one entry point into the camp is now allowed, and surveillance cameras have been installed to monitor any movement...

Another problem seriously affecting the inhabitants of the disputed territories is the deterioration of security due to constant jihadist attacks. ISIS continues to take advantage of the security vacuum left between the Kurdish *peshmerga* lines and the Iraqi federal forces. Residents are mostly left to fend for themselves against the terrorists, although in some cases, as in Makhmur on 31 December, local volunteers can foil attacks.

The Kurds have been asking for months for better Iraqi-Kurdish security cooperation. Discussions had already started in July 2021 to set up two joint brigades, but imple-

mentation is proceeding very slowly. The budget issue seemed to be resolved when, in early November, the official order to combine the 20th *Peshmerga* Brigade with the 66th Iraqi Brigade was issued, specifying that the Iraqi Ministry of Defence would arm and pay for the two joint brigades resulting from the merger (*Bas News*). On the 3rd, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Peshmerga, Jabbar Yawar, stated that the 2 brigades would start functioning “this month”. On the 17th, Peshmerga General Abdulkhaleq Talaat, liaison officer with the Iraqi forces, told *Rûdaw* that the training of the 2 joint brigades was “85% complete”, with the deployment locations determined, from the borders of Iran to Syria, the delay being solely due to the allocation of salaries. On the 30th, a new Iraqi-Kurdish military meeting was held in Chamchamal (Sulaimaniyeh) to evaluate several joint operations against ISIS that have taken place since the beginning of December and to plan the next ones (*PUK-media*).

The few joint operations had actually begun to show positive results in the second half of December, with a reduction in jihadist attacks. However, Jabbar Yawar pointed to the lack of drones affecting the *peshmerga*, as Baghdad does not provide them with the American aircraft they would like to have. Moreover, this does not mean that ISIS has disappeared. On the 7th, after a week of apparent calm, the jihadists resumed their attacks, launching 8

Katyusha rockets on Peshmerga posts near Pirde (Altun Kopri), without causing any casualties. On the 10th, they kidnapped the chief (*mukhtar*) of the village of Delsi, south of Daqouq district, after controlling the village for nearly two hours until an Iraqi patrol arrived. On 12 December, a jihadist cadre responsible for transporting terrorists was apprehended in Touz Khourmatou. On the 20th, a coalition aircraft struck several ISIS positions in the Qara Chokh Mountains, used as a sanctuary by the jihadists (WKI). On the 21st, the jihadists inflicted heavy losses on the Iraqi army, killing 11 soldiers at a base in Diyala, near the Iranian border (*Al-Monitor*). The next day, they attacked another Iraqi base, again in Qara Chokh, while another attack hit Daqouq...

Following the attack by ISIS on Hassakeh prison in Rojava on the 20th, the Iraqi Prime Minister ordered a general inspection of Iraqi prisons by counter-terrorism forces on the 22nd to detect any security risks; the inspection lasted until the 30th.

On the 24th, an Iraqi patrol lost three men, killed near Daqouq by an IED detonated as their vehicle passed. On the 25th, clashes in the Rokhana valley led to the intervention of the Iraqi air force. On the 27th, a new attack, on three simultaneous axes, targeted the village of Tamour near Daqouq, provoking clashes lasting several hours. At the same time, security forces announced the arrest of a sniper in the Hawija district. On the same day, a jihadist infiltration attempt was prevented at the Syrian border, possibly by Hassakeh (WKI) escapees. On the 29th, Iraqi police arrested 3 civilians in Nineveh who were extorting money from civilians for ISIS (*Rûdaw*). Finally, on the 30th, jihadists launched a massive attack on Iraqi police near the Rashad district in Kirkuk, killing two officers and wounding two others.

Moreover, the military presence and regular Turkish strikes add to the insecurity felt by the inhabitants. *Asharq Al-Awsat* makes a bitter as-

essment of the situation in North-Western Iraq: *"The regions of the Nineveh Plain that are home to [religious and ethnic] minorities have become areas of security tension and political messages and an arena for the resolution of international, regional and local conflicts"*, notes the daily (*Courrier International*). Among these minorities, the Yezidis, already victims of ISIS's attempted genocide, are now being held hostage on their territory by national and international rivalries: at the national level, the Kurdish parties, opposing the central government, want to assert their presence in the disputed areas, while at the international level, Turkey is constantly striking at local forces affiliated to the PKK, particularly in the Sinjar district, without the Iraqi government seeming to be able to do anything. Finally, the Turkish army has installed in Bashiqa, north of Mosul, a military base, Zilikan, which is regularly targeted by the pro-Iranian militias, as on the 15th of this month. In fact, while Turkey justifies its military presence in Iraq by the fight it is waging against the PKK, the scale of this presence suggests that Ankara's objectives are broader and that Turkey could wish in the long term to take control of large "security zones", or even impose, as it is doing in Syria, an ethnic reconfiguration of which the Kurds would be the first victims... The Kurdish Institute in Washington notes that *"thousands of Kurdish civilians have been uprooted by Turkish military operations, leaving entire valleys empty of Iraqi or Kurdish civilians. Turkish forces are not allowing Kurdish civilians to return to their villages, which presages a full and sustained Turkish occupation"* (WKI).

However, Turkish strikes continued this month. Earlier this month, several artillery strikes hit the village of Hiror (Dohuk), and the Sherbajer area (Suleimaniyeh) was subjected to aerial bombardment. In Makhmour camp, already hit by Turkey several times since 2017, drones flew overhead on the 19th, causing concern among residents.

But it was the district and town of Sinjar (Shengal), the ancestral land of the Yezidis, that was hit the hardest, causing an increase in tensions between the population and the Iraqi security forces. Seven Yezidis who took part in clashes provoked by protests against the Turkish strikes on the town were even charged on the 7th under the anti-terrorism law. In Sinjar, the Turkish strikes add to a situation that has remained dire since the 2014 ISIS invasion, characterised by a lack of security and basic services. On the 13th, the Iraqi anti-corruption commission opened several investigations after Yezidi organisations denounced the corruption behind the mismanagement of funds allocated to the return of displaced Yezidis to their homes. Nearly eight years after the attack by ISIS, 700 Yezidi families are still living in makeshift camps at the foot of Mount Sinjar, trapped by snow and bitter cold. On the 20th, the Yezidi MP Vian Dakhil called on the governments in Baghdad and Erbil *"to assume their responsibilities"* and to come to their aid as a matter of urgency (*Kurdistan au Féminin*).

Regarding maintaining security in Sinjar, the West Nineveh Operations Commander announced the activation of the Erbil-Baghdad agreement on Sinjar, including the formation of a new force composed of Yezidis. Concluded in October 2020, this agreement has so far not been concretely implemented... In the middle of the month, tension rose between the PKK-affiliated Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ) and the Iraqi army, after the latter removed a statue of the YBŞ commander, Zardast Shingal, who was killed in a Turkish air strike the previous year. The YBŞ demanded the statue's return, prompting a wave of arrests in response. The governor of Nineveh called for de-escalation... On the 21st, a Turkish drone strike hit a YBŞ convoy, killing 3 fighters including an officer. On the 28th, another Turkish strike targeted another YBŞ official outside his home.

IRAQ: TOWARDS A COALITION GOVERNMENT "WITHOUT FOREIGN INFLUENCES"?

The ongoing all-out discussions to form the next Iraqi government are marked by multiple tensions and intra-communal divisions.

Firstly, a violent Iranian-American opposition persists on Iraqi territory. Secondly, the results of the early legislative elections of October 10, called by Prime Minister Al-Qadhimi following the major demonstrations of 2019, confirm the loss of influence on the political spectrum of pro-Tehran Shiite political parties: the *Al-Fatih* Alliance ("Conquest"), the political showcase of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* ("Popular Mobilization Units"), obtained only 17 seats, compared to 48 in the previous parliament. It cried fraud after the election, but the courts rejected its appeals for annulment... (*AFP*) This electoral setback is pushing the pro-Iranian parties to resort to violence to make themselves heard. The third factor of tension is time: the new electoral law put in place by the Qadhimi government imposes strict deadlines. Within 15 days of the certification of the results by the Supreme Court, the new parliament must meet and elect its speaker. The largest bloc must be registered at the same session. Finally, within 30 days of its first session, the parliament must elect the new Iraqi president, who will charge the largest bloc with forming the government... (*Al-Monitor*)

According to a tacit agreement between the three main Iraqi communities, which has been respected since the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Prime Minister must be chosen from among Shiite personalities, the President of the Parliament must be Sunni, and the President of the Republic must be Kurdish. But the communities are themselves divided. While the Sunni parties have agreed to keep

Mohammad al-Halbousi, of the *Taqquadum* ("Progress") party, as speaker of the Parliament, the Shiites are divided between pro-Iranian parties, gathered in the "Coordination Framework", and "Sadrist", *i.e.* the supporters of Moqtada Al-Sadr, who, with the KDP, appears to be one of the main winners of the elections... As for the two main Kurdish parties, KDP and PUK, although united in Kurdistan within a coalition, they are in deep disagreement on several points, including the renewal of Barham Saleh (PUK) as Iraqi President. For their part, the Shiites continued their internal negotiations to try and agree on a candidate for the post of Prime Minister. In addition, discussions were held between the three communities, with the Kurds meeting Sunnis and Sadrists in Baghdad and a Sadrist delegation going to Erbil for meetings with KDP representatives.

At the inaugural session of parliament on 9 January, the newly elected MPs took the oath of office. They then proceeded to the election of the Speaker of Parliament. The outgoing Sunni Speaker Al-Halbousi was re-elected. The Kurdish deputy from Kirkuk, Shakhwan Abdullah Ahmed, affiliated to the KDP, was elected vice-president as well as the Shiite Sadrist deputy Hakim Al-Zamili. First consecration of the Sadr-PDK-*Taqquadum* coalition, Halbousi received the votes of the KDP, while the PUK deputies left the session without taking part in the vote. Deputies from the "Coordination Framework" challenged the validity of the session and filed a request with the Supreme Court to cancel the session.

A few days later, on the 13th, the Green Zone in Baghdad, including the US embassy and several military installations, was targeted by rocket fire, injuring 3 civilians. On

the 15th, a drone attack on the Balad base (Diyala) was thwarted when 3 drones, spotted from a distance, had to turn back after being targeted. Neither the launch site nor those responsible for this attempt could be identified, but suspicions point to the pro-Iranian *Hashd al-Shaabi* militia, already presumed to be responsible for the 7 November attack on the Prime Minister's residence. Later the same day, other rockets targeted a Turkish base in Nineveh. Their launch site, near Bashiqa, also points to these militias (*Asharq al-Awsat*). Finally, homemade bombs in Baghdad targeted the premises of the KDP, branches of the Kurdish banks *Djihan* and *Bank of Kurdistan*, injuring a woman and a child, and a Sunni deputy of *Taqquadum*, the party of Al-Halbousi. Although none of these attacks were claimed, it seems to be a "message" from the pro-Iranian militias to the Sadr-led coalition that they want seats in the next government: all Sadr's partners were targeted.

However, the bridges were not completely cut between the two camps, since in Erbil, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, received Hadi al-Ameri, leader of both the Shiite organisation *Badr* and the *Al-Fatih* Alliance, a member of the "Coordination Framework", on the 17th. This meeting could be part of the strategy that some believe Moqtada Al-Sadr is pursuing: to "turn around" *Al-Fatih* by offering it positions and thus marginalise the other components of the "Coordination Framework"...

On 25 February, the Supreme Court validated al-Halbousi's re-election as head of parliament, rejecting the request to cancel the inaugural session and thus allowing the political process to resume. Parliamentarians have until 8 February to elect the President of the

Republic (*L'Orient-Le Jour*). The latter will in turn have 15 days to appoint a Prime Minister. On the same day, the residence of Al-Halbousi in the Anbar governorate was targeted by 3 *Katyusha* rockets which wounded two children (WKI).

The choice of the future Iraqi President will also face difficulties. Until 2018, the KDP and the PUK had a "gentleman's agreement", known as the "strategic agreement", according to which the Iraqi presidency went to the PUK and that of the Kurdistan Region to the KDP. Neither partner-adversaries opposed each other's candidates for either position. But in 2018, for the first time, the KDP put forward against Barham Saleh

its own candidate, Fuad Hussayn, who was not successful (he is now Foreign Minister). This year, while the PUK is presenting Saleh again, the KDP is also running against him its own candidate, former Finance and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari. And in fact, the KDP seems to be in a better position than its opponent to win, both in terms of number of seats (31 against 18 for the PUK) and in terms of political support (the Sadr-PDK-*Taqquadum* coalition).

On the 31st, following an initiative by KDP President Massoud Barzani to ease the tensions accompanying the process of forming the future government, the leaders of the three potential partners, Nechirvan Barzani, Mohammed

al-Halbousi, and Moqtada Al-Sadr met at the latter's home in Najaf. KDP spokesman Mahmoud Mohammed confirmed to the Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* that Massoud Barzani's initiative was the result of a request from the commander of the Iranian *Al-Quds* Force, Ismail Qaani, who came to Erbil accompanied by the highest Iranian official in Iraq, the former ambassador to Baghdad, the Iraqi-Iranian Hassan Danaeifar. At the end of the meeting, Halbousi tweeted from Najaf a somewhat paradoxical message in which he reiterated Sadr's promises: "*The time for foreign interference in the formation of Iraqi governments is over*. He added that the meeting was to discuss a "*purely national Iraqi government, neither eastern nor western*".

IRAN:

"HOSTAGE DIPLOMACY" ABROAD AND WAVE OF REPRESSION IN KURDISTAN

As negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme continue in Vienna, the Iranian parliament has announced sanctions against 51 US civilian and military officials for "terrorism" and "human rights violations": they were involved in the targeted assassination of Qassem Suleimani in Baghdad in 2019. On the same day, Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, said that talks were progressing... While neither side wants to appear to be giving in, both need success and want to avoid conflict. The sticking point for Iran remains when the sanctions reinstated by Donald Trump in May 2018 will be lifted (*New York Times*). This reinstatement had caused a contraction of the Iranian economy (- 6%), which had taken off again after the signing of the treaty (+13.4% in 2016). For Washington, the concern is more about Tehran's progress in enriching uranium since the United States left the treaty: 60% last August according to the IAEA, well above the 3.67% ceiling set by the treaty. If the negotiations do not succeed quickly, Tehran could come dangerously close to a nuclear weapon (90% en-

richment), while its missile programme progresses...

On 13 January, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said that Iran had only "a few weeks" left to return to the deal before Washington would begin to consider "*other options, in close coordination with the countries involved*"... (*Al-Monitor*)

The day before, the Franco-Iranian anthropologist Fariba Adelkhah, under house arrest since October 2020, was again incarcerated in Evin prison for "failure to comply with the rules of her assignment"... Arrested in June 2019, she had been sentenced in May 2020 to 5 years in prison for "propaganda against the regime" and "harming national security" (*HRANA*). Her support committee denounced her re-imprisonment "*while the Covid pandemic continues in full swing*", and that "*the death in custody of poet and filmmaker Baktash Abtin [on 8 January]*" demonstrates "*the inability or unwillingness [of the government] to guarantee the safety of its detainees*"...

As it does not recognise dual na-

tionality, Iran does not hesitate to arrest dual nationals to use them as leverage, a method sometimes described as "hostage diplomacy". Thus Fariba Adelkhah's partner, Roland Marchal, who was arrested at Tehran airport when he came to visit her, was literally exchanged in March 2020 for the engineer Jalal Ruhollah-Nejad, imprisoned in France for violating American sanctions. More than a dozen dual nationals are still held in Iran. The Iraqi Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* quotes in particular British-Iranian humanitarian Zaghari-Ratcliffe, convicted in 2016, German-Iranian architect Nahid Taghavi, Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi, his father Baquer Namazi, a former UNICEF official, Swedish-Iranian doctor Ahmad Reza Jalali, Iranian-American environmentalist Morad Tahbaz and Emad Shargi, an American-Iranian... On the 24th, British-Iranian aeronautical engineer Anoosheh Ashoori, 67, who was arrested in 2017 during a visit to his mother and then sentenced to 12 years in prison for "spying for Israel", started a hunger strike to protest against his poor prison conditions and the refusal of a parole (*HRANA*).

The Frenchman Benjamin Brière is not a binational, but after he was arrested during a trip in May as he had been using a drone to take photos of “forbidden zones”, he was imprisoned for 600 days while awaiting trial for “espionage” and “propaganda against the regime”. His trial finally opened on 20 June in Mashhad and he was sentenced on 25 June, after a closed session, to 8 years and 8 months in prison. According to his lawyer, who told HRANA before the hearing that he had not been able to access the prosecution file, the judges, who illegally changed the charges at the last minute, mentioned during the trial the possibility of an “exchange”, which “revealed their intention” (HRANA). The French Foreign Ministry immediately described his conviction as “unacceptable” (*Le Monde*).

In the face of this state blackmail, the beginnings of a “hostage counter-diplomacy” are emerging. Some former hostages from the American embassy in Tehran between 1979 and 1981 travelled to Vienna to meet Western negotiators and “try to convince them [...] to tell Iran that there will be no nuclear agreement until all the hostages are free” (*La Croix*).

At the same time, the regime continues its assassinations of *kolbars*, those Kurdish cross-border carriers forced into this activity by poverty and the lack of other employment in a Kurdistan of Iran economically stricken by state discrimination and sanctions. Although unarmed and therefore not dangerous, they are regularly shot by border guards... On 2 January, two of them were injured while mines dating from the Iran-Iraq war caused several victims in Dehloran, Baneh and (on the Iraqi side) in Penjwin. On the 6th, one *kolbar* was shot dead and another wounded in Nowsud (Kermanshah). On the 11th, an ambush and then another mine wounded 3 near Nowsud, and another ambush killed 1 and wounded 3 on the 18th near Urmia. Another *kolbar* was killed in a car accident in Nowsud on the 31st.

According to HRANA’s annual report, in 2021, 242 citizens were targeted by these abuses, of whom 94 were killed. Among them, 23 *kolbars* and 31 *sukhtbar* (fuel carriers). 148 people were injured, including 81 *kolbars* and 51 *sukhtbars*.

This month, the situation of these porters has been further aggravated by bitter cold and heavy snowfalls, sometimes exceeding 2 m. More than 550 villages have been isolated without electricity or food, and have been confronted with rising prices for essential products such as bread. Here again, the state was accused of indifference (*Rûdaw*).

In the middle of the month, local activists and international media reported mysterious night-time explosions heard in several cities in western Iran, including Sanandaj, Hamadan, Mehra, Kermanshah, Kamyaran, Paveh and Javanrud. While some officials claimed that it was thunderstorms, several sources mentioned tests of air defence systems, an explanation denied by the *Pas-daran* (Revolutionary Guards). Some users of social networks have even envisaged Israeli strikes... Since the crash of the Ukrainian *Boeing* over Tehran in January 2020, many Iranians no longer believe in the official explanations (*Rûdaw*).

In Iranian Kurdistan, the regime has continued its permanent repression since the beginning of the month. In particular, four Kurds were arrested in Sanandaj on the 4th for organising the funeral of a political prisoner, Heidar Ghorbani, whom the Iranian authorities had executed last December. In parallel, several other arrests also took place in Paveh, Naghadeh, Puranshahr, and Kamyaran. In the latter city, Kianosh Rahmani was arrested for posting a picture of Ghorbani on social media. In Bokan, two Kurds were sentenced to six months in prison for “undermining national security”, and in Tehran, a Kurd called Shirko Agoshi received ten years in prison for “belonging to a banned Kurdish opposition party”. Some of

those arrested were held incommunicado, and in several cases the arresting officers did not show a warrant (HRANA).

On 8 August, Kurdish language teacher Zara Mohammadi, sentenced on appeal to 5 years in prison for “establishing an organisation to disrupt national security”, was summoned to begin her sentence in Sanandaj prison after the Supreme Court rejected her request for a retrial. Many observers have denounced the verdict as contrary to both the Iranian constitution and the UN Convention on Human Rights. Mohammadi’s only “crime” was teaching children their mother tongue.

In Mahabad, the “Islamic Revolutionary Court” continues to prolong the detention of the three Kurdish activists Farzad Samani, Sakar Eini, and Mohammad Houshangî arrested a year ago. Accused of “armed insurrection”, they are in pre-trial detention in Urmia. According to the families, the judge in charge of the case keeps delaying the trial for lack of evidence, while denying the defendants bail.

On 16 August, political prisoner Khaled Fereidooni was granted a leave of absence for the first time after spending 21 years in prison. Arrested in August 2000, he was initially sentenced to death for “undermining national security” and “enmity against God (*Moharebeh*)” by association with a political party hostile to the regime”, before his sentence was changed on appeal to life imprisonment.

On the 18th, *Hengaw* reported that some 20 Kurdish prisoners, mostly political, had been put in solitary confinement for refusing transfers to a “security prison”. Dozens of them went on hunger strike. To better understand these refusals, it should be recalled that in 2021, 17 Kurdish prisoners died in prison, including 10 tortured to death... In addition, at least 48 Kurdish prisoners were sentenced to death

and executed. On the same day, environmental activist Armin Esperlous was sentenced in Sanandaj to 1 year in prison for “cooperation with the Free Life Party of Kurdistan” (PJAK).

On the 24th, human rights defender Nargis Mohammadi was, according to her husband, sentenced to 8 years in prison and 70 lashes after a hearing lasting only 5 minutes. Mohammadi, a long-time opponent of the death penalty, had been arrested many times before (*Ruedaw*).

In addition, reports from the *Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)* and the *Kurdish Human Rights Network (KHRN)* suggest that an even more severe and arbitrary wave of arrests than usual has started this month in Iranian Kurdistan. On the 11th, the *Washington Kurdish Institute* reported the arrest of at least 19 Kurds in the previous week: 8 in Divandareh, 4 in Naghadeh, 4 in Oshnavieh, 2 in Sanandaj and 1 in Baneh. According to KHRN, the wave of arrests began on 9 January. Several families of those ar-

rested, residing in Tehran, Karaj, Bokan, Rabat and Mahabad, said they had received brief phone calls from their relatives informing them that they were being held by the *IRGC* in Urmia. But the prosecutor of their city and the prosecutor of Urmia, when contacted, replied that they were not aware of any such arrests and that no arrest warrant had been issued... The subsequent investigation by the KHRN suggests a wave of arrests launched simultaneously by the *Pasdaran* Intelligence in Tehran, Karaj, Mahabad, Rabat and Marivan, and by the Intelligence (*Etelaat*) in Piranshahr, Bukan, Naqadeh, Saqez and Marivan... These arrests were carried out arbitrarily, without any court decision. The scale of the repression is unusual, even for Iran where it is permanent.

On the 25th, the KHRN published a list of 57 such incommunicado persons (<https://kurdistanhumanrights.org/en/iran-forces-arbitrarily-detain-kurdish-civilians-activists/>), but arrests continued thereafter; the *Washington Kurdish Institute* reported that 23 people

had been imprisoned in Iranian Kurdistan in the last week of the month, citing among others: activist Zaman Zeawia and filmmaker Medad Nazhad in Saqez, a trade union activist, Rebwar Abdullahi, and two activists, Soma Shapari and Mahsa Mohamed in Sanandaj and two environmental activists, Ayoub Hadesi and Rahman Khademtikozar, in Piranshahr. Security forces also arrested several Kurds in Oshnavieh, Sarvabad, Javanrud, Bokan and Baneh.

The end of the month was also marked by nationwide demonstrations by teachers protesting against their low salaries and poor living conditions, called by the “Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers’ Professional Associations”. Demonstrations and strikes started on the 30th and continued on the 31st, provoking a brutal response from the authorities, dozens of arrests of organisers and members of local teachers’ unions, including two teachers from Marivan, Jabar Dosti and Shabaan Mohamadi, members of the “Kurdistan Teachers Professional Association” (*HRANA*).

FRANCE: KURDISH ACTIVISTS MURDERED IN PARIS, 9 YEARS LATER

Nine years almost to the day after the assassination of Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Saylemez in Paris on 9 January 2013, a thousand participants marched through the streets of Paris on Saturday 8 January to pay tribute to these three Kurdish activists and to demand justice in this case that has never been tried. In the calm and under rain, the procession left the Gare du Nord to reach the Place de la République, behind a large banner bearing the effigy of the three women, with the inscription “Without justice, France will remain guilty!” The investigation found “involvement” of

members of the MIT, the Turkish secret service, in the triple murder, but stopped short of naming the masterminds. In Turkey, media outlets released a document presented as an MIT “mission order” for Omer Güney, the alleged assassin. In January 2014, MIT officially denied any involvement, and Güney died of a brain tumour before his trial, ending the legal action. This unfinished business leaves a very bitter taste for members of the Kurdish community in France. “*Nine years later, it is a stain on the history of France. It is not normal. Justice must be done*”, Agit Polat, spokesman for the Kurdish Democratic Council in France (CDK-F) and one of the or-

ganisers of the demonstration, told AFP.

In May 2019, after multiple requests, an anti-terrorist judge was charged with taking over the investigation and a judicial inquiry was opened for “complicity in murder in relation to a terrorist undertaking” and “criminal terrorist association”. In a press release, the organisers of the demonstration demanded that the defence secrecy, invoked by the French authorities, be lifted concerning the information held by the intelligence services. As for the demonstrators, they have little doubt as to who ordered the attack. Among other slogans, they chanted while marching “Erdogan assassin!”.

GERMANY: LIFE SENTENCE FOR A FORMER SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

After a historic trial, former Syrian colonel Anwar Raslan was sentenced on 13 January by the Koblenz High Court to life imprisonment for “crimes against humanity”. He was found guilty of ordering or perpetuating torture against at least 4,000 prisoners in Al-Khatib prison in Damascus and the murder of 27 of them between April 2011 and September 2012. This is the first verdict ever against a senior Syrian official. The case was brought abroad thanks to the “universal jurisdiction” recognised by German courts, which allows the prosecution of the most serious crimes regardless of where they were committed and the nationality of the perpetrators or victims.

The former officer had been arrested in February 2019 after being recognised by some of his victims who had taken refuge in Germany. A junior officer under Raslan’s command in Syria, Eyad Al-Gharib, a co-accused, was sentenced to 4.5 years in prison. Raslan was the head of investigations of the Syrian military intelligence division 251. He coordinated arrests, investigations and interrogations conducted under torture to extract confessions

from prisoners. The detainees were not only “tortured but also starved and deprived of air”, the President of the court stressed. They were “beaten all over their bodies, especially on the soles of their feet”, “hung by their wrists” and subjected to “electric shocks and burns”. The judges also found Raslan guilty of sexual violence and aggravated rape.

Can such a trial, held at a time when Bashar Al-Assad’s regime seems to be able to emerge from the civil war by retaining power, contribute to preventing states from normalising their relations with the Syrian government, or even to allowing the prosecution of those responsible for the torture? This is what many exiled Syrians hope for, while there are still thousands of people missing from the regime’s detention centres and probably thousands of prisoners still subjected to the same abuses. In any case, it is an undeniable symbolic victory for the victims.

Musician Wassim Mukdad, one of the 34 plaintiffs in the trial, hopes that the Koblenz conviction will be “the first step” of a long way, “which will only end when the dictator Bashar

Al-Assad and all the criminals around him face a court of justice”. But the path could be strewn with obstacles. Clémence Bectarte, a lawyer and coordinator of the International Federation for Human Rights’ judicial division, who praises the “pioneering” work of the German court, regrets “the contrast with France, where there is no trial and no case heard”. At the end of November 2021, French justice declared itself incompetent to judge Syrians living in France for crimes against humanity committed in their country of origin. But the blockage is not only in France. As the human rights organisation *Human Rights Watch* points out, the International Criminal Court in The Hague does not have an automatic mandate, as Syria is not a party to it. The UN Security Council has the power to give it jurisdiction, but China and Russia vetoed it in 2014...

Human Rights Watch has posted a comprehensive article on the background to the case and how Anwar Raslan came to be tried (<https://www.hrw.org/feature/2022/01/06/seeking-justice-for-syria/how-an-alleged-intelligence-officer-was-put-on-trial-in-germany>).

CULTURE: ANNUAL REVIEW OF KURDISH PUBLICATIONS IN TURKEY

377 books were published in the Kurdish language in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan in 2021

In 2021, there was an increase in the number of Kurdish language publications in Turkey in the Kurmançî and Kurmanckî (Zazakî/Dimilkî) dialects. This is all the more remarkable as this language is discriminated against and virtually excluded from the public domain and education, which can only have a negative effect on its publications. Another negative factor affecting

publishers is the instability of the exchange rate.

According to a list compiled by journalist Cemil Oguz and published on the cultural and artistic news website *Diyarname*, the total number of books published in the past year is 377, an important figure for the progress of the Kurdish language, which is tolerated but marginalised and still under threat of prosecution by the Turkish judiciary.

The books were published by 26 different publishing houses. The

publisher *J&J* is in the lead with 68 books, including 20 books for children, followed by *Avesta* with 59 books. They together account for about one third of the books published during the past year. The publisher *Peywend* is in third place with 33 books published, followed by *Lis* with 26 books and *Na* with 24 books.

This year, with 77 publications, the novel genre tops the list, whereas in previous years it was poetry. Poetry comes second with 72 collections, followed by the

short story with 64 books.

The most productive authors, in descending order, are: Kerem Te-koglu, with 20 books for children,

Hilmi Akyol with 12 collections of oral literature, including 6 books on the bards (*dengbêj*) of Diyar-bekir, Kemal Tolan with 6 books on the Yezidis, Fewaz Hisên (pub-

lished in France with the spelling Fawaz Hussein) with 6 books, including 5 translations, Elî Çiçek and Evdî Hesqera with 2 books in the Kurmanckî dialect.

DISAPPEARANCE: FLORENCE HELLOT-BELLIER

Florence HELLOT-BEL-
LIER, a leading specialist
in the history of the As-
syro-Chaldeans and a
member of the Hu-
manities section of the Kurdish In-
stitute, died on 8 December 2002
after a long illness.

She was 78 years old.

Her death has caused much sadness
among her family, her friends at
the Kurdish Institute, the Assyrian-
Chaldean community to which she
was very close and among re-
searchers interested in Iran.

Her funeral took place in the strictest
of family privacy.

She graduated in Persian in 1982,
and in 1998 she defended her doc-
toral thesis in history at the Uni-
versité Sorbonne Nouvelle. A me-
ticulous and independent researcher,
she specialised in the history of Iran
at the end of the Qadjar dynasty
and the Assyro-Chaldean Christians.
She has published reference works
such as *France-Iran, quatre cents ans
de dialogue* ("France-Iran, four
hundred years of dialogue"), *Les
Assyro-Chaldéens d'Iran et du Hakkâri
face aux ambitions des empires (1896-
1920)* ("The Assyrian-Chaldeans of
Iran and Hakkâri faced with the
ambitions of empires (1896-1920)"),
*Les Assyriens du Hakkâri au Khabour:
mémoire et histoire* ("Assyrians from

Hakkâri to Khabour: memory and
history"), *La Géorgie : entre Perse et
Europe* ("Georgia: between Persia
and Europe").

