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### IRAQ: THE IMPENDING WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS REVIVES KURDO-ARAB TENSIONS

**T**he impending withdrawal of US troops is raising a series of problems regarding future Kurdo-Arab relations and their still unresolved tensions.

In Kirkuk, the Combined Security Force (CSF), composed of American, Kurdish and Arab troops, which was formed to ensure the Province's security, will gradually lose its American components to become solely composed of Iraqi soldiers and Kurdish Peshmergas by the end of 2011.

Drawing up a balance sheet of the CSF's results, the US colonel Michael Bowers, responsible for advising the central government on North Iraqi strategy, considered that its effectiveness in the field was positive, as was the cohabitation of the Arab and Kurdish troops. However, there are logistic and financial problems that cast a shadow over the future of this multi-ethnic force.

So far cohabitation between Kurds and Arabs in this unit has, so far, been "overseen" by the United States. However,

many fear that, after the departure of US troops, conflict between Irbil and Baghdad over Kirkuk and the other provinces claimed by the Kurds could undermine this cohesion.

Thus, at the end of August, Peshmerga units were deployed in the districts mainly inhabited by Kurds of Diyala Province, 55 Km North of Baghdad, to protect the Kurds living there who had been subjected to acts of violence linked to Iraq's instability and inability to protect its population. The Kurdish bloc in the

Baghdad Parliament, in a statement reported that about 500 Kurdish civilians had been killed and 1400 forced to flee in Diyala Province. Moreover, the Kurds, and in particular the PUK, that had ordered the Peshmergas' deployment, pointed out that these attacks no longer come from terrorists but from Arab militia opposed to the proposed referendum that could eventually detach these districts to include them in the Kurdistan Region and are thus trying to "Arabise" Diyala. The members of Parliament even accuse units of the Iraqi Army of carrying out several attacks on Kurdish civilians.

In 2003, following the overthrow of the Ba'ath, the Peshmergas had ensured the security of

Diyala and the request of the Americans. They were withdrawn in 2008, still at the request of the US, leaving the security of the province's Kurds in the hands of the US troops and the Iraqi police and army. On 18 August the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament stated that the withdrawal in 2008 had been "a strategic error": "These areas are part of the Kurdistan Region, it is our duty to send Peshmerga units to save the lives of the citizens. We have asked that Peshmerga units be deployed in the Kurdish parts of Diyala and the government of Iraqi Kurdistan has responded positively".

Consequently 7,000 Peshmergas took up their positions in the towns of Sadiya and Jalawla, in Khanaqin district, where the Kurds had suffered several

attacks. According to the local press, they are heavily armed and some Kurdish religious clerics have even granted them exception from the Ramadan Fast.

The most recent statistics show that the number of Kurds living there has dropped since 2003 and that these areas have tended to become Arabised. In Jalawla, the Arab population has increased from 40% to 77% and in Sadiya from 37% to 82%. However, Jabar Yawar, the Peshmerga spokesman, states that this drop in Kurdish population is due to their dangerous situation, stating that 423 of the 555 people murdered in the region were Kurdish and that 629 Kurdish families had been threatened and obliged to flee in Jalawla and 64 in Qartaba.

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## TURKEY: DEADLY BOMBING OF IRAQI KURDISTAN

**B**loody attacks are continuing in Turkish Kurdistan. On 17 August, eight Turkish soldiers were killed by PKK guerrillas in Hakkari Province by two mines that exploded as an army convoy was passing. As a reprisal, the Turkish air force bombed "168 PKK objectives" in Turkish Kurdistan and crossed the Iraqi border to bomb, according to their official communiqué "85 PKK objectives and positions" in Iraqi Kurdistan, in the areas of Kharkurk, Qandil and Zap. The Turkish armed forces haven't crossed the border to attack PKK bases for about a year.

The human losses from these air raids are said, according to Turkish sources, to have been about a hundred deaths and 80 injured in the ranks of the PKK. They also claimed to have hit 14 facilities, 8 food and 1 munition depots nine anti-aircraft guns, 18 caves and 79 arms caches.

For their part, the Iraqi Kurds denounced a raid that was responsible for 7 civilian deaths in Kortek village in Qalah Diaah district of Sulrimaniyah Province. On 21 August, whole family, fleeing the bombing by car, was wiped out. Some shocking video pictures of the bodies and the wrecked remains of the car circulated round the Kurdish press, web sites and were also brandished during demonstrations in Irbil, while the Turkish press ignored the "collateral damage".

Amnesty International demanded that the Turkish authorities set up an independent enquiry to clarify the death of 61 year-old Hussein Mustafa Hassan, his wife, Mer Haci Mam Kak, 43 years of age, his daughter Rezan Hussein Mustafa, and his two grand-daughters, Sonia Shamal Hassan (6 years) and Sholin Shamal Hassan (6 months), his son Zana Hussein Mustafa (11 years) and his niece Askar Khuzer Hassan (10 years).

For its part, the Iraqi government demanded the immediate end to these violations of its territory and protested against the civilian deaths.

Caught between two fires, the Kurdistan Regional Government again called for a bilateral ceasefire. Thus the former Prime Minister and present N°2 of the KDP, Nêçirvan Barzanî, in an interview to the Kurdish daily *Rudaw* on his return from Teheran, called on the PKK and PJAK fighters to lay down their arms.

*"The Turkish government must follow and policy of democracy and openness. In the context of such a policy, the PKK must lay down its arms and undertake a civilian and parliamentary struggle in Turkey".*

In Turkey, the consequences of the war are being felt in political and civil life, by stirring up the Turkish man in the street against the Kurds

and by inciting the Kurdish citizens to protest at the hardening of Ankara's policy. Police repression of a demonstration at Çukurca (Selê), where the attack on the convoys had taken place, resulted in the death of a Kurdish local councillor, Yildirim Ayhan, a member of the BDP, killed by a tear gas grenade.

*"The officers suddenly ordered the soldiers facing us to go into action. They began by firing tear gas grenades. One of these hit Ayham and we saw him collapse", stated an AFP witness.*

However, the military reprisals were not able to stop the fighting and, on 28 August, three soldiers and a village guard died when a

remote controlled mine exploded as their vehicle was going over at Semdinli. Three other soldiers were wounded.

At Midyat, the night attack on a police station caused the death of a village guard and wounded three other members of the militia.

## SYRIA:

### THE DAMASCUS DECLARATION PROMISES THE KURDS FULL RECOGNITION OF THEIR RIGHTS

**S**amir Nashar, General Secretary and spokesman of the "Damascus Declaration for a democratic change" Syrian opposition group, founded in 2005, was interviewed by the Kurdwatch. He stated that the Kurdish question in Syria would not be ignored by the Arab majority, if it achieved power and that his movement was working on "a fair and democratic solution to the position of the Kurds". "The Kurdish question in Syria is a national issue and must be resolved on a national scale" Samir Nashara stated, "in a new democratic, multi-faceted State and new civil status. Like all the other citizens, Arab, Assyrian, Armenian or Cherkassy, the Kurds are also Syrian citizens". According to this member of the opposition, giving identical civil rights to all the constituents of the Syrian population will settle all problems. Questioned more specifically about these rights Samir Nashara raised the issue of the Kurds who had been deprived of their nationality, that of the access of Kurds to state employment and their right to the use of their culture, traditions and language and to have their own universities. Kurdish could even be the second official language in Syria and

could have a preponderant status in the areas with a Kurdish majority.

In the issue of one of the demands made by certain Kurdish parties, namely the constitutional recognition of "Kurdish ethnicity" in Syria, Samir Nashara was more cautious, stating that he did not approve of an Assyrian or Kurdish nationalism that was not "Syrian above all else". "Personally, I reject all nationalisms, even Arab nationalism. I would like the Arab and Kurdish nationalists to do the same. Some Arab groups fear that recognition of the Kurds as the second Syrian ethnic group could lead the Kurds to demand, at some future date, to secede from Syria so some form of self-determination or autonomy". However, Samir Nashara said he was in favour of decentralising the Syrian State in favour of local organised forces in the various provinces.

Regarding the expropriations following the policy of the "Arab belt" in the Kurdish regions, the Syrian member of the opposition was more inclined to paying compensation to the injured owners rather than return of their property. Finally, the wait-and-see attitude

of some of the Kurdish parties regarding the Syrian revolution and the ambiguous attitude of some of them about joining the opposition and negotiating with the existing regime could have negative consequences for the Kurds after the fall of the Ba'ath, according to the Arab dissidents.

It is true that the Kurds in Syria are having difficulty in uniting round common action and a clear political line. On 4 August, they announced they were preparing a conference to finally draw up a clearer strategy on their future role in the new Syria, but without having any unanimity about the holding of such a conference. Thus, of the 12 Kurdish parties, the Sawa Kurdish movement, one of the most active in the demonstrations, has declined to participate. "The Kurdish parties have not even clarified their position regarding the present Syrian regime. This makes us suspicious. We hope that they will publicly announce their stand before holding this conference because, as far as we are concerned, we have finished with the Assad regime. Yet, despite this, some Kurdish parties are still talking about possible negotiations with this regime".



## IRAQI KURDISTAN: THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST EXCISION

**L**ast June the Irbil Kurdish Parliament passed a law banning the practice of excision, after a several-year-long campaign by local and international NGOs for banning this practice. Thus WADI, a Kurdish-German NGO, with the support of the Kurdish government, has been travelling all over the regions of Iraqi Kurdistan to evaluate the extent of the practice of excision.

For the moment this NGO's work has been on those Kurdish districts outside the Region, particularly Kirkuk but also in the rest of Iraq, where this practice, that had been presented as a specifically Kurdish tradition,

could also affect the Arab population. Since Kirkuk Province is multi-ethnic and multi-denominational, it enables the NGO to form hypotheses about those Iraqi provinces where it is too dangerous to carry out enquiries.

Out of 100 interviews carried out in Kirkuk Province, it appears that 54% of the Sunnis practice circumcision while the Shiites and other religious minorities are hardly affected at all. It also appears that circumcision is mainly practiced in rural areas and very little in the town.

Regarding its extent amongst the Kurds, Arabs and Tucomen, it appears that 78% of the Kurds

are circumcised as against 25% of Arabs and Turcomen. The Christians, be they Assyrian, Chaldean or Armenian are not affected by this practice at all.

Of those women who had been circumcised, only 2% stated that they wanted their daughters to have the same while 62% said they were against this. However, amongst the same group, 29% had already had their daughters excised, which suggests that there has been a very recent change of attitude — possibly due to the very active information campaigns of the Kurdish Region — despite the opposition of some very minority Islamist circles who oppose this ban.

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## IRAN: TENSION BETWEEN KURDS AND AZERIS OVER LAKE URMIAH

**T**he people inhabiting the area round Lake Urmiah are protesting against the refusal by the Teheran Parliament to redirect the flow of several streams to supply water to the world's largest salt lake. This has been ecologically endangered by dams and by building motorways and bridges. Several demonstrations were repressed on 27 August by the anti-riot police, who used tears gas and charged into the marchers.

However, this ecological protest can cover more political tensions, particularly between the Kurds and Azeris, since both people share the banks of Lake Urmiah, which lies between the

Provinces of West Azerbaijan (which includes the North of Iranian Kurdistan) and eastern Azerbaijan.

Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi-Zadeh, the Vice President of the Environmental Office, who runs the Environment Protection Organisation, accuses the local groups of "politicising" the defence of Lake Urmiah.

The demonstrations and clashes with the police are taking place in a tense political context in Iranian Kurdistan, at a time when the attacks on the PJAK bases are continuing outside Iran's borders.

As for the Azeris, they are a Shiite ethnic group fairly well

represented in the central authority, as many of the country's present leaders are Azeris, including the Supreme Guide, Khamenei himself. However, some Pan-Turanian movements are constantly active in the country and look towards re-unification with the Azerbaijan Republic and the Turkic world.

Thus both peoples, Kurdish and Azeri, have often revolted against the Persian power centre, ever since the 1906 Constitutional revolution. Both proclaimed short-lived independent republics in 1946 with some Soviet support and both provinces were active opponents of the Shah of Iran during the 1979 revolution.

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# Turquie: le pouvoir de l'armée ébranlé

ISTANBUL

**A**près la démission de plusieurs membres de l'état-major de l'armée turque, le Premier ministre entend peser dans le choix de leurs successeurs, une revanche face à une institution qui a renversé quatre gouvernements depuis 1960.

Trois jours après la démission retentissante du chef d'état-major turc ainsi que des commandants des armées de terre, air et mer, le Conseil militaire suprême se réunit, ce lundi, pour examiner l'évolution des carrières dans l'armée, ce qui offre au gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan l'occasion de reprendre la main sur cette institution, incontournable dans la vie politique turque.

Il s'agit de la première fois dans l'histoire turque que cette réunion annuelle débute en l'absence du chef de l'état-major, le général Isik Kosaner, et des généraux qui commandaient les trois corps d'armée. L'ex-chef de la gendarmerie, le général Necdet Özel, nommé vendredi commandant de l'armée de terre puis chef d'état-major en exercice, co-préside la réunion de quatre jours, aux côtés du Premier ministre islamiste-conservateur.

Les quatre officiers supérieurs ont démissionné en raison d'un désaccord avec le gouvernement sur la promotion de militaires de haut rang incarcérés dans des affaires de complot contre le régime (procès Ergenekon et "Masse de forgeron"). Les ex-chefs de l'armée exigeaient que les militaires en détention puis-



Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan préside le rendez-vous annuel du Conseil militaire suprême, le 1<sup>er</sup> août 2011 à Ankara

sent bénéficier de promotions, même s'ils sont en prison dans l'attente de la fin de leur procès, ce que refuse le gouvernement.

## Une institution longtemps incontournable

Autrefois intouchable et incontournable dans la vie politique, l'armée turque est depuis plusieurs années la cible de critiques et d'accusations. Quarante-deux généraux, soit plus d'un sur dix, et plusieurs dizaines d'officiers d'active ou à la retraite, sont actuellement incarcérés dans le cadre de ces complots présumés visant le gouvernement. L'armée fait également l'objet de critiques pour une opération militaire au Kurdistan qui a causé la mort de 13 soldats en juillet.

Depuis 1960, quatre gouvernements ont été chassés du pouvoir par l'armée, dont celui en 1997 de l'islamiste Necmettin Erbakan, mentor de Tayyip Erdogan.

## Le gouvernement veut jouer un rôle prépondérant dans

## les nominations

Les récentes démissions ouvrent la voie à un jeu de chaises musicales dans lequel le gouvernement entend jouer un rôle prépondérant pour façonner un état-major dont seront exclus ses plus féroces détracteurs. L'exécutif ne se contentera pas cette fois d'entériner, comme le voulait la tradition, les décisions de l'état-major concernant les nominations aux postes clés de l'armée, a prévenu Hüseyin Celik, vice-président du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) au pouvoir.

La fonction de chef d'état-major ne semble pas, selon la presse, poser de problème, les récentes promotions dont a bénéficié le général Özel semblant le désigner naturellement comme successeur du général Kosaner. Les nominations à la tête des quatre armes pourraient en revanche donner lieu à de nouvelles démissions si le gouvernement passe outre l'ordre de préséance hiérarchique pour évincer certains officiers, estimaient plusieurs quotidiens.

## Turquie: trois soldats tués, un fonctionnaire blessé dans une attaque du PKK

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 1 août 2011 (AFP)

**TROIS SOLDATS** turcs ont été tués et trois autres personnes, dont un sous-préfet, ont été blessées lundi dans une embuscade tendue par des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé des sources locales de sécurité.

Un groupe de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a ouvert le feu sur un convoi près de la ville de Baskale, tuant trois soldats et en blessant un autre, ainsi que le sous-préfet de Baskale et un de ses gardes du

corps, ont indiqué ces sources.

Les affrontements entre les forces de sécurité et rebelles du PKK se sont multipliés depuis les élections du 12 juin dernier.

Le 16 juin, 13 soldats ont été tués dans des affrontements avec le PKK dans la province de Diyarbakir. Ce sont les pertes les plus lourdes pour l'armée turque dans ce conflit depuis octobre 2008.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, s'est engagé dans la lutte armée en 1984. On estime que ce conflit a fait 45.000 morts depuis cette date.



## Irak: 200 familles déplacées suite aux tirs iraniens sur des rebelles kurdes

Erbil (Irak) - 2 août 2011 - (AFP)

**PLUS DE 200 familles ont été contraintes de fuir la zone frontalière entre l'Irak et l'Iran où Téhéran mène depuis plusieurs semaines une offensive contre les séparatistes kurdes iraniens du Pjak, ont indiqué mardi un responsable local et une ONG.**

"Environ 230 familles ont fui les villages frontaliers pour se mettre en sécurité", a déclaré le maire de Choman (province du Kurdistan irakien), Abdul Wahad Qawani. "Les tirs iraniens continuent, mais ce n'est pas comme avant, car ce n'est pas permanent (...). Avant, c'était continu", a-t-il précisé.

Selon le maire, un camp a été mis sur pied pour accueillir les réfugiés dans le village de Mawanan, dans la région de Baliyan. "Nous avons demandé aux organisations internationales de nous fournir des tentes et du matériel de base pour ceux qui ont abandonné leurs maisons et leurs biens", a-t-il indiqué.