Florence presented several of her
books to the public at the Institute.
Until 2019, she was also an active
member of the editorial board of
the Kurdish Institute's journal *Études
Kurdes*, where her knowledge, her
rigorous spirit, her good humour
and her unfailing optimism were
much appreciated.

Her death is a great loss to Kurdish,
Assyrian-Chaldean and Iranian
studies.

La Turquie flirte avec le désastre économique

Le Grand Turc semble fâché avec l'économie. Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan ne cesse de marteler que des taux d'intérêt élevés sont source d'inflation. Du coup, alors que la hausse des prix ronge le pays et que la politique monétaire qu'il insuffle est fustigée de toutes parts, il a déclaré le 20 décembre qu'il ne fallait « attend(re) rien d'autre de (lui) » que le maintien des taux au plus bas.

Le président turc a régulièrement invoqué, ces dernières semaines, les préceptes islamistes interdisant l'usure pour continuer de baisser les taux d'intérêt, même si la théorie économique préconise le contraire. Qu'importe : l'autocrate exige toujours de la banque centrale nationale qu'elle ouvre les vannes du crédit. Erdogan veut doper coûte que coûte la croissance (7,4 % au troisième trimestre) en s'appuyant sur le marché intérieur – le pays enregistre 5 % de croissance annuelle moyenne depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, d'abord comme premier ministre, en 2003.

Jeu dangereux

Mais les voyants sont au rouge. L'excès de crédit a ses conséquences : l'inflation atteint 36 % sur un an, et est ainsi plus de sept fois supérieure à l'objectif initial du gouvernement, selon les chiffres officiels publiés lundi 3 janvier – des économistes parlent de plus de 80 %... Pis, pour les entreprises, la hausse des coûts de production dépasse les 40 %, tout comme, pour les citoyens, celle des denrées alimentaires (+ 86 %



pour l'huile et + 54 % pour le pain).

La monnaie a perdu 45 % de sa valeur depuis le début de l'année. Cela favorise les exportations et relance le secteur manufacturier, grippé par le Covid. Mais les Turcs les plus riches achètent des dollars pour se prémunir contre la dévaluation : d'après la banque centrale, plus de la moitié des dépôts en novembre ont été effectués dans une devise étrangère. Pour calmer l'incendie, Erdogan a sorti le chéquier le 20 décembre (voir ci-dessous). Quelques jours auparavant, l'autocrate avait déjà annoncé une hausse de 50 % du salaire minimum – ce qui devrait alimenter l'inflation.

Un mur de difficultés structurelles

Pas question pour lui, toutefois, de dévier de sa politique monétaire. Ce qui n'est pas sans susciter la perplexité. « Pour exporter, la Turquie doit d'abord importer, explique Erinc Yeldan, professeur d'économie à l'université de Kadir Has à Istanbul. Le pays est très dépendant des importations : pour les matières pre-

mières, pour les biens intermédiaires... Elles sont financées par le recours à la dette, accumulée notamment auprès de créanciers étrangers. Résultat, cette forte croissance repose sur une base non durable. » La dette détenue par des investisseurs étrangers rend les débiteurs turcs vulnérables.

« La croissance économique a été tirée par les bonnes performances dans le secteur du bâtiment, complète Didier Billion, chercheur à l'Iris, l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques. Mais ce n'est pas suffisant pour être une économie mondialisée : le défi fondamental est de construire une industrie performante à haute valeur ajoutée. »

Oppositions contrôlées

Alors que les élections présidentielle et législatives sont prévues pour 2023, il est difficile de contester cette fuite en avant. « Erdogan, qui concentre les pouvoirs, s'est improvisé chef économique du pays, explique le chercheur. Il a déjà renvoyé deux ministres des finances en un peu plus d'un an, ainsi que des cadres

de la banque centrale, dont le gouverneur. »

Des protestations s'élèvent face à l'envolée du coût de la vie. Jusqu'où ira la fronde ? « Dans les hautes sphères, la peur domine et l'administration fait profil bas, analyse Erinc Yeldan. Dans quelle mesure la population soutient-elle les protestataires ? C'est difficile à dire car les médias sont contrôlés et les oppositions politiques mal structurées. »

La crise de la livre turque prend une tournure politique

Après un mois de pertes historiques, la livre turque s'est fortement redressée la semaine dernière, à la suite des mesures d'urgence annoncées par le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Le chef de l'État a annoncé que la valeur de certains dépôts bancaires en livre serait liée au cours du dollar. En clair : l'État compensera en partie les citoyens dont l'épargne s'érode. Mais de nombreux observateurs pointent les risques de ce nouveau mécanisme et questionnent sa pérennité.

Une chose est sûre : la crise de la livre turque a pris une tournure politique avec un appel du nouveau ministre des finances à déposer plainte contre les économistes et les journalistes qui ont commenté l'effondrement de la monnaie nationale. « Portez plainte contre tous ceux qui ont conseillé la prudence en disant que le cours des devises s'envolait, a-t-il lancé. Ceux-là vous ont leurrés. »

Newsweek

January 4, 2022

By Aykan Erdemir and Toby Dershowitz

It's Time to End CNN's License for CNN Turk's Hate Content

Turkish media recently reported that CNN International is sending a team to Turkey to "look into its Turkish branch's broadcasting policy," which has been "under fire for its one-sided reports." This belated move gives CNN an opportunity to disassociate its brand from one of the leading propaganda outlets of Turkey's increasingly authoritarian President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It is long overdue for CNN to revoke its license for CNN Turk and its hate content.

CNN's "sister network" CNN Turk started broadcasting in Turkey in 1999 and was a leading news outlet in its early years. The channel became synonymous with self-censorship when it aired a documentary on penguins in 2013 instead of reporting the Gezi Park protests, which witnessed country-wide demonstrations against the Erdogan government's authoritarianism.

Back then, even CNN mocked its sister network in Turkey for broadcasting the penguin documentary; it aired footage of a Turkish guest, during a live interview with CNN Turk, taking off his shirt to reveal a penguin T-shirt underneath in pro-



A Turkish national flag flies near the logos of Kanal D television station and CNN Turk at Dogan Media Group complex in Istanbul on March 22, 2018. OZAN KOSE/AFP via Getty Images

test of the broadcaster's editorial policies.

These policies have taken a turn for the worse following CNN Turk's forced sale to a pro-government conglomerate in 2018. When asked whether the sale would cause CNN to reconsider licensing its name to CNN Turk, CNN's worldwide executive vice president was noncommittal, saying, "If ... we have any reason whatsoever to believe the journalistic integrity of the channel could be compromised by the new owners, we will revoke the license." The

spike in antisemitic, racist and conspiratorial content on CNN Turk's platforms since then shows that that time has arrived and passed.

A retired Turkish ambassador on a talk show CNN Turk aired in April erroneously claimed, "Jews rule the world. They control 27 percent of the U.S. economy." A senior adviser to Erdogan joined him with his incorrect, dangerous and antisemitic rants: "They also rule the military, politics, media and more importantly the movie industry." During this exchange, the CNN

Turk anchor intervened only once to note that although there are only 7 million Jews in the United States, "their influence is very high."

This was not a one-off episode. The previous year, Brooklyn College associate professor Louis Fishman criticized CNN Turk for another talk show, where a guest known for his antisemitic conspiracy theories claimed that an Israeli professor at Harvard University had developed the COVID-19 virus as a biological weapon in partnership with a Wuhan lab. This antisemitic trope came at a sensitive time when a spike in coronavirus cases in Turkey also exacerbated antisemitic narratives, triggering accusations that Jews were responsible for the pandemic. When one of the other guests tried to push back against such a conspiracy theory, the CNN Turk moderator intervened in defense, "But can his theory be disproved?"

The accusations against CNN Turk are not limited to antisemitism. The network has also come under fire for racist content targeting Black people on its Twitter feed and online news platform.



January 4, 2022

Kurdistan's Weekly Brief January 4, 2022

Turkey

Several protests broke out in Istanbul and Turkey's Kurdish region after an armed Turkish man attacked the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) building in Istanbul on December 28 and wounded two HDP members. The as-

sailant, Muhammed Eren Sütçüm, was released on January 3. Separately, dozens of human rights organizations and public figures demanded the Turkish government release a Kurdish politician named Aysel Tuğluk. The Turkish government sentenced Tuğluk, who

is suffering from advanced dementia, to 14 years and seven months in prison.

The Inflation Research Group (ENAGrup) reported Turkey's consumer price index (CPI) hit 82.1 percent in 2021, the highest in two decades and more than twice the CPI re-

ported by the Turkish government-owned Turkish Statistical Institute. HDP lawmaker Saruhan Oluc blamed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for Turkey's inflation crisis and said, "The cost of one-man rule has emerged as hunger, poverty, and injustice."

HDP co-chairs Pervin Buldan and Mithat Sancar met with Turkish opposition leaders, including Republican People's Party (CHP) head Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, on December 28. The HDP leaders then held a press conference with Kılıçdaroğlu, and Buldan announced the HDP and CHP intended to propose early elections. Both sides also discussed other issues facing Turkey, with Kılıçdaroğlu saying, "No quarrel but peace must be our priority. Certainly, we hold different opinions, but every opinion has a high value for us."

Iraq

Iraq's Shi'a blocs will engage in another round of internal negotiations this week, but there are no indications the Sadrists and Iranian-backed parties are poised to forge closer relations. That said, after a Kurdish delegation held talks with Sunni and Shia politicians in Baghdad and Holland, a Sadrist delegation met with Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) representatives in Erbil after Iraq's Supreme Court confirmed the results of the October 10 parliamentary elections. Furthermore, Iraq's Sunni blocs agreed to retain Mohammad al Halbousi as Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq and nominated Khamis Khanjar, who is backed by Turkey and remains sanctioned by the US, for the post of vice president. Iraq's main Kurdish winners, the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), are waiting to hold talks until the Shia blocs reach an agreement.

Secretary-General of the Ministry of Peshmerga Jabar Yawer said Baghdad has yet to provide the Peshmerga with access to US-made



drones. Though improved co-operation between Iraqi forces and the Peshmerga has led to a reduction in Da'esh attacks in the "Disputed Territories" over the past two weeks, the terror group retains the ability to launch operations and wounded an Iraqi soldier near Tuz Khurmatu on Friday. Also, on Friday, however, the Peshmerga announced it seized Da'esh ammunition and IEDs in a joint operation with Iraqi forces near Kirfi.

The Turkish military conducted several artillery strikes in Duhok Governorate's Hiror village and launched several airstrikes in Sulaymaniyah Governorate's Sharbashjer subdistrict last week. While the most recent attacks caused no reported casualties, the Turkish military has killed dozens of civilians and displaced thousands more since it invaded Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of countering the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 2019.

Iran

The Iranian regime released seven Kurds who were previously arrested for "membership of Kurdish opposition parties" in November 2021 on bail in Baneh. That said, the regime continued its ongoing

repression of Iranian Kurdistan by arresting four Kurds in Sanandaj for organizing the funeral of a political prisoner, Heidar Ghorbani, that Iranian authorities executed in December 2021. Iranian authorities also arrested Paiman Ahadi in Paveh (Pawa), Farzin and Sarang Abdulhazada in Naqadeh, Karim Ahmad in Piranshahr, and Kianosh Rahmani for posting a photo of Ghorbani on social media in Kamyaran. Concurrently, a Tehran criminal court sentenced a Kurdish man named Shirko Agoshi to ten years in prison for "membership of a banned Kurdish opposition party." Lastly, a Bokoan court sentenced two Kurds, Kamal Abbas and Shirko Ahmadpouri, to six months in prison for "working against national security."

An Iranian Kurdish activist named Ahmed Bikham was found dead in his Erbil apartment on December 31. Bikham was originally from Sardasht and fought with Kurdish forces against ISIS (Da'esh) during the battle for Kobane in 2014. Though Bikham's death remains under investigation, the Iranian regime has a long history of assassinating dissidents in foreign countries and remains a suspect in several recent

killings in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Iranian border guards wounded two Kurdish border porters (kolbars) on January 2. Furthermore, mines from the Iran-Iraq War killed a ten-year-old boy in Dehloran, wounded a kolbar near Baneh, and injured a shepherd in Iraqi Kurdistan's Panjween. Iranian and Turkish border guards have killed over 50 kolbars and wounded at least 163 in 2021. Additionally, at least 515 kolbars have been killed and another 1075 have been wounded since 2012.

Syria

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) released 2021 security statistics, including anti-terrorism operations backed by the US-led global coalition. The SDF said it conducted 115 security operations and raids, foiling 16 "large and dangerous" terrorist attacks, arresting 802 terrorists, and "dissolving 93 terror cells." The International Coalition for Operation Inherent Resolve thanked the SDF fighters for keeping northeast of Syria "safe & secure."

Turkey and its proxies escalated attacks on SDF areas, mainly near the M4 highway near Tal Tamer, Ain Essa, and to the north in Zarkan town. The Turkish aggression killed a two-year-old and his mother on December 30th in Zarkan (Abu Rassin) town while 60 mortars shelled eastern Ain Essa. At least five civilians were wounded. Separately, dozens of Kurds protested following a funeral for a Kurdish fighter who died of his wounds after a Turkish airstrike near Kobani on December 25th. The drone attack killed five members of the People's Defense Units (YPG).

Ministry doesn't permit HDP MP Gergerlioğlu to visit Kurdish politician, ill prisoner Tuğluk

The Ministry of Justice has not allowed Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, also a medical doctor, to visit former HDP MP and ill prisoner Aysel Tuğluk in Kandıra Prison.

Diagnosed with "dementia", Kurdish politician Aysel Tuğluk was given a report of "she cannot stay in prison" by the Kocaeli University Faculty of Medicine. However, the İstanbul Forensic Medicine Institution's report has concluded that Tuğluk is "in a state to stay in prison."

With the execution of her sentence not deferred based on the latter report, HDP MP Gergerlioğlu, who frequently raises concerns about the violations of rights in prisons, wanted to visit Aysel Tuğluk; however, this request has been rejected by the Justice Ministry.

Gergerlioğlu has spoken to bianet about the rejection of the Ministry and the contradictory medical reports of the Kocaeli University Faculty of Medicine and the İstanbul Forensic Medicine Institution.

The MP has recalled that the permission of the Justice Ministry is stipulated to visit prisoners serving time on "terror charges". He has underlined that he made several applications, but his applications were rejected every time without a reason being cited for the rejection. According to HDP's Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, he is not given permission to visit due to his criticisms of the Justice Ministry, adding that the prison administration takes up a similar



attitude as well.
"No medical statements in the report"

Gergerlioğlu, as a medical doctor himself, has commented on the reports of the Kocaeli University Faculty of Medicine, which concluded that Aysel Tuğluk could not stay in prison and the execution of her prison sentence should be deferred, and the İstanbul Forensic Medicine Institution, which has concluded that Tuğluk can stay in prison.

According to the MP, "the report of the Forensic Medicine Institution does not contain medical statements." He has briefly said:

"Nine professors at Kocaeli University say, 'She definitely cannot stay in prison, the execution should be deferred' and express this in medical findings. In its report, the Forensic Medicine Institution says, 'She is trying to deceive us, there is no need for deferral.'

"They even consider it to be a ruse how she sat on the chair. Such situations occur in dementia and it is very frequently encountered. The disease is obvious. These are not medical

statements."
'It takes her minutes to pick up the receiver'

Referring to the hippocratic oath, Gergerlioğlu has underlined that physician cannot discriminate on any grounds, political or religious:

"All physicians take the hippocratic oath. Physicians shall not discriminate but the Forensic Medicine Institution obviously discriminates on political grounds. Our fellow MPs who visit her in prison say that they instruct her to pick up the receiver and even this takes minutes.

"They also say that a long time passes until she fixes her chair and sits, she forgets the words or what she will say and there are problems in her speaking. There is something even the ones who are not doctors sense but the Forensic Medicine Institution says, 'We are being deceived.' Its decision is completely political. There is no medical explanation for this."

Gergerlioğlu in front of the prison

As the Justice Ministry has not

permitted him to visit Aysel Tuğluk in prison, HDP Kocaeli MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu went in front of the Kandıra Prison today (January 6) and made a statement there.

In his speech in front of the prison, he briefly said, "Aysel Tuğluk is suffering from great violations of rights. According to medical reports, Aysel Tuğluk must be taken out of the prison as soon as possible. We may face a more severe consequence if this is not done."

What happened?

On December 29, 2016, when she was the Vice Co-Chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Kurdish politician Aysel Tuğluk was arrested along with seven other politicians from the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and the Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

The indictment filed against Tuğluk, who was the DTK Co-Chair till September 2014, brought her statements to the press as well as the funerals that she attended as criminal evidence against the politician.

On March 16, 2018, the Ankara 17th Heavy Penal Court sentenced Aysel Tuğluk to 8 years in prison as per the Anti-Terror Law (TMK) no. 3713. Increasing this prison term by half, the court then gave a 12-years prison sentence to the politician. Lastly, it has decreased this prison sentence by one sixth and ruled that she shall be sentenced to 10 years in prison.

As Aysel Tuğluk's appeal to the Ankara Regional Court of Jus-

tice was rejected, her file was sent to the Court of Cassation.
Her mother's funeral

Aysel Tuğluk's mother Hatun Tuğluk lost her life in 2017. Upon her last will, her deceased body was brought to the İncek Cemetery in Ankara. Aysel Tuğluk left prison by permission and her mother was laid to rest; shortly afterwards, a group of 5-6 people gathered to protest the funeral.

The ones who attended the funeral said that this number gradually increased and they tried to attack the grave.

As the attacks continued, the deceased body of Hatun Tuğluk had to be removed from the ground and laid to rest somewhere else. One of the people who attacked the funeral turned out to have a picture with Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu at the police station.

Health problems

Aysel Tuğluk's elder brother Alaattin Tuğluk said that his sister had a memory loss after their mother's passing:

My sister didn't look fine. She asks the same question 3-4 times. She doesn't remember some things. For instance, when she wants to ask about someone from the family, she says, 'Who was that, who?'

They are close people, it is impossible for her to not know them. I am concerned that this will come to an irreversible point and that we will lose my sister... I want treatment before it is too late. Let another committee examine her and give a decision accordingly. She is given 1-2 medications now. It is not enough. She will go [to jail] after her treatment ends.



January 6, 2022

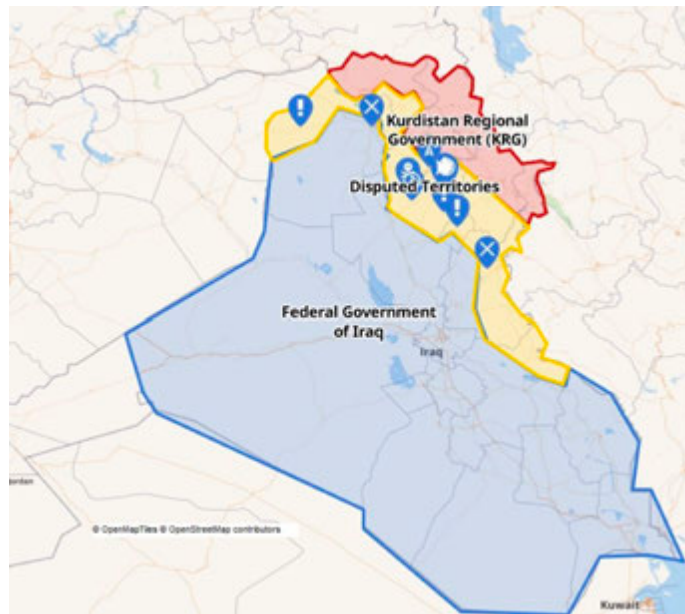
Kirkuk Minute January 6, 2022

Kirkuk

On January 2nd, the 61st division of the Iraqi army, which is responsible for the security file of Kirkuk, raided the Kurdish neighborhood Azadi for the second time in one week. The early morning raids have caused frustration among Kirkuk's Kurdish population.

Kurdish writing has been removed from new road signs that were installed recently by Kirkuk's municipality, sparking anger among Kirkuk's Kurds. An official from the municipality claimed the new signs were made in Turkey, and it was a "technical error." Since October 16, 2017, Kurds have been victims of forced demographic change and discriminatory policies by the illegal administration, imposed on the people of Kirkuk by Baghdad.

After rejection by the prime minister's office, the acting governor of Kirkuk, Rakan Saed al Jabouri, canceled a planned protest by two Arab parties that was set for January 7th. The protest was to advocate for al-Jabouri to remain in office. The planned demonstration by al-Jabouri's party, the



Arab Project and their allies, the Arab Coalition, aimed to overshadow the ongoing talks between Kurdish parties to designate a Kurdish governor.

On Wednesday, January 5th, Iraq's Federal Court of Cassation ruled in favor of the Kurdish owners of 4,000 dunams (988 acres) in Daquq district. The ruling came after a lawsuit was filed by the department of agriculture of Kirkuk, claiming that the land belonged to Arab tribesmen from outside of Kirkuk. The tribesmen were set-

tled in Kirkuk by the former regime of Saddam Hussein as part of the Arabization process. The court said the land belonged to two local Kurdish groups. The court will review two additional lawsuits that will soon determine the ownership of 14,000 dunams (3212 acres). In 1993, the former Ba'ath regime stripped 17,000 dunams of Kurdish land and distributed it to Arab tribesmen from outside of Kirkuk as part of the Arabization process.

Despite initial rejection by the

local administration and the Turkish embassy in Baghdad, the Kurdish sponsored Annual Theater Festival took place in Kirkuk with the participation of Kurdish artists, as well as companies from Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. According to a local source, the Kirkuk administration was obligated to allow the festival to take place, following pressure from Baghdad.

The Turkish-backed Iraqi Turkmen Front released a statement supporting changing the names of two districts in Kirkuk from Kurdish names to Arabic and Turkish names as was done by the former Ba'ath party regime of Saddam Hussein. The statement called for changing Pirde to Altun Kopri, and supported changing Dibis to its Arabic form of spelling, which the acting governor has already implemented.

Nearly 50 organizations demanded a new law criminalizing the denial of Kurdish genocide committed by the former dictator Saddam Hussein. The calls came after a trend on social media where some journalists and media outlets praised the former dictator. The demand resulted in

significant backing from several Kurdish institutions, including the Martyrs and Genocide department.

Khanaqin

The Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture renewed a contract on 7,000 dunams (1,729 acres) of Kurdish-owned land to Arab tribesmen in Jalawla (Golala). In 2009, the committee of article 140, returned ownership of the farmland to the original Kurdish owners. However, the ministry of Agriculture ignored the ruling, allowing Arab tribesmen to take over the Kurdish land.

Tuz Khurmatu

Shia parties in Tuz Khurmatu, including Hikma and Dawa are aiming to form a new province of "Tuz" consisting of Amerli, Tuz Khurmatu, and Suleiman Beg districts. The move is considered unconstitutional because the town is part of the disputed territories between Baghdad and Erbil. The Shia parties support this move because it would make the majority Kurds and Sunnis minorities in the new province. In recent years, there has been a mass migration of Shias to Amerli and displacement of Kurds and Sunnis in Tuz Khurmatu.

Makhmour

On December 31st, a local volunteer force, composed of local Kurds, foiled a Da'esh attack on a military court near the Qarachokh mountains. Kurdish forces intervened and thwarted the attack, killing four terrorists in the process. Additionally, Iraqi security forces warned of potential Da'esh attacks on oil fields near Makhmour in the near future.

Shingal (Sinjar)

Seven Yazidi protesters were charged under Iraq's anti-terror law, "Article 4". The charges

stemmed from a lawsuit by the Nineveh Operations Command after Yazidi Kurds protested against Turkish airstrikes on the town. There has been increased tension and clashes in Shingal between security officers and demonstrators as a result of the Turkish airstrikes.

Iraq's Integrity Commission launched investigations after corruption allegations were raised by Yazidi organizations of mismanaging funds which were allocated to return displaced Yazidis to their homes. Shingal suffers from a lack of security, basic services, and ongoing Turkish airstrikes.



January 6, 2022

Former HDP MP released after 5 years in jail

A former member of parliament for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) was released on Friday after serving more than five years in prison, Mezopotamya Agency reported.

Abdullah Zeydan was detained on terrorism charges in November 2016 alongside several other HDP parliamentarians including the party's then co-chairs Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş.

Demirtaş, who shared a cell with Zeydan in the Edirne Prison, remains imprisoned despite rulings by the European Court of Human Rights for his release.

Turkey's Court of Cassation overturned Zeydan's initial conviction in May 2021, citing a violation of the Kurdish politician's right to defence.



In the retrial, the prosecution demanded the same prison sentence, while Zeydan's lawyers argued for release, saying the sentence of 8 years 1 month 15 days had been overturned.

While the court upheld the conviction, including 3 years 1 month and 15 days for terrorist propaganda and 5 years for

aiding and abetting, it also ruled for Zeydan's release due to time served.

Without being taken back to Edirne, Zeydan was freed in the eastern Elazığ province. Upon his release, he was greeted by HDP MPs Remziye Tosun and Alican Önlü, as well as a group of party supporters, Mezopotamya said.

Zeydan faced trial for speeches he gave on seven different occasions in the southeastern Şırnak and Hakkari provinces, including in meetings, press statements, rallies and funerals. The maximum sentence he could have received was 20 years in prison.

One comment that resulted in the terrorist propaganda charge was related to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting against Turkey for four decades.

"PKK will drown you in its spit," Zeydan had said.

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January 7, 2022

Bodies of Kurdish migrants recovered from Greek waters

The bodies of several Kurds who tragically drowned in Greek waters while attempting to cross into western Europe last month have been recovered, a member of a foundation working with refugees and displaced persons told Rudaw from Athens on Thursday.

Fifteen bodies have been retrieved, the representative of Summit (Lutka) Foundation for Refugees and Displaced Affairs for Greece, Hussein Hama Saleh, said following the sinking of at least three separate migrants' boats in the Aegean Sea last month, according to AP.

Based on the site they were found at, four of the dead are thought to be from the boat that capsized on December 22, Saleh noted.

The boat "with over 30 Kurdish migrants capsized," he said. "Only 13 of them survived, seven of whom were Kurds and had a child with them."

The four bodies are currently being investigated for identification on an island off the Greek coast. At least 30 people, including Kurds, have died in the waters



Logo of Summit (Lutka) Foundation for Refugee and Displaced Affairs (left) Migrants being rescued (right) after their boat sank in the Aegean Sea on June 17, 2019. Photo : AFP ; Graphic: Rûdaw

separating Turkey and Greece between December 22 and 25. The details of the incidents and the total number of migrants the boats carried remain unclear.

Speaking to Rudaw from a hospital in Athens, Saleh noted that another 11 bodies were found from the boat that capsized on December 23.

"Six of the bodies have been identified and their families are with them. We are trying to send them back to the Kurdistan Region. The six identified people are from southern Kurdistan [Kurdistan Re-

gion]," he said.

One of the survivors of the December 23 incident previously told Rudaw that 103 people were on the boat, confirming the death of at least 11.

Greece is one of the main routes into the European Union for refugees and migrants. However, the flow tapered off following the arrival of nearly one million people, including Syrian Kurds, in Europe after crossing to Greek islands close to Turkey in 2015.

Kurdish migrants have suffered a

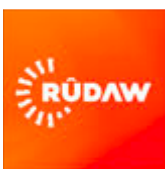
catastrophic fate this year. The bodies of 16 migrants, who drowned in the deadliest migrant disaster in the English Channel, were returned to the Kurdistan Region in late December.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) described the incident in the Channel as the "worst disaster on record."

Thousands of other Kurds have traveled to Belarus in recent months with the help of Kurdish smugglers, hoping to reach western Europe in a search for jobs and opportunities they feel they cannot access at home where unemployment is high and political tensions, corruption, and instability leave them with little hope for their future.

The Kurdistan Region, often called a safe haven within Iraq, is facing crises of its own - high unemployment, corruption, political instability, and an economic downturn during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has acknowledged the existence of systemic problems and financial hardships but says it is working to address these issues.



January 7, 2022

Hundreds abducted, killed in suspected Turkish attacks in Rojava last year

Hundreds of people, including security members, were killed and abducted in suspected Turkish attacks targeting north and northeastern Syria (Rojava) over the past year, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic

Forces (SDF) said in a recent report displaying the upsurge in offensives in the region.

Over 700 civilians were kidnapped and 134 were injured in Turkish attacks in 2021, the SDF said on Thursday.

One hundred and forty eight SDF members died responding to Turkish attacks and pursuing Islamic State (ISIS) sleeper cells that remain active in the region, the report added.

Ankara often targets Rojava,

killing and injuring civilians and security forces.

Rojava saw 47 Turkish ground attacks and incursion attempts, as well as 89 drone offensives, according to the SDF.

Fifty-eight villages and three

districts were the targets of direct bombardment. Zirgan district has seen an increase of suspected Turkish bombardments recently.

Turkey has not yet commented on the report.

At least one person was injured in a Turkish attack in the area last year, days after a similar attack took the lives of at least three people in Zirgan.

Rojava's internal security forces (Asayish) have previously described Turkey's offensives targeting northern



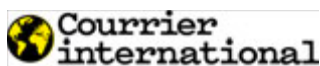
Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) logo. Graphic : Rudaw

Hasaka as "an attempt to displace the residents."

Hundreds of families have left Zirgan district as Turkish air-

strikes and bombardment spark fear in the residents, a conflict monitor reported at the beginning of the year.

Turkey has conducted three military operations in northern Syria since 2016, two of them against Kurdish fighters who Ankara considers a branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and a threat to its national security. It has been threatening a new offensive against Kurdish forces in Rojava in recent months.



9 janvier 2022

ASHARQ AL-AWSAT - LONDRES

En Irak, les minorités de la plaine de Ninive menacées par les tensions géopolitiques

Après avoir subi les affres de Daech, les communautés minoritaires du nord-ouest de l'Irak sont prises en étau entre les forces turques et iraniennes et victimes du bras de fer opposant les Kurdes au gouvernement irakien, déplore Asharq Al-Awsat.

Dans le nord-ouest de l'Irak, "les régions de la plaine de Ninive accueillant les minorités [religieuses et ethniques] sont devenues des zones de tension sécuritaire et de messages politiques et une arène de règlement des conflits internationaux, régionaux et locaux".

C'est le constat amer que dresse dans le quotidien panarabe Asharq Al-Awsat un ancien député issu de la communauté yézidie.

Sur ces terres, "parmi les plus diverses d'Irak, où vivent un large éventail de chrétiens, de yézidis, de Chabaks, de Kakaïs et d'autres minorités musulmanes arabes", ces populations continuent de s'accrocher à la terre de leurs ancêtres malgré leur "impuissance", poursuit le journal.



Un membre de l'Unité de protection de la plaine de Ninive devant une église, dans la ville irakienne à majorité chrétienne de Qaraqosh, dans le nord de l'Irak, en 2018. Photo Ahmad Al-Rubaye/AFP

Pris en étau entre l'Iran et la Turquie

Parmi ces minorités, les yézidis sont sans doute ceux qui ont payé le plus lourd tribut ces dernières années. La communauté, rappelle Asharq Al-Awsat, a été victime de persécutions généralisées de la part du groupe djihadiste État islamique (EI).

Un certain nombre d'entre eux ont pu rentrer chez eux après la défaite de l'EI, en 2017. Mais la population est toujours l'otage de conflits à plusieurs échelles,

explique une source au journal panarabe.

Il semble que la montée en puissance de Daech en 2014, qui a occupé de larges zones de la plaine de Ninive, a fourni une occasion unique aux voisins turc et iranien d'intervenir de manière caractérisée [dans la région]."

D'un côté, souligne cette source, la base turque de Zalkan, située dans le district de Baachiqa, au nord de Mossoul, est régulièrement ciblée par les factions armées pro-Iran, "ce qui menace la vie des gens". De

l'autre, la Turquie mène régulièrement des frappes dans le district de Sinjar dans le cadre de sa lutte contre les Kurdes du PKK.

Résultat : les agriculteurs originaires de la région ne peuvent plus se rendre sur leurs terres, occupées par les forces turques et les peshmegas kurdes.

Le manque de considération de Bagdad

Ces minorités sont également l'otage du bras de fer entre les autorités centrales de l'Irak et les forces et partis kurdes qui "cherchent à asseoir leur domination dans les zones adjacentes" à la région semi-autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Une situation qui exaspère ces populations, souligne Asharq Al-Awsat.

Ce qui aggrave peut-être la frustration des minorités ethniques et religieuses dans la plaine de Ninive, c'est que l'État irakien est dans l'incapacité de les protéger ou de prendre des mesures pour réduire leurs sentiments de peur et de menace."

Pétition. 1000 femmes mobilisées pour la libération d'Aysel Tuğluk

1000 femmes ont lancé une pétition demandant la libération immédiate d'Aysel Tuğluk, élue kurde d'HDP détenue en otage par le régime turc depuis 2016 malgré ses graves problèmes de santé.

Liberté pour Aysel Tuğluk

Voici le texte de la pétition (à signer ici: [Free Aysel Tuğluk](#))

« Appel de 1000 femmes pour la libération de Aysel Tuğluk !

Aysel Tuğluk fait partie des millions de femmes nées dans une région difficile et abritant de nombreux problèmes complexes. C'est une femme qui a choisi de lutter contre la marginalisation, et au nom de toutes les personnes marginalisées par les relations de pouvoir, notamment les Kurdes et les femmes. C'est une femme qui n'a jamais eu le privilège de bâtir une vie loin des difficultés et des problèmes de sa région, et qui n'a jamais renoncé à lutter à l'intersection du mouvement des femmes et des défenseurs des droits humains. Elle est l'emblème de la lutte en Turquie pour la démocratie et la liberté. Avocate et femme politique, elle est une adhérente précieuse du mouvement du droit des femmes qui nous lie toutes par un profond sentiment de solidarité.

Aysel Tuğluk a été jugée sous son mandat de députée pour ses discours qui s'inscrivaient dans le cadre de la liberté de pensée et d'expression. Elle est en prison depuis plusieurs années. Bien qu'il ait été déclaré par les établissements de santé pertinents qu'elle ne pouvait

pas vivre en prison, elle est actuellement toujours en captivité sur la base du rapport de l'Institut de médecine légale d'Istanbul. Elle n'est pas en mesure de guérir dans ces conditions carcérales, et sa santé se détériore de manière irréversible chaque jour qui passe.

Aysel est notre camarade, notre sœur.

Nous ne pouvons plus garder le silence sur le fait que la vie d'Aysel est en danger. Nous

ne pouvons pas être spectateurs.

En tant que 1000 femmes provenant de différents parcours de vie et au nom de la lutte pour les droits humains, nous invitons tout le monde à donner une voix à Aysel. Nous ne voulons pas verser des larmes.

Il y a aujourd'hui, en Turquie, des centaines de personnes emprisonnées, dont beaucoup qui sont gravement malades. Le mois dernier, sept

prisonniers sont morts dans les prisons turques. La libération des détenus malades est une exigence de la législation et des conventions nationales et internationales. Chacun et chacune a le droit de vivre et d'être soigné chez soi, parmi ses proches. Nous protégeons le droit à la vie.

Nous voulons la liberté pour Aysel Tuğluk et pour tous les prisonniers malades avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.



JANUARY 10 WORKING JOURNALISTS DAY: 'Turkey is a prison for journalists'

According to the annual report of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 488 journalists were behind bars due to their journalistic works across the world in 2021. The situation in Turkey was not any better: Ranked 153rd in the RSF World Press Freedom Index, Turkey still keeps several journalists in prisons and puts the ones outside on trial over their news.

Besides, journalists working in the Kurdish-majority south-eastern and eastern provinces face more hardships compared to the entire country. Speaking to bianet on the occasion of January 10 Working Journalists Day in Turkey, Tigris Euphrates Journalists (DFG) Association Co-Chair Serdar Altan says that the year 2021 was a tough year for the journalists working in the region. Journalists Abdurrahman Gök and Derya Ren also talk about the hardships and violations of rights they face in the region.

Gök faces 20 years in prison. Abdurrahman Gök is an editor for the Mezopotamya Agency (MA). He filmed the moment when Kemal Kurkut was shot to death by police during the 2017 Newroz celebrations in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeastern province of Diyarbakır. He is still on trial. Gök has been a journalist for 17 years. He is facing 20 years in prison on charges of "being the member of a terrorist organization" and "propagandizing for a terrorist organization" over the pictures he took, the information he passed, the news he wrote and the posts he shared.

Gök notes that the pressure on journalists in the region did not change in 2021, saying, "Nearly 20 court cases have been filed against me so far.



The pressure on journalists has never subsided since the Republic of Turkey was founded [in 1923] but during the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule and especially after 2015, it has been aggravated even more with media outlets closed and newspapers and TVs silenced."

As an example for the violations of rights faced by journalists in the region, Gök specifically refers to the four journalists who were arrested for six months for reporting on the two people who were thrown from a helicopter after being detained by soldiers in Van's Çatak.

Mentioning MA reporters Adnan Bilen and Cemil Uğur, Jinnews reporter Şehriban Abi and journalist Nazan Sala, Gök says:

Our friends were put on trial and punished because they shared the truth with the public. But they have been acquitted in the trial where they were facing charges. Because there is no truth to the lawsuits filed and trials held. The aim is to punish journalists.

Abdurrahman Gök notes that the pressure of the government deprives not only journalists of their rights but also the

public of their right to receive information. He underlines that since they do not want people to know the truth, journalists are prevented from doing their jobs.

Women journalists regarded as a threat

Raising concerns about the hardships and violations of rights faced by women journalists, especially in the Kurdish-majority regions of Turkey, JinNews reporter Derya Ren says that the number of women journalists has been gradually decreasing in the region and Diyarbakır:

Like previous years, 2021 was a year when the pressure on women increased and did not stop, but women did not bow down and raised their voices. Women journalists working in the region have - of course - always got their share from this pressure. But they do not stay silent. Both the system and security forces consider journalists and us women journalists in particular to be threats and prevent us from doing our jobs. All women journalists working in the field feel it.

CLICK - Two journalists battered in Diyarbakır during news follow-up

Talking about the hardships they face as women journalists

in the field, Ren says, "While we were covering news in Diyarbakır on March 8 Women's Day along with male journalists, we were subjected to identity check by security forces for minutes. While our male friends were let in, they prevented us from doing our jobs by making us wait for minutes."

Ren notes that women journalists are "always subjected to this discrimination while working in the field": "This is quite frequent in the region."

CLICK - '244-percent rise in rights violations against women journalists'

Report: 62 journalists still arrested

Tigris Euphrates Journalists (DFG) Association Co-Chair Serdar Altan says that 2021 was a "dark year" for journalists and shares the following information: In 2021, investigations were launched against 54 journalists, 47 journalists were sentenced to 133 years in prison in total and two journalists were killed while 62 journalists are still arrested.

Altan also raises concerns that his colleagues are subjected to ill treatment by security forces while following up news in the region.

"Turkey is in the position of a prison for journalists," says Altan, concluding his remarks briefly as follows:

"This is also the case for the journalists who are not in prison. Because the journalists outside cannot find the opportunity to practice their profession in a free environment. As they do not work for pro-government media outlets, journalists are portrayed as bogeys, so to say. Therefore, there was no shortage of investigations, court cases and penalties against journalists."



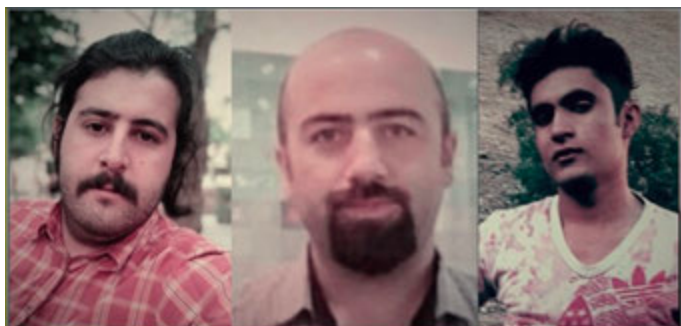
January 10, 2022

Iran court delays review of Kurdish activists' case

The Islamic Revolutionary Court in northwestern Iran's Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, continues to prolong the examination of the court cases of Kurdish activists Farzad Samani, Sakar Eini, and Mohammad Houshang, one year after their arrests.

The activists are still being held in temporary detention in Orumiyeh Central Prison, accused of "armed insurrection" (baghi).

Farough Samani, Farzad Samani's brother, spoke to the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) and said: "One year has passed since the arrest of my brother Farzad Samani and Sakar Eini, and despite the constant follow-ups of the families and lawyers, their situation remains unresolved. Javad Gholami, a judge at the Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Maha-



Farzad Samani, Sakar Eini, Mohammad Houshang

bad, who is in charge of the case, has so far delayed their trial due to ongoing investigations and insufficient documentation, and has refused to issue bails for their temporary release."

He added that during the past year, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Organisation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) summoned and interrogated some of Samani and Eini's friends.

These individuals have said that they were interrogated for the filing of cases on the two Kurdish activists.

Separately, a relative of Houshang, a Kurdish activist from Javanrud, in Iran's western Kermanshah province, also said that the activist's situation was still uncertain and that the Mahabad court was not proceeding with his case.

The case of the three Kurdish

activists has been sent to Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Mahabad on charges of "armed insurrection" (baghi) through "membership in a Kurdish opposition party", but the case has not yet been examined for unknown reasons.

On 9-10 January, the Intelligence Organisation of the IRGC arrested the three activists in Tehran and Karaj during a wave of widespread arrests of Kurdish activists and civilians.

They took the activists to the Haft-e Tir detention centre of the security institution in Orumiyeh, West Azerbaijan province.

On 1 June, Farzad Samani and Sakar Eini, and six months later Mohammad Houshang, were transferred to Orumiyeh Central Prison following the issuance of temporary arrest warrants.



10 janvier 2022

L'assailant du bureau du HDP de Bahcelievler placé en détention

L'armée turque poursuit ses offensives sur différentes zones du Sud-Kurdistan (nord de l'Irak) dans le cadre de l'opération d'invasion lancée le 23 avril.

L'aviation turque bombarde depuis jeudi les villages de Mijê et Spindara, à proximité d'Amadiya, dans la province de Dohuk, selon le site d'information Esta. Cette offensive s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'opération

d'invasion lancée par Ankara le 23 avril dans le Sud-Kurdistan, sous couvert de combattre la guérilla du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). L'armée turque est soutenue sur le terrain le clan Barzani qui domine le gouvernement régional. Celui-ci déploie en continu ses forces militaires et paramilitaires dans les zones contrôlées par la guérilla du PKK dans le but de les encercler et les isoler les unes des autres.

Selon les sources locales, les derniers bombardements ont provoqué des incendies de forêt. Depuis que la Turquie a lancé cette nouvelle campagne d'invasion, les incendies de forêt sont fréquents dans la région. Par ailleurs, l'armée turque pratique le déboisement des forêts, acheminant le bois vers la Turquie. Les habitants des zones visées sont très lourdement affectés : on compte des blessés et des

morts, ainsi que des milliers de déplacés. Des villages entiers ont été dépeuplés depuis le début de l'opération.

Jeudi, la même zone avait été bombardée pendant plusieurs heures, ce qui avait entraîné la mort d'au moins 150 moutons appartenant aux habitants du village de Dereşê, près de Spindara.

À Ankara, trois étudiants kurdes attaqués par un groupe ultra-nationaliste turc

Dimanche soir, un groupe d'une trentaine d'ultra-nationalistes turcs a attaqué trois étudiants kurdes avec des machettes et des couteaux devant la faculté de droit de l'université d'Ankara.

Un des étudiants agressés a été gravement blessé à la jambe, tandis que deux autres ont été légèrement blessés.

M.U., l'un des étudiants attaqués, a déclaré qu'ils avaient d'abord été abordés par deux étudiants du nom de Isa Kök et Fatih Temel, connus au sein de l'université pour être des partisans de l'extrême droite, et qu'ils avaient ensuite été attaqués par un groupe plus large. Alors que les étudiants essayaient de s'enfuir, l'un d'eux a été poignardé par Isa Kök à la cuisse gauche, a indiqué M.U. « Une foule de 20-25 personnes



Devant la faculté de droit de l'université d'Ankara, un groupe d'ultra-nationalistes turcs armés de machettes et de couteaux s'en prend à des étudiants kurdes

est arrivée, raconte M.U. Ils nous ont attaqués. Nous avons stoppé un véhicule de police. K.Y [l'étudiant blessé] a été transporté à l'hôpital. D.U et moi sommes montés dans le véhicule de police. Au moment où nous entrions au commissariat, une autre foule nous a attaqués. »

L'identité kurde des étudiants était connue

L'avocat des étudiants a déclaré qu'il s'agissait d'une attaque unilatérale à caractère raciste: « Il est évident que l'attaque a eu lieu en raison de leur identité. »

Placés en garde à vue suite à l'incident, les principaux agresseurs, Isa Kök et Fatih Temel, ont cependant été libérés après quelques heures, a-t-on appris ce matin. On ignore s'il y a d'autres personnes arrêtées.

Qui est Isa Kök ?

Isa Kök, ultra-nationaliste notoire, avait déjà attaqué deux étudiants avec une machette sur le campus de la faculté de droit de l'université d'Ankara. Cependant, le parquet d'Ankara avait alors qualifié l'incident de « simple bagarre » alors que les parties civiles avaient porté plainte pour « tentative de meurtre » et « établissement d'une organisation visant à commettre des crimes ». Ainsi, Kök n'a été condamnée qu'à une peine d'un peu plus d'un an d'emprisonnement assortie de sursis.

Des prisonnières politiques interdites de communications pour avoir protesté suite à la mort de Garibe Gezer

Qatorze femmes détenues dans la prison de haute sécurité de Kandira ont été interdites de contacts et de visites pendant un mois. L'administration pénitentiaire reproche aux femmes d'avoir scandé des slogans « interdits » – « L'Etat meurtrier doit rendre des comptes », « La pression ne peut pas nous intimider » et « Jin, Jiyan, Azadî » (Femmes, Vie, Liberté) – en signe de protestation contre la mort de Garibe Gezer.

La prisonnière politique Garibe Gezer est décédée le 9 dé-

cembre 2021 après avoir subi des tortures en isolement dans le centre pénitentiaire de Kandira. Tandis que les résultats définitifs de l'autopsie sont gardés sous clé, le rapport préliminaire ne donne aucune indication sur la cause du décès. Pendant ce temps, la direction de la prison maintient sa théorie d'un suicide.

Parmi les quatorze personnes concernées par les sanctions disciplinaires, figurent Figen Yüksekdag, Gülser Yıldırım et Edibe Sahin, des femmes politiques de premier plan du Parti démocratique des Peuples

(HDP) et de son parti frère, le Parti démocratique des Régions (DBP). Dans tous les cas, les recours contre les enquêtes disciplinaires ont été rejetés comme étant injustifiés, a fait savoir l'assistance juridique des femmes. Dans le cas de Yüksekdag, la direction de la prison a rejeté le recours en considérant que la femme politique avait demandé de faire toute la lumière sur la mort de Garibe Gezer et d'identifier les responsables. Pour d'autres détenues, les recours auraient été rejetés parce qu'elles auraient insisté, dans une sorte de désobéissance civile, pour

se défendre en kurde plutôt qu'en turc.

Les avocats des femmes détenues ont déjà déposé un recours contre les sanctions disciplinaires auprès du tribunal pénitentiaire compétent dans la province de Kocaeli. Parmi les autres détenues visées par l'enquête disciplinaire, figurait l'avocate et ex-parlementaire Aysel Tugluk, atteinte de troubles de la mémoire. Mais la direction de la prison a renoncé à une peine en raison de l'état de santé de Tugluk.

La coûteuse stratégie économique de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Pour appliquer sa vision de l'économie, le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan a imposé à la Banque centrale une politique qui entraîne une inflation sans précédent et une fluctuation incessante de la livre turque, laissant les commerces comme la population aux abois. Mais cette stratégie menace ses perspectives pour la présidentielle de 2023.

« Il y a un mois, je gagnais l'équivalent de 340 euros, maintenant j'en gagne moins de 250 », se désole Ceylan. Le pouvoir d'achat de son salaire de serveuse dans un restaurant d'Istanbul diminue de jour en jour en raison de la chute de la livre turque (LT), qui s'est dépréciée de 50 % depuis le début de 2021. En novembre, elle et ses collègues ont téléchargé une application mobile pour suivre le taux de change des devises. « Quand je reçois mon salaire, je change tout en euros. Si je vois que la livre est en baisse, j'en change de petites quantités en livres. Ce mois-ci, par exemple, j'ai gagné environ 500 livres en jouant avec le taux de change », explique-t-il. Cette spéculation de plus en plus courante chez les ménages turcs répond à la forte perte de valeur de la monnaie nationale, et à la hausse de 21 % de l'inflation, qui ampute d'autant le panier de la ménagère.

Plusieurs secteurs comme la



Istanbul, 18 décembre 2021. Des habitants font la queue pour acheter du pain bon marché au magasin municipal, dans le quartier de Sultangazi

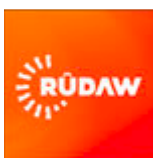
boulangerie et les produits pharmaceutiques rencontrent des difficultés de production et de distribution en raison de l'augmentation du prix des importations par rapport à la monnaie nationale. On ne compte plus les files d'attente devant les stations-service et les boutiques de high-tech, pour acheter avant la valse des prix. « Le problème n'est pas seulement une dépréciation sévère, la volatilité de la livre est pire. Les entreprises n'ont pas le temps de réagir et d'ajuster les prix de vente. Cela affecte la production », explique l'économiste Emre Deliveli. « Nous l'avons vu ces jours-ci avec Apple en Turquie. Ils ont dû fermer pendant deux jours, tant ils étaient incapables d'ajuster leurs prix à la fluctuation de la livre », ajoute-t-il.

La chute de la monnaie turque s'est accompagnée d'une forte inflation, qui a approché les 36,1 % en novembre 2021. Toutefois, le chiffre pourrait être plus élevé. Un groupe d'économistes indépendants qui surveille les indices affirme que les chiffres officiels ne correspondent pas à la réalité, et que l'inflation actuelle pourrait dépasser les 50 %. Leur thèse est soutenue par le syndicat des commerçants Market-Sen, qui a obtenu des images de la hausse dans les supermarchés ces derniers jours, avec des augmentations de 30 à 60 % pour les produits de consommation courante. Acheter l'huile au verre

Sevval Sener, membre du Deep Poverty Network, une ONG qui aide les familles vi-

vant au seuil de pauvreté, se plaint que d'une année à l'autre, les prix ont doublé. Aider de nombreuses familles coûte de plus en plus cher. « Pour couvrir les besoins mensuels de base d'un ménage, nous faisons des paniers avec des légumes, des produits d'hygiène et des couches. En mars 2020, ils coûtaient 250 livres.

Le même paquet coûte maintenant le double », explique-t-il. Il est de plus en plus fréquent que les familles achètent à crédit ou en petites portions à l'épicerie. « Parfois, ils achètent un verre d'huile au lieu d'un litre, ou bien trois ou quatre couches individuelles au lieu d'un paquet entier au supermarché », dit Sener.



12 janvier 2022

Rojava migrants take refuge in the Kurdistan Region's Bardarash camp

Around 1,534 migrants have arrived in the Kurdistan Region's Bardarash camp over the past two weeks, from northeast Syria (Rojava).

Another group of migrants arrived at the camp on Wednesday, the majority of which were young people.

The migrants claimed that Turkish bombardments in North and East Syria and the economic situation there has led them to migrate to the Kurdistan Region.

Rostam Mohammed has worked in a pharmacy in Amuda, a town in Syria's Hasaka province.



Share on Facebook

He had been away from his mother for three years when she came to the Bardarash camp, and recently decided to join his mother.

"We fled from war, there is a daily war and life has become hard in Rojava, many of the people migrating go through a

tough financial situation," Yoyda Hassan who also fled to the Kurdistan Region told Rudaw.

Migrants have been flowing into the Bardarash camps for the past eight days. Around 125 tents have been set up and after getting information from the migrants, they will be transferred to the tents.

The head of the camp, Aram Hadi told Rudaw that they have collected the information from the migrants and will carry out all legal and administrative procedures.

The camp is located in the Bardarash district of Duhok province. It was opened in 2014,

Le Monde

12 janvier 2022

La Franco-Iranienne Fariba Adelkhah à nouveau incarcérée à Téhéran

La décision de l'Iran de remettre en prison la chercheuse va « réduire la confiance » entre les deux pays, a mis en garde la France, en pleine négociation sur le nucléaire iranien.

L'anthropologue franco-iranienne Fariba Adelkhah a été de nouveau incarcérée à la prison d'Evin, en Iran, rapporte, mercredi 12 janvier, son comité de soutien dans un communiqué diffusé sur Twitter. « Nous apprenons avec stupeur et indignation la réincarcération dans la prison d'Evin de Fariba Adelkhah », a-t-il annoncé, dénonçant des agissements « cyniques » du pouvoir iranien qui utiliserait le cas de la chercheuse à « des fins extérieures ou intérieures qui demeurent opaques ».

« Alors que la pandémie de Covid continue de battre son plein, le gouvernement iranien met délibérément en danger la santé et même la vie de Fariba Adelkhah – la mort en détention du poète et réalisateur Baktash Abtin, samedi [8 janvier], ayant démontré son incapacité ou son mauvais vouloir à garantir la sécurité de ses détenus », juge le comité.

« La décision de sa réincarcération, que nous condamnons, ne peut qu'avoir des conséquences négatives sur la relation entre la France et l'Iran et réduire la confiance entre nos deux pays », a déclaré dans un communiqué le ministère français des affaires étrangères, exigeant sa « libération immédiate ». L'Iran, qui ne reconnaît pas la double nationa-

lité, a systématiquement rejeté les appels de la France à sa libération.

Moyen de pression pour l'Iran Arrêtée en juin 2019 et condamnée en mai 2020 à cinq ans de prison pour atteintes à la sécurité nationale, elle était aux arrêts domiciliaires depuis octobre 2020. L'Iran détient plusieurs ressortissants binationaux et un autre citoyen français, Benjamin Brière. Ils sont parfois accusés d'espionnage. Au cours des dernières années, la République islamique a procédé à plusieurs échanges de détenus avec des pays étrangers.

L'Iran et plusieurs pays (la France, le Royaume-Uni, l'Allemagne, la Russie, la Chine, et les Etats-Unis de manière indirecte) ont relancé en novembre

2021 les pourparlers pour sauver l'accord sur le nucléaire iranien de 2015 (JCPOA), censé empêcher Téhéran de se doter de l'arme atomique.

Ces discussions visent à faire revenir dans le pacte Washington, qui l'a quitté en 2018, et à ramener Téhéran au respect de ses engagements, rompus en réaction au rétablissement des sanctions américaines.

Cette annonce concernant Mme Adelkhah survient le même jour que celle du British Council, organisme de promotion de la culture britannique à l'étranger, sur le retour au Royaume-Uni de l'une de ses employées, Aras Amiri, après son acquittement en Iran, où elle avait été condamnée en 2019 pour espionnage.

The New York Times

January 12, 2022

By Farnaz Fassihi & Lara Jakes

Rojava migrants take refuge in the Kurdistan Region's Bardarash camp to a Nuclear Deal

As negotiations reach a critical stage, neither side wants to betray weakness by seeming too eager to reach a deal.

Iran and the United States have recently engaged in a spiraling escalation of threats and warnings, even as they are progressing in diplomatic talks about reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

On Saturday, Iran's Parliament placed largely symbolic sanctions on 51 Americans, many of them prominent political and military officials, for "terrorism" and "human rights violations," in retaliation for the U.S. assassination of Iran's top commander, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, two years ago.

Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, then warned that Iran would "face severe consequences" if it attacked any Americans, including any of the 51 people hit with the sanctions. And American officials generally have been quite circumspect in their appraisals of the state of the negotiations on the nuclear deal.

Yet on the same day that Iran issued the sanctions, the country's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, said outstanding differences in the deal were diminishing and that talks were moving forward, the official news agency IRNA reported.

Symbolic acts of sanctioning individuals and issuing sharply worded statements are nothing new in the long and troubled relationship between Tehran and Washing-



Iranian officials standing near missiles put on display by the Revolutionary Guard in Tehran on Friday. Despite their bombastic talk, Iranian officials seem optimistic about reaching a nuclear deal with the U.S. Credit... Abedin Taherkenareh/EPA, via Shutterstock

ton. But the recent exchanges are noteworthy because they come during a negotiation that both sides want to complete successfully, but without appearing to make significant concessions.

Former President Donald Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018 and imposed tough economic sanctions cutting off most of Iran's oil revenues and international financial transactions. Mr. Trump's goal was to pressure Iran into a deal that reached beyond its nuclear program, restricting its ballistic missiles and regional political and military activities.

The Biden administration initially wanted to return to the original deal while following the Trump blueprint on missiles and foreign policies, but

has now indicated it would accept a return to the 2015 accord without those strings attached.

The Iranians, for their part, said they would entertain only a return to the original accord, but initially demanded the lifting of all sanctions imposed by Mr. Trump and guarantees that a future American president would not withdraw from the deal. But Tehran has softened those demands as the negotiations have progressed in Vienna.

Despite all the posturing, the impetus for reaching a deal renewing the 2015 treaty remains strong for both sides. The Biden administration needs a foreign policy success, particularly after the chaotic exit from Afghanistan, and has said it prefers a diplomatic resolution to the nu-

clear standoff over military confrontation. Iran, too, having survived the maximum pressure policy of the Trump years, is keen to avoid conflict, gain sanctions relief and revive its ailing economy.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, signaled an indirect endorsement of talks with the U.S. in a speech on Monday when he said the Islamic Republic "holding talks and negotiating with the enemy at certain junctures does not mean surrendering."

Yet neither side wants to seem too eager to compromise, which would risk appearing weak.

"Iran appears to be buying time under the cover of continued diplomacy," said Ali Vaez, the Iran director of the International Crisis Group. "Something's got to give. Otherwise, we are really on a collision course."

The recent jousting between Tehran and Washington is linked to Iran's commemoration on Jan. 3 of the two-year anniversary of the U.S. assassination of General Suleimani. In speech after speech during the ceremonies, Iranian officials threatened revenge against American officials — even though Iran had retaliated five days after the assassination with a ballistic missile strike on an American military facility in Iraq.

Ebrahim Raisi, the newly elected hard-line Iranian president, said that former President Trump and his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, should stand trial in an impartial court and face “ghesas,” a term that in Islamic jurisprudence means an “eye for an eye.” Otherwise, he warned, people would take their own revenge.

The head of the Quds Forces, Gen. Esmail Gaani, issued a broader threat in his speech at a ceremony for his predecessor, General Suleimani. “We will facilitate revenge on Americans in any place, even their own homes and by people close to them, even if we are not present,” he said in a video of the speech.

Immediately following the anniversary, Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria stepped up attacks on U.S. interests.



Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, attending talks in Vienna in December. A series of threats out of Iran have been accompanied by optimistic pronouncements on progress toward a new nuclear accord. Credit... Alex Halada/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Over a four-day period, they unleashed a series of rocket and drone attacks on a U.S. military base in western Iraq and on the living quarters of State Department employees at the Baghdad airport, according to the Iraqi military and an official with the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition based in Baghdad, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak publicly.



Iranians commemorating the second anniversary of the killing in Iraq of Iran's top commander, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, on Jan. 3 in Tehran. Credit... Atta Kenare/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

He said U.S. air defenses shot down all the rockets and drones aimed at the base and the State Department facility, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, before they could do any damage, much less inflict casualties.

In northeastern Syria, artillery rounds were fired at a Syrian-Kurdish-led base with U.S. advisers, according to the

U.S.-led coalition, which issued a statement blaming the attacks on “Iran-supported malign actors.”

Yet, at the same time that Tehran's proxies were launching the attacks, Iranian officials were expressing a surprisingly optimistic view of the talks in Vienna, now in their eighth round, while the State Department was offering a more measured assessment.

An adviser to Iran's Foreign Ministry said he believed a deal could be reached before mid-February, which would coincide with the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iranian negotiators under Mr. Raisi, the new president — who had criticized his predecessor, Hassan Rouhani, for being too soft — made an important concession to get things rolling by agreeing to work from a draft agreement worked out with Mr. Rouhani's team, two people familiar with the talks said.

Under that agreement, the U.S. would lift all sanctions related to the nuclear deal (while keeping those for human rights and other issues) and Iran would return to its technical commitments regarding its nuclear program under the old treaty. But critical sticking points remain, such as which sanctions would be lifted and when, and in return for what specific actions by Iran, with an as-yet-to-be determined timeline that would sequence the steps.

Washington's outlook has been more cautious than Tehran's. Two senior State Department officials noted some modest progress in the talks, gaining a bit more ground beyond where the negotiations had paused in June. But both officials em-

phasized, without going into specifics, that major points still needed to be addressed. All the while, patience is wearing thin at the State Department.

“I'm not going to put a time limit on it or give you the number of meters remaining on the runway, except to say, ‘Yes, it is getting very, very, very short,’” Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken told reporters late last year.

While the United States could still offer Iran more sanctions relief, Mr. Vaez from the International Crisis Group said, officials in Tehran have failed to persuade Western negotiators that they are serious about coming back into full compliance with the 2015 accord.

Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, indicated that Iran may have softened its initial demand for the removal of all sanctions imposed after Mr. Trump exited the deal, including those related to human rights.

But in an interview last week with Al Jazeera, Mr. Amir Abdollahian said that at this stage in Vienna, Iran was pursuing “the removal of sanctions” related only to the original nuclear deal and looking to complete sanctions removal sometime in the future.

While the two sides rumble on toward some sort of resolution, there is no doubting the seriousness of the negotiation, Mr. Vaez warned.

Iran has long maintained that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. But if the talks fail, he said, its efforts at enriching uranium since the U.S. exited the nuclear deal have put it in a position to move toward weaponization very quickly.

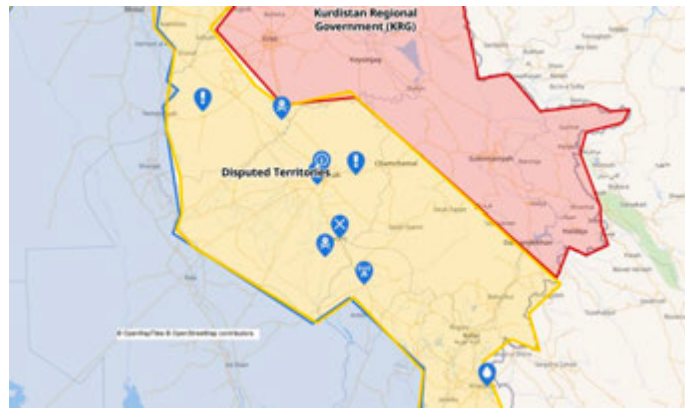
January 13, 2022

Washington Kurdish Institute Kirkuk Minute January 13, 2022

Kirkuk

ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists resumed attacks in the “disputed territories” after relevant calmness. On January 7th, the terrorists launched eight Katyusha rockets on the Peshmerga posts near Pirde (Altun Kopri) district. According to the Ministry of the Peshmerga, no casualties were recorded. After the attack, Iraq's security cell said, it confiscated the rocket launcher used. Meanwhile, Iranian-backed militias, the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), denounced the terror attack for the first time. Further, on Monday, January 10, Da'esh terrorists kidnapped the head (Mokhtar) of the Delsi village south of the Daquq district after controlling the village for nearly two hours before a patrol of the Iraqi forces intervened.

After days of reestablishing customs checkpoints between Kirkuk and the Kurdistan Region, the Iraqi government paused its operation after public outcry due to unfair treatment and bogus corruption cases against Kurdish businessmen. It remains unclear if the closure is permanent. The customs checkpoint was first set up in 2018 by former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi, using it as an economic weapon against the Kurds. However, in 2019, the current Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi annulled the decision before reactivating it two weeks ago. The checkpoints tax goods and



local produce from the Kurdistan Region.

The acting governor of Kirkuk, Rakan Saed al Jabouri, did not participate in the first session of the new Iraqi parliament despite winning a seat. According to local observers, al Jabouri aims to remain as acting governor of Kirkuk, a similar step he took in 2018. Iraqi laws allow lawmakers to take the parliamentary oath within a month of the first session, but in 2018, al Jabouri did not take the oath, and his seat remained reserved for him. The acting governor is backed by Sunni leaders, including the current Speaker, Mohammed al Halbousi.

Kirkuk's police announced the death of a “second largest” drug dealer in the province after he resisted arrest during a raid. The police did not release his name or further information. Since October 16, 2017, Kirkuk has become the main hub for drug trafficking, including by Iranian-backed militias.

Continuing Arabization policies, the Daquq court

changed its signs and removed the Kurdish language. The Kurdish language is recognized in Iraq's constitution, but the local administration and the federal government aim to Arabize the “disputed territories.” Separately, in Daquq, owners of fish farms are worried after the ministry of agriculture ordered its department in the town to demolish all artesian wells. 2287 fish farms exist in Daquq and mainly use artisan wells as a source of water.

Khanaqin

Due to drought, water in the Alwand River dam has decreased by 50% and continues to decline. Lack of rain during this winter, and Iranian water cutting off its source, has dramatically affected the dam.

Tuz Khurmatu

On Tuesday, the Iraqi Interior Ministry announced the arrest of a senior Da'esh terrorist in charge of transporting militants in the region. The arrest took place in Tuz Khur-

matu.

Makhmour

Residents of Makhmour protested the Iraqi army's blockade on the town. The blockade has prevented medicine and food deliveries from the Kurdistan Region. Locals called upon government officials and Kurdish leaders to intervene, threatening to expand the protests. Likewise, refugees in the Makhmour camp protested the Iraqi army's new security measure. The Army now allows only one entrance into the camp and records all of the activity through surveillance cameras.

Shingal (Sinjar)

In an interview with the state-owned al Iraqi, General Jabbar al Taie, Commander of West Nineveh Operations, said they will form a new force composed of Yazidis and that the Erbil-Baghdad security agreement has been activated since the beginning of 2022. Al Taie said; currently, only local police are in charge of Shingal as the military forces withdrew from it.

In a press conference, Shingal mayor Mehma Khalil said 130 corpses Yazidi Genocide victims would return to the area next month after the completion of DNA tests in Baghdad. After years of genocide, mass graves are often found, consisting of victims massacred by Da'esh terrorists.



January 13, 2022

British Council employee released in Iran, dual nationals remain detained

Kurdistan Region - As the family and friends of a British Council employee and Iranian national celebrate her acquittal by Iran's Supreme Court and safe return to the UK, a French-Iranian academic has been sent back to prison in the country that continues to hold the British-Iranian charity worker, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, among other foreign and dual nationals.

Employed for five years in London prior to being arrested in Tehran while visiting family in March 2018, Aras Amiri was released from detention in Evin prison last year and returned to the UK this week, with the British Council confirming the news on Wednesday.

"Amiri has been acquitted by the Supreme Court in Iran of all charges previously made against her, following a successful appeal lodged by her lawyer. She has been freed from detention and has returned to the United Kingdom," the Council said in a statement.

"We have always refuted the original charges made against Aras. We are very proud of her work in our London office as an arts programme officer supporting a greater understanding and appreciation of Iranian culture in the UK," the international cultural organisation added.

In May 2019, Amiri was sen-



Women detained by Iranian authorities (from left) : Fariba Adelhkhan, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Aras Amiri. Photo : AFP/Sciences Po/ Thomas Arrive/Submitted

tenced to ten years on spying charges and "cultural infiltration" in Iran, losing an appeal against the sentence three months later. Iranian authorities did not immediately publicise news of her unexpected release.

News broke on Wednesday that Iran had sent the French-Iranian academic Fariba Adelhkhan back to prison in Iran from her home in Tehran, where she had been able to serve her five-year prison term from October 2020.

Adelhkhan, who is a specialist in Shiite Islam and research director at the Sciences Po university in Paris, was charged for conspiring against national security in May 2020, having been arrested in June 2019; accusations which her supporters have always denounced as absurd.

Along with the British-Iranian detainee Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has been held in Iran since her sentencing in 2016, Adelhkhan and Amiri are just a handful of the estimated dozen victims held hostage in Iran on dubious charges in recent years, which many interpret as hostage diplomacy.

Other foreign and dual nationals remain in Iran - including, notably, from countries who continue to engage in Vienna's talks on reviving the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Those presently detained include Frenchman Benjamin Briere, detained while travelling in May, Nahid Taghavi, a German-Iranian architect, Iranian-American Siamak Namazi, a businessman, his

father, Baquer Namazi, a former UNICEF official, Dr. Ahmad Reza Jalali, a Swedish-Iranian physician, Morad Tahbaz, an Iranian-American environmentalist, and Emad Shargi, a US-Iranian.

The 2015 deal, agreed upon by Iran, the US, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany, offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

Former president Donald Trump withdrew the US from the deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions, leading to Iran's decision to roll back on its commitments, and step up its uranium enrichment capacity.

Several Western negotiators have stated that time is running out to revive the JCPOA.

A Coblence, verdict historique contre un Syrien

Au terme d'un procès historique, la haute cour régionale de Coblence, en Allemagne, a condamné, jeudi 13 janvier, le colonel syrien Anwar Raslan à la prison à vie pour « crimes contre l'humanité ». Le reconnaissant coupable d'avoir ordonné ou perpétré des actes de torture à l'encontre d'au moins 4 000 prisonniers dans la prison d'Al-Khatib, à Damas, et le meurtre de 27 d'entre eux entre avril 2011 et septembre 2012. C'est le premier verdict jamais rendu contre un haut responsable syrien.

Parmi les actions en justice engagées contre le régime de Bachar Al-Assad en Europe au nom de la compétence universelle, qui permet de poursuivre les auteurs des crimes les plus graves quels que soient le lieu où ils ont été commis et la nationalité des auteurs ou des victimes, la procédure dite « de Coblence » était la plus avancée. Celle dont le dénouement était le plus attendu. Le procès s'était ouvert en avril 2020 après l'arrestation de l'ancien officier en février 2019 par la police allemande. Il avait été reconnu par ses victimes, des Syriens réfugiés en Allemagne. Responsable des investigations de la division 251 du renseignement militaire syrien, Anwar Raslan était le chef. Celui qui a coordonné les arrestations, les enquêtes et les interrogatoires conduits sous la torture pour arracher de prétendus aveux. Sous ses ordres, il y avait, notamment, Eyad Al-Gharib, un officier subalterne.

Coaccusé à Coblence, il a, lui, été condamné à quatre ans et demi de prison en février 2021 lors de la première phase de ce procès, ouvert le 23 avril 2020, après avoir été reconnu



Anwar Raslan (au centre, flouté) lors de son procès pour crimes contre l'humanité, au tribunal de Coblence (Allemagne), le 13 janvier 2022. THOMAS FREY / AFP

coupable de l'arrestation d'une trentaine de manifestants et de leur transfert dans les locaux de la division 251.

Les détenus syriens n'étaient pas seulement « torturés mais aussi affamés et privés d'air », a souligné, jeudi, la présidente de la cour, Anne Kerber. Ils ont « reçu des coups sur tout le corps, en particulier les plantes des pieds », « ils ont été pendus par les poignets » et ont subi « des électrochocs et des brûlures ». Les juges allemands ont également reconnu Anwar Raslan coupable de violences sexuelles et de viols aggravés, les qualifiant de crimes contre l'humanité, comme l'espéraient de nombreuses victimes.

« Où sont-ils ? »

Ses avocats, commis d'office, ont martelé tout au long du procès qu'Anwar Raslan aurait

aidé les prisonniers avant de faire défection, mettant un terme à vingt-six ans de carrière. Le motif de son départ de Syrie reste obscur. A-t-il voulu fuir l'impensable ? Sauver sa peau ? Sa carrière ? Les juges ont balayé la défense « ambiguë » de l'accusé.

Jamais Anwar Raslan n'a pris la parole au cours des cent trois jours d'audience, alors que des Syriens, rescapés et proches de victimes, se relayaient à la barre pour demander « la vérité ». La vérité sur les dizaines de milliers de disparus, notamment. « Où sont-ils ? », pouvait-on lire sur les pancartes brandies par des proches devant le tribunal, jeudi matin.

Ceux qui ont survécu à Al-Khatib ont raconté les « fêtes de bienvenue », lors desquelles les nouveaux détenus étaient roués de coups de poing, de

ceinture et de tuyau de caoutchouc dans la cour de la prison. Les hurlements de douleur, qui résonnaient jour et nuit et venaient rappeler à chaque prisonnier le sort qui pouvait l'attendre à toute heure. Les cellules, si peuplées qu'il était impossible de s'y allonger pour dormir. Les interrogatoires, ponctués d'électrochocs, de brûlures, de simulacres de noyade. Ou encore la « chaise allemande », construite de telle sorte que la colonne vertébrale de celui qui s'y assoit est à deux doigts de se briser : un instrument « importé » par d'ex-tortionnaires nazis ayant trouvé refuge en Syrie après la seconde guerre mondiale...

Face à ces témoignages, Anwar Raslan est resté de marbre, prenant souvent des notes, chaussant ses lunettes pour observer attentivement les documents projetés pen-

dant les audiences, au point de donner le sentiment d'être resté l'enquêteur qu'il avait été et d'oublier qu'il était désormais dans le rôle de l'accusé. Jusqu'à la fin, sa stratégie de défense aura consisté non pas à nier l'existence des tortures et des sévices, mais à assurer qu'il n'était qu'un rouage subalterne sans responsabilité de commandement. Ce qui a conduit son avocat à plaider l'acquiescement.

« Il y a beaucoup d'histoires que nous n'avons pas entendues »

En écrivant cette page de l'histoire syrienne, le jugement de Coblenz pourrait-il avoir un impact sur la fabrique de la paix en Syrie ? Steve Kostas, d'Open Society Justice Initiative, espère que le verdict des juges allemands pourra « empêcher les Etats de normaliser leurs relations avec le gouvernement syrien » et motiver les gouvernements « à s'assurer que le président Assad et les autres architectes du programme syrien de détention et de torture soient poursuivis ». En septembre 2020, les Pays-Bas ont lancé une procédure contre la Syrie pour torture, promettant de la porter devant la Cour internationale de justice. Jusqu'ici, la menace ne s'est néanmoins pas concrétisée. Cette procédure judiciaire-diplomatique ne vise pas les individus, mais les Etats.

Pour Wassim Mukdad, l'un des 34 plaignants, musicien rescapé des prisons du régime, « il y a beaucoup d'histoires que nous n'avons pas entendues, soit parce que [les victimes] sont encore détenues et, alors que nous parlons, souffrent des tortures dans les centres de détention. Soit parce qu'elles ont été tuées dans les prisons ou sont mortes sur la route de l'Europe, noyées dans la mer ou gelées dans les fo-



Des femmes syriennes manifestent en souvenir de leurs proches disparus, devant le tribunal de Coblenz, en Allemagne, le 13 janvier 2022. MARTIN MEISSNER / AP

rêts ». Il y a aussi ceux qui sont toujours en Syrie, qui vivent « sous la machine de répression du régime et ne peuvent faire entendre leur voix ». Le survivant voit le procès comme « la première étape » d'un long chemin, « qui ne prendra fin que lorsque le dictateur Bachar Al-Assad et tous les criminels autour de lui feront face à une cour de justice ».

Absence de procès en France

« C'est avant tout une formidable victoire pour les victimes et les témoins qui ont rendu ce procès possible et dont il faut saluer le courage. C'est grâce à eux que justice a été rendue. Et c'est la première fois qu'un haut responsable syrien, un colonel issu du cœur de la machine de la répression de l'Etat, est condamné », se félicite Clémence Bectarte, avocate et coordinatrice du pôle judiciaire de la Fédération internationale pour les droits humains.

« Il faut également saluer le travail du tribunal, car les charges ont été étendues aux crimes sexuels, lesquels n'avaient pas, au départ, été retenus par le parquet, précise-t-elle. Or, ces crimes font partie intégrante de la machine répressive. C'est aussi la reconnaissance judiciaire des crimes contre l'humanité perpétrés par le régime. C'est une chose que les Nations unies ou les ONG l'aient dit, cela en est une autre que cela soit reconnu par un tribunal au terme d'un procès équitable. »

« Mais il ne faut pas que cela soit la fin d'un combat, mais le début. Et s'il faut saluer l'Allemagne, pionnière en la matière, on ne peut que constater le contraste avec la France, où il n'y a pas de procès et pas d'affaire audiencée », regrette l'avocate.

Fin novembre 2021, la chambre criminelle de la Cour de cassation a estimé que les tri-

bunaux français étaient incompétents pour juger des Syriens vivant en France pour des crimes contre l'humanité commis dans leur pays d'origine au motif que la législation syrienne ne sanctionne pas spécifiquement les crimes contre l'humanité. L'arrêt concernait un premier cas de mise en examen en France d'un homme arrêté dans le cadre de l'enquête commune ouverte en France et en Allemagne après la transmission, par un ancien photographe de la police militaire syrienne, de 55 000 images de corps suppliciés dans les prisons. Cette enquête avait notamment débouché sur le procès d'Anwar Raslan à Coblenz.

Le ministre fédéral de la justice, Marco Buschmann, a souhaité que ce jugement serve de modèle. « Je souhaiterais que d'autres Etats de droit suivent cet exemple, a-t-il déclaré. Ceux qui ont commis des crimes contre l'humanité ne doivent trouver nulle part des lieux sûrs pour se réfugier. »

L'Iran a violé sa propre constitution en emprisonnant l'enseignante kurde Zara Mohammadi

Amineh Kakabaveh s'est prononcée au sujet de l'emprisonnement de Zara Mohammadi sur son profil Facebook:

« L'incarcération de la jeune professeure de langue kurde à domicile Zara Mohammadi a scandalisé les gens à travers le monde. En raison de cela, j'ai posé une question écrite à la ministre des affaires étrangères Ann Linde à propos de la libération des prisonniers politiques en Iran et droits humains fondamentaux des Kurdes et autres minorités.

La militante des droits humains et professeur de langues Zahra Mohammadi a été arrêtée début 2021. Zahra Mohammadi travaillait depuis longtemps pour l'association culturelle Nojin. Son crime était d'enseigner la langue kurde aux enfants. Au cours de la première semaine de 2022, elle a été condamnée à cinq ans de prison.

Les citoyens de la ville de Sanandij ont apporté un soutien massif au travail de Zahra en tant que professeur de langue maternelle, et ils ont protesté après le verdict. Des centaines de manifestants se sont rendus à la prison où elle a été emmenée et enfermée derrière les barreaux.

Pendant les dix ans qu'a



L'Iran a violé sa propre constitution en emprisonnant Zara Mohammadi, déclare la députée suédoise d'origine kurde, Amineh Kakabaveh qui interpelle la ministre suédoise des Affaires étrangères, Ann Linde, au sujet des prisonniers politiques en Iran et droits humains fondamentaux des Kurdes et autres minorités.

enseigné Zahra Mohammadi, son travail a été ouvertement et bien connu des autorités. Le droit à sa propre langue maternelle est un droit fondamental. Puisque le verdict contre Zahra Mohammadi est contraire à la constitution du pays, il doit être déclaré nul et Zahra Mohammadi devrait être immédiatement libérée.

En 2019, les rapporteurs spéciaux de l'ONU ont exprimé leur grande préoccupation lorsqu'ils ont été informés de l'emprisonne-

ment de Zahra Mohammadi et d'autres prisonniers d'opinion pornographiques dans les prisons iraniennes. Condamner une jeune enseignante pour avoir enseigné à des enfants la langue kurde, qui est leur langue maternelle, à cinq ans de prison est une violation à la fois de la Convention des Nations Unies sur les droits de l'homme et de la constitution iranienne, et c'est ce qui se rapproche le plus à une cruauté innommable.

D'après ce que nous avons vécu au fil des ans, nous

savons que ce qui a affecté Zahra Mohammadi n'est pas un seul cas lorsqu'il s'agit de l'incertitude juridique des femmes et des minorités lorsqu'elles sont traduites en justice en Iran.

La Suède en tant que pays individuel et au sein de l'UE et de l'ONU va-t-elle poursuivre la question de la libération de Zahra et d'autres prisonniers politiques et prisonniers d'opinion, ainsi que la question du respect des droits fondamentaux des Kurdes et autres minorités en Iran ? »



January 17, 2022
By Ali Kucukgocmen

Turkish court keeps Kavala in jail despite European watchdog's move

A Turkish court on Monday rejected a request to release philanthropist Osman Kavala who has spent more than four years in jail without conviction, despite a European human rights watchdog moving against Ankara over his detention.

Kavala has remained in detention despite initially being acquitted of charges over nationwide protests in 2013 focused on Istanbul's Gezi Park. The ruling was overturned last year and combined with charges in another case related to a coup attempt in 2016. He denies any wrongdoing.

Kavala, 64, is now on trial with 51 others in a combination of three separate cases.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has called for Kavala's release over a lack of reasonable suspicion that he committed an offence, ruling that his detention served to silence him.

The Council of Europe (CoE) told Turkey in December it was preparing "infringement proceedings" over its failure to release Kavala, a move that could lead to Ankara's suspension from the body.

A panel of three judges rejected releasing Kavala by a majority vote and set the next hearing on his detention for



Lawyers, opposition lawmakers and supporters gather in front of the Justice Palace, the Caglayan Courthouse, as a Turkish court holds a hearing of philanthropist Osman Kavala and 15 others over their role in nationwide protests in 2013, in Istanbul, Turkey, January 17, 2022. REUTERS/Dilara Senkaya

Feb. 21. Kavala was detained on Oct. 18, 2017.

Human rights groups have said the case has political motivations and is part of a crackdown on dissent under President Tayyip Erdogan. The government rejects this and says Turkey's courts are independent.

Kavala has not attended the last two hearings. He said in October that there was no possibility of a fair trial after Erdogan said Turkey would not release "bandits, murderers and terrorists" in rela-

tion to the case. Ilkan Koyuncu, Kavala's lawyer, said his client had lost faith in the judiciary. Staged play

Milena Buyum, Turkey campaigner for Amnesty International, called on the Council of Europe to act.

"Refer this stubborn refusal to implement the binding (ECHR) judgment back to the court under infringement proceedings," she said on Twitter, referring to the first step in the process. Erdogan threatened in Oc-

tober to expel the ambassadors of 10 countries, including the United States, Germany and France, after they reiterated the ECHR ruling seeking Kavala's release.

Mucella Yapici, a co-defendant who has twice been acquitted of charges related to the 2013 protests, rejects the current indictment.

"We have been tried since 2015 with some nonsensical indictments. It is as if we are extras here in a staged play, the end of which is already determined," the 70-year-old Yapici said.

Deux migrants sont morts de froid à la frontière turco-iranienne

L'une des victimes est une femme afghane. Son corps aurait été découvert à Amanyurt, dans la province de Van, puis abandonné par des soldats turcs de l'autre côté de la frontière.

Deux migrants sont morts de froid dans la zone frontalière entre la Turquie et l'Iran. Il s'agit d'une femme originaire d'Afghanistan et d'un homme qui n'a pas été identifié. Leurs corps ont été découverts dimanche du côté iranien de la frontière.

Selon des témoins cités par l'agence de presse Mezopotamya (MA), la femme afghane serait morte de froid du côté



turc de la frontière. Le drame se serait produit dans le district de Saray, à Van. Retrouvé dans le hameau d'Amanyurt, le corps de la défunte aurait été emmené et abandonné par des soldats turcs de l'autre côté de la frontière. Le corps

de l'homme réfugié y aurait également été découvert.

Au moins huit morts en deux mois

Au cours des deux derniers

mois, au moins huit migrants sont morts de froid dans la zone frontalière entre l'Iran et la Turquie. Un cas particulièrement dramatique s'est produit le premier jour de l'année. Une jeune femme afghane et ses deux enfants âgés de huit et neuf ans ont été pris dans une tempête de neige près du village de Belasur, dans l'est du Kurdistan (Iran), alors qu'ils tentaient de rejoindre Van. La mère a été retrouvée morte, tandis que ses enfants ont survécu. Pour protéger ses enfants du froid, la femme avait enveloppé leur main avec ses chaussettes. Quant à elle, elle avait recouvert ses pieds nus avec des sacs en plastique.



January 18, 2022

Kurdistan's Weekly Brief January 18, 2022

Iran

A Sanandaj court sentenced a Kurdish environmental activist named Armin Aesparlous, who was arrested in October 2021, to one year in prison for "cooperation with the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK)." Further, Iranian security forces in Kermanshah arrested a Kurdish activist and renowned hiker named Hussein Saedi for "disrespecting the sanctity of Islam's prophet" and a Kurdish poet named Kamaran Takouk for social media activities. Additionally, Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela'at) detained a Kurdish man named Hassan

Omarpour in Urmia. Omarpour's fate remains unknown. The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights reported twenty Kurdish prisoners, mostly political detainees, were moved to solitary confinement after refusing transfer to a prison that offered fewer privileges. Dozens of prisoners previously launched a hunger strike to protest their transfer to a "security prison." 17 Kurdish prisoners died in Iranian prisons in 2021, ten of whom were tortured to death.

Three Kurdish border porters (kolbars) went missing during a blizzard near Urmia. Concur-

rently, Iranian border guards ambushed several kolbars in Nowsud and Baneh, killing one, Mihran Rahmani, and wounding three.

On Sunday, local activists and international media outlets reported hearing "loud explosions" in several western Iranian cities, including Sanandaj, Hamadan, Mehra, Kermanshah, Kamyaran, Paveh, and Javanrud. On Monday, an Iranian official claimed the sounds were caused by thunder, but a few Iranian news sources asserted the Iranian military was testing "air defense systems."

Iraq

Several terror attacks targeted US bases and political parties aligned with the Sadrist-bloc shortly after Iraq's new parliament convened and elected Mohamed al Halbousi to a second term as Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq. The US's C-RAM defense system repelled a rocket attack on its embassy in Baghdad on Thursday, but three civilians were injured during the incident. "We have long said that these sorts of reprehensible attacks are an assault not just on diplomatic facilities, but on the sovereignty of Iraq itself," read

a statement from the US Embassy. The US also countered a drone attack on Balad Air Base in Diyala Governorate on Saturday. That said, IEDs in Baghdad targeted the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and a Sunni lawmaker allied with the Sadrists. Though no one claimed responsibility for the attacks, Iraqi observers believe Iranian-backed militias are using violence and intimidation to pressure the Sadr-led coalition into including them in the next government.

The head of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization, Hadi al Ameri, visited Erbil and met with the President of Kurdistan Region, Neichervan Barzani, to discuss the formation of a new government. President Barzani's office stated that he and Ameri discussed "disputes and obstacles to the political process in the country." The Badr Organization is part of the Iranian-backed coalition known as the "Coordination Framework" and rejected the first session of Iraq's new parliament. Meanwhile, the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) remain undecided on the nominee for the presidency. The KDP vetoed the PUK's choice of Barham Saleh, the current president, and nominated Hoshiyar Zebari for the post. Four other Kurdish candidates have nominated themselves for the position.

General Abdulkhaleq Tala'at, the Peshmerga's liaison to Iraqi forces in the "Disputed Territories," told Rudaw that the formation of joint Peshmerga-Iraqi divisions for the region was 85 percent complete. The joint divisions will deploy along the border of the "Disputed Territories" and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to counter a resurgent ISIS (Da'esh).

Syria

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) released



statistics on Turkish attacks in northeastern Syria during the past two weeks. The SDF claimed Turkey and its proxies launched 225 attacks in the region, including 20 in Kobani, that killed one civilian and wounded at least 15. Attacks were also documented in Ain Essa, Tal Tamer, Giri Spi, and areas along the strategic M4 Motorway.

The SDF said it was closely watching reports on Da'esh activities and warned criminal gangs were smuggling people to Turkey and using the proceeds to support the terrorist organization. Separately, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) released another 217 individuals from the al Hawl camp under the auspices of an October 2020 agreement with local tribes that requires a tribal leader to sponsor those released and confirm they did not participate in crimes against humanity. According to AANES officials, al Hawl camp currently holds 57460 people, including 8555 wives and children of slain Da'esh members from 54 countries.

Human Rights Watch released its annual report on human rights, World Report 2022, that included information on Turkey and its proxies' human rights abuses in Turkish-occupied Syria in 2021. The report claimed the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army arbitrarily detained at least 162 Syrians and illegally transferred another 63 to Turkey to face trials where they could receive life sentences.

Turkey

The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) called upon the international community and the European human rights organization to "take immediate action" for Aysel Tuğluk, a jailed Kurdish politician suffering from advanced stages of dementia. The HDP accused the government of "bogus terrorism charges" against Tuğluk, who has been jailed since 2016. Separately, the HDP denounced the recent racist attacks against Kurdish students and Syrian refugees by ultranationalist Turks. The HDP accused the ruling parties of Justice and Development

(AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) of protecting "organized lynchings of fascist gangs."

Turkish police arrested a Kurdish lawyer, Sedat Düşünmez, spokesperson for HDP's law commission in Van, after a raid on his house. Meanwhile, the Istanbul high criminal court ruled to continue jailing Turkish philanthropist, human rights defender Osman Kavala. The court hearing trailed dozens of people, including opposition figures. Kavala and several other defendants boycotted the hearing and remained in their jail, protesting the "unfair trials." International organizations and governments around the world called for the release of Kavala, but the government, mainly President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, rejected the request.

In a public conference in Batman city, the HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan expressed readiness for a "new election" in Turkey. Buldan's remarks came after HDP met with opposition parties and planned a meeting with several smaller left-leaning parties in an attempt to form an alliance.

Environ 700 familles yézidiennes piégées par la neige au pied du mont Sincar

Depuis hier, environ 700 familles yézidiennes sont piégées par la neige dans le camp de réfugiés de Sardasht, au pied du mont Sinjar. Cela fait plus de 7 ans que les rescapés du génocide yézidi vivent dans des camps de fortune, après avoir fui le groupe État Islamique à Sinjar en août 2014.

En raison des fortes chutes de neige sur le mont Sincar et en raison des conditions météorologiques très froides qui balayent la région en ce moment, il y a plus de 700 familles yézidiennes de Sinjar qui vivent dans le camp de réfugiés à Sardasht, au pied du Mont Sinjar.



La députée yézidienne du Gouvernement et membre du Conseil des représentants de l'Irak, Vian Dakhil Shekh Saeed demande au gouvernement régional et le gouvernement irakien, ainsi que les

ONG humanitaires à venir en aide aux réfugiés yézidies piégés par la neige et le froid alors qu'ils vivent dans des camps de fortune depuis huit ans maintenant. En été, ils étouffent sous des températures

avoisinant les 50°, en hiver, ils gèlent à cause des hivers rigoureux...

« Nous remercions toutes les organisations de secours locales et internationales, et la fondation caritative Barzani. Nous demandons au gouvernement fédéral et au gouvernement local dans le gouvernorat de Ninive d'assumer leurs responsabilités envers des centaines d'enfants, femmes et vieux coincés dans ce camp et prendre des mesures urgentes pour porter un secours immédiat à ces familles. (...) », a déclaré la députée sur son compte Facebook.

duvaR.english

January 19, 2022

Students in Diyarbakır deprived of Kurdish language courses, directed towards religious classes

According to regulations of the Education Ministry, students in Turkey should be able to sign up for elective Kurdish classes in public schools. However, education professionals in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır have said that students are effectively being denied the opportunity due to a lack of faculty and resources.

Students began selecting electives for the spring semester on January 3, 2022, according to the Education and Science Workers' Union (Egitim-Sen) in Diyarbakır, and many wanted to take the Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects of Kurdish. How-



ever, in order for faculty to be hired to teach a course, ten students must sign up for the class. If this limit is not met, the class is canceled.

Even if there are enough students, however, there are not

enough teachers to cover the course. The Education Ministry states that "in the event that the courses in which there are not enough teachers in the relevant field are selected, teachers will be recruited from other schools through appoint-

ments." However, Egitim-Sen said that this was not happening.