Un porte-parole de l'Office international des migrations (OIM), une agence humanitaire, a pour sa part fait état mardi de 203 familles déplacées enregistrées auprès des autorités.

Ces familles ont essentiellement besoin "d'abris et d'eau", a indiqué un porte-parole, Bertram Douglas, précisant que l'OIM avait fourni des lits et des kits de purification d'eau. L'agence des Nations unies pour les réfugiés

a pour sa part donné des tentes et les autorités locales fournissent de l'eau.

"Ces familles ne pourront pas survivre longtemps sans aide (...). Beaucoup ont abandonné leurs cultures et leurs troupeaux", a-t-il prévenu.

Le Pjak (Parti pour une vie libre du Kurdistan) est régulièrement impliqué dans des affrontements armés avec les forces iraniennes, qui bombardent en représailles les zones frontalières montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien, d'où opèrent les combattants indépendantistes.

Les Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique d'élite de Téhéran, ont lancé en juillet une offensive contre le Pjak qui a fait plusieurs morts des deux côtés.

Le président du Parlement irakien, Oussama al-Noujaifi, a insisté mardi sur "l'importance d'une cessation immédiate des bombardements sur le territoire irakien, qui sont considérés comme une violation de la souveraineté de l'Irak", selon un communiqué de ses services.

Un comité parlementaire a été chargé d'enquêter sur la question.

La semaine dernière, le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebani, avait sommé l'Iran de cesser ses bombardements. Mais un commandant des Gardiens de la révolution a affirmé fin juillet que l'armée entendait poursuivre ses opérations jusqu'à ce que l'Irak déploie des forces le long de la frontière commune.



## Irak: horizons incertains pour la force militaire arabo-kurde de Kirkouk

KIRKOUK (Irak), 9 août 2011 (AFP)

**SA CRÉATION l'an dernier devait aider à désamorcer l'un des plus épineux conflits de l'Irak post-Saddam Hussein: le conflit entre Arabes et Kurdes dans le nord du pays. Mais à Kirkouk, la force militaire conjointe arabo-kurdo-américaine fait face à un avenir incertain.**

L'armée américaine, après avoir parrainé début 2010 la naissance de ce qui a été baptisé Force combinée de sécurité (FCS) dans la province pétrolière et multiethnique de Kirkouk, s'en retire à présent progressivement dans la perspective de son départ d'Irak, prévu fin 2011.

Lancée en 2009 et concrétisée l'an dernier, l'idée de faire patrouiller ensemble des militaires américains, kurdes et arabes dans cette région, que se disputent âprement le gouvernement central de Bagdad et la région autonome du Kurdistan, a donné des résultats en termes de sécurité, estiment les militaires.

Le nombre d'incidents violents a reculé dans cette zone depuis début 2010, indique le colonel américain Michael Bowers, chargé de conseiller le commandement central pour le nord de l'Irak en matière de stratégie.

Et la cohabitation sur les points de contrôle de soldats arabes et kurdes se passe globalement bien, ce qui n'apparaissait pas gagné d'avance au vu des tensions toujours vivaces autour des "territoires disputés", un conflit qui remonte à leur arabisation forcée au début des années 1990 par Saddam Hussein.

A Kirkouk, le projet a même été étendu: d'une centaine d'hommes, il est passé à environ 350, déployés actuellement sur six points de contrôle de la ville. Il est même question d'augmenter encore leur nombre à plus d'un millier, selon des responsables américains.

Malgré ces succès, les officiers américains craignent que le mandat de la FCS ne soit devenu trop large et trop complexe, le tout sur fond de difficultés financières et logistiques.

"Nous faisons face à des défis car cette force est nouvelle et contient trois groupes" ethniques, admet le colonel de police irakien Salaheddine Saber, qui commande le bataillon.

Parmi ces défis "figurent le soutien logistique et l'approvisionnement en carburant et véhicules", souligne-t-il.

Pour l'heure, le colonel Saber "est contraint de faire la tournée pour obtenir des ressources de tout le monde", note le lieutenant colonel américain Joseph Holland.

"Ce qu'il leur faut, c'est une ligne budgétaire séparée de Bagdad (...) pour qu'ils n'aient pas constamment à payer pour faire fonctionner cette affaire", souligne-t-il. La solution actuelle est loin d'être idéale, admet-il.

Les responsables américains déplorent aussi que la force conjointe soit utilisée sur des points de contrôle, là où ils estiment que des policiers irakiens auraient fait l'affaire.

Or, les effectifs de la FCS ne lui permettent pas à la fois de se déployer sur des points de contrôle et de mener des patrouilles, souligne Joseph Holland.

Pendant ce temps, le conflit opposant Bagdad et le Kurdistan pour la souveraineté de Kirkouk et de la vaste bande de territoire riche en ressources pétrolières qui l'entoure ne donne guère de signe de progrès.

Les tensions ont connu un pic fin février lorsque des peshmergas (combattants kurdes) ont fait avancer leurs forces vers Kirkouk, disant vouloir protéger la ville alors que des manifestations secouaient tout le pays. Ils se sont finalement retirés fin mars.

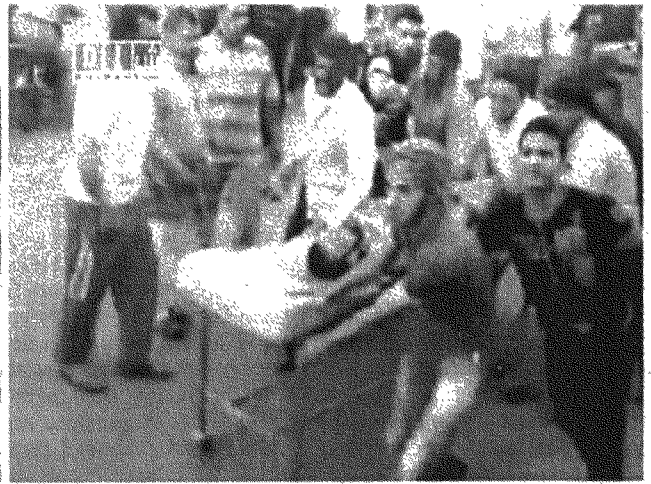
Durant cette période tendue, les rencontres hebdomadaires sur la sécurité à Kirkouk entre les différents leaders ont été annulées, et n'ont repris que sur l'insistance des forces américaines. Et ce différend, bien que réglé depuis, peut faire douter de la capacité des deux communautés à régler une crise sans médiation américaine, reconnaissent à demi-mot les responsables américains.



Le Monde  
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# Assauts meurtriers du régime syrien contre les manifestants avant le ramadan

Les activistes ont dénombré au moins une centaine de morts, dont plus de la moitié à Hama



Images extraites de vidéos amateurs montrant la répression de la contestation par le régime à Hama, le 31 juillet. AFP ET REUTERS

**Beyrouth.**  
Correspondante ;

C'est à la veille du ramadan, le mois de jeûne et de prières des musulmans, que le régime syrien a lancé, dimanche 31 juillet à l'aube, l'un des plus violents assauts contre les manifestants en quatre mois et demi de soulèvement populaire. Les opérations militaires menées simultanément dans plusieurs villes de Syrie ont fait une centaine de morts, dont plus de la moitié à Hama, selon un bilan fourni par les comités de coordination locale en Syrie, un réseau d'activistes à la pointe de la contestation. Des organisations des droits de l'homme syriennes avancent, elles, un chiffre bien plus élevé.

Sous un ciel alourdi d'une épaisse fumée noire, des adolescents transportent des corps inanimés dans des rues encombrées de véhicules écrasés. D'autres s'abritent

derrière des barricades de briques ou de sacs de sable, tandis que claquent les coups de feu. Les vidéos amateurs en provenance de Hama sont nombreuses.

Vendredi, les Syriens avaient manifesté avec le slogan : « *Votre silence nous tue.* » Dimanche, les images qu'ils ont transmises sont parfois insoutenables. L'une montre un homme décapité par un tir de gros calibre, une autre un survivant exhibant une jambe écrasée, dit-il, par un char. Il y a aussi cette vidéo qui s'arrête brutalement, une balle frappant en direct celui qui filmait. Sa caméra, braquée sur un paysage de guerre, s'immobilise sur le gris du bitume.

D'après le témoignage recueilli auprès d'un activiste de Hama, « *les chars ont pénétré par les quatre axes principaux de la ville. Dans l'entrée nord, des véhicules blindés ont tiré au hasard sur les habitations. Les hôpitaux Al-Horani, Badr, Al-Hikme sont débordés par le nombre de blessés et sont en pénurie de sang.* »

Hama, entrée massivement dans la contestation le 3 juin, avait semblé jouir d'un statut particulier. Le premier jour, la répression avait fait près de 70 morts selon les activistes. Mais les forces de sécurité avaient ensuite déserté la ville, laissant les habitants investir la grande place Al-Aassi. Plusieurs vendredis durant, ce lieu était devenu le théâtre d'immenses rassemblements réclamant « *la chute du régime.* »

Suite à une vague d'arrestations, les manifestants avaient même dressé des barricades dans l'espoir de stopper les raids des forces de sécurité. Les chars étaient postés depuis trois semaines autour de la cité, mais n'y étaient pas encore entrés. Une exception locale souvent attribuée au lourd passé de Hama, restée dans l'esprit de nombreux Syriens une « *ville martyre.* » Une révolte déclenchée à Hama en 1982 avait été écrasée par les forces d'Hafez Al-Assad, le

« Depuis le début de la révolution, le régime a fait face à près de vingt vendredis de mobilisation »

un activiste syrien

père du président actuel, lors d'une opération militaire qui avait coûté la vie à plus de 10 000 de ses habitants.

La violence de l'assaut de dimanche montre que si le régime a hésité à intervenir dans Hama, ses réserves ont désormais disparu. La date choisie ne relève pas du hasard. Le ramadan, qui débute le 1<sup>er</sup> août, est un mois de prières durant lequel la fréquentation des mosquées, seuls espaces de rassemblements autorisés en Syrie, est quotidienne. Les activistes, qui jusqu'à présent organisaient des manifestations le vendredi, après

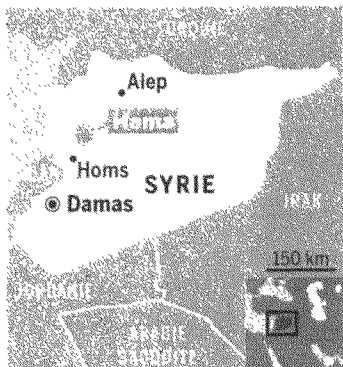
la prière hebdomadaire, ont déjà prévenu que leur mouvement allait s'intensifier.

« *Depuis le début de la révolution, le régime a fait face à près de vingt vendredis de mobilisation. Avec le ramadan, il sait que ce sera vendredi tous les jours.* » résume un activiste syrien sous couvert d'anonymat. Selon lui, frapper aussi fort à la veille de ce mois saint ou prendre pour cible des mosquées (une vidéo montre des tirs sur le minaret de la mosquée Al-Sahan, à Hama) relève aussi d'une « *tactique visant à provoquer les islamistes et à créer des conflits confessionnels.* »

Depuis le début de la révolte, les autorités syriennes affirment que les morts, attribués par les opposants à la répression, sont l'œuvre de « *gangs armés* » ou de « *terroristes islamistes infiltrés* » dans la population. Dans son compte rendu des événements de dimanche à Hama, l'agence de presse officielle SANA a indiqué que « *des groupes armés parcourent les rues de la ville sur des motocycles munis d'armes automatiques, imposent le couvre-feu aux citoyens et mettent le feu aux biens publics* » et qu'un « *élément des forces de l'ordre* » a été tué.

Dimanche soir, les comités de coordination en Syrie ont appelé « *ceux qui doutaient encore de la nature criminelle du régime* » à rejoindre la contestation et le peuple syrien à « *entamer, dès à présent, la grève générale.* » ■

Cécile Hennion



# «L'armée va finir par rentrer dans le rang en Turquie»



**Jean Marcou.**  
(Chercheur associé à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul)

**L**a décision prise, le 29 juillet au soir, par l'état-major de l'armée turque de démissionner collectivement fait craindre l'éclatement d'une nouvelle confrontation entre civils et militaires en Turquie. Professeur à l'IEP de Grenoble et chercheur à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul (IFEA) depuis 2006, Jean Marcou connaît particulièrement bien ce pays, où il a enseigné les sciences politiques et administratives à la fin des années 1980. Il a bien voulu décrypter, pour *El Watan*, cet événement et en analyser les implications sur la vie politique turque.

- Quelle analyse faites-vous de la démission, vendredi, des quatre plus hauts responsables militaires turcs pour protester contre la mise en détention de 250 officiers accusés de complot contre le gouvernement Recep Tayyip Erdogan ? La Turquie est-elle entrée dans une nouvelle crise ?

Je pense qu'il s'agit d'un événement historique, qui marque la fin du système de démocratie contrôlée qui avait été établi, en Turquie, après les interventions militaires de 1960, 1971 et 1980. Dans ce système, l'armée était un véritable acteur politique. Elle était au pouvoir sans gouverner directement. L'intervention militaire feutrée de 1997 (appelée en Turquie «coup d'Etat post-moderne») avait bien montré que, sans sortir de ses casernes, l'armée avait suffisamment de moyens politiques et d'arguments au sein de ce système, pour faire pression sur un gouvernement qui lui déplaisait (en l'occurrence celui de l'islamiste Necmettin Erbakan) et provoquer sa chute. Ce système est en train de vivre ses dernières heures. La Turquie entre-t-elle pour autant dans une crise ? Je ne le crois pas, car l'affaiblissement de l'autorité politique de l'armée est telle que la démission collective des principaux responsables de l'état-major devrait être rapidement surmontée.

- Partagez-vous donc l'avis selon lequel ces démissions sont la preuve que la vieille garde militaire a jeté l'éponge ? Selon vous, l'armée a-t-elle vraiment cessé d'être le centre de gravité du pouvoir en Turquie ?

Je partage cet avis, la vieille garde de l'armée turque est effectivement au bout du rouleau, usée par la résistance qu'elle a tenté d'opposer au gouvernement de l'AKP, au cours de la dernière décennie. Car le processus de démilitarisation en Turquie est le fruit d'une longue évolution depuis que le parti de Recep Tayyip Erdogan est parvenu au pouvoir, en 2002. Si la première législature de l'AKP (2002-2007) a été dominée par un compromis qui fut reflété par l'attitude consensuelle du chef d'état-major de l'époque

(le général Hilmi Özkök), la deuxième (2007-2011) a été particulièrement conflictuelle. Il faut dire qu'elle s'est ouverte sur une lourde défaite politique de l'armée à l'occasion de l'élection présidentielle de 2007, qui a vu Abdullah Gül accéder à la présidence de la République, alors même que les militaires avaient tout fait pour l'en empêcher. Au cours des 4 ans qui ont suivi, l'armée a été laminée par les fameuses affaires judiciaires de complot (Ergenekon, Balyoz...) qui ont conduit à l'inculpation, voire à l'arrestation de militaires d'active de plus en plus importants. L'an dernier, lors du Conseil militaire suprême, Recep Tayyip Erdogan était entré dans le dernier pré carré des militaires : leur faculté de coopter leur commandement suprême selon des procédures internes, échappant au contrôle du pouvoir politique. Le gouvernement de l'AKP était notamment parvenu à bloquer pendant 5 jours la nomination du général Kosaner, le chef d'état-major qui vient de démissionner. Preuve de l'état d'affaiblissement de l'armée : pendant son court mandat, ce chef d'état-major a été beaucoup moins présent sur la scène politique et médiatique turque que ses prédécesseurs. Plus généralement, au cours des derniers mois, les gestes de mauvaise humeur de l'armée à l'égard du gouvernement ont été beaucoup moins commentés et médiatisés que précédemment.

- Après ces départs, comment vont évoluer les relations entre l'armée et le gouvernement ? L'armée peut-elle, selon vous, invoquer encore l'argument de la laïcité pour contrer le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan ?

La démission collective de vendredi va accélérer le processus de démilitarisation que j'évoquais antérieurement. Le chef de la Gendarmerie, le général Necdet Özel, qui a été le seul à ne pas démissionner au sein du commandement suprême, a déjà pris la tête de l'armée de terre et devrait être nommé chef d'état-major prochainement. L'an dernier, ce général était apparu comme le principal bénéficiaire des conflits entre le gouvernement et l'armée, qui avaient marqué le déroulement du Conseil militaire suprême. Il apparaissait d'ailleurs comme le favori pour succéder à Isik Kosaner, dont le mandat devait normalement s'achever en août 2012. Le départ de Kosaner ne fait en réalité qu'anticiper un scénario prévisible. L'armée va donc rentrer dans le rang. Il est peu probable qu'elle ouvre une crise en invoquant la violation de la laïcité, ce qu'elle n'a d'ailleurs pas fait réellement depuis la présidentielle de 2007. Car, en réalité, au cours des dernières années, la résistance laïque a beaucoup plus été le fait de la hiérarchie judiciaire (Cour constitutionnelle, Conseil d'Etat, Cour de cassation) que de l'institution militaire.

En 2008, les hauts magistrats ont, en effet, été à deux doigts d'obtenir la dissolution de l'AKP et sont parvenus à faire annuler la réforme autorisant le port du voile dans les universités. Toutefois, depuis la révision constitutionnelle de septembre 2010, cette haute magistrature est, elle aussi, très affaiblie et ce recul général qui concerne aussi d'autres institutions (hiérarchie universitaire, diplomatie...) est peu favorable au maintien du droit de regard de l'armée sur les affaires publiques.