In the union's statement, they said that despite being in place since 2012, Kurdish classes for 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students had effectively been abolished as a result of lack of supplies, teachers, and obstacles put in place by school administrators. The situation began to deteriorate after 2015, they say, and not a single Kurdish teacher was appointed in 2019.

Kurdish language education throughout Turkey was hindered by the collapse of a

peace process between the government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 2015, which led to an outbreak of violence and closures of cultural institutions.

When parents complained to school administrators about the lack of Kurdish courses, they were told by some principals that there was a lack of space and in other schools, students were directed to other electives. One of the main

classes recommended for those who wanted to take Kurdish was religion.

"Schools are making an effort to direct students to certain courses, school administrators say this," Zülküf Güneş, head of Diyarbakır Eğitim-Sen said. "Here, too, we see that there are mostly referrals to religion classes."

Further, Güneş says that Kur-

dish and all "living languages" elective options have been removed from some elective forms distributed to students.

"In some schools, we see that the option of living languages and dialects in the forms distributed to students has been removed," he said. "If these forms are not corrected, I would like to reiterate that we will resort to legal action. We will intervene against attempts

to prevent the choice of Kurdish lessons in schools."

Güneş and the union say that they will fight until students are able to take Kurdish again, as guaranteed by the Education Ministry.

"Choosing elective courses is a process where our students should make a choice of their own free will in line with their academic success, interests, and abilities," he said.



January 20, 2022

Washington Kurdish Institute Kirkuk Minute January 20, 2022

Kirkuk

On Wednesday night, an unknown assailant attacked a Kurdish lawmaker's office in Kirkuk's Rahimawa neighborhood. The newly elected lawmaker, Shakhawan Abdullah, announced that no one was injured during the attack but there was property damage. Abdullah is a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

On Thursday, January 13th, the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) held a commemoration ceremony for the Iranian general Qassim Solemani and his Iraqi proxies, killed by the US airstrike in 2019. During the ceremony, the Turkish-backed lawmaker Arshad al Salehi called for "expulsion" of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq, in a similar call by Turkish officials. On the contrary, a Shia leader of the State of Law Coalition, Haider al Lami, accused Turkey of "stirring up strife" in Iraq and spreading "racist slogans" that Kirkuk is "Turkish and will remain Turkish." al Lami called upon the caretaker Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhim to obligate Turkey to "Respect the sovereignty of Iraq and its people."

In a statement, the Police Department to Combat Narcotics and psychotropic substances announced the arrest of four drug dealers on Sunday, January 17th. On Saturday, January 16th, the police also announced the death of a wanted drug dealer and the arrest of another accompanying him after a deadly clash with police near the Taqtaq district. Fire exchange occurred when one of the drug dealers refused to surrender to the police. Two and a half kilos of "Narcotics" were confiscated. Dozens of drug dealers have been arrested or killed in Kirkuk since October 16th, 2017, as Kirkuk became the main route of drug trafficking.

Iraq's oil minister fired the head of Kirkuk's oil and gas distribution department after alleged corruption. Kirkuk faces a severe shortage of fuel, and the recent change aims to decrease the smuggling of oil and gas. Hussien Talib Ab has replaced the former head Mohammed Faiq Aref.

Due to an increase of the Covid-19 variant, Omicron, Kirkuk's administration decreased working hours by 50% after the prov-

ince recorded the highest rate of cases in the country.

After an explosion in the Ceyhan pipeline near Turkey's Kahramanmaraş, exports were halted for hours. Though a PKK offshoot claimed an attack on the pipeline, Turkish officials said it was a "power pylon and not an attack." The state-owned BOTAŞ oil pipe company said it resolved the issue without further elaboration.

Arab opinion board leader Nazem al Shamari joined the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition in calling for provisional elections in the province to determine a new governor. Non-Kurdish parties in Kirkuk pressure major election winners in Baghdad to not include negotiations with Kurds over selecting a new Kurdish governor, a demand Kurds have raised despite not having a candidate.

Khanaqin

Iraq's electricity ministry decreased Khanaqin's share of national power to five hours per day, raising anger among the public. Due to the freezing cold conditions, the ministry said the demand had risen dramatically,

but locals complain about Khanaqin facing a shortage of electricity and water during hot summer days.

Iraq's interior ministry announced the capture of a group of six drug dealers on January 14th. The ministry said the group marketed itself more as weapon traders, but they were dealing drugs instead.

Makhmour

A US-led coalition struck several ISIS (Da'esh) positions in the Qara Chokh mountain, where the terror group has been active.

Shingal (Sinjar)

Tensions rose between the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) and the Iraqi army after the latter removed a statue of YBS commander Zardast Shingal, who was killed in a Turkish airstrike last year. The YBS threatened the Iraqi military with action if the statue did not return. In response, the Iraqi army launched an arrest campaign in the town. Both forces deployed in the city and the governor of Nineveh called for de-escalation.



January 20, 2022
By Jabar Dastbaz

Kolbars jeopardized, locals in misery following snowfall in western Iran

As dusk fell, three Kurdish porters set off to transport their goods on their backs to neighboring Turkey through the rugged border mountains of Iran to sell them.

Carrying tea and cigarettes, Barzan Mihnai, Asaad Saedani Fard, and Fard Bilhul left the village of Bawan in Urmia province last Wednesday to Turkey. On their way home, the three Kolbars disappeared amid the heavy snow that has blanketed the region.

Despite constant efforts by locals and authorities to discover them, they have remained unaccounted for due to heavy snowfall.

"Barzan Mihnai, Asaad Saedani Fard, and Fard Bilhul left [Iran] to the village of Gilsum in Turkey to sell their goods. According to villagers from Gilsum, they sold their loads and left their area on the morning of Thursday [to return to Iran]. But contact between them and their families has severed," Farkhir Mihanni, the cousin of one of the missing Kolbars told Rudaw English.

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

Since then, local authorities in Urmia province, families as well as relatives of the missing Kolbars have been looking for



People lining up to the buy bread in Sina on January 19, 2022. Photo: Jabar Dastbaz/Rudaw

their whereabouts, but to no avail. The one-meter-high snowfall in the mountainous region has made the rescue and search operation almost impossible. The distraught families call on authorities on both sides of the border to join efforts to discover them.

The unprecedented snowfall, which in some places has reached two meters, comes after years of drought that had plagued the Kurdish western border regions of Iran.

'Black market' - 'Price hikes'

Despite making people happy that the snowfall will put an end to the past droughts, it has heaped misery on several other sectors of life.

In several neighborhoods of Mariwan near the Kurdistan Region's border, people have faced power outage with traffic coming to a standstill due to

the blockade of roads.

"Our electricity has cut since the snowfall started, forcing us to move to our relatives' houses. Despite having called the relevant electricity authorities, we have not yet received an answer from them," Payman Danish, a resident of the neighborhood of Zagros, Mariwan, told Rudaw English.

The drastic plummet of temperature has hit the Kurdish provinces of Iran hard, including Kurdistan province, west Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah. Locals across these provinces are plagued by the cold snap, most notably blackouts, road blockades, price hikes of goods and services. They accuse the Iranian government of having done little to alleviate their concerns.

In Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, more than 50 centimeters of snow has fallen, sending temperature degrees below

zero.

Traffic has come to a standstill, people find it difficult to move around. Plenty of people could be seen in the streets desperate to take a taxi, or they have to walk in the freezing streets to reach their destinations.

"A black market has emerged due to the halting of traffic and a lack of food essentials," Bayan Ahmedi, 38, lamented as she angrily got off a taxi and held the little hands of her two-year-old child to walk home.

"Last night, I went to my sister's house. The snow blocked me from coming back home. I stayed there and I was forced to come back home today. I waited for more than one hour to get a taxi to drive me home. All the taxi drivers demanded many fares. I took this taxi for 120,000 tomans [\$5] which is ten times higher than the original fare. We are poor people and we cannot afford it. I just do not understand

why the authorities do not care about us," she said angrily.

Iran's economy is in dire shape mainly due to mismanagement, US sanctions, low oil prices, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The economy has left hundreds of thousands of workers unemployed or in desperate need of government subsidies.

According to the Kurdistan province's traffic authorities, excessive snowfall has blocked roads to more than 550 villages in the cities of

Baneh, Mariwan, Saqqez, Diwandara, and Kamyaran. The government has declared a public holiday for schools over the past three days.

Feeling the pinch due to high inflation and an already deteriorating economic situation, what adds to make locals furious is a price hike in their daily life essentials, including bread.

One could see massive queues of people desperate for their turns to arrive to get home some hot bread to their

children, despite the high prices.

"Even though this snow made us all happy, lack of services and the negligence of the authorities has made me walk for more than an hour to reach this bakery shop from my home and I have been waiting for two hours in queues for my turn to come to buy bread. Yet, I do not know when my turn will arrive," Saeed Mohammed, 55, said.

Municipality teams have not done enough to plow snow

from the streets to make traffic easier.

Civil activists and locals have taken to social media to express their anger over the government's inaction.

"The snow crisis showed the real image of the authorities to us. The frozen streets, the broken trees, a lack of public transport, showed the authorities' misuse of their power and how they have monopolized all sectors" for their own advantages, Ejlal Qawwami, a civil activist claimed.



January 21, 2022

Shelling on Afrin kills six civilians, children

Several civilians, including children, were killed when rockets targeted Afrin city in northwest Syria on Thursday, a conflict monitor reported.

The latest in a spate of attacks, artillery shells were fired "from an area where Kurdish fighters and Syrian regime forces are present," the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on Thursday.

The attack led to the death of six people, including two children while nearly 30 others were injured, it added, with some civilians sustaining "severe injuries."

SOHR on Friday raised the death toll to eight, including five children.

Afrin is a Kurdish-majority region in Syria's northwest. The People's Protection Units (YPG) took control of the area after regime forces re-deployed to defend Arab-majority areas against rebels at the start of the Syrian uprising in



Afrin city in northwest Syria. File photo : AFP

2011. In 2018, Turkey and its allied Syrian militias seized control of Afrin, forcefully displacing much of the local population and committing what the United Nations has said are possible war crimes against the local population. Turkey has blamed the YPG for several deadly explosions in the city.

The YPG is a Kurdish armed force in northeast Syria. Ankara considers it to be the Syrian extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), named a terrorist group in Turkey. Ankara has used this alleged link as a pretext for multiple military operations across the border into Rojava.

In October 2019, Turkey

launched an offensive against Kurdish forces in northeast Syria. Ceasefires were brokered by Moscow and Washington, but the truces are frequently violated.

At least four were killed in a car bombing in Afrin in October.

En Syrie, des djihadistes s'évadent après l'attaque d'une prison par l'organisation Etat islamique

L'assaut s'est produit contre un établissement contrôlé par les forces kurdes, dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Un nombre indéterminé de djihadistes a pu s'enfuir, a rapporté une ONG syrienne.

Ghwayran, l'un des plus grands centres de détention abritant des djihadistes en Syrie, a été attaqué, jeudi 20 janvier, par des combattants de l'Etat islamique (EI), qui sont parvenus à libérer des prisonniers.

Selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH), qui dispose d'un vaste réseau de sources en Syrie, une voiture piégée a explosé à l'entrée de la prison, et une deuxième explosion s'est produite à proximité avant que des djihadistes de l'EI attaquent de front les forces de sécurité kurdes gardant l'établissement pénitentiaire.

« Un nombre de prisonniers a réussi à s'enfuir », a rapporté l'ONG, sans plus de précision. Elle n'a pas fait état, dans l'immediat, d'éventuelles victimes dans cette attaque rare survenue dans la ville de Hassaké, contrôlée par les Kurdes syriens.

Situation sous contrôle

Les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les combattants kurdes et fer de lance de la lutte contre l'Etat islamique, ont confirmé l'assaut contre la prison de Ghwayran, mais pas l'évasion de détenus.

« Une tentative d'évasion de terroristes de Daech [un acronyme arabe pour désigner l'EI] détenus à la prison de Hassaké a eu lieu après une explosion et l'explosion d'une voiture piégée », ont déclaré les FDS dans un communiqué. « Des membres de cellules dor-



Des détenus suspects d'être affiliés à l'Etat islamique, à la prison de Ghwayran, à Hassaké, en Syrie, en octobre 2019. FADEL SENNA / AFP

mantes de Daech ont surgi des quartiers environnants et affronté les forces de sécurité » kurdes, ont-elles poursuivi.

Les FDS ont dépêché des renforts à la prison et bloqué le secteur, a expliqué l'OSDH. Dans un autre communiqué, un porte-parole des FDS, Ferhad Sahmi, a affirmé que « la situation à l'intérieur de la prison est maintenant sous contrôle » et fait état « d'affrontements intermittents entre les combattants kurdes et les djihadistes près de la prison ». Des avions de la coalition internationale antidjihadiste dirigée par les Etats-Unis ont survolé le secteur et largué des fusées éclairantes dans les environs de la prison, d'après l'OSDH. Cellules dormantes

Selon les autorités kurdes, qui contrôlent de vastes pans du nord de la Syrie, quelque 12 000 djihadistes de plus de cinquante nationalités sont détenus dans les prisons sous leur contrôle.

En première ligne dans le combat contre l'EI, les FDS, soutenues par la coalition internationale, ont vaincu en 2019 le groupe djihadiste en Syrie en le chassant de son dernier fief de Baghouz, dans la province de Deir ez-Zor (est). Malgré sa défaite, l'EI mène des attaques meurtrières, notamment dans le vaste désert syrien, qui s'étend de la province centrale de Homs jusqu'à celle de Deir ez-Zor, à la frontière avec l'Irak. Ces attaques ciblent aussi bien

l'armée syrienne et ses alliés que les forces kurdes, longtemps soutenues par Washington dans leur lutte contre l'EI, qui semait la terreur dans ces deux pays et perpétrait des attentats sanglants à travers le monde. En Syrie comme en Irak, le groupe djihadiste conserve des cellules dormantes.

Déclenchée en mars 2011 par la répression de manifestations prodémocratie, la guerre en Syrie s'est complexifiée au fil des ans avec l'implication de puissances régionales et internationales et la montée en puissance des djihadistes. Elle a fait près d'un demi-million de morts selon l'OSDH et a déplacé des millions de personnes.



21 janvier 2022

70% des jeunes Kurdes victimes de discrimination en Turquie

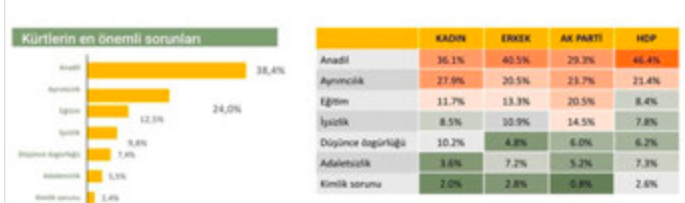
Une enquête menée par l'Institut de sondage Rawest (basé à Diyarbakır) a révélé qu'environ 70% des jeunes Kurdes en Turquie sont, rarement ou fréquemment, victimes de discrimination. Les jeunes Kurdes pointent aussi les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent au regard de leur langue maternelle.

Pour cette enquête sur "La vie des jeunes Kurdes : connaître et comprendre les jeunes", l'Institut Rawest (en collaboration avec l'Ambassade britannique, la Fondation YA-DA, le Centre d'études kurdes, et avec le soutien de la Fondation Heinrich Böll Stiftung) s'est entretenu avec plus de 1500 personnes à travers la Turquie, à Diyarbakır, Van, Mardin, Şanlıurfa, Mersin, Adana et Izmir.

Une forte discrimination constatée

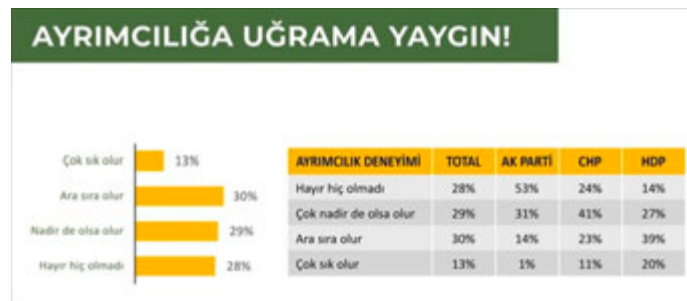
Selon l'enquête, il ressort que sept participants sur 10 ont déclaré être "rarement ou fréquemment victimes de discrimination", tandis que 28% ont déclaré ne jamais avoir vécu tel traitement. Il est intéressant de noter que ces discriminations sont plus marquées au sein de la population kurde qui vote pour le Parti démocratique du peuple (HDP).

ANADIL VE AYRIMCILIĞA MARUZ KALMA HAKIM SORUNLAR



lisation kurde qui vote pour le Parti démocratique du peuple (HDP).

Ces discriminations peuvent



affecter les relations amoureuses : l'étude souligne que près de la moitié des jeunes Kurdes (44%) ne veulent pas d'un(e) petit ami turc / petite amie turque.

La jeunesse kurde a tendance à penser que les préjugés à l'égard des Kurdes se rencontrent particulièrement à l'ouest du pays. Ils associent aussi cette discrimination à la télévision turque, et au fait que les politiques, ces deux dernières années notamment, envoient des messages négatifs concernant les Kurdes. Les réseaux sociaux, où la discrimination se manifeste ouvertement, ont aussi leur part de responsabilité.

Les difficultés liées à l'emploi

Si 30% des personnes interrogées sont étudiantes, l'enquête montre que seuls 34% ont une activité professionnelle, dont 24% travaillent

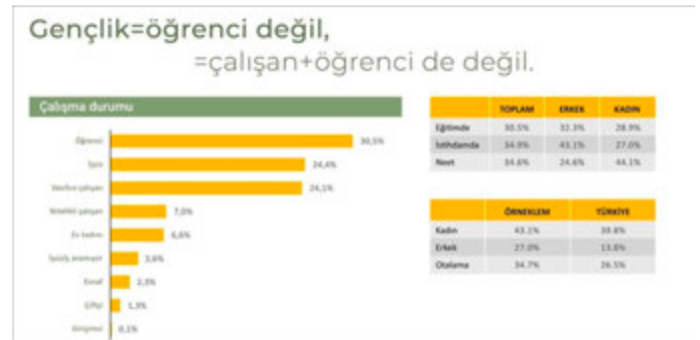
comme ouvriers non qualifiés ; le chômage chez les jeunes Kurdes est donc élevé. L'enquête souligne que les femmes sont considérées

nation à laquelle ils sont confrontés.

Les problèmes concernant la langue kurde

Les jeunes Kurdes ayant participé à l'enquête ont cité, avant même la discrimination, les difficultés liées à leur langue maternelle (son absence de reconnaissance), comme le plus gros de leurs problèmes. Ils sont d'ailleurs nombreux à renoncer à leur langue maternelle au profit du turc seulement. Ce phénomène s'observe particulièrement dans l'ouest de la Turquie, où un jeune Kurde sur deux aurait immigré seul (pour les études ou l'accès à l'emploi).

Enfin, l'enquête constate que



L'enquête souligne que la frange anti-AKP s'éloigne de la religion.

Les jeunes Kurdes sont moins "religieux" qu'il y a cinq ans, 17,3% se considèrent d'ailleurs athéistes, agnostiques, ou encore déistes.

Mécontentement général sur la vie en Turquie

Les personnes interrogées sont moins satisfaites de leur vie en Turquie (dans leur ville de résidence), en comparaison avec les Turcs en général.

On note que ceux qui vivent à l'ouest sont un peu plus pessimistes en raison de la discrimi-

les Kurdes s'éloignent de la "radicalisation". Cela s'expliquerait notamment par les valeurs que nombreux partagent avec Selahattin Demirtaş, l'ancien coprésident du HDP, emprisonné depuis novembre 2016.

La jeunesse kurde dresse donc un tableau plutôt négatif sur sa vie en Turquie dans cette enquête. En effet, une grande partie demeure mécontente de la vie qu'elle mène dans le pays ; elle doit faire face à des discriminations et à des difficultés financières, et même si elle cherche à s'intégrer (dans l'ouest principalement), la revendication de son identité culturelle reste forte.

Des djihadistes de l'EI en fuite après l'attaque d'une prison kurde dans le Nord-Est syrien

L'assaut mené à Hassaké, que les forces kurdes tentent de contenir, témoigne de la résurgence graduelle de l'organisation Etat islamique

Trois ans après la chute de son califat autoproclamé, l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) poursuit sa stratégie de déstabilisation dans les territoires qu'elle a perdus en Syrie et en Irak, afin de reconstituer ses zones d'influence. Le groupe djihadiste a lancé, jeudi 20 janvier au soir, à Hassaké, dans le nord-est de la Syrie administré par les forces kurdes, sa plus grande opération militaire depuis 2019, en attaquant la prison de Ghwayran pour libérer des détenus. Les combats qui se poursuivaient samedi, ont déjà fait plusieurs dizaines de morts. Quasi simultanément, l'EI a mené, vendredi à l'aube, une attaque contre une base militaire dans la province de Diyala, en Irak, tuant onze militaires.

L'assaut contre la prison de Ghwayran a été lancé par des combattants de l'EI lourdement armés. Plus d'une centaine d'assaillants, emmenés par des djihadistes étrangers, la plupart irakiens, y ont participé, a précisé Farhad Shami, un porte-parole des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), à dominante kurde. A l'intérieur de la prison – où se trouvent près de 5 000 détenus, dont « des commandants de l'Etat islamique et des membres parmi les plus dangereux du groupe », selon M. Shami –, des prisonniers ont organisé au même moment une mutinerie, en brûlant des couvertures et des matières plastiques.

Un nombre indéterminé de prisonniers a profité de l'explosion d'une voiture piégée devant la prison et des



Cette photo, fournie par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) sous commandement kurde, montre des combattants du groupe Etat islamique qui ont été arrêtés par les FDS après avoir attaqué la prison de Ghwayran, à Hassaké, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, vendredi 21 janvier 2022. FORCES DÉMOCRATIQUES SYRIENNES DIRIGÉES PAR LES KURDES / AP

combats avec les forces kurdes pour s'évader. Les combats se sont poursuivis vendredi dans la partie nord de la prison, encore contrôlée par des détenus, ainsi que dans le quartier mitoyen de Zouhour, où des combattants se sont retranchés, entraînant la fuite d'une partie des habitants. Les FDS ont annoncé avoir arrêté plus de 100 évadés. Sept membres des FDS et 28 combattants de l'Etat islamique ont été tués dans les affrontements, a annoncé Farhad Shami. Le dernier bilan établi par l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme fait, lui, état de 28 morts parmi les forces kurdes et les gardiens de prison, 45 parmi les membres de l'EI, ainsi que cinq civils tués.

La progression des forces kurdes à Zouhour a été ralentie par les pièges explosifs plantés dans des maisons par les djihadistes et l'utilisation de rési-

dents comme boucliers humains, a ajouté M. Shami. Les FDS ont reçu l'appui de la coalition internationale anti-EI. Le porte-parole du Pentagone, John Kirby, a confirmé que les forces américaines avaient mené des frappes aériennes contre des membres de l'EI. Vendredi soir, le commandant des FDS Mazloum Abadi a annoncé que ses forces avaient réussi à déjouer l'attaque et que tous les évadés avaient été arrêtés. Toutefois, Farhad Shami affirmait samedi que « des combats se déroulent du côté nord de la prison », et évoquait « une situation exceptionnelle à l'intérieur et autour de l'établissement ».

« Menace existentielle »

Revendiquée par le groupe Etat islamique, cette attaque confirme les inquiétudes quant à une résurgence du groupe en Syrie et en Irak. Ce dernier

exploite les failles sécuritaires ainsi que les griefs politiques et économiques des populations locales pour se reconstituer. Selon les experts des Nations unies, plus de 10 000 combattants seraient encore actifs dans les deux pays. L'EI « reste une menace existentielle en Syrie et ne peut être autorisée à se régénérer », a reconnu, vendredi, la coalition internationale anti-EI.

Le groupe a reformé un système d'extorsion et de trafics en tous genres, lui permettant d'entretenir des loyautés au niveau local

Les experts observent une stratégie graduelle du groupe Etat islamique pour rétablir ses réseaux d'influence. En plus de ses attaques de harcèlement et d'offensives plus frontales, comme celle contre la prison, le groupe a reformé un système d'extorsion et de tra-

tics en tous genres, lui permettant d'entretenir des loyautés au niveau local. Il n'est toutefois pas encore entré dans une logique de reterritorialisation, ce qui pourrait l'exposer aux frappes de la coalition. En Syrie, il concentre ses actions dans un périmètre restreint, du désert central de la Badiya à Deir ez-Zor, à la frontière irakienne.

Les prisons, viviers de radicalisation, sont une cible privilégiée du groupe Etat islamique. Sa conquête d'un tiers de l'Irak et de la Syrie en 2014 avait été

précédée d'une campagne d'attaques de prisons, qui avait permis l'évasion de centaines de djihadistes. Les prisons sous contrôle des autorités kurdes dans le nord-est de la Syrie sont particulièrement vulnérables : quelque 12 000 djihadistes présumés de près de 50 nationalités – dont une soixantaine de Français – y vivent dans des conditions rudimentaires de détention comme de sécurité. Les attaques et les mutineries s'y multiplient. La prison de Ghwayran, dont le périmètre avait été consolidé avec des blocs de béton, est

ainsi la cible d'une attaque pour la seconde fois depuis décembre 2021.

« Les puissances internationales sont responsables de ce qui se passe à Hassaké », a dénoncé, vendredi, le responsable des relations extérieures de la Syrie du Nord, Abdul Karim Omar. Pointant la présence d'un nombre important d'étrangers parmi les djihadistes emprisonnés, les autorités kurdes n'ont cessé d'appeler la communauté internationale à l'aide. Mais de nombreux pays refusent de

rapatrier leurs ressortissants, à l'instar de la France, qui n'a consenti à ramener sur son territoire qu'une trentaine d'enfants de couples djihadistes depuis 2019. Deux cents enfants et quatre-vingts femmes de nationalité française végètent toujours dans les camps du Nord-Est syrien. Alors même que l'autorité kurde syrienne n'est pas officiellement reconnue, Paris répète que les djihadistes étrangers doivent être jugés dans la zone où ils sont partis combattre.

AL-MONITOR 

January 22, 2022

Islamic State escalates violence across Baghdad Belt

Terrorist attacks increase as Iraq continues government formation process

Iraqi government formation process on brief hold...

Iraq's Federal Supreme Court will decide on Jan. 25 whether the election of Mohammed al-Halbousi on Jan. 9 to return as Speaker of the Council of Representatives (or parliament) is valid. The speakership is held by a representative from the Sunni parties. Halbousi's "Progress" party won 37 seats, second only to Iraqi populist Shiite Cleric Muqtada Sadr's party winning 73 seats. Hassan Ali Ahmed has the background on the vote here.

The expectation is that Halbousi's selection will stand and the process of government formation will resume. The parliament will then have about 20 days to choose a president from the Kurdish parties. Fifteen days after that, the president will designate a prime minister (a Shiite), appointed from the largest bloc, to form a government. The current president, Barham

Salih, has been nominated by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Party; the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) has nominated former Finance and Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari. The KDP has 31 seats in the new Iraqi parliament; the PUK has 18. The custom has been for the PUK to hold the Iraqi presidency and the KDP to hold the Kurdistan Region presidency; the current Kurdistan Region president is Nechirvan Barzani from the KDP.

So far the Iraqi government formation process has taken three months since elections on October 21, 2021. The previous timeframe from elections to government was five months in 2018, and eight months in 2010.

Pro-Iran militias increase attacks in capital... In an escalation of violence many see as connected to the government formation process, Shiite armed groups close to

Iran, and who are linked to parties which lost support in Iraq's October elections, have launched attacks in Baghdad over the past week.

As Shelly Kittleson reports from the Iraqi capital, "two Kurdish-owned banks in Baghdad were targeted by attacks using explosives on Jan. 16 in which a woman and child were injured. Iran-linked armed groups had recently increased threats against and attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and those associated with it. The latest in a long string of attacks by these groups on Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone occurred on Jan. 13 and also injured an Iraqi woman and child."

Ali Hashem has the inside story here at Amwaj on the visit to Iraq last week of Ismail Ghaani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, in seeking to quell divisions among the disparate forces in the Iraqi "Shiite house."

... As Islamic State escalates violence in 'Baghdad Belt'

As the government formation continues, Islamic State is stepping up its attacks in both Iraq and Syria:

- Islamic State militants killed 11 Iraqi soldiers in a Jan. 21 attack on a military base in Diyala, north of Baghdad, Kittleson reports from Iraq.

- In Syria, the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) killed 23 Islamic State IS militants, including those from Iraq, in clashes after IS attacked a prison in northeastern Syrian city of Hassaka on Jan. 20. Seven SDF members were killed in the attack on the jail, as Kittleson reports.

- On Jan. 19, in Tarmiya, 50 miles north of Baghdad, Iraqi military forces and loyal Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) killed three IS militants in retaliation for the killing of two PMU

fighters, Kittleson reports. In prior weeks, Iraqi security forces had clashed with IS fighters and killed IS suicide bombers before they completed their mission.

- On Jan. 13, the Iraqi Air Forces bombed IS encampments in the Tarmiya region.

Kittleson provides the context:

“Administratively in the southern part of the Salahuddin province but part of what is known as the Baghdad Belt, Tarmiya has been called the center of Salafi recruiting for the area and has often been key to access for insurgents to the Iraqi capital for those arriving from north of it, lying as it does between the road going north from the capital toward Kirkuk to the east and the road to the west going north toward Tikrit. There have been calls to “clear” Tarmiya that some say are actually part of an attempt at sectarian displacement of the area’s Sunni inhabitants.”

Islamic State showing ‘higher level of operational maturity’

The most recent report from the Pentagon’s Inspector General on Operation Inherent Resolve, the US-led diplomatic and military operation against IS in Iraq and Syria, indicates that IS has weakened but remains a priority for, and a threat to, US interests and partners in the region, as we reported here.

The quarterly report, which surveyed the period through September 30, noted that while IS has carried out a decreasing number of attacks, in some cases it has shown unusual complexity and a “higher level of operational maturity” in its operations. And now the number of attacks may be going up.

The US mission in Iraq transi-



Mourners carry the casket of one of eleven Iraqi soldiers, killed in an overnight attack by the Islamic State (IS) group against a base in eastern Iraq, through a street in the central holy shrine city of Najaf, on Jan. 21, 2022. - ALI NAJAFI / AFP via Getty Images

tioned to “training, advising and intelligence gathering” on Dec. 31, and there is no expected reduction in the number of US troops in Iraq, currently at approximately 2,500.

A difficult northern border reopens ...

The Pentagon report highlighted the Iraq-Syria border as a locus of IS activity.

A key border crossing between the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and northeast Syria, which had been closed since Dec. 15, has been partially reopened, as a result of US diplomacy.

Amberin Zaman has the scoop here on the US-led diplomacy which led to the border’s limited reopening for vital humanitarian assistance. The reason for the blockade was an escalation of border clashes between groups affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is linked to the Kurdish parties in the SDF, and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG).

... as Iraqi forces seek to reclaim control of Sinjar province

The Iraqi Army on Jan. 18 arrested several fighters from a Yazidi armed group operating in Sinjar in northern Iraq, an area of the country known for massacres of Yazidis by Islamic State in 2014, and now the scene of fighting among armed groups and Iraqi security forces.

Those arrested were from Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) affiliated with the PKK, which provides the YBS with training and weapons, Shelly Kittleson reports from Iraq. The YBS claims it does not take orders from the PKK, which is designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the US, and the EU

... and another border opening shows better Iraq-Saudi ties

During his visit to Najaf on Jan. 6, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered completion of the land pilgrim route linking Najaf to Mecca and Medina, the holy Muslim cities in Saudi Arabia. His announcement coincided with the official opening of Iraq’s Arar border crossing with Saudi Arabia.

The border openings are testi-

mony to the dramatic improvement in ties between Riyadh and Baghdad under the current Iraqi government.

“The importance of the land pilgrim route travels beyond the religious dimension to the political rapprochement and economic and security cooperation between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in a region that witnessed many political and sectarian differences and pushed trust between the two peoples to its lowest levels,” writes Adnan Abu Zeed from Baghdad.

In Najaf, largest Islamic cemetery in the world

Nicole Di Ilio reports here on the largest graveyard in the world, known as the “Valley of Peace,” in Najaf.

“The ever-growing graveyard houses the remains of 5 million people, including hundreds of Islamic religious figures, such as the Prophet Hud and Prophet Saleh, clerics and political and social leaders. The cycle of life and death adds an inevitable load each year. The spiritual aura is tangible,” writes Di Ilio.

Syrie : les forces kurdes luttent pour reprendre une prison à L'EI

Daech a investi il y a quatre jours le centre de détention pour libérer des djihadistes

S'agit-il du grand retour de Daech en Syrie ? L'attaque, qui se poursuit depuis bientôt quatre jours autour de la prison du quartier de Ghwayran, dans la ville de Hassakeh, dans le nord-est du pays, est la plus importante depuis la chute du califat de l'organisation État islamique (EI), fin 2019.

Cette fois, les djihadistes n'opèrent plus seulement à partir de cellules dormantes en Irak et dans le désert syrien. Leur assaut planifié, reposant sur deux explosions simultanées et des appuis locaux parmi les réfugiés arabes de cette ville mixte (arabes et kurdes), a été lancé, jeudi soir, par une centaine de combattants, qui a attaqué cette prison tenue par les forces kurdes, pour tenter de libérer d'autres djihadistes emprisonnés. Depuis, malgré l'appui de troupes américaines engagées au sein de la coalition internationale anti-Daech, les combats se poursuivent autour de ce centre de détention, qui abrite 3 500 membres présumés de l'EI, selon l'Organisation syrienne des droits de l'homme (OSDH). « Les forces kurdes n'en ont pas encore repris le contrôle, confiait dimanche après-midi au Figaro un témoin sur place. À l'intérieur, les djihadistes se servent des Kurdes comme des boucliers humains. »

En trois jours, plus de 135 personnes ont été tuées : 84 djihadistes et une quarantaine de membres des forces kurdes. Celles-ci mènent des raids dans des maisons voisines de la prison pendant que des hélicoptères de la coalition internationale survolent les environs, ciblant parfois des mouvements de djihadistes. Alors que



Des forces kurdes à Hassakeh, samedi. Des dizaines de détenus djihadistes sont toujours en fuite. -/AFP

les forces kurdes ont saisi des ceintures explosives, des armes et des munitions dans certaines de ces maisons, qui servaient d'appuis logistiques aux radicaux islamistes, des milliers de civils ont fui les violences dans un froid glacial.

Durant le week-end, les affrontements se concentraient dans la partie nord de la prison que les djihadistes, appuyés par des complices arrivés du quartier voisin d'al-Zohour, maintiennent sous leur contrôle. Selon l'OSDH, les assaillants ont réussi à s'emparer d'armes et à libérer des djihadistes. Des centaines ont pu s'évader, la plupart ont été rattrapés, mais des dizaines seraient encore en fuite. Cette opération repose la question de la corruption parmi les gardiens des prisons du nord-est syrien, dont bénéficie Daech.

Ghwayran est l'un des principaux centres de détention de djihadistes dans le nord et le nord-est de la Syrie, des territoires aux mains des autorités kurdes. Parmi les 12 500 combattants radicaux prison-

niers des Kurdes dans une douzaine de prisons, souvent mal sécurisées, figurent des centaines d'étrangers d'une cinquantaine de nationalités, dont des Français que Paris refuse de rapatrier, au grand dam des autorités kurdes, alliées pourtant de la France dans la guerre contre Daech. Selon une source du renseignement français, « une cinquantaine de djihadistes français sont incarcérés mais dans la prison de Derik, plus à l'est de Hassakeh », dans une emprise mieux sécurisée, proche d'une base américaine.

Une tactique éprouvée

Cette attaque relance le débat sur le rapatriement des djihadistes. Pour Abdelkarim Omar, haut responsable de l'administration kurde, elle est due à « l'incapacité de la communauté internationale à assumer ses responsabilités ». De nombreuses prisons aux mains des Kurdes étaient à l'origine des écoles et sont donc mal adaptées pour garder des détenus sur le long terme. D'autant que les attaques de centres de dé-

tention constituent une tactique maintes fois éprouvée par Daech. En 2013, en Irak voisin, un assaut avait déjà eu lieu contre la prison d'Abou Ghraib, près de Bagdad.

« Les évasions de prison représentent la meilleure opportunité pour l'État islamique de retrouver sa force (...) et la prison de Ghwayran est une bonne cible, car elle est surpeuplée », estime le chercheur Nicholas Heras, du Newlines Institute, à Washington. Dans le Nord-Est syrien, des passeurs rôdent autour des prisons et des camps où vivent femmes et enfants de djihadistes pour les aider à franchir éventuellement la frontière turque, leur seule porte de sortie. Dans un communiqué, le Département d'État américain a rappelé « le besoin urgent que les pays d'origine des détenus rapatrient (...) et jugent » chez eux les terroristes.

« Dans ce dossier, la position française paraît incohérente, souligne un diplomate. On insiste par exemple auprès des Algériens pour qu'ils récupèrent leurs islamistes radicalisés présents sur notre territoire et, en même temps, on ne veut pas récupérer nos propres djihadistes détenus dans les prisons kurdes » en Syrie.

Quasi simultanément, en Irak, Daech a lancé dans la nuit de jeudi à vendredi une attaque contre une position de l'armée dans la province de Diyala, dans l'est du pays, tuant onze soldats. L'une des opérations les plus meurtrières depuis plusieurs semaines. Autre signe d'une résurgence de l'EI sous une forme encore plus dangereuse.

Syrie : Plus de 120 morts en quatre jours lors de combats entre forces kurdes et jihadistes

Plus de 120 personnes, en grande majorité des combattants, ont péri en quatre jours d'affrontements entre le groupe jihadiste État islamique (EI) et les forces kurdes en Syrie, a indiqué une ONG dimanche.

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Les affrontements ont été déclenchés par une attaque lancée jeudi soir par l'EI contre la



Les affrontements ont été déclenchés par une attaque lancée jeudi soir par l'EI contre la prison de Ghwayran (nord-est), l'une des plus grandes abritant des jihadistes en Syrie, l'EPA/MAXPPP

prison de Ghwayran (nord-est), l'une des plus grandes abritant des jihadistes en Syrie, et gar-

dée par les forces kurdes. "77 jihadistes et 39 combattants kurdes ont été tués", de même

que "sept civils", a précisé l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme



January 24, 2022

Twenty Turkish bar associations call for release of Kurdish politician suffering from illness

Twenty bar associations in Turkey have released a joint statement calling for the release of Aysel Tuğluk from Kocaeli prison. Tuğluk has suffered from early-onset dementia for years, likely a result of trauma.

Tuğluk has received a medical report from the Kocaeli Faculty of Medicine stating that she "cannot remain in prison" due to the ever-deteriorating nature of her condition. Prison authorities, however, have refused to release her.

Former People's Democratic Party (HDP) deputy co-chair Tuğluk was arrested in 2016 as part of the government's operation against the Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

She has long been a vocal

member of the Kurdish opposition and has openly called for Kurdish "democratic autonomy". She was one of the lawyers who fought against the death sentence for the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, and later shuttled letters between him and the PKK.

She later became a politician as a member of the HDP.

Tuğluk's mother, Hatun Tuğluk, who was long an advocate for the Kurdish movement, died in 2017. The funeral in Ankara was attacked by a mob and the family could not bury the body. Aysel Tuğluk was at the funeral with special permission from the prison, but could not actually see her mother buried because she had to return.

After her mother's death, Tuğluk's condition rapidly deteriorated. Her lawyer, Serdar Çelebi, said that she withdrew from the world.

"She was very affected by this process (of imprisonment). She cut off contact with the world. She did not attend to her daily needs. She went through a process where she became cut off from life," he said in November.

In recent months, Tuğluk's family and lawyers have openly said that she suffers from early-onset dementia. Now, twenty bar associations including that of İzmir and Antalya say her continued imprisonment is a denial of her right to life, which is guaranteed in the Turkish constitution. They further state that Turkish legislation regulating prisons states

that in case of illness, "If the execution of the prison sentence poses a certain danger to the life of the prisoner, the execution of the prisoner's sentence is suspended until he recovers." In Tuğluk's case, they say, this is not being followed.

Further, according to the statement, Tuğluk is now unable to meet her most basic needs, including eating and drinking. She is also hardly able to communicate. Her lawyers and human rights associations state that her condition will only worsen the longer she stays in prison.

The twenty bar associations signed the statement in the name of "protecting and defending human rights," as required by Turkish law regulating attorneys.



January 24, 2022

Jihadist fighters holed up with minors in Syria prison

Kurdish forces geared up for an assault Monday on a northeast Syria prison that Islamic State group fighters stormed last week, raising concern over the fate of hundreds of under-age detainees.

IS fighters on Thursday rammed two explosives-laden vehicles into the Kurdish-run Ghwayran prison to launch a brazen jailbreak operation that has plunged the city of Hasakeh into chaos.

The attack, the group's biggest since their once-sprawling proto-state was defeated in 2019, has already killed more than 150 people, including more than 100 among jihadist ranks.

Fighting drove hundreds of residents of Syria's largest Kurdish city to flee, but clashes receded on Monday, with the presence of hundreds of children complicating an assault.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said elite Kurdish forces had moved armoured vehicles inside the main prison yard, ahead of a possible attempt to storm the facility.

The autonomous Kurdish authorities running the region imposed a state of emergency across Hasakeh, after at least seven civilians were caught in the crossfire.

According to rights groups and the United Nations, hundreds of children were being held in Ghwayran, a hugely overcrowded facility where at least 3,500 suspected IS members were held.

More than 700 minors are thought to be held in Ghwayran,



Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) cross a street in the northern Syrian city of Hasakeh on January 23 - AFP

a former school converted into a detention facility three years ago when thousands of jihadists were captured in the dying moments of their "caliphate".

Minors 'trapped'

"These children are effectively trapped in Ghwayran prison," said Sara Kayyali, Syria researcher at Human Rights Watch.

HRW heard voice messages from an injured minor at Ghwayran who reported "there are dead bodies everywhere," Kayyali said.

"It's not clear if they have any kind of medical assistance," Kayyali added, explaining that most of the minors were aged between 12 and 18.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the autonomous Kur-

dish authorities' de facto army, charged IS attackers were using children as human shields to prevent an assault.

The jihadist group "continues to hold children hostage and is using them as human shields to protect themselves," the SDF said in statement Monday.

Eva Hinds, a spokesperson for UN children's agency UNICEF, said the plight of the trapped minors, around 10 percent of whom are believed to be 15 or younger, was a source of "grave concern".

"The SDF initially allocated a special section for children. Many of them have adult relatives inside and have since joined them in other sections," Hinds said.

The US forces who are based in the region — and were the main support in the Kurdish offensives that put thousands of jihadists into custody three years ago — were heavily deployed in Hasakeh.

US-led coalition helicopters could be seen flying overhead as a full curfew was enforced across the city, an AFP correspondent reported.

"If IS is using these children as human shields, and the SDF and the US-led coalition are trying to retake the prison, then the children are at incredible risk from both sides," Kayyali said.



This file photo taken on October 26, 2019, shows men suspected of being affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) group in a cell in the Ghwayran prison. FADEL SENNA AFP/File

IS morale

According to the Observatory war monitor, at least 154 people were killed since the attack was launched late on January 20.

Among them were 102 jihadists, 45 members of the Kurdish security forces and seven civilians, Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said.

Hamsha Sweidan, 80, a resident who had been trapped near the jail, said civilians were left without bread or water as battles raged.

"We have been dying of hunger and of thirst," she said, adding that she had no idea where to go.

The attack on one of the biggest prisons in the region was seen by analysts as a clear sign that IS needed manpower



Syria AFP

to continue rebuilding following the demise of its "caliphate".

The thousands of IS fighters who remained, in various remote locations across Syria

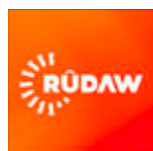
and Iraq, had never stopped carrying out guerrilla-style attacks.

While it is unclear how successful IS will have been at springing fighters from Ghwayran, the operation marks a new step in the jihadist organisation's resurgence.

But observers also argued that while IS has trumpeted the attack on its propaganda channels and that it might provide a morale boost for IS sympathisers, it would do little to change the military balance on the ground.

Jailbreaks have long been central to jihadist group's efforts to build up momentum, but IS is still far from recovering the strength that allowed it to take over large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014.

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January 24, 2022

Iran rights defender sentenced to 8 years jail, flogging: husband

An Iranian court has sentenced leading human rights campaigner Narges Mohammadi to eight years in prison and over 70 lashes, her husband announced on Sunday, following her sudden arrest in November last year.

Her husband Taghi Rahmani, who is based in France, wrote on Twitter that the sentence was handed out after a hearing that lasted only five minutes. The details of both the verdict and the case against her remain unclear.

A colleague of Nobel Peace Prize-winning campaigner Shi-

rin Ebadi, who now lives outside Iran, Mohammadi has been repeatedly jailed by the Iranian authorities over the last years.

She was released from prison in October 2020 but then suddenly arrested in November 2021 in Karaj outside Tehran while attending a memorial for a man killed during nationwide protests in November 2019.

Amnesty International at the time condemned Mohammadi's arrest as "arbitrary" and described her as a "prisoner of conscience targeted solely for her peaceful human rights activities".

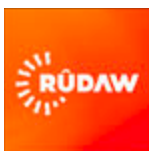
Mohammadi, who has long campaigned against the use of the death penalty in Iran, had before her latest arrest been working with families seeking justice for loved ones who they say were killed by security forces in the 2019 protests. Even while out of prison, she had in May 2021 been handed a sentence of 80 lashes and 30 months in jail on charges of "propaganda" against Iran's Islamic system.

Activists have decried what they see as increased repression in Iran over the last months, including the jailing of campaigners and greater use of the death penalty.

Prominent detainees have also died in prison, such as the well-known poet Baktash Abtin.

Another top rights defender serving a lengthy sentence in Iran is prize-winning lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh who defended women arrested for protesting against the requirement for Iranian women to wear the hijab.

While she is currently believed to be out of jail on medical leave, supporters fear she is at risk of being imminently returned to prison.



January 24, 2022

Iran says will consider direct US talks for 'good' nuclear deal

Iran said Monday it will consider direct talks with the US during ongoing negotiations in Vienna, if that is required for a "good agreement" to salvage a 2015 nuclear accord.

The deal -- agreed by Iran, the US, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany -- offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

But the US unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and reimposed biting economic sanctions, prompting Tehran to begin rolling back its commitments.

Talks aimed at restoring the deal started last year in Vienna between Iran and countries still part of the accord. The US has been taking part indirectly in negotiations.

"Iran is not currently talking with the US directly", Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in televised remarks.

"But, if during the negotiation process we get to a point that reaching a good agreement with solid guarantees requires a level of talks with the US, we will not ignore that in our work schedule," he added.

"Our direct talks are with P4+1," he said, referring to Germany and permanent Security Council powers



Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. File/AFP

France, China, Britain and Russia.

"And our indirect negotiations with the US currently are... via (EU diplomat Enrique) Mora and one or two other countries present at Vienna talks," he added.

Iran had previously stated that the US must "change course" and return to the nuclear deal, prior to any direct talks between the two arch-foes in Vienna.

"Meanwhile, the US side is sending messages in different ways that it seeks a level of direct talks with Iran," Amir-Abdollahian added during a conference at the foreign ministry in Tehran.

The negotiations, which seek to bring Washington back to the accord and ensure Iran returns to its commitments under the deal, started in April, and resumed in late November, after they were suspended in June as Iran

elected ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

US-Iran relations have been severed since April 1980, just months after the fall of the shah and the occupation of the American embassy by Islamist students loyal to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

They worsened significantly after Washington withdrew from the nuclear deal and imposed sanctions on Tehran.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on major issues including the nuclear policy, said earlier this month that negotiating with the 'enemy' does not mean surrendering.

"The bullying of the enemy should not be tolerated," he said, referring to the US.

But "negotiating with the enemy some time for example is another thing -- us interacting with them is another thing," Khamenei

added in a televised speech. - Prisoners' release 'possible'

Some analysts had interpreted these remarks as a tacit signal for possible direct talks with the US, as was the case in the buildup to the 2015 nuclear accord.

Earlier on Monday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman said it was "possible" to reach an agreement on both the release of Iranian and US prisoners and the nuclear deal.

"They are two different paths, but if the other party (the US) has the determination, there is the possibility that we reach a reliable and lasting agreement in both of them in the shortest time," spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters.

Khatibzadeh's comments came in reaction to remarks made by the US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, who on Sunday said it was unlikely that Washington would strike an agreement unless Tehran releases four US citizens.

The four US citizens held in Iran are Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi, 50, and his father Baquer, 85, as well as environmentalist Morad Tahbaz, 66, and businessman Emad Sharqi, 57.

Washington also holds four Iranian nationals.

En Turquie, la crise économique plonge les classes moyennes dans la détresse

Avec un pouvoir d'achat de plus en plus faible à cause de la crise économique, les Turcs s'inquiètent de ne plus pouvoir se nourrir correctement. Les files d'attente devant les dépôts de pain sont vertigineuses.

Naciye n'a pas pleuré en racontant qu'elle avait dû couper le chauffage et que ses enfants s'étaient plaints du froid. Elle n'a pas pleuré, non plus, lorsqu'elle s'est souvenue du temps d'avant – quand elle pouvait partir, en famille, s'offrir un bout de soleil sur la côte égéenne. Ni en évoquant les trois dents qu'elle ne peut plus soigner, et qui font de chacun de ses repas une souffrance. Mais au souvenir de cette jeune mère et de son nouveau-né qu'elle a vu grelotter de froid dans le métro, vêtus d'habits légers quand le mercure avoisinait les températures négatives, Naciye fond en larmes. «Le bébé était presque bleu. Sa mère m'a dit qu'elle n'avait plus d'argent pour quoi que ce soit. Je lui ai donné mon écharpe, c'est tout ce que j'ai pu faire.»

«La viande est devenue un luxe»

Comme des millions de personnes en Turquie, Naciye a vu son existence s'obscurcir à mesure que le pays s'enlisait dans une crise économique sans précédent. Employée dans un syndicat pour 3800 livres turques par mois (241 euros), la mère de 44 ans se bat avec un crédit immobilier de 7500 livres turques, que le salaire de son mari (6000 livres turques) peine à rembourser. La crise économique, latente depuis 2018, s'est accélérée depuis le mois de septembre, alors que la monnaie turque a perdu 45 % de sa valeur face



Zuhre, retraitée, serre dans ses mains les trois miches de pain qu'elle est heureuse d'avoir trouvées – dans les dépôts conventionnés, il vient parfois à manquer. (Emin Ozmen/Magnum Photos pour Libération)

au dollar en un an. Le pouvoir d'achat des Turcs décroît de jour en jour, tandis qu'une préoccupation nouvelle gangrène les esprits : la faim. Selon un rapport daté de novembre 2021 du World Food Program, 26,8 % des foyers turcs sont tombés sous le seuil de pauvreté. Un chiffre destiné à s'accroître à mesure que la livre continue de dévisser.

Le salaire minimum a été augmenté de 50 % par le président Erdogan en décembre. Mais Naciye craint toujours de manquer de l'essentiel. Dans la petite chambre que se partagent ses deux enfants âgés de 7 et 15 ans, elle a stocké 25 litres d'huile et 40 rouleaux de papier toilette. Selon un rapport de l'Iris, le prix de l'huile a bondi de 86 % en un an, quand celui de l'électricité s'est envolé à 120 %. Pour se nourrir, elle compte désormais sur les produits frais que la famille de son mari leur envoie du village.

«Je n'ai pas d'espoir. Le cœur des gens est comme un ciel de janvier. Les couleurs sont parties. Avant, on avait des rêves. Maintenant, on espère juste avoir assez de pain pour la journée.» Avant que sa vie ne soit rétrécie par la crise, Naciye soutenait le président Erdogan, qu'elle estimait proche du peuple. «La viande est devenue un luxe, on a coupé l'électricité à ma mère, on a l'impression de suffoquer. Ils peuvent dire qu'on ment, mais c'est faux. Le gouvernement nous laisse mourir de faim», grince-t-elle, amère.

Partout dans Istanbul, les files d'attente souvent vertigineuses devant les dépôts de pain racontent à elles seules l'effroi d'une société qui, soudain, craint pour son pain. Devant ces petites échoppes gérées par la municipalité d'opposition, le pain est vendu 1,5 livre – contre 3 dans le commerce. Une différence de 7 centimes

d'euros devenue déterminante pour des milliers de familles qui ont basculé dans une certaine forme d'angoisse alimentaire. «Ne parlez pas à ces journalistes occidentaux qui veulent salir la Turquie, il n'y a pas de problèmes ici», hurle une vieille femme. «Vous pensez vraiment que s'il n'y avait pas de problèmes, on serait en train de faire la queue pour du pain conventionné ?» maugrée son voisin. Elle se répand en imprécations et menace d'appeler la police. Murat, retraité, peste : «Comment peut-on défendre la politique de notre président quand on est obligés d'acheter son pain ici ? Personne n'est heureux de cette situation, c'est un mensonge. Depuis trois mois, je ne peux plus acheter mon pain qu'ici. On ne peut plus acheter quoi que ce soit, d'ailleurs. J'ai plus de 65 ans et je vais devoir renoncer à mon appartement, dont le loyer est devenu trop cher, pour vivre en colocation.

J'aurais cru pouvoir jouir d'une vieillesse tranquille, et me voilà à vivre comme un pauvre.»

«On survit»

Dans un dépôt situé à deux kilomètres, une autre file, les mêmes problèmes. Zuhre est une retraitée au regard pétillant sous son fichu coloré. Elle serre dans ses mains les trois miches de pain qu'elle est heureuse d'avoir trouvées – dans les boutiques conventionnées, le pain vient parfois à manquer.

«La vie est devenue impossible, heureusement qu'il y a ces dépôts de pain. On aime notre pays, mais on ne peut plus y vivre.» Elle n'aurait jamais imaginé que ses trois enfants connaissent, un jour, la faim. «Je viens ici trois fois par jour, en craignant toujours de ne pas trouver de pain. Les loyers sont devenus ingérables. Avant, on avait une belle vie. Aujourd'hui, on survit», dit-elle.

Dans un faubourg du quartier de Kadikoy, au rez-de-chaus-

sée d'une petite maison, Fatma tente de composer avec un quotidien toujours plus difficile. Agée de 40 ans, elle travaille désormais dans une compagnie de thé stambouliote, après avoir vécu quatre ans en France, où son mari travaillait toujours. «Mon salaire ne me dure plus que cinq jours. Il y a quelques jours, j'ai acheté quatre paquets de couches pour mon bébé : cela m'a coûté 1000 livres turques. Presque le quart de mon salaire mensuel», déplore-t-elle, les yeux rivés sur sa tasse de

thé. Son regard se voile quand elle évoque la litanie des restrictions charriées par une crise sur laquelle elle n'a pas de prise. Les toasts que mangent ses enfants le matin, faute de pouvoir s'offrir du beurre ou de la confiture. L'angoisse qui l'étreint à chaque excursion au supermarché. Les vêtements qu'elle ne peut plus s'acheter. Pour seule évasion, il ne reste à Fatma et ses enfants que la télévision et une promenade en bord de mer, tous les dimanches. «Au moins, le rivage est encore gratuit.»



January 25, 2022
By Ely Sannes

How Will Erdogan Treat the Kurds Going Forward?

Kurds have suffered from a long history of repression and struggle in the Kurdistan region of Turkey (Bakûr). Since World War I, successive Turkish governments have harshly restricted expression of Kurdish culture, ethnic and religious identities of the Kurdish people and worked in various ways to prohibit Kurdish participation in the country's political system and prevent economic development in Kurdish majority areas. In 1924, the Turkish government outlawed the existence of all Kurdish schools, cultural centers, organizations, and publications and forbade usage of the terms 'Kurds' and 'Kurdistan' along with restricting the rights of other non-Turkish minorities in hopes of creating an 'indivisible' country of one people with one language under one flag. This repression continues under current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has centralized power to an extent unparalleled since the beginning of the multi-party system in the modern Republic of Turkey.

In modern times, the Kurds continue to have their cultural



and political identities denied and suppressed. Since the failed coup attempt in 2016 which claimed at least 240 lives, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has cracked down on dissent by arresting more than 50,000 soldiers, journalists, lawyers, police officers, academics, and countless Kurdish politicians. Erdogan's Party of Justice and Development (AKP) party has removed hundreds of thousands of government officials including democratically elected co-mayors and replaced them with party loyalists. This purge of dissidents began in 2015, before the 2016 coup attempt because of disagree-

ments between Erdogan and exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen. Allegations of corruption at the highest levels of the AKP including, even Erdogan's family appeared online and Erdogan acted quickly to purge Gülenists whom he and his party believed were responsible for the leaks and allegations. Those not purged in 2015 were kept on a watchlist and accused of being a part of the so-called "Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Group/Parallel state structure." This watchlist formed the basis for purging more than 100,000 lawyers, judges, security officials, and civil servants following the failed coup attempt. The AKP

has come under international scrutiny for violating human rights, operating an 'empty process' in which evidence does not matter, only suspicions matter. There is also a concern that the scope of the purge will expand to anyone who opposes the AKP and Erdogan, and some Western observers argue that Erdogan orchestrated the failed coup attempt in order to justify centering his authoritarian rule. Erdogan has reason to fear loss of his position to opposition parties; in 2015, Erdogan and the AKP briefly lost their parliamentary majority because of the surprising electoral success of the pro-Kurdish, progressive Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and, more recently, in 2019, the AKP lost the mayorship of Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, and Ankara, its capital. In both Istanbul and Ankara, cities with sizable Kurdish minority populations, the HDP decided not to field candidates, with some HDP voters presumably supporting the candidates from the Republican People's Party (CHP) who ultimately defeated those of the incumbent AKP. Analysis shows that 911,000 votes out of the 4.6 mil-

lion that Ekrem Imamoglu, Mayor of Istanbul, received were HDP votes. The HDP, in response to increased state violence against the Kurds under AKP rule, endorsed CHP candidates in major western Turkish cities.

According to M. Selahattin Esmer, the purge is “not about getting coup plotters...It’s about cleansing the country”. This is why the Kurdish minority did not escape the purge of 2016 or the military occupation of Kurdish towns in 2015. The stance of the Kurds on the coup attempt is well documented and unambiguous. There are no reasons to suspect that the Kurds or the HDP would support any coup attempt, let alone one led by Gulenists. First, the HDP was one of the first political parties to condemn the coup attempt. Secondly, Fethullah Gulen and his supporters often advocated for Erdogan to be more aggressive in his handling of the Kurds, and Gulen himself is extremely unpopular in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Following the coup, the pro-Kurdish HDP came out against the purge, and now is being sidelined by Erdogan’s government. The HDP office was raided in August 2016 and its co-leaders were indicted on terrorism charges in a move that is supposedly unrelated to the coup along with eleven other Kurdish members of parliament. The purge of Kurdish officials was massive and targeted at Kurdish individuals who held social or political power, in total the purge led to 30 Kurdish co-mayors being removed, 11,000 teachers being removed, and 20 Kurdish media outlets being shut down. Kurdish school teachers, healthcare workers, and government officials were suspended from their jobs following the coup because they attended Gulenists schools (often the only schools available to them in the less developed parts of Turkey) or for alleged association with Gulenist politicians. This process continues and in 2019 more than 48 elected HDP co-mayors were removed from their posts

by the Turkish government and replaced with AKP loyalists. These removals rapidly increased following Turkey’s military incursions into Syria and Iraq. Two officials who were removed from their positions, Nihat Kiratli and Fatma Yildizhan, believe they were suspended for protesting the Turkish military occupation of Kurdish cities and villages in 2015. The Turkish launched military campaigns in these Kurdish majority towns following Erdogan’s unilateral withdrawal from negotiations between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Initially, experts believed that Erdogan was renewing the conflict in order to solidify the AKP’s position before elections. Turkish military operations and the PKK’s response led to dozens of Kurdish areas becoming bloody battlefields. Among these regions is the historic district of Sur in Amed (Diyarbakir), a World Heritage Site with over a thousand years of history, that was destroyed by Turkish military attacks. Sur was home to most well preserved and oldest historic buildings dating all the way back to 350AD, though many of these historic sites have been destroyed or damaged in the conflict along and thousands of civilians being displaced. In total, hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced because of the revived conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, with nearly 150 civilians killed by Turkish artillery and airstrikes. IMC TV, a Kurdish media outlet, was shut down following the coup, but many believe the Turkish government was already going to shut down IMC TV because they were reporting that the Turkish government is killing civilians in its fight against the PKK.