- Est-ce la fin du modèle turc que l'Occident montre comme un exemple à suivre aux pays arabes actuellement en transition ?

C'est probablement la fin d'un modèle de pays musulman laïciste allié de l'Occident et essayant d'évoluer vers la démocratie libérale. Mais c'est aussi l'avènement d'un modèle de gouvernement musulman modéré représentatif de son peuple et beaucoup plus indépendant sur le plan stratégique. Dans le monde arabe, la Turquie est aujourd'hui très observée en raison de ses succès économiques (elle est devenue la première croissance du monde au premier semestre de 2011), en raison de ses acquis politiques (elle a réussi à faire rentrer l'armée dans ses casernes et à intégrer l'islam politique dans un régime pluraliste et parlementaire), en raison de ses nouvelles postures diplomatiques (elle n'hésite pas à tenir tête à Israël et même aux Etats-Unis).

La Turquie est ainsi surtout une sorte de «success story», quant à être un modèle pour le monde arabe, je pense qu'il faut être prudent. Certes, l'expérience turque est intéressante pour des pays arabes actuellement en transition, mais elle n'est pas exempte de dysfonctionnements ; ce qui a été illustré récemment par les arrestations abusives de plusieurs journalistes ou par des limitations apportées à l'usage d'internet. En outre, la démocratisation ne peut être le résultat de la mise en œuvre de recettes importées arbitrairement. Les succès de la Turquie d'aujourd'hui se sont construits sur plusieurs décennies d'expérience du suffrage universel et du pluralisme qui ont également laissé place à des crises et des blocages divers. Les pays arabes ont besoin de conduire leurs propres expériences et de construire leurs propres systèmes.

- Le Premier ministre Tayyip Erdogan a affiché aujourd'hui son souhait de doter la Turquie d'une nou-

velle Constitution, sans faire allusion à la démission des quatre plus hauts responsables militaires. Quel est, selon vous, le principal objectif qu'il vise à travers ce projet ? A-t-il des chances de concrétiser ses ambitions ?

Ce projet de Constitution n'est pas réellement nouveau, on en parle depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP, mais il a été mis sous le boisseau au cours de la première législature (2002-2007). L'idée est néanmoins revenue à l'ordre du jour pendant la crise présidentielle de 2007 et a généré le projet dit de «Constitution civile». Mais au cours de la deuxième législature (2007-2012), ce projet s'est heurté à de très vives oppositions.

Finalement, il n'a abouti qu'à une révision constitutionnelle limitée, en septembre dernier. Au seuil de la troisième législature de l'AKP, l'idée d'élaborer une nouvelle Constitution est plus que jamais d'actualité. L'entreprise ne sera pourtant pas facile pour Recep Tayyip Erdogan. En premier lieu, en dépit de sa large victoire lors des élections législatives du 12 juin dernier, l'AKP a moins de députés dans ce Parlement que dans le précédent, et ne dispose pas de la majorité renforcée lui permettant de modifier seule la Constitution. En second lieu, les très forts pouvoirs, qui sont désormais ceux de l'AKP au sein de l'appareil d'Etat, et l'accentuation du recul de l'armée par les démissions de vendredi, risquent de susciter la méfiance de l'opposition et d'un certain nombre de secteurs de la société. Enfin, l'une des dimensions majeures de cette nouvelle Constitution doit être la résolution politique du problème kurde. Or, les députés kurdes élus en juin dernier, qui forment le quatrième groupe politique parlementaire, et qui sont mécontents du sort fait à certains d'entre eux (maintien en détention ou invalidation), ont décidé de boycotter les réunions du Parlement. Même si Recep Tayyip Erdogan et son gouvernement sont aujourd'hui en position de force, l'affaire n'est donc pas jouée.

Zine Cherfaoui

**REUTERS**

## Attentat devant une église catholique en Irak, à Kirkouk

KIRKOUK, Irak - 2 août 2011 - (Reuters)

UNE ÉGLISE catholique a été la cible, mardi, d'un attentat à la voiture piégée qui a fait 16 blessés à Kirkouk, ville du nord de l'Irak où cohabitent plusieurs communautés ethniques.

Les policiers ont réussi à désamorcer à temps d'autres voitures piégées à proximité de deux autres églises de Kirkouk, a indiqué le n°2 de la police de la ville, le général Torhan Abdoulrahmane.

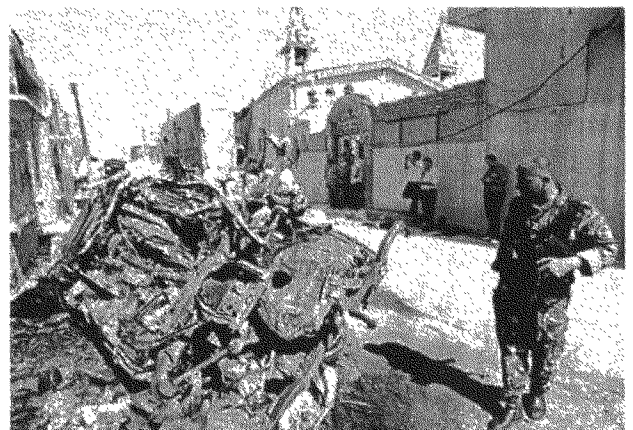
L'église endommagée est fréquentée essentiellement par des chrétiens de rite syriaque.

"Il s'est agi d'une attaque concertée ciblant au même moment des édifices chrétiens", a déclaré le général à l'agence Reuters en faisant état de 16 blessés.

Selon des sources proches des hôpitaux, 23 personnes ont été soignées.

La minorité chrétienne de ce pays majoritairement musulman est la cible d'attaques sporadiques.

En octobre, la cathédrale syriaque de Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours de Bagdad avait été la cible d'un commando armé en pleine messe. Les forces de l'ordre avaient donné l'assaut à l'église et on avait dénombré 52 morts au total.



Cette attaque - l'une des plus meurtrières commises contre les chrétiens d'Irak - avait conduit les autorités à renforcer le dispositif de sécurité aux abords des églises.

Kirkouk est située à 250 km au nord de Bagdad dans une région semi-autonome revendiquée par les Kurdes.

Ces dernières années, il ne resterait plus qu'entre 850.000 et 1,5 million de chrétiens en Irak, qui compte au total une trentaine de millions d'habitants.

Plus de huit ans après le renversement de Saddam Hussein, les violences ont considérablement diminué en Irak, où persistent cependant des tensions à caractère confessionnel et ethnique.

**AP** Associated Press

# Turkey sees police role in Kurdish fight

August 2, 2011 - By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA - AP

**ISTANBUL** - The Turkish military casts itself as a defender of the nation against internal threats as well as external ones, and describes soldiers who die in combat with Kurdish rebels as martyrs. Now a government plan to deploy elite police squads in the fight could undercut the traditional role of the armed forces, even as civilian leaders move forcefully to reduce its political power.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan chaired a military meeting in Ankara, the capital, after the nation's top four commanders quit last week to protest the arrests of retired and active-duty officers accused of plotting a coup. In eastern Turkey, meanwhile, security forces combed a rural area where three soldiers were killed a day earlier by suspected Kurdish militants.

The Ankara meeting, which started Monday, will select new commanders in a process aimed at sealing civilian authority over the generals, whose predecessors once staged coups in the name of stability or secularism. But discussions about handing more power to the police in domestic security matters such as the Kurdish conflict could reduce the military's operational clout.

Erdogan, whose roots in political Islam unsettled hardline secularists in the military, raised the police idea after suspected rebels killed 13 soldiers on July 14 in the Silvan district of southeast Turkey.

The attack was especially bold because it happened in daylight; media reports said rebels threw a grenade from a speeding car, and then opened fire on soldiers standing beside armored vehicles at a checkpoint. The assailants quickly withdrew.

The seeming lack of military preparedness and intelligence sharpened criticism of a largely conscripted force that has struggled to tamp down guerrilla activity even though the Kurdish rebel group PKK lacks the power it enjoyed at its 1990s peak. Many rebel leaders are based across the border in northern Iraq.

The government says it has no intention of forcing the military, which has jets and other heavy weaponry at its disposal, out of the fight altogether. Instead, it is urging the generals to initially deploy 5,000 professional soldiers with commando-style training.

"The military police and police forces will be integrated at the highest level," Erdogan said in late July. "The (military) Land Forces will intervene if the governors deem it necessary. We want to withdraw conscripts from the border units."

He said a government study has concluded that counter-terror police units should deploy not just in rural areas, but also towns and cities, and that he hoped for "maximum results in this struggle in the shortest period."

The rebels, who seek autonomy and other rights, have escalated attacks in recent weeks, apparently dissatisfied with government pledges to follow through on reconciliation efforts after June elections. The clashes also left about 10 rebels dead.

Ethnic Kurds represent up to 20 percent of Turkey's 75 million people. They have long been a target of discrimination by the state, which has traditionally viewed minority demands as a threat to national unity. Pro-Kurdish activists are troubled by the conservative nationalism of the government, even though it granted



*Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, center, Gen. Necdet Ozel, Turkey's new Land Forces Commander and acting Chief of Staff, second left, and top army generals follow a guard of honour at the mausoleum of modern Turkey's founder Kemak Ataturk after the military's annual meeting in Ankara, Turkey, Monday, Aug. 1, 2011.*

some cultural rights to Kurds in line with Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

The use of elite police in operations against Kurdish rebels, dubbed terrorists by the Turkish state and its Western allies, would elevate the standing of an agency seen as possessing strong intelligence-gathering abilities and close ties to the ruling Justice and Development Party. Police answer to the Interior Ministry, which is officially outside the authority of the military.

So-called Special Operations Police were widely used between 1990 and 1993, at the peak of a conflict in which large numbers of villagers were forced to relocate and both sides committed abuses. They were forced to hand over heavy weapons, including some mortars and rockets, to the military in 1997 when the generals pressured the Islamist premier, Necmettin Erbakan, to step down.

The police force was tainted with allegations of corruption and extrajudicial killings, especially during the tenure of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller in the mid-1990s.

Government officials have clarified that special police units would not replace the military in the fight against rebels, and the date and other specifics of their mobilization have not been announced. Still, Kurdish militants condemned the idea.

"This announcement reminds Kurds of the '90s, when these special units ravaged the region, committing executions and torture, leading the country into a dark period," the rebel group said in a statement sent by email to The Associated Press.

Nearly 150,000 soldiers serve in the east and southeast, where most of the Kurdish rebel violence occurs. The PKK has been fighting since 1984, and tens of thousands of people have died. State officials have held exploratory talks with jailed rebel chief Abdullah Ocalan, but key questions such as the autonomy debate and a possible amnesty for rebel fighters have yet to be addressed.

# Uncharted territory for Turkey as generals resign

ISTANBUL

BY ANTHONY SHADID

Fifty years ago, when a populist prime minister tangled with the Turkish military, he ended up on the gallows, the mandate of three election victories little consolation. This time around, the rivalry climaxed with most of Turkey's military command resigning simultaneously, its leader complaining of powerlessness and bad press.

As Turks grappled Saturday with the shock of the resignations — and an extraordinary moment in modern Turkish history — officials scrambled to project a facade of business as usual, even as their critics warned of a creeping authoritarianism engineered by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has governed since 2003.

But in broader ways, the resignations on Friday delivered Mr. Erdogan a perch to reshape a military bound by civilian control, pursue a foreign policy emboldened by the decisive victory of his conservative party in elections in June and pursue constitutional changes that could transform Turkish politics.

The struggle that has posed the most serious danger to Mr. Erdogan, with a powerful military willing to act above the law, in many ways appeared to have come to an end.

"The days of Turkey's military calling the shots are over," said Cengiz Candar, a prominent columnist. "There's a new equation in the politics of the country, and anyone depending on the military to score points on a political issue has to forget about it."

In a move that officials acknowledged had taken them by surprise, Turkey's top commander, Gen. Isik Kosaner, together with the leaders of the navy, army and air force, asked to retire Friday to protest the arrests of dozens of generals as suspects in long-running conspiracy investigations that Mr. Erdogan's critics contend are politically motivated.

"Four-star earthquake," declared a headline in Sabah, a pro-government newspaper. But Mr. Erdogan quickly promoted Gen. Necdet Ozel, the commander of the military police, as the projected replacement for General Kosaner. And while the prime minister said nothing publicly, perhaps in an attempt to stay above the fray, other government officials played down the idea of a vacuum or a future confrontation, in what appeared to be an effort to assure the country's population of 73 million that a coup was not in the offing.

"It shouldn't look as if a crisis, a problem still continues," President Abdullah Gul said Saturday. "Events of yesterday



ADEM ALTAN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, right, at a ceremony in Ankara last year with Gen. Isik Kosaner, front left, who recently resigned as Turkey's top military commander.

were extraordinary in their scope; however, everything is back on track."

The most immediate cause of the dispute between the military and civilian leaders was the arrests of military commanders in a series of investigations, given intensive coverage in the news media, in which they and others were charged with conspiring to topple Mr. Erdogan's government. More than 40 serving generals, almost a tenth of the country's commanders, are under arrest on charges their supporters call flimsy.

But the battle runs far deeper, pitting a party with religious roots against an institution that has considered itself the guarantor of secular traditions, which underpinned the founding of the modern state in 1923 amid the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire. Suspicions ran deep enough that when asked to explain a murky sequence of events this year, Mr. Erdogan's officials tapped their shoulders, signifying a general's epaulets. The gesture was meant to cast blame on a military that his officials deemed unduly unaccountable.

Officials said Saturday that there was growing frustration on their part over the military's fight against a Kurdish-led insurgency in the southeast, which has claimed as many as 40,000 lives and seemed to have escalated in past months. On July 14, 13 Turkish soldiers were killed in a clash with guerrillas in Diyarbakir Province, and the issue of rights for the Kurdish minority has proved almost as nettlesome as Mr. Erdogan's contest with the military.

In some quarters, there was a sense of triumphalism over the resignations, serving as a sign of a military whose influence pales by comparison with the past, when it carried out three coups, beginning in 1960. Just 14 years ago it drove

from power a government that shared some ties with Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, known as the A.K.P.

"In the old times when the military and politicians could not get along, politicians used to be given notice and they would be forced to quit," Mehmet Barlas, a columnist, wrote in Sabah. "Now, the reverse is happening. It is not easy to get used to change."

But the country's intelligentsia seem divided, their perspectives shaped by venerable cleavages between liberal and conservative, religious and secular, and nationalist and Islamist. Those divisions were highlighted in the resignations themselves. To Mr. Erdogan's supporters, the generals' departure underlined growing civilian control over the military, in a healthy sign of a democratic order. But the prime minister's detractors said he had managed his victory by deploying the justice system against the military, in another example of his party's mounting hold on state institutions.

"Those who believe the A.K.P. is a party with a democratic agenda are now applauding it and believe we are moving abruptly toward democracy," said Ersin Kalaycioglu, a professor of political science at Sabanci University. "Others believe the A.K.P. is another conservative party with a conservative agenda trying to consolidate power in a new form of authoritarianism or even the dictatorship of one man."

"There's a split in opinion, completely," he added.

Mr. Erdogan, 57, a former mayor of Istanbul, has emerged as perhaps the most compelling political phenomenon here in generations. His party won 50 percent of the vote in June, its third victory since 2002. Mr. Erdogan has spoken of

plans to overhaul the Constitution, drafted under military tutelage after a coup in 1980. Among his ideas were articles that would curb the power of certain judicial bodies and introduce a system that enshrined more power in the president than the prime minister. His clear majority in Parliament should help him carry out his agenda, though his party lacks the two-thirds majority to do it with ease.

Buoyed by a thriving economy, Mr. Erdogan has been working for years to transform the country, building it into a decisive power in a region long dominated by the United States.

But since the election, he has become more forceful in foreign policy, combative and, some say, aggressive in his statements directed at neighboring Ar-

menia, with which Turkey has long been at odds. Relations with Israel, which once enjoyed warm ties with Turkey, have yet to markedly improve; they deteriorated badly in 2010 when Israeli troops boarded a Turkish boat that was trying to break the blockade of Gaza and killed nine activists. Last month, Mr. Erdogan took a harder line on the divided island of Cyprus, ruling out more concessions in negotiations to reunite the island's Greek and Turkish regions.

"You have a completely different change of atmosphere in just two months," said Hugh Pope, an analyst with the International Crisis Group in Istanbul. "It's extraordinary. One assumes that the prime minister feels very strong and very powerful."

General Ozel may offer Mr. Erdogan his most immediate impact. Though not considered an ally of the prime minister, he may have an attribute more valuable for a civilian leadership long dogged by the ambitions and sensitivities of generals. General Ozel appears to have neither, according to one newspaper profile of him a year ago.

"Up until today, he has never had a political stance at any time or on any basis," wrote Namik Cinar, a columnist in the newspaper Taraf, which is critical of the Turkish military. "He will not become a middleman of a certain interest or political group."

Sebnem Arsu contributed reporting.

INTERNATIONAL  
Herald Tribune AUGUST 2, 2011

# As deadline nears, U.S. still deeply engaged in Iraq

AL RUFAIT, IRAQ

BY TIM ARANGO  
AND DURaid ADNAN

The American and Iraqi soldiers came to this village of grape farmers and tribal traditions in the dark in search of a suspected insurgent and left in the morning sunlight. In the hours between, however, the operation went horribly wrong: the suspect eluded capture, but three men, including a tribal elder, were killed and five others wounded, among them two young girls.

The next day, on Sunday morning, the villagers submitted to the grief rituals familiar to Iraqi life. Young men were erecting a tent for the three-day funeral that would begin later in the day. A mother displayed the bloodied garment that her son, a local teacher, was wearing when he was shot and killed. Inside, a woman cried and wailed about her dead brother, "Why did you leave me?"

The men mostly wanted answers and to vent their anger against the Americans, even though the operation was led by the Iraqi security forces.

The raid and the resulting fatalities coincide with an ongoing debate about the future role of the U.S. military here and are likely to provide another rallying point for those opposed to an American troop presence beyond the end of this year, when the military is required under current agreements to withdraw.

But they also underscore that how almost a year after President Obama declared the official end of the combat mission, American soldiers are still deeply engaged in the fighting on two fronts: against Sunni insurgents in the Sunni-dominated areas north of Baghdad such as Salahuddin Province, where this vil-



Khaula Ghazi, 20, mourning the death of her brother. Villagers said he died during a weekend raid that killed two others and wounded five, including two young girls.

lage is located; and in the south with Shiite militias, who are responsible for a sharp increase in combat-related deaths of U.S. soldiers.

It is a war fought largely beyond public scrutiny and is visited upon small villages and urban neighborhoods almost nightly, when Iraqi and U.S. Special Forces descend on homes in search of weapons and insurgents. Shots are rarely fired, yet sometimes, as happened here in this Sunni village just south of Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, there are lethal consequences.

"The war is not over," said Sheik Youseff Ahmad, a leader of the Al Rufait tribe, which he said has farmed the land here for hundreds of years.

The men brandished evidence of the nocturnal raid. One held up a shell casing. Another, the pin from a grenade. Tangled

in the brush was a piece of a black, plastic handcuff, made in New Hampshire.

Mr. Ahmad and his tribesmen condemned the operation, which the U.S. military said was aimed at a suspected member of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and carried out with an Iraqi judicial warrant.

Predictably, in the fog-of-war aftermath of the raid, competing stories emerged. Mr. Ahmad had first said some villagers opened fire when the raid began, thinking they were under attack by insurgents. The American military verified this, yet the next day residents said they never fired weapons.

In an e-mailed statement, a military spokesman in Baghdad wrote, "as the team of Iraqi forces with U.S. advisers came near the house, they received fire and fired back in self defense." The spokesman added that there were "an unknown number of casualties and the

incident is under investigation by the Iraqi government.”

When the raid began shortly after 1 a.m., villagers said 16 people, including many children, were sleeping on the roof of the first house the American and Iraqi soldiers confronted. The soldiers apparently were fired on from the roof, and responded by tossing a grenade. “Immediately thereafter, the lethal fires ceased,” wrote the military spokesman.

The next day the roof was pockmarked from the impact of the grenade, and footprints in blood smeared the floor. Two young girls suffered shrapnel wounds, villagers said.

Villagers said that after the operation finished about six hours later, they discovered the body of their tribal elder, Sheikh Hameed Hassan, who was in his mid-60s, blindfolded and handcuffed with his arms behind his back.

The sheikh’s son, Majid Hameed, said he watched through a window as his fa-

ther was handcuffed and led away from the house, an eyewitness account that raises troubling questions about the manner in which his father was killed. When asked about this version of events, the military spokesman wrote, “the specifics of what occurred during the operation remain under investigation.”

“He was a peaceful man,” said the son, who is 19. “He was our leader.”

The man sought by the American and Iraqi special forces units was not found, but “two suspected terrorists were detained at the scene and are being questioned as to their involvement with the warranted individual,” the American military said in its statement.

While it may have once harbored insurgent sympathies, local officials said this village, on the outskirts of Balad, near a big American base that is headquarters for special operations forces, is not a hotbed of the still-simmering Sunni insurgency.

“It is a peaceful village,” said Mohammad Hassan, the head of the security committee in the Salahuddin Provincial Council. “There are no wanted men there, plus they have been very helpful to our forces and the Awakening by giving us information about al Qaeda members.” (The Awakening was the movement that blossomed in 2007 in which former insurgents switched sides to fight alongside the Americans.)

Convulsed by grief and anger, the villagers decried the style of democracy left in the wake of America’s war. But the villagers and local officials vowed to pursue a tool of recourse deeply ingrained in American life: the lawsuit.

“We are going to sue the Americans for it,” said Mr. Hassan. “We will follow them with the legal process and the courts.”

*An employee of The New York Times contributed from Salahuddin Province.*

## The Voice of Russia August 1, 2011

# Kurds, oil and independence

Yelizaveta Isakova / Moscow

**The Iraqi Parliament insists on the expulsion of Iranian Ambassador Hassan Danaie-Far over the continuing border clashes between members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan. Experts say that clashes on the Iranian-Iraqi border mark the start of a large-scale war. Our correspondent Yelizaveta Isakova reports.**

Armed clashes in Iraqi Kurdistan don’t come as something unexpected. Clashes in the middle of July killed 7 Kurds, and 13 Turkish servicemen as Kurds made an attempt to capture part of southeastern Turkey. Diyarbakir, the largest city in southeastern Turkey, was proclaimed a Kurdish autonomy. Some reports say that clashes on the Iranian-Iraqi border left 50 Kurds dead and about 100 men wounded.

According to Oriental expert Alexei Malashenko, the current border clashes are the continuation of the Kurds’ years-long struggle for an independent Kurdish state:

“The Kurdish struggle for independent Kurdistan has been going on for years and Iran has made attempts to quell the Kurdish movement for independence on many occasions before. No one knows when this armed confrontation is going to end given Turkey’s and Iraq’s strained relations with Kurds. Many experts say that the 21st century is going to be the century of Kurds’ struggle for independence.”

For today, Kurds are the world’s largest ethnic minority. Since they have no state of their own, struggle for independence is in their blood. Also, there are economic reasons behind the



*Iraqi Kurds. Photo: EPA*

clashes. According to the 2008 agreement, the US armed forces, deployed in Iraq, will have to leave the country by December 31st this year. But Washington is unwilling to pull out of the oil-rich region. The Kirkuk Province alone, populated by Iraqi Kurds, has double the volume of oil reserves compared to Libya. Should all oil be concentrated in Kurdish hands, and Kurds helped the US topple Saddam Husein, nothing will prevent them declaring independence from Iraq. For this reason, Washington has gone into talks with the Iraqi government on leaving part of US troops behind. And even though the dialogue has been progressing with difficulty, the White House has no intention of giving up.

Official reports say that whatever the case, a 10,000-strong ground force will stay on in Iraq in 2012, apparently to protect 17,000 American diplomats and experts that the US State Department plans to deploy in Iraq one year later. The deployed US personnel will also keep an eye on Kirkuk’s oil fields so that Kurds can’t lay any hopes on them. As it happens, the current border conflict plays into the hands of the US, giving it a good pretext for military presence in the region. An extra billion of Iraqi oil dollars in the conditions of economic crisis comes more than handy.

# Why Iraqis in oil-rich Kirkuk want US troops to stay

**US troops are due to leave Iraq by Dec. 31, but this province sees them as a key force for stability. Iraqi leaders agreed this week to begin negotiations that could keep some US troops longer.**

By Mohammed A. Salih, Correspondent  
Kirkuk, Iraq

Away from the sweltering heat and dust engulfing this northern Iraqi city, a group of friends from different ethnic groups recently discussed the future of their country in an air-conditioned store.

While their friendship appears to have survived years of ethnic division in oil-rich Kirkuk, they are all concerned about what might happen to their city if US troops leave Iraq by the end of the year as planned.

"Ideally, I would not want US soldiers to be here. But the reality makes me want them to stay," says Mohammed Jassim, as his friends nod in agreement. "If they were to leave now, problems and tensions might emerge," adds the young Arab musician. "There are many sides who don't want things to go well here."

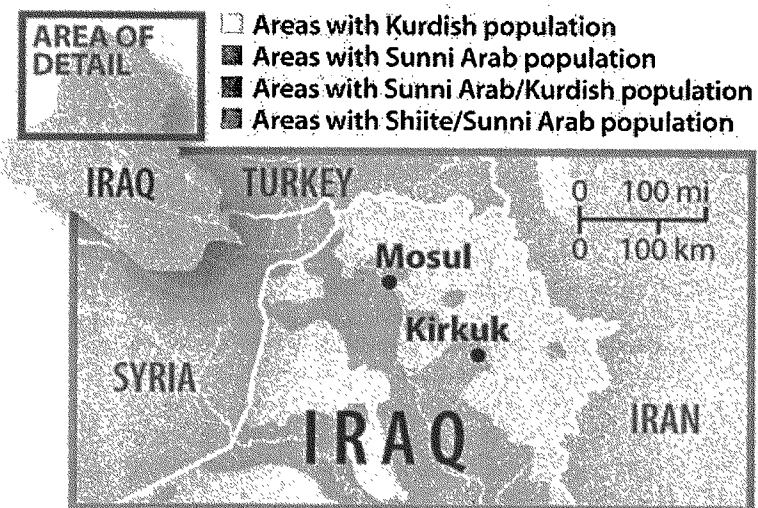
Indeed, as the Dec. 31 deadline approaches for the US to withdraw from Iraq, a broad consensus is taking shape in Kirkuk that a continued US military presence is key to stability.

The province of Kirkuk, which shares the name of its capital city, is home to one of the world's largest oil reserves. It has been at the center of decades-long rivalries among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans, who hold competing claims on the land. Iraq's 2005 Constitution stipulated that a referendum be held within two years to resolve those land disputes, but the vote still has not taken place.

Now militant groups, composed mostly of Saddam Hussein loyalists or Islamist extremists, appear to be



Conflict flares in Kirkuk. Here Iraqi firefighters extinguish flames after a car bomb exploded in front of a Christian church in early August.  
Emad Matti/AP



RICH CLABAUGH/STAFF

exploiting divisions in the province, which lacks a unified security force of its own.

I think the terrorist groups are concentrating on places like Kirkuk and Mosul, where they can instigate political differences among the groups, says Najmaldin Karim, Kirkuk's Kurdish governor, one of the few officials who has been willing to publicly urge US forces to stay. The US can play a good role as a broker between different communities in Kirkuk and intervene in times of crisis.

Iraqi leaders agreed this week to begin negotiations over a possible extension of the US troop presence in Iraq.

## Security forces 'not ready' to take over from US

Saddam Hussein expelled tens of thousands of Kurds and Turkomans from the province and replaced them with ethnic Arabs. The goal was to ensure the uninterrupted flow of oil from the province by populating it with people whom the regime trusted.

US leaders have supported the rights of Kurds since toppling Mr. Hussein's regime in 2003. But eight years later, Kirkuk like much of Iraq is still seen as an unfinished business in danger of collapse.

Although Kirkuk has been less affected



ted than other provinces by the mayhem that has wracked the country, it has had its share of violence. In recent months, a series of bombings and assassinations rocked the province, arousing fears that the situation might further deteriorate if the United States withdraws its remaining forces.

The security situation is not stable here, and there are all sorts of problems and disputes, says Ali Mahdi Sadiq, the spokesman for Iraqi Turkoman Front (ITF), the largest Turkoman political group in Kirkuk. Turkomans constitute the third-largest ethnic group in the province.

The security and police forces are not ready yet to take over and this requires the presence of neutral troops, such as US forces, in these areas, says Mr. Sadiq.

### **Lack of unified command structure among security forces**

Several security and military groups are operating in Kirkuk, resulting in a lack of a unified command and operational structure. There are the units of the Iraqi Army's 12th Division in addition to local police forces and the Kurdish security and armed forces known as asayish and

peshmerga.

There is a security chaos in Kirkuk. Each one of the security groups acts on their own.... There needs to be a framework to address this, says Mohammed Khalil al-Juburi, an Arab member of the Kirkuk Provincial Council. Mr. Juburi says his Iraqi Republican Gathering (IRG) is against renewing the presence of US forces in Iraq, calling it an extension of the occupation, but instead endorses the deployment of a neutral international force in Kirkuk.

Tensions increased in late February as the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) deployed thousands of its elite peshmerga forces to Kirkuk in anticipation for what Kurds said were attempts by insurgents to bring down the provincial and local administrations under the guise of popular protests. That prompted many Arabs and Turkomans to cry foul and demand the removal of Kurdish forces, indicating the extent of distrust between various groups.

### **Political maneuvering**

Kurds want to annex Kirkuk to the Kurdistan Region to the north that is administered by the KRG. Many

Iraqi Arabs and Turkomans view Kurdish attempts to incorporate Kirkuk into their territory with suspicion, considering it a move toward outright independence.

Perhaps recognizing the perils of inaction, Kirkuk's rival groups arrived at a deal in March to reshuffle the top administrative positions. Kurds retained the office of governor, but gave up the post of head of the provincial council for a Turkoman politician from the ITF. An Arab from the IRG was sworn in as deputy governor. There have been no provincial elections in Kirkuk since 2005, and Kurds control 26 out of 41 seats in the provincial council.

It is true that there is some sort of agreement between the groups in Kirkuk, and all ethnicities are represented in the provincial council, says Sadiq of ITF. But a solid agreement between different political factions is still lacking. □



## **Kurdish oil market a global beacon?**

**LONDON, August 9, 2011 - United Press International**

**OIL COMPANIES are flocking to tap into the wealth in the Kurdish north of Iraq as upstream potential in other parts of the world declines, investors say.**

The Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq reached a February revenue-sharing deal with Baghdad and expects a political breakthrough on a long-awaited hydrocarbon law by the end of the year.

Paul Atherton, chief financial officer with Heritage Oil, which holds assets in northern Iraq, told the Financial Times the resource potential there was significant.

"There are very few places left in the world with onshore prospects like it," he said.

Kurdish exports through the Iraqi federal oil ministry are expected to increase from around 175,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day to 200,000 barrels by the end of the year.

Market analysts at IHS Global Insight told the Financial Times that some supermajors are staying on the sidelines because they don't want to upset the political balance in Iraq. But Phil Corbett, an oil and gas analyst at Royal Bank of Scotland, told the newspaper upstream opportunities in Kurdistan are expanding.

"If you want to go, you've got to buy companies or farm in to existing concessions, so I think we'll see a lot of corporate activity going forward," he said.

## EDITORIAL

### DITHERING ON SYRIA

Tougher measures and a united international front are the only hope of ending the violence.

As many as 1,600 courageous Syrians have been slaughtered since pro-democracy demonstrations began in March. On Wednesday, after three days of shelling, President Bashar al-Assad ordered his military to storm Hama, the city where his father killed up to 20,000 people three decades ago.

Where has the international community been? Shamefully paralyzed.

On Wednesday, the United Nations Security Council finally issued a statement condemning "widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities" — but with no threat of sanctions. For two months, Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa had blocked any action at all. They have allowed Mr. Assad to believe that he can keep killing and pay no price.

The statement, of course, is better than silence. We would like to believe that even this faint change of heart by Moscow — a longtime military supplier and patron — will grab Mr. Assad's attention. But we suspect that he will instead focus on how Russia managed to water down the language in a ridiculous bid for evenhandedness.

The Security Council's statement unfairly blames the protesters when it urges "all sides to act with utmost restraint, and to refrain from reprisals, including attacks against state institutions." And it gives Mr. Assad — who needs to be gone — a lifeline by urging his government to implement its now thoroughly discredited "commitments" to reform.

It is going to take a lot more pressure to persuade Mr. Assad that his time is up — or to persuade those enabling him to switch sides. The Council needs to impose tough sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes on Mr. Assad and all of his top aides. It should refer the Syrian leader and his thugs to the International Criminal Court for a war crimes investigation and direct states to halt investment in Syria's government-run energy sector. More dithering will only mean more killings.

The United States and the European Union have done a much better job, although not as clearly and swiftly as needed. They have imposed several rounds of travel bans and asset freezes on Mr. Assad and his henchmen — Europe added more names to its list on Monday. They need to ratchet up the pressure.

One idea is for the top consumers of Syrian oil — Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands — to stop buying it. The exports are small enough that a suspension would have little effect on world prices but would still have a big impact on Damascus. There should be no new investments in Syria's energy sector.

Turkey, once one of Syria's closest allies and now a critic, needs to use all of its leverage. Washington, the European Union and Turkey should also be pressing the cowardly Arab League to stand with the Syrian people.

On Tuesday, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met Syrian opposition members. Washington and its allies should do all they can to help lay the groundwork for a democratic, post-Assad Syria. Right now, they need to marshal every possible diplomatic and economic pressure to help the Syrian people topple this brutal regime.

## 24-hour death toll put at 100 in Syrian troops' assault on city



### BEIRUT

BY NADA BAKRI

The Syrian military forces that rolled into the rebellious city of Hama and occupied its central square killed more than 100 people in 24 hours, rights activists in satellite communication with people in the city said Thursday. The new toll doubled the rough count of civilian dead there to more than 200 since the military's tanks began shelling Hama over the weekend.