The crackdown on Kurds is not limited to Turkey’s domestic politics, even though it is the core component of Erdogan’s political agenda. Erdogan has expanded his campaign against the Kurds to Iraq and Syria. In Syria, Turkey launched oper-

ations “Olive Branch” and “Peace Spring” in 2018 and 2019 respectively to eliminate the Kurdish who defeated ISIS along Turkey’s border with Syria. While these Syrian Kurdish forces gave thousands of lives in the battle against ISIS and have never attacked Turkey, Erdogan and his AKP brand them “terrorists”. The Turkish military and Turkish-backed militias invaded, occupied, and looted the city of Afrin which was previously protected by the Kurdish People’s Defense Units (YPG) and allied forces. In these Turkish-occupied areas, there has been widespread abuse, violence, and criminality, especially against Kurdish civilians. The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) has engaged in a litany of abusive practices including the beating and execution of Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf, and they continue to occupy large swaths of territory in Syria along the Turkish border and elsewhere. The SNA itself has documented many of their war crimes including videos of themselves committing summary executions, mutilating corpses, rape, threats against Kurdish civilians, and widespread looting. Bassem al-Ahmed of the Syrians for Truth and Justice stated that “what is going on now in Afrin is a deep ethnic cleansing from which Turkey and the brigades profit financially as well”. Many of these abuses were targeted at women, with more than 228 cases of kidnappings and countless cases of rape, threats of rape, so-called “virginity testing”, and many other forms of sexual violence. The majority of female victims were Kurdish in ethnicity, and some of them were members of the Yazidi minority according to a UN commission. The situation in Afrin is a template for what Turkish-backed militias are doing across Syrian Kurdistan, and what they hope to continue with the backing of the Turkish state and military elsewhere in the region. Erdogan’s government has reportedly broken its 1987 agreement with Iraq and Syria to not decrease the flow of the

Euphrates River to below 500 cubic meters per second –current flow from the Euphrates is around 200 cubic meters per second due to Turkey’s interference. This has put millions of civilians at risk due to water insecurity. The damage caused by Turkey limiting the flow of the Euphrates is multifarious because it disrupts agriculture, electricity, access to potable water, along with a multitude of other issues.

Similarly in Iraq, Turkey has initiated cross-border military operations in areas administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) with the stated goal of wiping out the PKK. However, these large scale operations seem to have another objective as well – to expand and solidify Turkish military presence in Iraq. The PKK has operated out of the mountainous region of southeast Turkey and northern Iraq for many years. To date, the Turkish armed forces have constructed at least 40 military and intelligence bases across northern Iraq to expand military operations in the region and with this Turkey has created an 8-mile wide militarized zone in Iraqi Kurdistan. Several Kurdish villages in Iraq have been evacuated because of indiscriminate Turkish airstrikes. The Turkish military is using scorched earth tactics including the looting and destruction of valuable agricultural land and woodlands in order to further disrupt the economic, political, and social lives of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thousands of Kurdish civilians have been uprooted by Turkish military operations, leaving entire valleys empty of Iraqi or Kurdish civilians. Turkish forces are not allowing Kurdish civilians to return to their villages, a move that hints at full and long lasting Turkish occupation. The Turkish occupation of both Syria and Iraq is part of Erdogan’s wider goal of ethnically cleansing the region by emptying the lands east of the Euphrates of Kurds, Christians, and other minorities.

Erdogan is now contending with

a political crisis far greater than that of his fallout with Fetullah Gulen, facing the brunt of criticism for a struggling economy. A recent poll by Metropoll Research found that Erdogan's approval rating was 38.6%, his lowest since 2015, and his AKP's approval rating was at 27%, also reflecting a large decline. In 2021, Turkey experienced a free-falling currency and rising inflation caused by the government's failed monetary policy. The average price of consumable goods has risen more than 36% and has affected every person in Turkey. The lira's value has declined 46% against the dollar since last year. Although the GDP is expected to grow 9% this year, inequality has become the main concern of opposition parties, business groups, and other groups in Turkey. The price of housing is increasing because construction materials now cost more due to the decline of the lira. An estimated 62% percent of bank deposits in Turkey are now held in foreign currencies. Erdogan's government has cut interest rates four different times, defying basic monetary theory, which has only worsened inflation in the country and is further weakening Turkey's economy. The effects of the failing economy have hit the working poor and middle class the hardest. The recent economic turmoil has especially hurt the Kurdistan region of Turkey because they are significantly less developed than the rest of the country. There is some belief that Erdogan is attempting to grow the economy through a contraction. A contraction devalues the Turkish exports and causes an increased demand for tourism and Turkish services because the currency also declines in value. This allows the state to rely on the export sector and tourism which could lead to a boom in the economy. However, the Turkish people are not satisfied with Erdogan's promises of economic renewal. In November, protestors called for a change in government due to the growing economic crisis. The income level and quality of

life created during the nearly two decades of Erdogan's leadership have disappeared, causing those who once supported Erdogan to turn away.

The growing dissatisfaction with the government and the struggling economy has led Erdogan to reach out to former adversaries to mend relations. Top Turkish and Syrian officials met in Moscow for the first time in years after years of conflict over the Syrian Civil War and Turkey's intense involvement in the conflict. The two governments discussed containing the Syrian Civil War and how to address the autonomous region in North and East Syria administered by the Kurds and their allies. Both governments discussed "the possibility of working together against the YPG". Turkey's newfound desire to make amends with a regime it targeted for destruction in a country is a consequence of the Turkish state's maintained focus on its primary objective, preventing any empowerment whatsoever of the Kurds. Similarly, a weakened Erdogan is attempting to mend his relations with long standing rival Egypt in the Mediterranean, and Israel. At present, Egypt and Turkey support opposite sides in the Libyan Civil War, and their relationship became even more tenuous after the Egyptian military ousted President Mohammed Mursi, an ally of Erdogan, in 2013. Recently, the two countries' intelligence networks revealed that Ankara has asked for a meeting with Cairo to discuss "economic, political and diplomatic cooperation." This is by no means a formal sign of resumed diplomacy, but it shows there is an effort on Turkey's end to repair frayed relationships with its neighbors. Turkey and the UAE have had the most measurable increase in diplomatic relations in recent years. The two countries have long been involved in a standoff because of political differences in their foreign policy and in their battle for religious soft power, supporting opposite sides in the Libyan Civil War

and rival forces in the Syrian Civil War, causing havoc in these countries. However, Erdogan and UAE President Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan have recently worked towards normalizing their diplomatic relationships with a \$10 billion dollar investment plan. This investment, which reinforced economic ties between the countries, was badly needed by Turkey because of their struggling economy and may provide a lifeline for Erdogan's low approval ratings. The Crown Prince of the UAE also visited Turkey last year, his first trip to the country since 2012. This is a part of Erdogan's broader goal of normalizing relations with powerful Gulf states like Saudi Arabia.

It is important to remember that, in times of crisis, the Turkish government makes a scapegoat out of the Kurdish people. The Kurdistan region of Turkey has historically received substantially less developmental investment compared to the rest of the country. And according to Sinem Adar, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, "political parties in Turkey, except HDP, easily unite when it comes to the Kurdish issue... the perception 'Turkey is under existential threat' is broadly shared by political actors." In other words, the AKP and Turkish opposition parties rally around the Kurdish issue, especially in times of crisis. Operation Olive Branch and Operation Peace Spring were widely popular across all of Turkey, with opposition parties and even sports clubs and businesses expressing their support. The AKP's Islamist neo-Ottoman policies have led to them instrumentalizing minorities in order to garner broader support for their actions. This has allowed Erdogan to build massive support domestically for his domestic and foreign policies even when those policies are failing. Following the coup in 2016, Erdogan swiftly villainized the Kurdish population and laid the

responsibility of the coup at their feet despite their swift condemnation of the coup attempt, which was issued before it had failed. He argued that the Kurds were the 'new Lawrences', after British Army officer T.E. Lawrence who was responsible in World War I for multiple uprisings against the Ottomans, in order to further alienate the Kurdish populations. This is a part of the AKP's broader, long-standing policy approach to dealing with minority populations. The AKP will often push conspiracy theories about various minority groups, especially the Kurds, in order to distract the electorate from their failing policies. Erdogan and the AKP's approval ratings are at all-time lows, and the economic crisis is threatening to completely overturn the current political structure. The economic and foreign struggles of Turkey combined with the fact that the Turkish government historically has pushed its failures onto minority groups means that the ultra-nationalist alliance in Turkey will further scapegoat, persecute, and brutalize minorities, especially the Kurds, because much of their ongoing foreign policy is centered around the Kurds and the alleged existential threat they present. The AKP will attempt to blame the country's issues on minority groups in order to distract the electorate from its policy failures. The scapegoating of minority groups has already started. The AKP is helping propagate rumors that Syrian refugees in Turkey are responsible for the country's economic woes. Opposition groups in Turkey argue that Erdogan's attempts to focus the national discussion on Turkey's foreign involvement against threats like the Kurds are being done as a distraction to deflect public opinion from the failing economy. Ultimately, Erdogan and the AKP will use any means necessary in order to hang onto power, including crushing internal dissent, launching new wars, and promoting ethnic cleansing in Syria and Iraq.

Turquie. Erdogan promet de « punir » une journaliste accusée de l'avoir insulté

« C'est notre devoir de protéger le respect de ma fonction, de la présidence. Ça n'a rien à voir avec la liberté d'expression », a estimé le président turc.

« **C**e délit ne restera pas impuni », a prévenu le chef de l'État lors d'un entretien à la chaîne de télévision privée NTV. Selon lui, la journaliste Sedef Kabas a agi « par provocation ». « C'est notre devoir de protéger le respect de ma fonction, de la présidence. Ça n'a rien à voir avec la liberté d'expression », a estimé le chef d'État.

« La critique peut exister mais elle doit s'exercer dans un langage adapté », a-t-il poursuivi en dénonçant la

suggestion du parti d'opposition CHP d'abolir le délit d'insulte au président. « Vous ne pouvez vous offrir le luxe d'insulter le président » a-t-il ensuite martelé.

Suivie par 900 000 personnes sur Twitter

Sedef Kabas a été interpellée à son domicile d'Istanbul dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi, quelques heures après son passage à l'antenne pour des propos considérés comme désobligeants envers le président, répétés ensuite sur son

compte Twitter suivi par 900.000 abonnés.

Elle a été formellement arrêtée après sa présentation au tribunal et placée en détention provisoire à la prison de Bakirkoy à Istanbul.

Délit d'« insulte au président »

Le délit d'« insulte au président » est passible d'un à quatre ans de prison en Turquie. Pour le Syndicat des journalistes de Turquie (TGS), « l'arrestation de Sedef Kabas pour "insulte

au président" est une grave atteinte à la liberté d'expression ».

Les ONG dénoncent régulièrement des violations de la liberté de la presse en Turquie, en particulier depuis la tentative de putsch en 2016, suivie par l'arrestation de dizaines de journalistes et la fermeture de plusieurs médias jugés hostiles.

La Turquie figure à la 153^e place sur 180 du classement 2021 de la liberté de la presse de Reporters sans frontières (RSF).

The New York Times

January 26, 2022
By Ben Hubbard

Boys Held as Hostages by ISIS Worry Rights Activists

The ISIS Hostages: 'These Children Should Not Have Been There'

About 700 boys have been held for years in a prison in Syria because their parents joined the Islamic State.

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The boys in the prison sleep in groups of about 15 in cells with no windows, according to aid workers.

They get fresh air and see the sun during visits to a walled-in yard, but receive no visitors. They range in age from as young as 10 up to 18 and have received no schooling since they were detained three or more years ago.

The battle between Kurdish-led

militia and Islamic State fighters for control of a prison in northeastern Syria yanked from the shadows the bleak plight of the nearly 700 boys detained there.

On Wednesday a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces said that it had retaken the complex after hundreds of fighters had been reported killed. But the fate of hundreds of boys who ISIS took hostage and used as human shields is still in question.

They are among the tens of thousands of children held in prisons and detention camps in northeastern Syria because their parents

belonged to the Islamic State.

The Kurdish-led militia that operates the prison, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, or S.D.F., says that the children's ties to the Islamic State make them dangerous. It has also criticized foreign governments for refusing to repatriate their citizens held in the camps and prisons, including the children.

But aid workers and human rights advocates say detaining the children punishes them for the sins of their parents — and could fuel the

very radicalization that the authorities who locked them up say they want to prevent.

"Under international law, putting children in detention should be a last resort," said Bo Viktor Nylund, the representative for Syria for the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF. "The whole aspect of these children as victims of their circumstances has not been taken into account."

After days of fighting, the battle for the prison, in the city of Hasaka, centered on one three-story building that houses the kitchen, cloth-

ing workshop, clinic and barber-shop, said Farhad Shami, an S.D.F. spokesman. The upper floors of that building are the children's ward, where the 700 boys were detained.

Mr. Shami said he did not know how many of the boys had been killed or wounded. But Letta Tayler, a director with Human Rights Watch who tracks the Syria detentions, wrote on Twitter that she had spoken with two men and one boy inside the surrounded building, and they said they had seen many dead and wounded boys. They also said they had run out of food and water and had burned their mattresses to cook before the food ran out.

The detention crisis in northeastern Syria has its roots in the collapse of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate, which at its height was about the size of Britain and stretched into Syria and Iraq.

An international military coalition led by the United States joined with the S.D.F. to fight the jihadists in Syria, pushing them from their last patch of territory in March 2019.

The S.D.F. detained those who survived in an ad hoc network of prisons for the men and camps for the women and children, expecting that the countries the fighters and their families had come from would take them back. But most countries have refused, leaving the detainees languishing for years in squalid, dangerous camps and makeshift prisons, with no legal recourse.

Tens of thousands of children, most of them Syrians and Iraqis, live in the area's two main camps, along with thousands of children of other nationalities, said Ardian Shajkovci, director of the American Counterterrorism Targeting and Resilience Institute, which has researched the issue.

From 200 to 220 children are believed to be in two rehabilitation centers run by the S.D.F.-affiliated administration that governs the area.

The S.D.F. has long resisted providing information about the number of boys in its prisons, but



Young boys, many under the age of 16, sitting in a crowded cell where they were being held at a prison for former Islamic State members run by Kurdish-led forces in northeast Syria in 2019. Credit...Ivor Prickett for The New York Times

Mr. Shajkovci said there are about 700 in the Hasaka facility and about 35 in another lockup in the city of Qamishli. Most are Syrians and Iraqis, but about 150 are foreigners.

In 2019, when The New York Times first reported on the presence of children in the Hasaka prison, they were dressed in orange jumpsuits and crammed in normal cells near the adult prisoners.

Since then, their conditions have marginally improved, according to aid workers. They were segregated from the adults and moved to their own building on the north side of the compound, where there are three floors with about 15 cells each.

Aid groups have brought them blankets, mattresses, hygiene supplies and clothes. They have communal bathrooms and their own yard where they get regular recreation time.

Over the last 15 months, their number increased to 700 from about 550, aid workers said, when the S.D.F. moved some adolescents from the camps to the prison. In some cases, that meant separating them from their mothers, who remained in the camps.

They were removed for a variety of reasons: some after security incidents, some because the S.D.F. thought they had reached a "dangerous" age, or because of worries they would impregnate women in the camps, according to aid workers and Mr. Shajkovci, the researcher.

Mr. Shami, the S.D.F. spokesman, denied that any boys had been moved from the camps to the prison but said some had been taken to rehabilitation centers because they were at risk of getting radicalized in the camps, where many detainees remain steadfast supporters of the caliphate.

He called all the boys in the prison "cubs of the caliphate," the name ISIS used for children trained to fight, and said they had been captured in ISIS bases and could have been trained to carry out suicide bombings.

Mr. Nylund of UNICEF acknowledged that some of the boys could have played roles in combat but said it was difficult to determine each child's background and that some had clearly been too young to fight. None of the boys have been charged with a crime or seen a judge.

As the battle for control of the prison was still raging, none of

those circumstances mitigated the danger to the boys, Mr. Nylund said. "These children are at very close risk of falling both as targets in the crossfire and potentially being re-recruited or recruited for the first time and ending up in the hands of ISIS," he said.

Mehmet Balci, the founder and co-director of Fight for Humanity, a human rights group, has visited the prison three times. Last year, his organization began a project to do individual assessments of the boys to provide them with educational, recreational and psychological support, he said in an interview.

His group hired staff, purchased equipment, made plans for TV rooms for the boys and conducted two training sessions with the prison staff about child protection.

The ISIS attack put everything on hold.

Mr. Balci said the project could have made a bad situation for the boys a little better, but without changing what he saw as the fundamental injustice.

"These children should not have been there," he said. "This is not their place."

Syrie : les Kurdes reprennent une prison six jours après un assaut sanglant de l'État islamique

Les forces kurdes soutenues par des soldats américains en Syrie ont repris le contrôle d'une grande prison attaquée par l'État islamique (EI), mettant fin au plus important assaut jihadiste dans le pays en trois ans.

Les forces kurdes soutenues par des soldats américains en Syrie ont repris le contrôle d'une grande prison attaquée par l'État islamique (EI), mettant fin au plus important assaut jihadiste dans le pays en trois ans.

Les combats qui ont suivi l'assaut lancé le 20 janvier pour libérer des jihadistes de la prison de Ghwayran à Hassaké (nord-est) contrôlée par les forces kurdes, ont fait 181 morts -124 jihadistes, 50 combattants kurdes et sept civils-, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

45 000 civils prennent la fuite

Ils ont également poussé à la fuite par un temps glacial environ 45 000 personnes qui vivaient dans les secteurs proches de la prison, d'après l'ONU.

Certains déplacés ont trouvé refuge dans une mosquée de Hassaké. « On est en sécurité ici, mais il n'y a ni pain, ni eau, ni sucre », lance Maya, 38 ans, mère de neuf enfants, en tentant de calmer son nourrisson qui tremble de froid.

La prison sous contrôle

« Toute la prison est sous notre contrôle et les détenus sont transférés vers un lieu sûr », a indiqué Nowruz Ahmed, une responsable des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) dominées par les Kurdes et fer de lance de la lutte anti-EI en



9 000 combattants kurdes ont pris part à l'opération et continuent de ratisser la zone. (AFP)

Syrie, pays en guerre depuis 2011.

Elle a ajouté lors d'une conférence de presse que 9 000 combattants kurdes avaient pris part à l'opération et continuaient de ratisser la zone.

Plus d'une centaine de jihadistes à l'assaut

Des prisonniers, qui se sont mutinés et servis dans une armurerie, ont participé aux combats aux côtés d'assaillants qui ont réussi à s'infiltrer dans la prison.

Avec des camions piégés et des armes lourdes, plus d'une centaine de jihadistes ont participé à l'assaut, la plus importante attaque menée par l'EI depuis sa défaite territoriale en Syrie en 2019 face aux forces kurdes.

Aide des soldats américains

Les FDS ont été aidées par des soldats américains de la coalition internationale antijihadistes dirigée par Washington pour reprendre la prison. Les quartiers autour ont été sécurisés, selon les forces kurdes.

Un porte-parole des FDS, Farhad Shami, a fait état de la reddition des jihadistes retranchés dans la prison avant sa reprise.

Plus de 1 000 jihadistes se sont rendus

Les FDS avaient coupé la nourriture et l'eau de la prison pendant deux jours pour forcer les jihadistes à se rendre, a indiqué l'OSDH.

Plus de 1 000 jihadistes, des prisonniers ou des infiltrés, se sont rendus aux forces kurdes depuis le 20 janvier, avaient auparavant indiqué les FDS et l'OSDH. Et un nombre indéterminé de jihadistes sont parvenus à s'échapper depuis l'assaut, a dit l'ONG ce que les FDS ont démenti.

La prison abritait au moins 3 500 jihadistes de différentes nationalités, selon l'ONG.

L'ONU et des organisations de défense des droits humains ont fait également état de centaines de mineurs enfermés dans cette ancienne école convertie en centre de détention. On ignorait dans l'immédiat le sort de ces mineurs.

La communauté internationale appelée à l'aide

Mercredi, l'administration autonome kurde qui contrôle de vastes régions du nord et nord-est syrien a de nouveau appelé la communauté internationale à l'aide, craignant que l'EI ne se renforce.

« C'est un problème international que nous ne pouvons régler seuls », a dit à l'AFP Abdel Karim Omar, responsable kurde.

La plupart des pays occidentaux refusent de rapatrier l'ensemble de leurs citoyens détenus dans les prisons et camps sous contrôle des Kurdes, se contentant de rapatriements au compte-gouttes.

Les prisons, un terreau pour l'EI

Des experts voient dans l'assaut jihadiste une étape vers la résurgence de l'EI, qui s'est replié dans le désert syrien après sa défaite en Syrie et en 2017 en Irak, pays voisin.

« Il s'agit d'un problème mondial qui nécessite une réunion de nombreux pays pour trouver une solution durable à long terme », a déclaré la coalition internationale dans un communiqué. « Les prisons de fortune dans toute la Syrie sont un terreau fertile » pour l'EI.

« On meurt de froid ici »

Et comme toujours les civils payent le prix des violences dans un pays où la guerre complexe aux multiples protagonistes a fait environ 500 000 morts depuis 2011.

Face aux combats et craignant l'infiltration de jihadistes dans leurs quartiers proches de la prison, les habitants ont fui pour se réfugier chez des proches, dans une mosquée ou dans des tentes alors que les températures avoisinent zéro degré Celsius la nuit.

« On meurt de froid ici. Ce qu'on veut, c'est être en sécurité et rentrer chez nous », confie les larmes aux yeux Nabila, une mère de sept enfants.



January 27, 2022

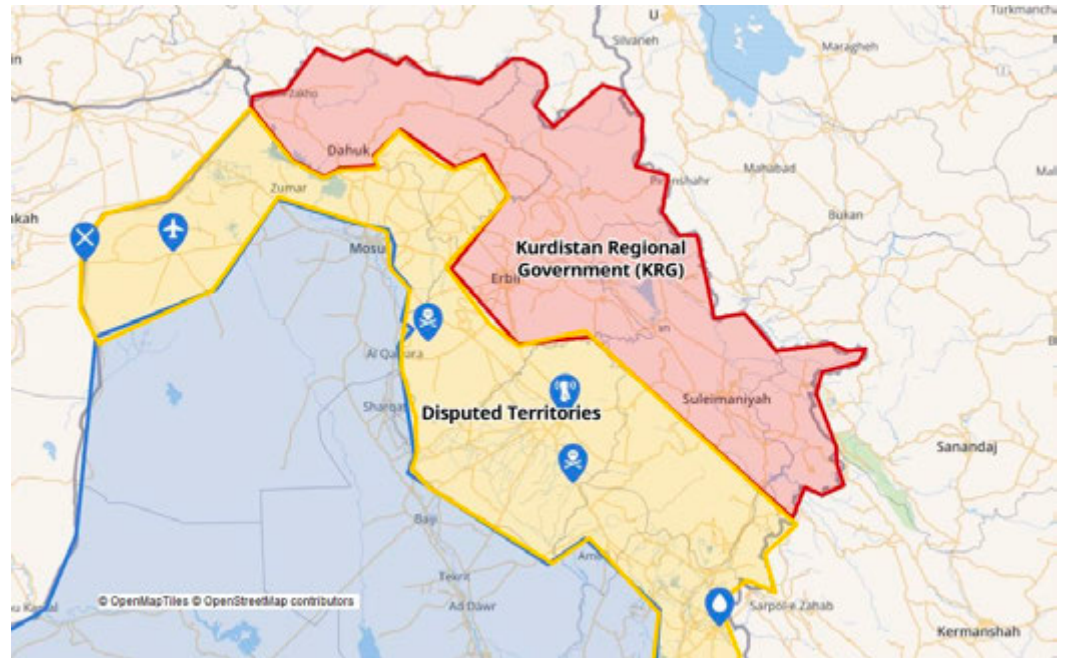
Washington kurdish institute Kirkuk Minute January 27, 2022

Kirkuk

In Kirkuk's Shorja, Imam Qasim, Shoraw, and Rahimawa neighborhoods, Kurds held anti-government protests after the deterioration of primary services, including electricity, continued. The government provides only four hours of "national power" while the population primarily depends on private sector generators, which have become increasingly costly.

Several ISIS (Da'esh) attacks in Kirkuk hit the Daquq district this week, including on January 23rd, when a civilian named Ibrahim Hamad Ismail was kidnapped in the Yarqhon village. The next day, an IED targeted a reconnaissance scout of Iraq's 8th army division, killing three soldiers and wounding one in Albu Shahab village. Iraq's Interior Ministry announced the highest level of emergency alert and called on security personnel on withdrawal. Moreover, on Tuesday, January 25th, Da'esh terrorists clashed with federal police near the Rokhana valley, leading Iraq's airforce to intervene after unconfirmed reports of the two death of police and wounding of four others. Likewise, on Thursday, January 27th, Da'esh terrorists attacked the commando brigade on three axes near Daquq's Tamour village. The fighting lasted over two hours. Meanwhile, security forces announced the arrest of a Da'esh sniper in Hawija district.

On Tuesday, January 25th, the Iraqi Integrity Commission re-



leased a statement announcing an appeal against recent "simple" sentences the Central Anti-Corruption Criminal Court issued against several officials who were sentenced to one year in prison. The officials were responsible for allocating relief funds for displaced people in Kirkuk. The commission called for "Toughening the penalties"

Khanaqin

Khanaqin's agriculture department said fears of drought have led the farmers to only cultivate 50% of the farmlands in the area, totaling approximately 10,000 dunums. The farmers' hesitancy comes from losing much of their crops last year due to the drought caused by rain scarcity and water cut off on rivers by Iran. Separately, a demonstration in front of Khanaqin's mayor's of-

fice called for the government to provide kerosene, which is supposed to be allocated by the government in the winter. The town suffers from a lack of essential services, including heating fuel.

Makhmour

On Sunday, January 23rd, Da'esh terrorists attacked a base of the Iraqi army west of the mountain range. After clashes, the Da'esh terrorists withdrew to their hideouts. Meanwhile, in Makhmour, Turkish drones hovered over the refugee camp holding Kurds from Turkey on Wednesday. The Makhmour refugee camp has suffered several Turkish airstrikes since 2017.

Shingal (Sinjar)

On Friday, January 21st, a

Turkish drone struck a convoy of the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), killing three members, including a commander named Ali Shair. On Friday, January 28th, another Turkish airstrike targeted a senior leader of the YBS named Seliman Shamo Yousif in front of his home in Shingal's Shilo neighborhood. Turkish-state-owned news confirmed the Yazidi casualties.

A Yazidi lawmaker, former mayor of Shingal, Mehma Khalil, warned about the possible arrival of fleeing terrorists from the Da'esh prison break in Syria's Hasakah to the Yazidi region. Khalil called for "immediate" control of the security of Iraq-Syrian borders. Moreover, on Thursday, a military official said they thwarted Da'esh's plan by Da'esh escapees to enter the region from Syria.

Le Monde 28 janvier 2022
By Hélène Sallon

A la prison d'Hassaké, la résistance acharnée de l'EI face aux Kurdes

Les Forces démocratiques syriennes peinent à reprendre le contrôle du centre de détention, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, attaqué par les djihadistes le 20 janvier.

Des combats sporadiques continuaient d'opposer, vendredi 28 janvier, les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS, à dominante kurde) aux djihadistes de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) retranchés dans la prison de Ghwayran et ses alentours à Hassaké, dans le nord-est de la Syrie. L'annonce faite par les FDS, la veille, de la reprise du centre de détention, au terme d'affrontements qui ont fait plus de 235 morts, était prématurée.

Plusieurs dizaines de djihadistes ont été localisés dans l'aile nord de la prison lors des opérations de ratissage. Un nombre indéterminé de combattants se terrent aussi dans les quartiers adjacents. Depuis une semaine, ils opposent une résistance acharnée aux forces kurdes, malgré l'appui que ces dernières ont reçu des unités américaines de la coalition internationale anti-EI.

L'EI a lancé l'assaut sur Ghwayran le 20 janvier, dans le but de regarnir ses rangs après la chute de son califat autoproclamé en 2019. La prison, la plus grande sous contrôle kurde, était depuis longtemps une cible, en raison de sa surpopulation et de sa sécurité notoirement défaillante. L'ancienne école, reconverte en pénitencier, accueillait environ 5 000 détenus, selon une estimation de la coalition anti-EI, en février 2021 : des djihadistes syriens et étrangers, parmi lesquels des commandants du groupe, ainsi que 700 mineurs. Selon nos informations, il n'y avait pas de ressortissant français parmi les détenus. Les hommes djihadistes de nationalité française arrêtés par les Kurdes ces dernières années – entre 50 et 100



Les Forces démocratiques syriennes, à Hassaké, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, jeudi 27 janvier. BADERKHAN AHMAD / AP

selon les estimations – ont été transférés il y a quelque temps de façon discrète vers un autre lieu de détention, mieux protégé. « Beaucoup de cadavres d'enfants »

Les assaillants – près de 200, selon les FDS – sont parvenus à ouvrir une brèche dans l'enceinte de la prison à l'aide de deux véhicules piégés. A l'intérieur, au même moment, des détenus se sont mutinés et se sont servis dans une armurerie, avant de faire jonction avec des assaillants. Des prisonniers ont réussi à s'évader et se sont retranchés dans les quartiers adjacents, aidés par des cellules dormantes. Les échanges de tirs ont entraîné la fuite, par un temps glacial, de plus de 45 000 habitants d'Hassaké, selon l'ONU. Les forces américaines, qui disposent de 700 hommes dans une base des environs, ont procédé à des frappes aériennes et au déploiement de blindés pour appuyer les forces kurdes.

Mardi, les FDS ont coupé l'accès des détenus djihadistes à l'eau et à la nourriture, dans l'espoir de les forcer à se rendre. Ces derniers s'étaient retranchés dans l'un des bâtiments du complexe, prenant en otage des gardes et les 700 mineurs installés dans cette aile. Parmi ces enfants âgés de 12 à 17

ans se trouvaient une majorité de Syriens et d'Irakiens, et une centaine d'autres nationalités selon les FDS, pour certains extraits des camps où ils vivaient jusque-là avec leur famille. « Aucun d'eux n'a été condamné pour un crime au regard du droit national ou international. Ces enfants n'auraient jamais dû être maintenus en détention militaire en premier lieu. La violence à laquelle ils ont été soumis relève des crimes de guerre », a dénoncé l'Unicef, dans un communiqué, craignant qu'ils ne soient « blessés ou recrutés de force ».

L'ONG Save the Children a affirmé, lundi, détenir les preuves que plusieurs de ces enfants ont été tués ou blessés dans les combats. Des témoignages rapportés par Letta Tayler, de l'ONG Human Rights Watch, en attestent, notamment celui d'un Australien de 17 ans qui dit avoir été blessé à la tête et avoir vu « beaucoup de cadavres d'enfants ». Les forces kurdes, qui considèrent ces mineurs comme dangereux, se sont défendues en disant que ces enfants se trouvaient dans des dortoirs séparés, dans l'attente qu'une solution soit trouvée. Elles ont réitéré leur appel aux Nations unies, et aux Etats dont ils ont la nationalité, à les rapatrier.

Appel à l'aide internationale

A court de nourriture et d'eau, et incapables de soigner leurs blessés, les djihadistes ont négocié leur reddition, mercredi. Selon les forces kurdes, la plupart des enfants ont été libérés et transférés dans un autre lieu. Les combats ont toutefois repris le lendemain, après la localisation de djihadistes retranchés dans la prison et les quartiers alentours. Les FDS ont annoncé que 60 à 90 djihadistes étaient dissimulés dans les sous-sols de l'aile nord de la prison. Elles ont maintenu le couvre-feu à Hassaké, bloquant toutes les entrées pour empêcher les djihadistes en fuite de gagner d'autres régions.