The military's assault on the city, a linchpin of the five-month uprising against the iron-handed government of President Bashar al-Assad, represents one of the fiercest efforts yet to crush the uprising and is a signal of Mr. Assad's defiance in the face of growing international condemnation. Activists say the overall toll from the repression since March is more than 1,700.

With foreign journalists barred from the country and the government silent about most aspects of the rebellions, activists have been the main source of information on the crackdowns and casualties.

Syria's state-run media have conspicuously avoided mention of the Hama siege, focusing instead on news that suggests normalcy in the country and what it has described as Mr. Assad's noble attempts to promote political dialogue and openness. The top story Thursday on the English-language Web site of SANA, the official news agency, was about Mr. Assad's endorsement of a draft law allowing multiple political parties. Syria's political opposition denounced the law as a joke when it was announced last month.

Mr. Assad's endorsement of the law seemed only to add to the international

outrage over the repression. France called a "provocation."

Mr. Assad's isolation is deepening. Russia, a close ally of Syria, joined with other members of the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday in rebuking Mr. Assad for the repression. And on Thursday, President Dmitri A. Medvedev criticized him in unusually blunt terms in an interview with Russian radio and television from the Russian resort of Sochi.

"He needs to urgently carry out reforms, reconcile with the opposition, restore peace and set up a modern state," Mr. Medvedev said. "If he fails to do this, he will face a sad fate."

Activists said that at least 1,000 families had fled Hama since Sunday. Land lines, mobile phones, Internet service, electricity and water remained cut for the second consecutive day. Satellite connections offered perhaps the only route left to get information out. Activists said they feared the almost total media blackout on the city would allow the military to pursue an unrestrained assault.

Their fear was deepened by the painful legacy of Hama, where Mr. Assad's father, Hafez, president at the time, crushed an uprising in 1982 out of sight of the world, leaving upward of 10,000 people dead and parts of the city leveled.

Other activists spoke of a critical shortage of basic food staples and medical equipment. Hama has been surrounded since Sunday, and cars trying to carry food into the city have been attacked, according to reports in recent days. Hundreds of people have been arrested in house-to-house raids.

Rick Gladstone contributed reporting from New York.

# L'affaire de corruption « Pétrole contre nourriture » sera effectivement jugée

Malgré les réquisitions de non-lieu du parquet, Charles Pasqua et le PDG de Total, Christophe de Margerie, sont renvoyés en correctionnelle

Il y aura bien un procès, en France, dans la longue et tortueuse affaire « Pétrole contre nourriture ». Quinze ans après les faits qui leur sont reprochés, le groupe pétrolier Total, son PDG, Christophe de Margerie, Charles Pasqua et 17 autres personnes (dont plusieurs diplomates) ont été renvoyés devant le tribunal correctionnel de Paris pour des malversations présumées dans le cadre de ce programme « Oil-for-food » mis en place en Irak par l'Organisation des Nations unies (ONU) entre 1996 et 2003. Publiée par *Charlie Hebdo*, l'information a été confirmée de source judiciaire et par Total.

Le programme de l'ONU autorisait l'Irak à vendre du brut pour acheter de la nourriture, des médicaments puis des biens d'équipement, afin de soulager la population durement frappée par l'embargo décrété après l'invasion du Koweït par Saddam Hussein en août 1990. Mais le régime avait détourné le programme de son objet initial et de nombreux dignitaires s'étaient partagé 1,8 milliard de dollars (1,3 milliard d'euros) par le biais de surfacturations sur les produits importés ou de ventes d'or noir en contrebande à ses frontières. A elles seules, ces ventes ont rapporté 11 milliards de dollars au régime entre 1996 et 2003, quand l'invasion américaine de l'Irak a mis un terme au programme.

De leur côté, des personnalités françaises auraient reçu du dictateur des barils de brut en échange de leur lobbying en faveur d'une levée des sanctions internationales contre l'Irak. Ainsi, M. Pasqua sera-t-il jugé pour trafic d'influence et corruption, même si son avocat, M<sup>e</sup> Léon-Lef Forster, a immédiatement affiché une « sérénité totale » sur l'issue du procès, qui devrait se tenir courant 2012.

Au nombre des prévenus figurent aussi l'ancien conseiller diplomatique de M. Pasqua, Bernard Guillet, et deux diplomates de

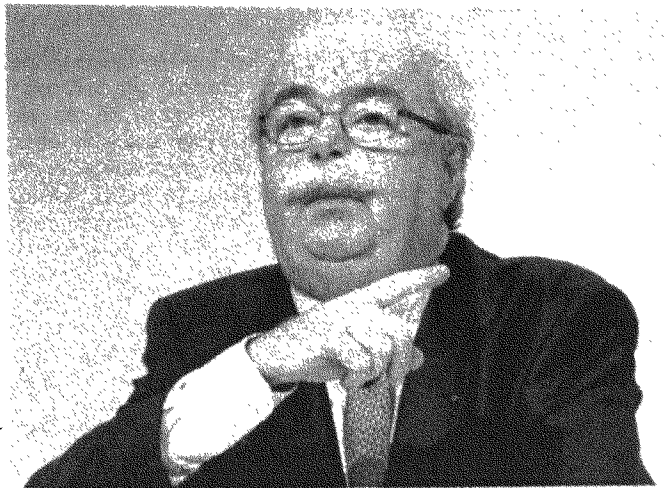
Au nombre des prévenus figurent aussi l'ancien conseiller diplomatique de M. Pasqua et deux diplomates de haut rang

haut rang : Jean-Bernard Mérimée, qui fut, notamment, ambassadeur de France à l'ONU, et Serge Boidevaux, ancien secrétaire général du

Quai d'Orsay. Les trois hommes sont renvoyés devant le tribunal pour corruption et trafic d'influence. Saddam Hussein avait en effet ciblé la France (et la Russie) en raison des très bonnes relations que Bagdad entretenait avec Paris depuis les années 1970 et de sa position de membre permanent du conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

Pour sa part, M. de Margerie, patron de l'exploration-production de Total à l'époque des faits, est renvoyé devant le tribunal pour complicité d'abus de biens sociaux et le groupe pour corruption et trafic d'influence. Le juge soupçonne certains cadres de la compagnie d'avoir versé des pots-de-vin pour obtenir plus de pétrole irakien que ne l'autorisait le programme onusien. Une porte-parole affirme que « le groupe est confiant sur le fait qu'il sera établi que Total ne peut se voir reprocher les faits cités ».

Les dirigeants de Total n'ont d'ailleurs pas attendu la lecture de l'ordonnance de renvoi de 271 pages, signée le 28 juillet par le juge Serge Tournaire, qui a repris une affaire longuement instruite par le juge Philippe Courroye, pour contre-attaquer. « Aucun élément du dossier ne permet d'établir la réalité de ces allégations pour lesquelles le parquet a déjà



Le PDG de Total, Christophe de Margerie, en 2007. MARTIN BUREAU/AFP

requis deux non lieu depuis l'ouverture de l'instruction en 2002 », souligne le groupe.

Il rappelle qu'en 2005, le rapport de la commission d'enquête indépendante sur le détournement du programme « Pétrole contre nourriture », créée par l'ONU et confiée à Paul Volker, ancien président de la Réserve fédérale américaine, avait « écarté tout grief de corruption » des compagnies pétrolières. Y compris de la part de Total qui affirme s'être « toujours conformé aux règles du programme de l'ONU ».

L'affaire avait débuté en 2002. La justice française soupçonne alors des cadres de Total d'abus de biens sociaux pour décrocher des marchés en Irak. Deux ans plus tard, l'ONU met à jour un détournement massif de son programme. C'est alors que les soupçons s'orientent vers des hommes politiques et des diplomates français. En avril 2006, le juge Courroye avait déjà procédé à douze mises en examen dans cette affaire.

Si Total apparaît dès le début de l'affaire, son patron n'entre en scène qu'en octobre 2006. Alors numéro deux du groupe et déjà désigné pour en devenir le PDG quelques mois plus tard, M. de

Margerie est mis en examen par le juge Courroye pour « complicité d'abus de biens sociaux » et « complicité de corruption d'agents publics étrangers » au terme d'une garde à vue de quarante-huit heures qu'il jugera humiliante. Et d'autant plus injuste, selon son avocat, M<sup>e</sup> Emmanuel Rosenfeld, que « le dossier est sans fondement » et qu'« il n'y a pas l'ombre d'un abus de bien », déclare-t-il à l'époque.

Depuis ce dernier épisode, peu d'éléments semblent avoir nourri le dossier du juge d'instruction. A deux reprises, le parquet de Paris a même requis un non-lieu pour M. de Margerie et M. Pasqua : en septembre 2009, il estimait que l'enquête n'avait pas permis de démontrer que le patron de Total s'était rendu complice d'abus de biens sociaux, ni que l'ancien ministre de l'intérieur s'était livré à du trafic d'influence ; en octobre 2010, nouveau réquisitoire de non-lieu pour Total, son PDG et l'ensemble des salariés impliqués. Chez Total, on s'étonne que dix mois se soient écoulés entre cette position du parquet et la décision du juge Tournaire. ■

Jean-Michel Bezat

Le Monde  
Mardi 9 août 2011

# Les critiques arabes isolent un peu plus le régime syrien

Beyrouth

Correspondance

Sans relâche, les critiques régionales se sont succédé à l'encontre de Damas depuis samedi 6 août. C'est en premier lieu le Conseil de coopération du Golfe (CCG) qui a exhorté à l'arrêt « immédiat » de l'« effusion de sang » en Syrie. L'appel a été relayé par la Ligue arabe, dont le nouveau secrétaire général, Nabil Al-Arabi, a pressé, dimanche, le régime de Bachar Al-Assad de mettre fin « immédiatement à tous les actes de violence et aux campagnes sécuritaires contre les civils ».

Quelques heures plus tard, la Jordanie emboîtait le pas à l'organisation, qualifiant les développements chez son voisin d'« inquiétants, malheureux et tristes ». Avant que, dans une prise de position inédite depuis le début de la contestation populaire en Syrie, le 15 mars, suivie de la répression, le roi Abdallah d'Arabie saoudite dénonce l'escalade de la violence « injustifiée » et rappelle son ambassadeur à Damas. « pour consultations ».

Après l'adoption par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, mercredi 3 août, d'une déclaration condamnant l'usage de la force en Syrie – plus de 1 600 morts depuis près de cinq mois, selon des militants des droits de l'homme –, ce chœur de critiques renforce l'isolement du régime. Les avertissements adressés sont d'autant plus remarquables que les pays ou les organes qui les ont formulés s'étaient jusqu'alors montrés discrets.

En faisant part de sa « préoccu-

pation croissante » face à la « détérioration sécuritaire en Syrie », la Ligue arabe est ainsi sortie de son mutisme. Nabil Al-Arabi s'était rendu à Damas le 13 juillet, « au grand désarroi du peuple syrien », note le dissident Ammar Qurabi, président de l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'homme en Syrie. M. Al-Arabi avait en effet déclaré, à cette occasion, que « personne n'a le droit de retirer sa légitimité à un dirigeant, car c'est le peuple qui le décide », se refusant ainsi à mettre en cause directement le président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad.

De la même manière, le Conseil de coopération du Golfe, qui rassemble notamment l'Arabie saoudite, Bahreïn et le Koweït, était resté prudent. Cela relevait, en partie, d'une mesure de réciprocité. Damas avait en effet approuvé l'envoi de troupes saoudiennes et émiraties à Bahreïn, décidé par les monarchies du Golfe, à la mi-mars, pour mater le soulèvement contre la famille royale Al-Khalifa dans le petit royaume du golfe Persique. A deux reprises, Bachar Al-Assad avait même

reçu des messages de soutien du roi Hamad ben Issa Al-Khalifa.

Cela n'a rien d'un hasard, selon plusieurs observateurs, si ces pays, traditionnellement proches des États-Unis – tout comme la Jordanie – ont rompu avec leur précédente retenue. L'administration américaine a en effet haussé le ton, après le vote du Conseil de sécurité, affirmant une nouvelle fois que le président syrien « n'était pas indispensable ».



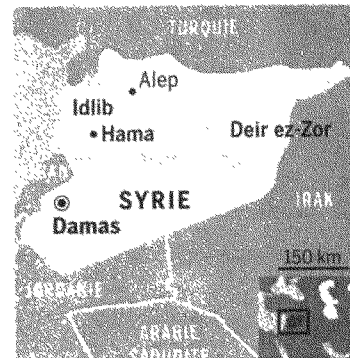
« Un régime non sunnite massacre des civils sunnites qui jeûnent, cela n'est pas acceptable pour Riyad »

Amr Al-Azm  
un opposant syrien

L'accentuation de la répression, ensuite, alors que le ramadan a commencé le 1<sup>er</sup> août, a probablement précipité ces prises de position. « Le déferlement de violence en ce mois de jeûne, censé être un temps de paix, est un coup dans l'estomac pour le Conseil de coopération du Golfe, et notamment pour l'Arabie saoudite, juge Amr Al-Azm, membre du conseil exécutif du groupe d'Antalya, qui rassemble des opposants syriens. Un régime non sunnite massacre des civils sunnites qui jeûnent, cela n'est pas acceptable pour Riyad, qui ne pouvait pas ne pas réagir ».

Pour l'opposition syrienne, les déclarations arabes restent néanmoins en deçà de ses attentes. « Tout en posant une limite à l'usage de la violence, elles ne constituent pas une condamnation totale », poursuit M. Al-Azm, enseignant auprès de l'université Shawnee aux États-Unis. Les différents acteurs arabes ont ainsi évoqué la nécessité d'un « dialogue », que refusent les dissidents, jugeant également dépassés les appels à réformer.

L'opposition met en avant les derniers épisodes meurtriers : des dizaines de personnes ont été tuées dimanche dans la ville de Deir ez-Zor (nord-est de Damas), soumise à une offensive militai-



re, dans les environs d'Homs (nord de la capitale) et à Idlib (nord), selon des militants des droits de l'homme.

La réaction de Damas reflète néanmoins son embarras face aux critiques. Sur la défensive, les autorités ont répondu vertement au Conseil de coopération du Golfe, estimant que « l'instance aurait dû condamner les « actes de sabotage perpétrés par des groupes armés pour nuire (...) au pays » et appuyer les « réformes ». Le pouvoir a aussi prévenu Ankara contre toute « tentative d'ingérence », alors que le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a annoncé que le chef de la diplomatie turque se rendra mardi 9 août en Syrie. « Notre patience est à bout (...). Nous considérons les problèmes en Syrie non pas comme une question de politique étrangère, mais comme une affaire interne », a déclaré M. Erdogan.

Face à ces mises au ban, Damas n'aura conservé le soutien que de son voisin libanais, dont le ministre des affaires étrangères était reçu en visite, dimanche, dans la capitale syrienne. « Ce qui nuit à la Syrie nuit aussi au Liban », a indiqué Adnane Mansour depuis Damas. ■

Laure Stephan

## D'Hama à Deir ez-Zor, une semaine sanglante

**31 juillet** A la veille du ramadan, les chars pénètrent dans la ville d'Hama (nord de Damas). L'assaut fait au moins 70 morts.

**3 août** La répression se poursuit à Hama. Le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies vote une déclaration non contraignante condamnant la répression en Syrie.

**5 août** Lors du premier vendredi de prière depuis le début du ramadan, au moins 26 civils sont tués. Hama reste totalement isolée, les

communications étant coupées.

**6 août** Damas annonce des « élections [générales] libres et transparentes » avant la fin de l'année.

**7 août** Le pape lance « un appel pressant aux autorités et à la population pour rétablir au plus vite la coexistence pacifique ». Selon des militants des droits de l'homme, des dizaines de civils sont tués par les forces du régime. L'armée pénètre à Deir ez-Zor (nord-est de Damas).

# Après son succès aux législatives, le BDP à la croisée des chemins

Par Elif Karaman



Logo du BDP

**L**e BDP (le Parti pour la Démocratie et la Paix) pro-kurde fait partie des grands gagnants du scrutin du 12 juin dernier. En effet, avec 35 députés, il est parvenu à multiplier pratiquement par deux le nombre de ses sièges au Parlement. Alors que ce dernier se donne pour mission une révision constitutionnelle dont l'un des objectifs est de régler la question kurde, ce score pourrait permettre au BDP d'exercer une influence et de tenter de faire passer des réformes importantes comme le droit d'enseigner la langue kurde. Pourtant, au moment même où il s'affirme comme force politique montante, il a refusé de prêter serment et a boycotté le Parlement (voir notre édition du 29 juillet 2011).

Pourquoi cette situation ? La tension entre le BDP et le gouvernement s'est amplifiée autour des élections du 12 juin. En effet, un mois avant le scrutin, la candidature de sept candidats indépendants soutenus par le BDP (ainsi que de cinq autres candidats indépendants à travers la Turquie) avait été annulée par le Haut Conseil des élections (YSK) en raison de leur casier judiciaire (voir notre édition du 21 avril 2011). Selahattin Demirtas, député du BDP depuis 2007, avait déclaré qu'il s'agissait « d'un complot politique » et d'une « nouvelle déclaration de guerre ». Pour Aysel Tugluk, députée du BDP depuis 2007, ces interdictions ne pouvaient qu'inciter les Kurdes à davantage de révolte. Cette remise en cause préélectorale a également été dénoncée par Hasip Kaplan, député du même parti, qui estimait que les élections législatives perdaient ainsi toute légitimité. Même si six de ces sept candidatures ont été réhabilitées quelques jours plus tard, la méfiance s'est installée. À cela s'est ajouté le traditionnel désavantage des candidatures indépendantes : dans la mesure où un parti n'obtient de représentation parlementaire que s'il rassemble au moins 10% des voix au niveau national - score jamais atteint par un parti pro-kurde -, le BDP, comme ses prédécesseurs, ne concourt pas directement aux élections, mais préfère soutenir des candidats indépendants. Cette stratégie, qui lui permet d'obtenir un nombre non négligeable de sièges, a pour contrepartie le fait que le BDP n'a pas bénéficié de fonds publics pour sa campagne électorale, à la différence des autres partis représentés et en particulier à l'AKP qui a dépensé des sommes considérables lui permettant d'être omniprésent dans les médias.

Mais le conflit s'est surtout amplifié après les élections, notamment en raison du maintien en détention provisoire de cinq des nouveaux élus du BDP soupçonnés de proximité avec le PKK, ainsi qu'à l'invalidation de l'élection de Hatip Dicle, fondateur du BDP, dont une peine d'emprisonnement a été confirmée entre-temps, et dont le siège parlementaire a été attribué à l'AKP. Aux élections a ainsi succédé une recrudescence des violences opposant les forces de l'ordre turques au PKK (voir notre édition du 18 juillet 2011). Le 14 juillet, alors qu'une embuscade du PKK entraînait la mort de treize soldats turcs et de sept rebelles, Aysel Tugluk, présidente du Congrès pour une Société Démocratique (DTK), plate-forme d'associations et de mouvements kurdes, proclamait lors d'une réunion partisane « l'autonomie démocratique » des Kurdes de Turquie. Selon cette députée du BDP condamnée à plusieurs reprises pour propagande terroriste, cette autonomie ne consiste pas à former un Etat autonome, mais à permettre la reconnaissance des droits d'une minorité et leur auto-administration au sein de leur région. Mais les commentateurs se sont longuement interrogés sur le contenu et la portée d'une telle déclaration.

Le BDP est largement critiqué au sein de la classe poli-

tique et par les médias, qui le considèrent comme la branche politique du PKK obéissant aux ordres d'Abdullah Öcalan. Lors de cette même réunion du BDP - qui a eu lieu à Diyarbakır, ville majoritairement kurde, et non comme il se doit à Ankara - Bengi Yıldız, député du BDP, déclarait ainsi que voter pour son parti revenait à soutenir Abdullah Öcalan et par conséquent le PKK, contribuant à l'amalgame entre le PKK et le BDP. Dans la même veine, le BDP a accusé l'armée turque d'être elle-même responsable de la mort de ses soldats. Abdullah Öcalan allait jusqu'à affirmer, le 27 juillet, que « l'AKP veut la guerre ». Dans cette perspective, certains membres du BDP veulent prolonger le boycott parlementaire et établir une alliance avec le KCK (la Confédération démocratique du Kurdistan), organisation civile soutenant le PKK et largement considérée comme sa branche urbaine. D'une manière générale, la principale différence entre le BDP et les autres partis réside dans le refus de ce dernier de considérer le PKK comme une organisation terroriste. Il souhaite ainsi que le PKK soit partie prenante de la résolution de la question kurde.

Cependant, d'autres députés plus modérés au sein du BDP préfèrent trouver une solution pour mettre fin au boycott lors de la rentrée parlementaire et ainsi participer à la réforme constitutionnelle, et faire avancer par ce biais les revendications du parti (droit d'enseigner, de pratiquer librement et publiquement la culture et la langue kurdes, développement économique du sud-est anatolien, et libération des prisonniers politiques). Ce faisant, ils reflètent la stratégie électorale adoptée par le parti pour les législatives de 2012 : ce n'est pas seul que le BDP a soutenu les indépendants, mais au sein d'une plate-forme intitulée « bloc pour le travail, la démocratie et l'égalité » regroupant d'autres partis de gauche. C'est ainsi que de nombreux artistes et intellectuels kurdes et turcs ont adhéré au BDP, au moment où Abdullah Öcalan affirmait que le « BDP ne doit plus être un parti identitaire », mais devrait inclure et représenter les intérêts à la fois des Kurdes et des Turcs. Parmi les députés BDP qui n'ont pas le profil classique nationaliste kurde, on peut citer Altan Tan, écrivain et politicien avec un passé dans le parti islamiste Refah, ou encore Sırrı Süreyya Önder, cinéaste turc alévi de gauche.

On voit donc que le BDP est divisé - sur les relations avec le PKK, sur la stratégie à adopter face au gouvernement et à la question constitutionnelle. Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard si fin juillet est revenu en Turquie l'écrivain Kemal Burak, le fondateur du Parti Socialiste du Kurdistan en 1974, après 31 ans d'exil en Suède. Il adopte une approche moins confrontationnelle et critique le rejet de toute proposition émanant du gouvernement, qu'elle soit bonne ou mauvaise, par les « kurdes les plus politisés », à savoir le PKK et le BDP. Le gouvernement d'Ankara est confiant en sa contribution au règlement pacifique du problème kurde.

# Les tensions restent vives entre Ankara et Damas

L'Inde, le Brésil et l'Afrique du Sud devaient tenter une médiation auprès de Bachar Al-Assad

**Beyrouth**  
Correspondance

Officiellement, la rencontre, mardi 9 août en Syrie, du chef de la diplomatie turque, Ahmet Davutoglu, et du président Bachar Al-Assad a été moins houleuse que ne le laissaient présager les échanges à couteaux tirés, deux jours plus tôt, entre Ankara et Damas. Selon l'agence de presse syrienne SANA, M. Assad s'est dit réceptif à « l'aide de pays frères et amis » pour « appuyer les réformes ». De retour en Turquie, M. Davutoglu a qualifié d'« ouverte » la discussion qu'il a eue avec le chef de l'Etat syrien pendant près de six heures, dont un long tête-à-tête de trois heures et demie.

Plusieurs signes montrent néanmoins que les tensions restent vives entre les deux capitales. Chaque partie campait sur sa position mardi soir. Le président Assad a continué de dénoncer, derrière les violences en Syrie, des « groupes terroristes » contre lesquels les autorités « poursuivront leur lut-

te ». M. Davutoglu, pour sa part, a délivré un ultimatum implicite : « Les développements qui surviendront dans les prochains jours seront décisifs quant aux attentes de la Turquie et du peuple syrien. » Ankara exige la fin des « effusions de sang » et le lancement d'un « processus de réforme politique ».

L'accentuation des pressions

## La Turquie exige la fin des « effusions de sang » et le lancement d'un « processus de réforme politique »

régionales n'a pas semblé entamer l'assurance de M. Assad, qui a mis en garde son voisin contre toute ingérence. Répondant au premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui avait qualifié la situation syrienne d'« affaire intérieure » pour son pays, le chef de l'Etat a indiqué que Damas appliquerait un princi-

pe de réciprocité, en ayant « les mêmes considérations face à tout événement qu'affronte la Turquie ». Lors d'un entretien à la chaîne satellitaire Al-Arabiya, un expert syrien en stratégie, défendant la position des autorités, a invité à « ne pas sous-estimer la puissance militaire syrienne ».

Après le retrait par trois monarchies du Golfe de leur ambassadeur à Damas, les critiques régionales se sont poursuivies, mardi, à l'encontre du régime baasiste, provenant de l'Irak et de l'Egypte. Depuis Le Caire, le chef de la diplomatie, Mohammed Amr, a jugé que le pouvoir syrien avait atteint un « point de non-retour ».

Tandis que les agences de presse font état de la volonté américaine de renforcer les sanctions contre les officiels syriens, Damas devait accueillir, mercredi 10 août, une délégation de représentants de l'Inde, du Brésil et de l'Afrique du Sud. Les trois pays, membres non permanents du Conseil de sécurité, ont été approchés par l'opposition syrienne au début de

l'été, à l'époque où ils rechignaient à soutenir une déclaration de l'ONU condamnant la répression - qui a finalement été votée par le Conseil de sécurité le 3 août. Ils ont également été courtisés par le régime, qui se targuait, mardi, d'avoir reçu l'appui de Pretoria. Cette délégation, qui se présente comme une mission de médiation, souhaite plaider auprès du pouvoir syrien la « nécessité du dialogue entre le gouvernement et la population, de mettre fin à la violence et de respecter les droits de l'homme », selon un porte-parole du ministère des affaires étrangères, brésilien. Elle doit dresser un « état des lieux » de la situation.

La répression s'est poursuivie, mardi. Des militants des droits de l'homme ont fait état d'arrestations et de dizaines de morts dans le pays, notamment à Deir ez-Zor, investie par l'armée depuis dimanche. Des mouvements de chars ont été enregistrés dans plusieurs localités du nord-ouest de la Syrie, non loin de la frontière turque. ■

Laure Stephan



## Danemark: ouverture du procès pour "terrorisme" de la chaîne kurde

COPENHAGUE, 15 août 2011 (AFP)

LE PROCÈS de la chaîne kurde de télévision Roj TV, basée à Copenhague et accusée de soutenir le "terrorisme" auprès de la population kurde dans les 68 pays où elle émet, s'est ouvert lundi dans la capitale danoise.

Après cinq années d'enquête, le Parquet danois a demandé en 2010 l'interdiction de cette chaîne en estimant qu'elle soutenait le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui figure sur la liste des organisations terroristes de l'Union européenne (UE), des Etats-Unis et de la Turquie.

Dès l'ouverture du procès, l'avocat de la défense Bjoern Elmquist a demandé l'abandon des poursuites, arguant du fait que les accusations étaient trop vagues, selon l'agence danoise Ritzau.

"Il n'y a rien (dans les accusations) sur la date" où les crimes présumés ont été commis et "ce que Roj TV est supposé avoir fait n'est pas clair non

plus", a plaidé l'avocat.

La cour a rejeté la demande et un responsable du tribunal a indiqué à l'AFP que le procès pourrait durer jusqu'à 25 jours, compte tenu du grand nombre de témoins appelés à la barre tant par le Parquet que par la défense.

Lundi, un petit groupe de manifestants s'était réuni devant le palais de justice pour affirmer que "les Kurdes devraient aussi pouvoir jouir de la liberté d'expression".

D'autres demandaient "Pourquoi Roj TV devrait payer pour le poste d'Anders Fogh (Rasmussen, ndr) à l'Otan ?", en référence aux révélations du site WikiLeaks selon lesquelles la Turquie avait menacé de mettre un veto à la candidature de l'ancien Premier ministre danois au poste de secrétaire général de l'Alliance, si Copenhague ne faisait pas fermer la chaîne kurde.

M. Fogh Rasmussen a été désigné en avril 2009 et a pris ses fonctions à l'Otan en août de la même année.



## Trois soldats turcs tués dans une embuscade

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 13 août 2011 (AFP)

TROIS SOLDATS turcs ont été tués dans un accrochage entre l'armée et des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé samedi une source militaire.

Des rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a tendu une embuscade sur une route, dans la province de Sirnak (sud-est), contre une

patrouille militaire qui revenait d'une opération contre le groupe armé, a indiqué à l'AFP cette source qui a requis l'anonymat.

Les faits se sont produits à 10 kilomètres de la ville de Beytussebab.

Le 16 juin, 13 soldats avaient été tués dans des affrontements avec le PKK dans la province de Diyarbakir. Il s'agissait des pertes les plus lourdes pour l'armée turque dans ce conflit depuis octobre 2008.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, s'est engagé dans la lutte armée en 1984. On estime que ce conflit a fait 45.000 morts depuis cette date.

**Bloomberg**

August 9, 2011

# Erdogan Risks Kurdish Flare-Up Weakening Turkey Role Model for Arab Spring

BY EMRE PEKER

**A**s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan urges Arab leaders to heed popular demands for change, in Turkey's southeast violence and political protests are spreading among Kurds.

Fighting between the army and Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, has escalated this year, leaving at least 107 people dead. Meanwhile, the group's political ally, the main legal Kurdish party, has declared autonomy for the region after making record gains in national elections.

Erdogan, who has promised an end to the three-decade war, has toughened his line in recent weeks. He accused Kurdish politicians of "dancing to their own tune" and announced plans to beef up special operation teams. A flare-up in the conflict could undermine Erdogan's effort to position Turkey as a stable, democratic role model for Arab neighbors gripped by unrest.

"Turkey cannot itself be a model at the moment when the process of nation-building is far from complete," said Fadi Hakura, an analyst at Chatham House research institute in London. "There's growing ethnic antagonism in Turkey and that is the ultimate fear: that it's feeding a growing polarization that can reach a point of no return."

Turkey's war with the PKK has left 40,000 people dead, mostly Kurds. The movement, classified as a terrorist group by the U.S. and European Union as well as Turkey, demands self-government for the Kurds, who make up about 20 percent of Turkey's 74 million people.

## Parliament Boycott

The conflict has taken as much as \$10 billion a year out of Turkey's budget, as well as scaring off business, said Huseyin Yayman, a researcher at the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research in Ankara. "For foreign investors and people planning to invest in the region, violence constitutes a problem," he said.

Erdogan's economic growth record is under threat: the lira has slid more than 8 percent since the start of July, the most among global currencies. A second-quarter trade deficit of almost \$30 billion was the biggest ever.

The Peace and Democracy Party, linked to the PKK, won 36 seats in Turkey's 550-member legislature on June 12, then boycotted parliament after five of its lawmakers failed to win release from prison to attend. Another, Hatip Dicle, was stripped of his seat, which was then allocated to a runner-up from Erdogan's governing party.

The party called a July 14 congress in Diyarbakir, the biggest Kurdish city, and declared autonomy. The same day, 13 soldiers were killed in a firefight with the PKK in the countryside outside Diyarbakir.

## PKK Problem

Erdogan has gone farther than past Turkish leaders in seeking to meet Kurdish demands. In the last six years he has lifted emergency rule in the southeast, started a state-run television channel in Kurdish and allowed broadcasts, print and music distribution in the language. Restrictions on its use in schools remain.

After those measures there is no longer a Kurdish problem, just a PKK problem, Erdogan has repeatedly said.

Many Kurds see the rights they have gained as fruits of the



armed struggle, not gifts from Erdogan, and say they don't go far enough.

Mehmet Damlayici, a 41-year-old building contractor who lost three brothers in the conflict, said he supports the Kurdish declaration of autonomy. Conditions may have improved, yet state officials still wouldn't let him name his son Chekdar, meaning "heavy weaponry" in Kurdish, he said in an interview.

## 'War and Deadlock'

"The point we've reached is the result of a 30-year guerrilla struggle," Damlayici said. "The PKK is our insurance."

Turkey's army, which has argued that concessions to Kurds would undermine national unity, has lost its political influence under Erdogan, who has supported investigations into alleged coup plots that have put more than 40 serving generals behind bars. Chief of General Staff Isik Kosaner, who quit July 27 along with three top aides, said the probes cast the army as a "criminal gang."

The Peace and Democracy Party welcomed the departure of Kosaner and his colleagues as a victory for civilian rule over the military. Erdogan has pointed to the army as an obstacle to ending the Kurdish conflict, and is now free to pursue peace instead of "war and deadlock," the Kurdish party's co-leader, Filiz Kocali, said on Aug. 1.

That means negotiating with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, serving a life sentence in an island prison in the Marmara Sea, she said, adding that there are no signs that the government is shifting in that direction.

## Unofficial Dialogue

Erdogan, like other Turkish leaders, publicly rules out talks with the PKK. Instead, he has proposed to strengthen Turkey's special-operations forces -- a hardening stance that recalls policies of the mid-1990s, when the conflict was at its peak, Chatham House's Hakura said.

Unofficially, Turkey has maintained a dialogue with Ocalan through various channels for almost 20 years, according to a report published in June by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation. Its author, Cengiz Candar, says Turkey needs to recognize the importance of the PKK and Ocalan's "cult personality" among Kurds if it wants to end the conflict.

Erdogan's plan to rewrite a constitution inherited from Turkey's last military coup in 1980 offers an opportunity to meet some Kurdish demands. Failure to do so risks igniting the kind of popular unrest that Arab countries, including Turkey's southeastern neighbor, have experienced this year.

"Uprisings won't just stop at the Turkey-Syria border," Candar said. "They'll carry on across it, via the Kurds."

# Syria presses deadly assaults on regions

BEIRUT

## Assad's regime ignores more U.S. sanctions and other foreign pressure

BY ANTHONY SHADID  
AND STEVEN LEE MYERS

Syria's government on Wednesday defied a new set of American financial sanctions and other international pressure as it pressed ahead with military assaults on rebellious areas that residents and activists said killed at least 35 people.

The attacks in northern and eastern Syria underlined what appeared to be a decisive move by the government to try to crush an uprising during the holy month of Ramadan, when observant Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. This month, military and security forces have attacked Hama, in central Syria; Deir al-Zour, in the east; and now Idlib, along Turkey's border.

Calls have grown for restraint, most recently from Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu of Turkey, who visited Damascus on Wednesday. But President Bashar al-Assad declared that Syria would "not relent in pursuing the terrorist groups."

Since the beginning of the uprising, Syrian officials have insisted — despite formidable evidence otherwise — that the uprising is led by militant Islamists with foreign backing.