Selon un bilan provisoire de l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH), pas moins de 173 djihadistes, 55 combattants kurdes et sept civils ont été tués depuis le début de l'attaque. L'ONG, basée à Londres, a précisé que « le sort de dizaines de personnes [est] toujours inconnu ». Les FDS ont annoncé la reddition d'environ 3 000 membres de l'EI. Selon un membre de la coalition anti-EI, ils ont été transférés dans une « nouvelle installation renforcée ». L'EI affirme, de son côté, avoir libéré des centaines de détenus.

L'administration kurde a lancé un nouvel appel à l'aide internationale, rappelant à leurs obligations les pays qui refusent de rapatrier leurs citoyens détenus dans les prisons et camps sous son contrôle. Cet appel a été relayé par les Nations unies, ainsi que par le chef de la coalition anti-EI, le général John W. Brennan. « Il s'agit d'un problème mondial qui nécessite que les nations se réunissent pour trouver une solution à long terme, a-t-il exhorté. Les prisons de fortune à travers la Syrie sont un terreau fertile pour l'idéologie en faillite de Daech. »



29 janvier 2022

Turquie : l'inflation s'envole, Recep Tayyip Erdogan limoge son statisticien en chef

Le chef de l'Office national des statistiques a été limogé par le président turc pour avoir publié des données qui placent le taux d'inflation annuel du pays à 36,1 %, son plus haut niveau en 19 ans.

Face à l'inflation galopante, Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'en prend à son statisticien. Le président turc a limogé le chef de l'agence nationale des statistiques, selon un décret paru samedi 29 janvier, après la publication de données qui placent le taux d'inflation annuel à 36,1 %, son plus haut niveau en 19 ans.



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le 20 octobre 2021. © Afolabi Sotunde, Reuters

"J'ai une responsabilité vis-à-vis de 84 millions de personnes", avait fait valoir le statisticien, Sait Erdal Dincer, expliquant au quotidien économique *Dunya* qu'il était tout simplement impossible de publier des chiffres de l'inflation différents de ceux constatés par ses services.

L'opposition a néanmoins déclaré que le chiffre officiel était sous-estimé, affirmant que l'augmentation réelle du coût de la vie était au moins deux fois plus élevée. Une envolée à plus de 36 %

Le président Erdogan n'a pas expliqué sa décision de nommer Erhan Cetinkaya, ancien vice-président du régulateur bancaire turc, au poste de chef des statistiques de

l'État, à la place de Sait Erdal Dincer.

"Cette décision ne fera qu'accroître le manque de confiance dans les données officielles dans un contexte où la politique économique est déjà une source d'inquiétude", a estimé l'analyste Timothy Ash de Blue Bay Asset.

L'inflation s'est envolée à plus de 36 % sur un an en décembre en Turquie, un record depuis septembre 2002, dû à la dégringolade de la livre turque. Mais le président Erdogan, en position inconfortable à dix-huit mois de l'élection présidentielle, continue de défendre ses choix.

La hausse des prix à la consommation, plus de sept fois supérieure à l'objectif initial du gouvernement, à 13,58 % sur le seul mois de décembre, s'explique par la chute de près de 45 % de la livre turque face au dollar en un an, malgré des mesures d'urgence annoncées par le chef de l'État mi-décembre.

Conscient des dommages causés non seulement à l'économie mais aussi à sa cote de confiance, Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait promis début janvier de "ramener l'inflation à un chiffre le plus vite possible"

Bataille politique

Car ces données sont l'objet

d'une âpre bataille politique : l'opposition et une partie de la population accusent l'Office national des statistiques (Tüik) de sous-estimer sciemment la hausse des prix, alimentée par la politique économique du président qui a poussé la banque centrale turque à abaisser systématiquement ses taux d'intérêt ces derniers mois.

Le président a par ailleurs nommé comme nouveau ministre de la Justice l'ancien vice-Premier ministre Bekir Bozdag pour remplacer le membre vétéran du parti au pouvoir, Abdulhamit Gul.

"Le ministre de la Justice est remplacé, le président du Tüik (Office national des statistiques) est limogé avant que les nouveaux chiffres de l'inflation ne soient publiés : on ignore pourquoi", a écrit sur Twitter l'ancien vice-Premier ministre Ali Babacan, qui a quitté le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) d'Erdogan pour fonder le Parti de la démocratie et du progrès (Deva).

Les données de l'inflation du mois de janvier doivent être publiées jeudi.

Face à l'Iran, les premiers pas d'une contre-diplomatie des otages

Un ancien prisonnier américain de Téhéran, Barry Rosen, tente de mobiliser les diplomates occidentaux pour lier le sort des « otages » détenus par le régime iranien aux discussions en cours autour de l'accord sur le nucléaire.

Barry Rosen est encore surpris par l'impact qu'a eu sa démarche destinée à dénoncer la « diplomatie des otages » en Iran. « J'ai le sentiment qu'il y a un nouveau sentiment d'urgence pour venir en aide à ces gens emprisonnés par l'Iran », affirme-t-il. Rentré mercredi aux États-Unis, cet ancien otage de la prise de l'ambassade américaine à Téhéran a rencontré ces derniers jours des diplomates des délégations française, allemande, américaine et européenne à Vienne où des pourparlers se tiennent pour tenter de sauver l'accord de 2015 censé empêcher la République islamique de se doter de l'arme atomique. Son objectif ? « Essayer de convaincre les États-Unis, l'E3 (France, Royaume-Uni et Allemagne) et les Européens de dire à l'Iran qu'il n'y aura pas d'accord sur le nucléaire tant que tous les otages ne sont pas libres, explique l'énergique septuagénaire, depuis son appartement à New York. Il faut un front uni contre l'Iran, qui utilise des gens comme monnaie d'échange, pour mettre un terme à cette diplomatie des otages. »

Une douzaine de ressortissants occidentaux détenus Sa démarche, qui bouscule les usages feutrés de la diplomatie, n'a pas été ignorée. « J'ai reçu un retour très positif de la part de l'envoyé spécial américain – Robert Malley –, qui m'a dit qu'il n'imaginait pas un accord avec l'Iran sans la libération des quatre otages américains, se félicite-t-il. Mais



je veux aussi m'assurer que nos amis européens sont sur la même longueur d'onde pour que chaque otage soit libéré d'Iran », ajoute Barry Rosen, rejoint à Vienne par un autre ex-détenu libano-américain, Nizar Zakka, qui dirige l'ONG Hostage Aid Worldwide.

La République islamique détient actuellement une douzaine de ressortissants occidentaux, souvent binationaux, qui sont en prison ou en résidence surveillée, pour « espionnage » ou « atteinte à la sécurité de l'État ». Parmi eux se trouvent le Français Benjamin Brière, condamné la semaine dernière, après plus d'un an et demi de détention, à huit ans et huit mois de prison, ainsi que la chercheuse franco-iranienne Fariba Adelkhah, condamnée à cinq ans de prison et réincarcérée mi-janvier. « J'espère que Benjamin Brière et Fariba Adelkhah supportent la souffrance et comprennent que des gens ici se soucient d'eux. Ils ont besoin du soutien du gouverne-

ment français, qui doit garder une position forte contre l'Iran », estime Barry Rosen.

Le traumatisme de 444 jours de détention

Les conditions de détention de tous ces détenus ont une résonance directe avec ce que l'Américain a lui-même vécu pendant 444 jours entre 1979 et 1981, comme 51 autres otages de la prise de l'ambassade des États-Unis. « Je sais de quoi j'ai souffert à cause de ce régime et je ne veux pas que d'autres vivent la même chose. Être otage crée des problèmes psychiques pendant toute une vie, ajoute-t-il. Il y a plusieurs semaines, je me suis dit qu'il fallait faire quelque chose pour eux. C'est comme un mauvais film qui dure depuis trop longtemps. »

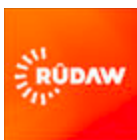
Pour donner davantage d'écho à sa démarche promue sur les réseaux sociaux grâce au hashtag #FreeTheHostages, Barry Rosen s'est mis en grève de la faim quelques

jours à Vienne, avant que ses médecins le convainquent d'y mettre un terme. « Mais les diplomates ont été surpris de voir que quelqu'un de 77 ans que l'Iran a fait souffrir il y a quatre décennies soit disposé à faire une grève de la faim pour parler de gens victimes de violations des droits de l'homme », affirme-t-il. L'un des détenus actuels, l'ingénieur irano-britannique Anoozheh Ashoori, a depuis cessé de s'alimenter « par solidarité ».

« Deux questions intimement liées »

Mais le fait de lier le dossier nucléaire au sort des détenus aux mains de Téhéran n'est pas du goût de tous. Certains observateurs questionnent cette démarche et appellent, comme le fait officiellement le département d'État américain, à faire évoluer les deux dossiers de manière distincte.

« Bien sûr que ces deux questions sont intimement liées : l'Iran prend des otages pour avoir un meilleur deal dans les négociations ! Alors, oui, les experts disent qu'il faut tout séparer, les négociations sur le nucléaire et les otages, mais ils n'ont jamais vécu comme otage et ne savent pas ce que traversent ces prisonniers ! », s'agace l'ex-détenu, qui entend encore rester un caillou dans la chaussure de Téhéran. « Ma démarche peut être vue comme une contre-diplomatie des otages, c'est le volet humain de la diplomatie des otages. »



January 29, 2022

Turkey's justice minister steps down

Turkish justice minister Abdulhamit Gul said early Saturday that he has resigned from his position without revealing why he has stepped down.

"With the approval of our honourable President, I have resigned from my duty as justice minister which I have been serving since July 19, 2017," Gul said in a tweet, thanking Erdogan "for accepting my request for relief."

Gul also wished success for his successor Bekir Bozdag who was appointed by Erdogan in the same presidential decree that approved Gul's resignation. Bozdag has served as justice minister and deputy prime min-



File photo of former Turkish Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul. Credit : handout.

ister in the past and currently serves as a lawmaker for Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

In another presidential decree, Erdogan also replaced the head of the statistics institute (TUIK).

Ali Babacan, a former foreign minister and the head of the newly-established Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), slammed Erdogan for the replacements.

"A country governed by decisions made at night with the signature of a single person can only do this much," he said in a tweet, adding that no one know why such changes are made.

He also said that the AKP's alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) continues to harm the country.



30 janvier 2022

En Syrie, nouveau bilan de 373 morts dans l'attaque du groupe EI contre une prison

L'attaque du groupe État islamique contre la prison d'Hasaké (nord-est de la Syrie) a fait 373 morts selon un nouveau bilan établi dimanche par l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH). Parmi eux, 268 jihadistes, 98 membres des forces kurdes et sept civils. L'ONG estime que le bilan risque encore de s'alourdir car de nombreux combattants kurdes ont été grièvement blessés lors de ces combats.

L'assaut des jihadistes de l'État islamique (EI) contre une prison du nord-est de la Syrie et les combats les opposant aux forces kurdes ont fait 373 morts, selon un nouveau bilan établi dimanche 30 janvier par l'Observatoire syrien

des droits de l'homme (OSDH).

Cette ONG, au vaste réseau de sources en Syrie, avait donné un précédent bilan faisant état de 332 morts dans les combats entre Kurdes et jihadistes depuis l'assaut, le 20 janvier, de la prison de Ghwayran, à Hassaké.

Un nouveau bilan de l'OSDH fait désormais état de 373 morts, dont 268 jihadistes, 98 membres des forces kurdes et sept civils.

Cette hausse est due à la découverte de nouveaux cadavres - de Kurdes mais aussi de jihadistes - durant les opérations de ratissage dans les bâtiments de la prison et les quartiers proches de l'établis-

sement, selon l'OSDH.

Fin des opérations de ratissage "Le bilan est provisoire car il y a des dizaines de cadavres mutilés qui n'ont pas pu être identifiés," a précisé Rami Abdel Rahmane, le directeur de l'OSDH.

L'ONG estime que le bilan risque encore de s'alourdir car de nombreux combattants kurdes ont été grièvement blessés lors de ces combats.

lus tôt dans la journée, les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les Kurdes, ont annoncé la fin des opérations de ratissage dans la prison attaquée de Ghwayran.

Fer de lance de la lutte contre les jihadistes en Syrie, les FDS avaient

déclaré mercredi avoir repris le contrôle de la prison, à l'issue de six jours d'intenses combats. Mais des combats sporadiques les ont ensuite opposés aux jihadistes du groupe EI, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur de l'établissement.

D'après l'OSDH, vingt jihadistes se sont rendus dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche, et cinq autres sont morts dans des combats au sein de la prison.

Les FDS enquêtent sur les circonstances de l'attaque de l'organisation EI, a assuré l'OSDH. "Des dizaines de détenus de l'EI ont réussi à s'enfuir (...) dans les premières heures de l'attaque", a précisé l'ONG.



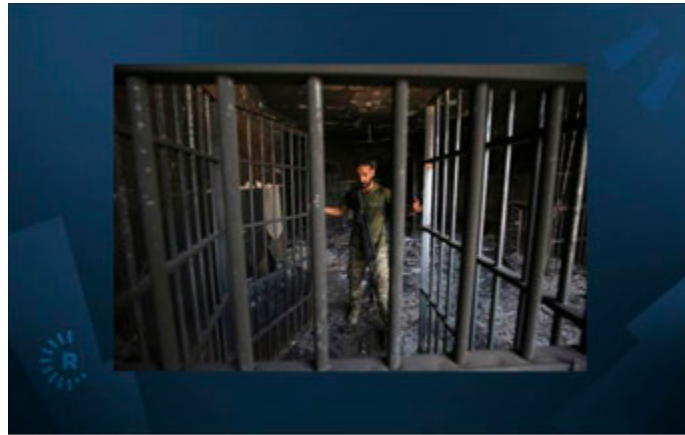
January 30, 2022

Iraqi counter-terrorism launches prison inspection operations

Iraqi counter-terrorism forces on Sunday announced that they had launched a major campaign to inspect prisons on the orders of the Iraqi premier Mustafa al-Kadhimi. These measures to secure Iraqi prisons from potential security gaps follow a major prison siege by the Islamic State (ISIS) group in Hasaka, northeast Syria (Rojava).

"After the recent security developments in the Syrian city of Hasaka, in which ISIS elements tried to escape from the 'Sina'a prison' ... units of the counter-terrorism service launched a major campaign to inspect Iraqi prisons in several provinces, which began on the 22nd of January and continued until the 30th," the counter-terrorism forces announced on Sunday, as reported by state media.

ISIS detainees led an audacious attack on the al-Sina'a prison in Hasaka's Ghweran neighborhood on Friday, January 21st. The facility housed around 5,000 ISIS



An Iraqi officer conducting an inspection on an Iraqi prison on June 30, 2016. File photo: Ahmad al-Rubaye/AFP

members at the time of the incursion, and the major escape attempt raised significant concern about the terror group's capabilities, despite their complete lack of territorial control.

An additional 5,000 other militants are held by the SDF in other jails.

"The intelligence of the [Iraqi] Counter-Terrorism Service partici-

pated in this campaign, which obtained important and precise information related to terrorist cells who are trying to create a foothold in our country," continued the statement.

According to data obtained by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the death toll from ISIS's attempted prison break in Hasaka has reached 322 dead.

Among them are 246 ISIS members, 79 security forces (Asayish) and prison guards, and seven civilians. SOHR also noted that the fate of many ISIS prisoners remains unknown.

The prison attack in Hasaka is the largest operation conducted by ISIS since the fall of its territorial caliphate in 2019.

ISIS controlled swathes of Iraqi and Syrian land in 2014 but it was declared territorially defeated in 2017 and 2019 respectively. However, the group still poses a threat to both countries through bombings, hit-and-run attacks, kidnappings, and other tactics.

On Saturday, Iraqi security forces arrested four civilians in Nineveh who were forcing citizens to pay money to finance ISIS.

Iraqi and Syrian security forces often carry out operations against members of the terror group.

The New York Times

January 30, 2022

By Jane Arraf, Sangar Khaleel

U.S. Allies Retake Control of Prison in Syria, Subduing ISIS Fighters

The fighting was the most intense urban warfare involving American troops in Iraq and Syria since the fall of the Islamic State.

Kurdish-led forces regained full control of a prison in northeastern Syria on Sunday after a battle which spread to surrounding neighborhoods in the most intense urban combat involving American soldiers in Iraq or Syria since the self-declared ISIS caliphate fell in 2019.

"We announce the end of the

sweep campaign in al-Sina'a Prison in Ghweran neighborhood in Hasaka and the end of the last pockets in which ISIS mercenaries were holed up," the Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish militia, said in a statement.

The U.S. Special Operations Joint Task Force said the militia had cleared the prison of "active

enemy fighters" and was conducting recovery operations to make sure the area was fully safe. It said detainees were transferred to a more secure site.

The Syrian Democratic Forces, American partners in the fight against ISIS, did not say whether the last remaining gunmen in the prison had surren-

dered since Saturday or whether they had been killed. S.D.F. officials said Saturday that the gunmen were believed to be holding teenage detainees hostage.

Fighting in the past week has spilled into the residential areas of Hasaka near the prison.

New York Times journalists saw several dozen bodies, some

dressed in orange prison jumpsuits, being carted away over the weekend by Kurdish militiamen near the prison, an indication of the scale of fighting in recent days.

On Sunday clearing operations continued in the Ghweran neighborhood around the prison to find ISIS sleeper cells. The day before, Kurdish-led counterterrorism forces backed by U.S. Special Operations troops went house to house in the narrow alleys of the neighborhood in the majority-Arab city.

Kurdish forces threw flash grenades into homes where they believed ISIS fighters were hiding as residents gathered in the streets.

The latest round of fighting began this month after an attack by ISIS on the prison, which housed more than 3,000 ISIS members and almost 700 minors.

On Saturday the Syrian Democratic Forces said that about 30 ISIS fighters surrendered overnight but that the remaining militants in the prison were believed to be holding teenage detainees as human shields. "We think there are cubs of the caliphate with them," Farhad Shami, an S.D.F. spokesman, said in reference to the children forced by ISIS to become fighters.

The Kurdish militia has released conflicting information about the siege. On Wednesday it declared it had regained control of the prison after the United States launched airstrikes and sent in armored fighting vehicles to help retake it. On Thursday, it was clear that fighting with gunmen barricaded in prison buildings was continuing.

By Saturday, there were increasing signs that the battle was much fiercer than had initially been reported. Members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces providing water to Syrian families near al-Sinaa prison in Hasaka. On the edge of the Ghweran neighborhood, journalists for



Fighting spilled into a residential area of Hasaka, Syria, on Saturday near where Kurdish forces were trying to subdue the last ISIS fighters barricaded in a prison. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

The New York Times saw what appeared to be at least 80 bodies being transported in a small truck from the direction of the prison and being dumped in a pile on the road. Kurdish fighters heaved them one by one into the shovel of a yellow front-end loader, which moved them into a 40-foot gravel truck to be taken away for burial.

While some bodies were in prison jumpsuits, others were dressed in civilian clothing, as is also common among those held at the site. Almost all the corpses were intact and unbloodied, many of their faces and bodies black with soot.

A distraught fighter shouted at a Times photographer not to take photos.

"We know this is not right, but there are so many of them," he said.

Hasaka, in the breakaway Kurdish-led region of Rojava, is surrounded by hostile Syrian forces and Turkish-backed troops who occupy northwestern Syria.

The region has been struggling with existential security threats, a lack of infrastructure and near financial collapse. Foreign countries have refused to repatriate ISIS fighters and their families, leaving Rojava to become a haven for the remnants of the self-declared ISIS caliphate, including thousands of accused fighters and tens of thousands of their family members.

mine how many ISIS fighters had been killed.

S.D.F. officials have said prison inmates who were younger than 18 have been transferred to a new location. The minors were brought to Syria as young children with their parents.

An official with the Y.P.G., the main Kurdish faction, said most of the ISIS fighters who were still barricaded in the prison surrendered on Friday night after the Kurdish-led forces stormed the building.

"They told us they were surrendering and then they came out one by one and put their guns on the ground," said Siyamend Ali, the Y.P.G. media director. He said some laid down suicide belts.

Hasaka has been under lockdown since the prison break on Jan. 20. Shops are shuttered and makeshift shelters house families displaced by the fighting. In some areas there has been no electricity or running water for more than a week.

In the Ghweran neighborhood on Saturday, a group of men and boys stood in an alley down the street from U.S. and Kurdish armored vehicles. "It is an un-



Members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces providing water to Syrian families near al-Sinaa prison in Hasaka. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

probably higher. It has not released figures for the number of inmates killed in the fighting.

An official with the U.S.-led coalition who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly said it would take time to deter-

believably bad situation," said a laborer who would be identified only by his first name, Mohammad, because he feared speaking about ISIS. "The neighborhood has not been cleared properly yet and ISIS is using the rooftops to jump from one house to another."

Mort suspecte d'un prisonnier kurde à Bolu

Le prisonnier politique kurde, Mehmet Hanifi Bilgin est mort de façon suspecte dans une cellule de la prison de Bolu. Condamné à 30 ans de prison, Bilgin devait retrouver sa liberté dans quelques mois. L'administration pénitentiaire prétend que Bilgin est mort « d'une crise cardiaque ».

La famille de Bilgin est venue à Ankara de Bingöl pour recevoir le corps. Le député du HDP Bingöl, Erdal Aydemir, et l'avocat de la branche d'Ankara de l'Association des avocats pour la liberté (ÖHD) Kenan Maçoğlu se sont également rendus à l'Institut de médecine légale d'Ankara (ATK) où le corps se trouvait pour l'autopsie.

Après les procédures d'autopsie, Bilgin serait emmené dans sa ville natale.



Bilgin devait être libéré dans 5 mois. Il était originaire du district Genç de Bingöl. Il avait subi une crise cardiaque il y a 3 ans.

HDP : Les prisons ont été transformées en mouiroir

Le HDP a publié une déclaration

soulignant que 8 prisonniers sont morts en prison au cours des 3 derniers mois.

Le HDP a ajouté que: « Tous ces décès sont indissociables de la politique du gouvernement, qui transforme les prisons en lieux de mort. Bien que l'État soit responsable de la protection du droit à la vie

des détenus conformément aux dispositions de la Constitution et de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, il a suspendu tous les droits, en particulier le droit d'accès à la santé et a transformé les prisons en centres de soins physiques et psychologiques. torture.

Nous tenons à exprimer une fois de plus que la manière d'établir la justice dans ces terres sera possible en changeant la mentalité anti-justice, et non le ministre de la Justice. Forts de cette prise de conscience, nous réitérons une fois de plus que nous intensifierons notre lutte politique, sociale et judiciaire face à l'attaque systématique contre la vie des prisonniers, et nous tiendrons bien sûr responsables de ces décès ceux qui ont causé ces décès sur le terrain de la loi. »

The New York Times

January 31, 2022

By Jane Arraf and Sangar Khaleel

Teenage Inmates Found Among the 500 Dead in Syria Prison Attack

The bodies of at least two boys were found on a street behind the prison — the first confirmed deaths among up to 700 teenagers who had been detained there because they were the children of ISIS fighters.

The boy had dark brown hair coated in white dust, and on his chin were the wispy beginnings of a beard.

On Sunday, his body and that of another youth were found lying on a dirt road behind the prison in northeastern Syria where a Kurdish-led force, backed by the U.S. military, fought for more than a

week to put down an attempt by Islamic State militants to free former fighters held there.

The discovery of the bodies was the first confirmation that at least two of up to 700 teenage boys, who had been detained in the prison because they were the children of ISIS fighters, were killed in the fighting.

The leader of the Kurdish-led

Syrian Democratic Forces, which ran the prison, acknowledged Monday that "a very small number" of the boys had been killed.

"Some escaped with the adults," the commander, known by his nom de guerre Mazlum Kobani, said in an interview, his first since the siege began. "They were either rearrested or were killed."

Some had been held as hostages during the prison siege, according to the S.D.F. A fuller accounting of the ISIS prison siege, and the efforts by the Kurdish-led militia and American forces to put it down, emerged on Monday, a day after the Syrian Democratic Forces, or S.D.F., regained full control over the Sinaa prison in the city of Hasaka.

About 500 people were killed, 374 of them linked to ISIS, the S.D.F. said. The death toll also included about 40 S.D.F. fighters, 77 prison staff and guards, and four civilians.

The group also said that the ISIS fighters who assaulted the prison had used sleeper cells to aid in the attack, and that the prison assault was part of a larger plot to also attack the giant detention camps in the same region that hold tens of thousands of people, most of them wives and children of ISIS fighters, and the city of Raqqa, once the de facto capital of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate.

The boys had been held at the prison in Hasaka for three years as the international community debated what to do with them.

The S.D.F. has said that their ties to the Islamic State made them dangerous, and some of the older ones may have been trained to fight, while human rights organizations consider them victims, children brought to the Islamic State through no choice of their own.

Both groups have clamored for the boys' home countries to repatriate them.

Mr. Kobani, the S.D.F. commander, said he had been asking the international community for three years to build rehabilitation centers in his impoverished region. Without better facilities or unless their countries taking them back, he said, there was no where else but the prison to put them.

The bodies of the two boys seen by The New York Times on Sunday lay on a dirt road along with the remains of four other corpses, all of them dismembered. All appeared to have been shot.



A woman sat with her child on the rubble of her house in Hasaka, Syria, on Sunday. The home was destroyed in operations by the Syrian Democratic Forces aimed at capturing ISIS militants. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

One of them still wore socks made from gray blankets used at the prison. Fragments of orange prison uniforms were strewn nearby.

Some of the neighborhood boys kicked the corpses as they passed by, in a display of the deep hatred that many residents of this area harbor toward ISIS.

Neighborhood residents said the boys were among a group of escaped inmates, most of them Iraqi, who were killed on Friday by the S.D.F. as its troops went door to door to hunt down ISIS fighters.

"Poor kids, they turned them into soldiers," said a neighbor who did not give her name out of fear for her safety. "We

wish they would take them away."

It was not clear whether the boys had sought to escape with the ISIS fighters or were still being held hostage by them. Several residents said they did not see the boys or the escaped inmates alive and did not know whether any had been armed.

Mr. Kobani said that all of the boys were trained ISIS fighters, an assertion disputed by human rights groups. And he said the boys ranged in age from 15 to 17. Human rights workers have said the boys were as young as 12.

He also appeared to be shocked about a Times report on Sunday that at least 80 bodies were dumped from a front-end loader onto the



One of the teenage boys who had been held at the Syrian prison attacked by ISIS was found dead in the streets of Hasaka after an operation by Kurdish special forces near the prison. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

street and then shoveled into a gravel truck to be taken away to a mass grave.

"This is my first time hearing about it," Mr. Kobani said. "If this happened, it is a sin."

The American-led military coalition in northeast Syria, asked about the dead boys and the bodies being dumped, called both "an unfortunate reality" in war.

"The S.D.F. employed the appropriate amount of lethal force to counter the attack and quell the detainee uprising," the coalition said in a statement. "Time and again they tried to negotiate a full surrender, and used the necessary force to respond to hostile actions."

"Although the images The New York Times witnessed are disturbing," the statement added, "they are an unfortunate reality in armed conflict where there are significant casualties and measures must be taken to limit the spread of disease."

The streets around the prison were littered with the rubble of homes destroyed by security forces.

The streets around the prison were littered with the rubble of homes destroyed by security forces who used armored bulldozers and fighting vehicles to kill ISIS fighters and escaped prisoners who refused to surrender. Residents said they saw armored vehicles flying American flags taking part in the operations.

The prison attack drew in U.S. forces and turned into the biggest battle between the American military and ISIS in the three years since the group lost the last remnant of its so-called caliphate, a large swath of territory in Syria and Iraq. The United States conducted airstrikes and provided intelligence and ground troops in Bradley fighting vehicles to support the S.D.F. efforts.

Abu Jassim, another resident who lived in the neighborhood behind the prison, said he returned to his house on Friday and found four escaped inmates there wearing their prison uniforms.

“They said ‘Come in and sit down. Do you know us?’” he recounted. “I said ‘You are the Islamic State’. They said ‘Sit down and don’t interfere.’”

Two of the escaped prisoners were from Iraq while another was from Chechnya, Abu Jassim said. They told him not to be afraid and that they would leave when it got dark. He persuaded them to let him leave the house.

He reported their presence to the S.D.F., which arrived soon after with bulldozers.

“They started to hit the walls until the house fell down,” he said.

Their four bodies were those later seen on the street near those of the two boys.

The S.D.F. said that based on seized ISIS documents and the confessions of captured ISIS leaders, it had determined that the prison attack was part of a much larger plan. If it had succeeded, the S.D.F. said, the group would have attacked surrounding neighborhoods, Raqqa, and the sprawling Al Hol detention camp that holds an estimated 60,000 family members of ISIS fighters.

Al Hol, about 40 miles from Hasaka, is the main detention



U.S.-backed Syrian forces searched for escaped prisoners and Islamic State fighters near the prison in the city of Hasaka. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

camp set up to house the families of ISIS fighters detained after the fall of the caliphate three years ago.

S.D.F. factions secure both the exterior and inside of the camp but do not have enough



S.D.F. forces checked documents of Syrian men on Sunday while searching for Islamic State fighters. Credit...Diego Ibarra Sanchez for The New York Times

guards to be able to combat increasing ISIS activity there, including frequent murders. Mr. Kobani said that he has asked for more U.S. and coalition support to secure al-

Hol and other detention camps and prisons.

Both the camp and the prison lie in an isolated and impoverished breakaway region in northeastern Syria. The S.D.F. has struggled to maintain con-

trol over both and has long warned that it cannot safely guard them.

Among the camp residents are several thousand foreign

women and children whose home countries have refused to allow them to come back. They live in unsanitary conditions and children have died there of malnutrition and lack of medical care.

One resident living near the prison, a Syrian government employee named Hassoun, said that groups of armed ISIS fighters had forced their way into his home Friday morning and again that night.

Hassoun, who asked to be identified by his first name only out of fears for his safety, said that the gunmen took his phone, flipping through it to see if he was a member of the security forces. All of the militants were Iraqi, he said. “They were complaining about the internet — they said ‘the Syrian internet is slow’,” Hassoun said.

At one point, he said, one of the gunmen opened the door to check the street and said, “There is an infidel dead.”

A woman collected personal belongings from her brother-in-law’s destroyed house.

It was one of Hassoun’s neighbors, shot by ISIS fighters after they found a photo of him in an S.D.F. uniform during compulsory military service. Relatives identified him as Ghassan Awaf al-Anezi, 20.

“It was horrifying,” Hassoun said. “I was just praying for the sun to rise.”