"In Syria, the state is pointing guns at its own people," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey said Wednesday at a meeting of his governing party in the Turkish capital, Ankara.

But Mr. Erdogan, a personal friend of Mr. Assad's, said he hoped that within 10 to 15 days Mr. Assad would end the violence and "take steps for reform," Turkish news services reported. The comments seemed to suggest that Turkey, unlike many other countries, viewed Mr. Assad as still capable of leading a transition in Syria, long one of the Arab world's most authoritarian states.

In Washington, the Obama administration increased pressure on Syria by imposing sanctions on the state-owned Commercial Bank of Syria, along with a Lebanese-based subsidiary, and the country's largest mobile telephone operator, Syriatel, which is owned by Rami Makhluf, a powerful businessman and cousin of Mr. Assad's who has faced American sanctions since May.

The administration's growing sanctions blacklist already covers most of Syria's senior leaders, including Mr. As-



ADEM ALTAN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, center, of Turkey on Wednesday at a ruling party meeting in Ankara. Mr. Erdogan said he expected Syria to start reforms within 10-15 days.

sad, and several other businesses with close ties to the government.

Under the sanctions, imposed by the Treasury Department, any assets under American jurisdiction that belong to the people and businesses on the blacklist are frozen, and American businesses are prohibited from dealing with them.

In a sign that the administration is trying to find as many levers as possible, the latest sanctions were based in part on executive orders aimed at restricting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. In a statement, the Treasury Department said the Commercial Bank of Syria had provided financial services to banks in Iran and to North Korea's Tanchon Commercial Bank, which in turn works closely with that country's main arms dealer, the Korea Mining Development Corporation.

"We are taking aim at the financial infrastructure that is helping provide support to Assad and his regime's illicit activities," David S. Cohen, the Treasury Department's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in the statement.

The White House also reiterated its criticism of Syria's leader. The press secretary, Jay Carney, said that Syria "would be better off without" Mr. Assad in power, but again stopped short of directly calling for him to step aside. "The most important thing that we can do right now is ensure that our actions back up our words," he said.

The State Department's spokeswoman, Victoria Nuland, said that the focus of American diplomacy now was "to strengthen the international chorus of condemnation regarding the abhorrent activities of the Assad regime." Specifically, she added, the United States was working with European and other countries to impose a broader series of international sanctions that would have more direct impact on Syria's leader-

ship than American sanctions alone "to tighten the noose, to ensure that we do as much as possible to increase the pressure on Assad."

The reports on the crackdown from inside Syria were conflicting, not unusual given the government's ban on most foreign reporters entering the country. While an assault on Deir al-Zour and Idlib was being pressed, journalists escorted by the government to Hama reported that dozens of armored vehicles were seen leaving Hama, a linchpin of the uprising before Syrian military and security forces assaulted it on July 31.

Turkey's ambassador to Damascus visited the city on Wednesday, and Mr. Erdogan described the withdrawal as the result, in part, of Turkey's pressure. But a resident in Hama reached by phone said the military still had checkpoints in place and was arresting anyone found with video footage of army equipment or vehicles on their cellphones. "Everything's still the same," said the resident, who gave his name as Mohammed.

The Local Coordination Committees, an opposition group that helps document and organize protests, said 21 people were killed in Hama since Tuesday night, most of the bloodshed apparently before the partial redeployment. It said four people were killed in Deir al-Zour, four in Idlib and four in Homs, another restive city south of Hama.

In all, 35 people were killed, the committees said.

Since the protests began, some human rights groups say, government forces have killed more than 2,000 demonstrators.

"Can you hear the sounds?" asked a resident in Deir al-Zour who gave his name as Abu Omar. Loud bursts of gunfire were audible in the background as he talked by phone. "It's been like this since Sunday. God be with the people. It's a merciless assault."





## Nechirvan Barzani: Iran Testing US Military

RUDAW

**ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan** -- In a recent interview with the pan-Arab newspaper Asharq Alawsat, former Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani pressed for US troops to stay in Iraq and said Iran has launched a slew of attacks inside of Iraqi territory to test the resolve of the US military.

Iran has been fighting the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) along the border for years, but the intensified shelling by Iranian forces and reports that Iranian troops have crossed into Iraqi territory over the past month has angered Iraqi Kurds.

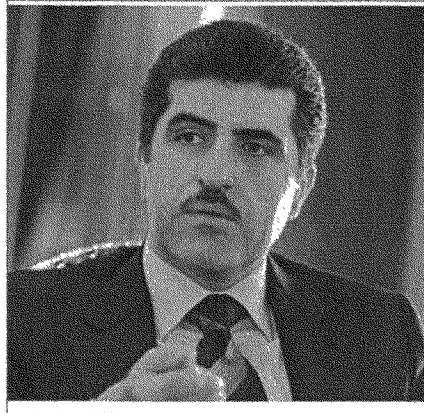
Barzani said the shelling "has had considerable impact on the lives of the people in those areas" and maintained that the US decision not to respond to the shelling "has encouraged Iran to pose a bigger threat to the security of Kurdistan."

"But let's be realistic," he added. "The Kurdistan Region is committed to the principle of not under any circumstances allowing its soil to be used to threaten neighboring countries, whether Iran or Turkey. We have proven in the recent years that we are a factor of stability in the region and not disorder."

Barzani also spoke out against PJAK and called on the armed Kurdish rebels to lay down their arms.

"We believe PJAK's attacks do not serve the Kurdish issue in Iran and will only increase pressure on the Kurds. So, I believe PJAK has to understand the danger emanating from its actions and should take the initiative to stop the armed struggle against Iran and turn to peaceful political struggle," Barzani said.

Barzani reiterated the stance of Kurdistan leaders that the US troop presence should be extended in Iraq, but that Erbil will not oppose Baghdad if the central government decides the US military should leave.



"The Kurdistan Region's leadership has already established a clear position with regard to the presence of US troops in Iraq and has stated unequivocally that Iraq is in great need of assistance from US troops to improve its security situation," Barzani told Asharq Alawsat.

"There is a need for some (US) troops to stay until Iraq's security forces are able to uphold the responsibility of protecting the democratic process for which Iraqis have been sacrificing for many years," he said.

Barzani, the deputy head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), said Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani called for the extended presence of US troops after consulting with other Iraqi groups.

According to an agreement signed between Iraq and the US in 2008, the US should withdraw all its troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. There are currently around 30,000 US soldiers in Iraq, down from more than 150,000 deployed in the early years of the war.

US officials have shown a willingness to keep some of their forces in Iraq if Baghdad makes the request. Iraqi officials have so far been unwilling to come to an agreement on keeping US troops, however.

Separately, Barzani also blamed the US and Baghdad for not implementing a constitutional mandate to resolve issues in disputed territories which are clai-

med by Kurds, Arabs and other groups.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution outlines steps for "normalizing" the disputed areas, including allowing Iraqis -- mostly Kurds -- who were expelled from their homes during the Baath regime to return and for those who were brought in as settlers to be sent to their original areas. The constitution also calls for a census to be held followed by a vote on who should administer disputed areas -- Baghdad or the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The KRG wants

Saddam Hussein's regime reshuffled populations under a Baathist campaign that aimed at weakening Kurdish areas, including oil-rich Kirkuk.

"A great deal of responsibility for the problem (in disputed territories) rests with the US because (the US) didn't carry out its duty," Barzani said.

"We didn't see the Americans taking any serious steps to help Iraqis overcome and resolve the issues, whether they were disagreements over Kirkuk or other areas. The Iraqi leadership as well as Americans needed to put finding a resolution for this issue at the top of their agenda."

Barzani stated that there is "no real will" on the part of Iraqi leaders to resolve the status of the disputed territories and blamed the Iraqi army for "terrorist attacks" against Kurds who are facing threats in some disputed areas.

"What's happening in those areas is a systematic process of cleansing those areas from Kurds through threats, murder and displacement with the support of Iraqi army. We expected the army would become a patriotic army after the fall of (Saddam Hussein's) dictatorship and that it would represent all Iraqis -- not that it would become part of the process of intimidating and terrorizing harmless civilians," Barzani said.

"If the situation is going to continue the way it is," Barzani warned, "the Kurdistan Region's leadership of the will take all necessary measures to protect our people residing in those areas."



## Turquie/attaques: 2 policiers tués

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 8 août 2011 (AFP)

DEUX POLICIERS ont été tués dans deux attaques distinctes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, dont la population est majoritairement kurde, a rapporté aujourd'hui l'agence turque Anatolie.

Un agent de police a succombé aujourd'hui à l'hôpital à ses blessures, le véhicule dans lequel il se trouvait ayant sauté hier sur une mine posée par de présumés rebelles kurdes dans la province de Hakkari, a précisé l'agence. Trois autres policiers ont été blessés dans cet attentat.

Aujourd'hui, un policier qui faisait des courses dans la ville de Hakkari, chef-lieu de cette province située à la frontière avec l'Iran et l'Irak, a été abattu par un agresseur masqué non identifié, a annoncé le gouverneur Muammer Turker, cité par Anatolie.

Les affrontements entre les forces de sécurité et les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) se sont multipliés depuis les élections législatives du 12 juin. Le 16 juin, 13 soldats ont été tués dans des combats avec le PKK dans la province de Diyarbakir, les pertes les plus lourdes pour l'armée turque dans ce conflit depuis octobre 2008. Sept rebelles ont également été tués.



## Turquie: le PKK revendique l'attentat contre un gazoduc irano-turc

ISTANBUL, 13 août 2011 (AFP)

Les rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont revendiqué samedi l'attentat qui a endommagé jeudi soir un gazoduc irano-turc dans l'est de la Turquie, coupant les livraisons de gaz iranien à la Turquie.

Les rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont saboté le gazoduc, à cinq km de la province d'Agri, vers 20H00 GMT jeudi, a annoncé le HPG, branche armée de l'organisation, dans un communiqué rendu

public par l'agence pro-kurde Firat.

Un responsable du ministère turc de l'Energie avait indiqué vendredi que les réparations avaient débuté et qu'elles pourraient durer une semaine, durant laquelle la Turquie sera privée de gaz iranien..

La Turquie reçoit entre 15 et 18 milliards de mètres cubes de gaz par jour du gazoduc iranien, qui relie la ville de Tabriz, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, à Ankara.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, mène depuis vingt-sept ans des actions armées pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est et de l'est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde. Le



August 14, 2011

## PKK claims responsibility for blast at Turkish gas pipeline

By the CNN Wire Staff

ISTANBUL, TURKEY -- A separatist rebel group has claimed responsibility for an explosion at a gas pipeline that runs from Iran to Turkey.

"On August 11, our guerrillas carried out a sabotage action against the Iran-Turkey natural gas pipeline near Dogubeyazit town of Agri," the PKK

group said on its website Saturday.

The explosion last week occurred in part of the pipeline that is in Turkish territory near the border with Iran, the latter's semi-official Fars News Agency reported.

The explosion could cause a halt in gas exports to Turkey for about a week, the agency said.

The United States considers the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a terror group.

Kurdish fighters are seeking autonomy in Turkey's southeast and have been locked in a bloody conflict with the government since the 1980s. More than 30,000 people have been killed during the conflict.

The group also claimed responsibility for another blast at a gas pipeline on August 3 in southeastern Turkey.



## PKK rebels kill 3 Turkish soldiers in ambush

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey / August 14, 2011 - (Reuters)

KURDISH guerrillas ambushed a military convoy in eastern Turkey late Saturday, killing three soldiers, security sources said.

They said the clash took place in the southeastern province of Sirnak when soldiers patrolling a road were attacked by guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

In June, jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan sent word through his lawyers that he had agreed with Turkish officials to set up a "peace council" aimed at ending a 27-year conflict in which 40,000 people have died.

Militant activity in the impoverished southeast continues, however.

## IRAN-IRAK : Une guerre secrète au Kurdistan

Depuis plusieurs semaines, les militaires iraniens n'hésitent pas à franchir la frontière irakienne pour traquer des militants kurdes. Une offensive passée inaperçue mais qui a déjà fait plusieurs morts.

Kaveh Ghoreishi / Rooz

Voilà maintenant plusieurs semaines que des affrontements armés opposent les Gardiens de la Révolution islamique [armée parallèle du régime islamique] au groupe kurde du PJAK (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan). D'importants bombardements ont également lieu. La région est le théâtre d'une guerre non déclarée.

Les deux camps déplorent de nouvelles victimes tous les jours et la Croix rouge internationale estime à au moins 160 le nombre de familles contraintes d'évacuer leurs villages du Kurdistan irakien [région autonome du nord de l'Irak]. Ces habitants sont devenus des réfugiés. Le gouvernement régional irakien en dénombrait plus d'un millier. D'après des sources médicales dans la région, au moins cinq civils ont été blessés ou tués.

Ce n'est pas la première fois que l'on assiste à des pilonnages d'artillerie à la frontière entre l'Irak et l'Iran. Ce qui est nouveau, en revanche, c'est la présence au sol des Gardiens de la Révolution et le fait que les autorités aient donné l'ordre d'évacuer les régions frontalières [les villages sont directement visés par les bombardements, ce qui oblige le gouvernement régional kurde irakien à évacuer la population].

La République islamique d'Iran justifie ces incursions en territoire irakien en affirmant qu'il s'agit de lutter contre un "groupe armé" ou "sécessionniste" semblable au Joundallah [groupe terroriste sunnite du sud-est de l'Iran et auteur de plusieurs attentats]. D'après les chefs de plusieurs groupes kurdes,



le but ultime des attaques de la République islamique ne serait pas de soumettre le PJAK mais tout le mouvement de contestation kurde. De fait, c'est précisément ce que tente de faire le gouvernement au lieu de répondre aux attentes des populations de cette région.

Ces événements ne sont pas sans rappeler la guerre qu'a menée la République islamique contre le parti kurde Komala et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan irakien [PDKI] juste après la révolution de 1979. Trente ans après ce conflit meurtrier, les Kurdes tentent toujours de faire valoir leurs droits. La poursuite de ces attaques n'est dans l'intérêt de personne, ni de l'Iran, ni du peuple iranien, y compris des Kurdes qui luttent pacifiquement pour leurs droits.

Avec la naissance du mouvement

vert [mouvement de protestation contre la réélection douteuse du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad], il y a deux ans, une coopération inédite a émergé entre les groupes kurdes et le reste du pays. On assiste à la montée d'une nouvelle génération de jeunes Iraniens qui cherchent à comprendre ce qui se passe dans la région, indépendamment du discours officiel.

Les militants kurdes doivent aussi comprendre qu'il ne suffit pas de condamner les attaques de la République islamique. Ils doivent également porter un oeil critique sur les activités du PJAK. Sans cela, leur actes ne pourront être interprétés que comme des manifestations émotionnelles, non réfléchies et aveugles de soutien en faveur d'un parti politique.

# A Damas, des envoyés de l'Inde, du Brésil et de l'Afrique du Sud appuient le « processus de réformes » de M. Assad

New York (Nations unies)  
Correspondante

Tandis qu'à New York, le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU entendait un haut responsable de l'organisation dresser « un exposé accablant sur la situation épouvantable qui continue à se détériorer en Syrie », le président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad, reconnaissait, devant une délégation des Nations unies à Damas, « que quelques erreurs avaient été commises par les forces de l'ordre dans la première phase des violences » et indiquait que des mesures avaient été prises pour éviter « qu'elles ne se reproduisent ».

Cette rencontre, mercredi 10 août, entre M. Assad et des représentants de l'Inde, du Brésil et de l'Afrique du Sud, avait été organisée la semaine passée à l'initiative des trois grandes puissances émergentes qui siègent au sein de l'organe exécutif des Nations unies en tant que membres non permanents. Leur mission « de bons offices » avait été annoncée alors que

les Européens, soutenus par les Américains, tentaient de faire adopter une résolution condamnant la répression syrienne.

Devant l'opposition de la Russie et de la Chine, refusant toute action hostile à l'encontre de leur allié syrien et brandissant la menace d'un veto, les quinze pays membres avaient fini par s'entendre sur une déclaration présidentielle, moins contraignante. Cette visite à Damas, conçue comme un « appui » à l'action du Conseil, a vite pris la forme d'une « alternative ».

A l'instar des Russes, et des Chinois, avec lesquels ils représentent le groupe des grands pays émergents, où BRICS, au Conseil de sécurité, les Indiens, qui président ce mois l'instance onusienne, les Sud-Africains et les Brésiliens n'ont eu de cesse, depuis le déclenchement de la révolte syrienne au mois de mars, de s'opposer à toute condamnation de Damas. Au nom du sacro-saint respect de la souveraineté nationale.

Une stratégie qualifiée d'« héré-

sie » par une source interne à l'ONU, selon qui la « névrose souverainiste » de ces pays les amène à « sacrifier leurs valeurs démocratiques ». Dans leur communiqué, les trois envoyés spéciaux se font les porte-parole de M. Assad, soulignant son « engagement envers le processus de réformes, dont l'objectif est d'ouvrir la voie à une démocratie multipartite » et sa promesse de procéder aux révisions de la Constitution en février-mars 2012.

## Menace voilée de sanctions

« Un communiqué indigné », s'insurge un diplomate occidental, après la réunion à huis clos du Conseil, lors de laquelle le sous-secrétaire général aux affaires politiques, Oscar Taranco, a rendu compte de la situation sur place, citant des exécutions sommaires et des défections de soldat. Le haut responsable a fait état de 2 000 civils tués, 3 000 disparus, 13 000 emprisonnés et de dizaines de milliers de Syriens en fuite.

« Le régime syrien continue à recourir à la force massivement et

de façon totalement disproportionnée », a résumé le représentant permanent adjoint de la France, Martin Briens. Le diplomate français, à l'unisson de ses homologues britannique, allemand et portugais, a agité la menace de sanctions : « Si le régime syrien persiste à ignorer les appels du Conseil de sécurité à la fin de la violence, a déclaré M. Briens, « alors nous devons envisager les moyens d'accroître la pression sur Damas ». Une formule qui, dans le jargon de l'ONU, est le nom de code des « sanctions ».

De son côté, l'ambassadrice américaine Susan Rice a affirmé que les Etats-Unis détenaient la preuve que des « crimes » ont été commis en Syrie et qu'ils sont prêts à s'en servir pour accroître la pression sur Bachar Al-Assad. Les puissances occidentales comptent bien maintenir la Syrie à l'agenda du Conseil et devraient pour ce faire inviter la semaine prochaine les responsables de l'ONU chargés des droits de l'homme. ■

Alexandra Geneste

Le Monde Mardi 16 août 2011

# Syrie : la marine appuie l'assaut de l'armée contre le port de Lattaquié

Beyrouth  
Correspondance

Leur présence a d'abord suscité l'incrédulité, bien vite supplantée par la panique. Deux navires de la marine syrienne se sont approchés des côtes de Lattaquié, dimanche 14 août, avant d'ouvrir le feu, selon les témoignages de résidents de cette cité portuaire baignée par la Méditerranée.

Les bâtiments auraient ainsi participé à l'encercllement de la ville, au deuxième jour de l'offensive militaire lancée contre Lattaquié, théâtre d'une mobilisation sans relâche contre le pouvoir des Assad depuis le début de la contestation en Syrie, le 15 mars. « Les

navires ont d'abord croisé au large, tandis que les troupes terrestres prenaient d'assaut la ville. Ils ont ensuite fait usage d'artillerie lourde, au cours de tirs répétés », affirme un membre des Comités de coordination locale, réseau d'activistes à la pointe du soulèvement populaire.

Depuis la mer, les obus se sont abattus sur plusieurs quartiers de cette cité de quelque 650 000 habitants, tandis que les blindés ouvraient le feu. Ce sont ces tirs qui ont causé la mort de la plupart des civils, dimanche 14 août. Selon les bilans donnés par des militants des droits de l'homme, au moins 24 personnes auraient été tuées au cours de l'assaut.

Le scénario de la terreur a paru

une nouvelle fois se dérouler, de façon presque immuable : des chars pénétrant dans la ville après avoir stationné dans ses environs des heures ou des jours durant ; des tirs, laissant blessés et morts ; des arrestations ; des communications devenant difficiles, parfois impossibles.

Tout cela n'est que pure fiction pour le régime de Damas. Les autorités ont démenti qu'un quelconque « bombardement maritime » ait eu lieu. Comme il l'a toujours fait depuis le début de la contestation, à travers les médias officiels, le pouvoir a justifié son intervention par les « appels au secours » pressants formulés par la population et par la nécessité de venir à bout « d'hommes armés ». L'agence SANA a déploré, dimanche, la mort de deux membres des forces de l'ordre, rapportant que quarante et un d'entre eux ont également été blessés.

## Francs-tireurs

Si des armes circulent dans les villes en proie à la contestation, d'après des connaissances du dossier syrien, les manifestants insistent sur le caractère pacifique de leur mouvement. L'accentuation

de la répression viserait, à Lattaquié, à écraser le soulèvement, comme lors des dernières offensives, à Hama (nord de Damas) le 31 juillet ou à Deir ez-Zor (nord-est de la capitale) le 7 août, qui ont fait des centaines de morts selon des activistes.

La stratégie n'a jamais semblé payante, jusqu'ici : dès la fin du mois de mars, la ville de Lattaquié, à majorité sunnite, avait été soumise à des épisodes de violence, marqués par la présence de francs-tireurs. La répression n'a en rien freiné la mobilisation dans la cité portuaire, pas plus qu'elle n'est venue à bout des rassemblements anti-régime dans les autres villes phares : Homs, Idlib, Hama.

Face aux violences redoublées, en cette troisième semaine de ramadan, Damas risque de s'attirer des critiques toujours plus vives de la part des pays arabes. Depuis le 6 août, les condamnations régionales se sont multipliées. ■

Laure Stephan



SAMEDI 13 ET DIMANCHE 14 AOÛT 2011

Samar Yazbek, auteure syrienne, membre de la communauté alaouite, plusieurs fois arrêtée pour ses prises de positions anti-Al-Assad :

# «Une révolution d'esclaves contre leurs maîtres»



Samar Yazbek, 41 ans, est l'une des écrivains les plus importantes de sa génération en Syrie. Auteure de quatre romans (dont *l'Odeur de la cannelle*, bientôt traduit en français), elle tient une chronique dans le quotidien panarabe *Al-Hayat*. Issue d'une grande famille alaouite, la communauté du clan Al-Assad, elle est très active depuis le début de la révolution syrienne. Cela lui a valu plusieurs arrestations, dont elle a fait le récit poignant dans un texte inédit que *Liberation* a publié mercredi (*lire ex-*

*trait ci-dessous*). De passage à Paris, elle témoigne.

**Après tant d'années de dictature, la révolution syrienne vous a-t-elle surprise ?**

Oui et non. Non parce que cela fait plus de quatre décennies que le peuple syrien est humilié, qu'il vit sous la coupe des services de renseignements. Ces derniers temps, ils ne se contentaient plus de contrôler la société, mais régentaient l'ensemble de la vie des citoyens. On ne jouit d'aucune liberté d'expres-

le lumpen. C'est seulement après que les intellectuels ont suivi. Je me suis rendue dans la plupart des villes qui ont manifesté, à Deraa, à Baniyas, à Lattaquié, à Douma [*banlieue de Damas, ndr*]. Dès le début, les slogans étaient identiques, alors même qu'il n'y avait encore aucune coordination. Les gens voulaient que cesse l'intervention permanente des services de sécurité dans leur vie quotidienne. Ça a commencé par des revendications sociales et de dignité. Ce n'est qu'au bout d'un mois, après tout le sang versé, que sont apparus les slogans appelant à la chute du régime.

**Quand l'armée est entrée en action, à Deraa, fin avril, avez-vous pensé que c'était la fin du mouvement ?**

Au début, j'avais toujours peur que la répression vienne à bout de la contestation. Mais c'est là qu'il y a eu un miracle syrien : alors que Deraa était occupé par les tanks et que la ville vivait un carnage, une coordination s'est mise en place afin que, partout ailleurs, on manifeste en solidarité avec Deraa. Le régime s'est mis à tuer partout. Il y a eu des initiatives dont on n'a pas entendu parler hors du pays : des médecins sont venus à Deraa, depuis Damas et d'autres

villes, en secret. Les jeunes des comités de coordination ont créé de toutes pièces une véritable contre-société.

**Les deux principales villes du pays, Damas et Alep, n'ont pas encore vraiment basculé dans la contestation. Pourquoi ?**

D'abord, c'est là que se concentrent les classes sociales qui ont le plus profité du régime. Mais, si elle voit que ses intérêts sont menacés, la bourgeoisie marchande finira elle aussi par prendre position contre les Al-Assad. Or le pays traverse une crise économique très grave. La deuxième raison, c'est que tous les lieux publics sont occupés par

les forces de sécurité afin d'empêcher le moindre rassemblement. Le pouvoir est obsédé par ces deux villes. Il y a quotidiennement des petites manifestations dans la capitale, mais qui sont tuées dans l'œuf. Une fois, nous avons voulu organiser une marche de femmes dans le quartier de Sahet Arnous, à Damas. Nous nous étions passé le mot pour ne pas être repérées : ni Facebook, ni mail, ni textos. Nous étions 80 à 90. En cinq minutes, nous nous sommes retrouvées entourées de policiers et de chabbih, qui nous matraquaient.

**Le régime essaie d'attiser les antagonismes confessionnels. Est-ce que cela marche ?**

On ne peut pas nier que le fait confessionnel existe, mais, pour l'instant, il n'a pas dégénéré en guerre civile, bien que le régime fasse tout pour. Il y a eu quelques vengeances mais, au vu de l'ampleur des exactions gouvernemen-

tales, ce sont des actes isolés. Je suis originaire de Jibla, un village mixte sunnite-alaouite tout près de Lattaquié [*dans l'ouest du pays, ndr*]. Le jour où les forces de sécurité ont tué onze sunnites, elles sont allées dans les quartiers

## UN APERÇU DE L'«ENFER»

«Je ne sais pas s'il y avait une ouverture au plafond, mais la lumière s'est transformée en rayons fragiles, suffisants pour les voir. Et j'ai vu des jeunes hommes, qui avaient à peine la vingtaine, leur corps dénudé, reconnaissables sous leur sang, suspendus par leurs mains à des menottes en acier, leurs orteils touchant difficilement le sol... Le sang coulait de leurs corps : du sang neuf mêlé au sang séché. Des blessures profondes tracent sur leurs corps le dessin d'un pinceau absurde. Le visage affaissé, ils étaient évanouis, semblables à des bêtes immolées. [...]

«Dans ces étroits cachots humides, des jeunes gens sont transformés en morceaux de viande froide. Ces visages, qui n'en sont plus un, ces corps à l'anatomie inédite... J'ai dit à un des hommes : "Est-ce les jeunes des manifestations ?" Il me répondit en ricanant : "Ce sont les traîtres des manifestations."»

*L'intégralité du récit de Samar Yazbek est disponible sur Liberation.fr.*

alaouïtes en disant aux habitants de se protéger parce que les sunnites allaient se venger. Des armes ont été vendues aux alaouïtes par les chabbiha et le résultat, c'est que Jibla est coupé en deux.

#### Qui sont les chabbiha ?

Ce sont des milices composées de jeunes alaouïtes qui sont nées dans les années 80, dans l'entourage familial de Hafez al-Assad. Elles sont d'une fidélité absolue au régime. Leurs membres sont rémunérés pour leurs basses besognes, ils travaillent de manière coordonnée avec les moukhabarat [les services de renseignements, ndlr], la police et l'armée. Ce sont eux qui font le sale boulot.

#### Que pense la communauté alaouïte, à laquelle vous appartenez, tout comme le clan Al-Assad ?

La majorité est solidaire avec les Al-Assad. Ils pensent qu'ils vont payer si jamais le régime chute, alors même qu'ils n'en ont pas profité. Il y a une mémoire profonde des persécutions passées et de l'exploitation dans laquelle vivait la communauté alaouïte. Mais, dans

l'élite, des jeunes participent aux comités de coordination de la révolution, en particulier à Lattaquié. Quant aux chrétiens, ils sont en retrait : la plupart d'entre eux ont peur de la majorité musulmane et restent sensibles à la propagande du régime sur l'infiltration de groupes salafistes [fondamentalistes sunnites] dans les manifestations.

#### Vous-même, vous avez été arrêtée...

Oui, d'abord il y a eu des campagnes contre moi sur Internet. J'ai été arrêtée à plusieurs reprises. Comme je suis une auteure connue en Syrie et que j'appartiens à une grande famille alaouïte, ils n'ont pas osé me garder. Mais, à chaque fois, j'ai été emmenée les yeux bandés et interrogée, menacée, pendant plusieurs heures. Comme ils ne pouvaient rien me faire, ils ont voulu que je voie ce qui arrivait à ceux qui sont arrêtés et torturés. Ils voulaient que je prenne position contre la révolution. Comme ça n'a pas marché, ils ont cherché à me décrédibiliser. Des tracts anonymes ont été distribués dans mon

village, me qualifiant de « traître » et appelant à me tuer. Des alaouïtes ont commencé à m'appeler pour me menacer. C'est ce qui m'inquiète, plus que les arrestations. A la cinquième convocation par les moukhabarat, je suis passée dans la clandestinité. Au moment du soi-disant dialogue national, début juillet, le pouvoir a annoncé que tout le monde était libre de voyager, même les opposants, j'en ai profité pour quitter le pays.

#### Pensez-vous retourner en Syrie ?

Bien sûr, c'est mon pays. Les gens meurent là-bas, j'y pense tous les jours. Je ne suis pas en exil.

#### Le régime a levé l'état d'urgence et autorisé le multipartisme. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

C'est de la poudre aux yeux. De vraies réformes signifieraient la fin du régime. Si jamais des élections libres avaient lieu en Syrie, le régime de Bachar al-Assad serait fini. Si le pouvoir croyait dans les réformes, il aurait arrêté de tuer son propre peuple.

Recueilli par CHRISTOPHE AYAD

## Le Monde

20 août 2011

# Pressions sur Damas : mieux vaut tard que jamais

Il aura fallu attendre cinq mois de sanglante répression, dans le fracas des tanks et des mitrailleuses, cinq mois et plus de 2 000 morts, avant que les démocraties occidentales n'appellent haut et fort au départ du président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad.

Jeudi 18 août, Barack Obama, suivi par Nicolas Sarkozy, David Cameron et Angela Merkel, a fini par le dire : Assad a perdu toute légitimité et doit partir.

Pendant ces cinq mois, les récits et les vidéos de morts et de torturés, plus atroces les uns que les autres, n'ont cessé de filtrer par les réseaux d'une opposition courageuse et pacifique. En dépit du huis clos médiatique imposé par Damas, tout témoigne de la rage meurtrière d'un pouvoir prêt à tout pour se perpétuer.

Les Occidentaux ont hésité longtemps – trop longtemps – à

franchir ce pas et à appeler au changement de régime. Ce faisant, ils ont amplement nourri l'accusation du « deux poids, deux mesures » : en Libye, il avait suffi d'une semaine de répression militaire contre des manifestants pour que les premiers appels occidentaux fusent : « Kadhafi doit partir ! » Rien de tel en Syrie.

## Editorial

Soyons clair : les manifestants syriens n'ont jamais demandé d'intervention armée extérieure ; un tel scénario n'est pas à l'ordre du jour. Mais ils étaient en droit d'attendre, eux aussi, que l'ONU invoque le principe de la « responsabilité de protéger », destiné à prévenir les pires atrocités, ou menace de recourir à la Cour pénale internationale contre les crimes

d'une dictature sanguinaire.

Les raisons de cette lenteur diplomatique sont connues. On sait que l'ONU est bloquée par la Russie, tant Moscou a été braqué par le précédent libyen et reste arc-bouté sur des calculs géopolitiques qui font peu de cas des droits de l'homme. Les réticences des « émergents » du groupe Inde-Bresil-Afrique du Sud ne sont pas une surprise : ils veulent croire aux promesses de « réformes » lancées par le dirigeant syrien. Quant aux pays de la région, Arabie saoudite et Turquie en tête, ils ont mis du temps à conclure que rien de bon, décidément, ne pouvait être espéré de Bachar Al-Assad. Leurs tentatives de médiation n'ont porté aucun fruit.

De tous côtés, enfin, l'on craignait que la chute de la maison Assad n'ouvre la boîte de Pandore au Moyen-Orient. Avant de com-

prendre, au contraire, que la stabilité régionale est mise en péril par le maintien d'un dirigeant prêt à toutes les violences.

Rien n'est encore gagné. Les Occidentaux sont bien seuls à exiger le départ d'Assad. Leurs moyens de pression sont limités contre un pouvoir bunkérisé. La rue syrienne, elle, a montré une incroyable résilience face à un appareil répressif aussi féroce dans ses méthodes que cynique dans sa propagande. La diplomatie internationale ne doit pas l'abandonner.

Les Européens, qui achètent 95 % du pétrole exporté par la Syrie, seraient bien avisés de mettre fin aux transactions financières et économiques qui aident le régime Assad à tenir. Ce serait mettre leurs actes en conformité avec l'objectif qu'ils s'assignent : la chute d'un tyran. ■

AP Associated Press

## 9 killed in rebel attack in Turkey

Ankara, - August 17, 2011 - Associated Press

**KURDISH REBELS** ambushed a military convoy near Turkey's border with Iraq on Wednesday, killing eight soldiers and a village-guard, the prime minister said.

Defence Minister Ismet Yilmaz vowed tough response, as the military launched an air and ground offensive in the largely Kurdish Hakkari province where the attack happened, Turkey's state television reported.

More than 30 Turkish soldiers have died in intensified rebel attacks since July, including one that killed 13 service members in July, leading to a major military offensive in southeastern Turkey.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said armored personnel carriers in the convoy came under rocket fire after being attacked with roadside bombs. The Hakkari governor's office said the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, detonated four bombs as the unit passed by.

Eight soldiers and a government-paid village guard who was helping troops fight the rebels were killed in the attack that also wounded 11 other soldiers, Erdogan said.

"What is it that they are doing? It's oppression, it's threats, it's terrorism," Yilmaz, the defence minister, told reporters. "The retaliation they will find will be manifold stronger."



Dismayed that attacks are continuing during Ramzan, Erdogan this week also hinted at tougher military action against the rebels after the end of the month of piety for Muslims, saying Turkey is at the end of its tether.

AP Associated Press

## Turkish air raids kill 7 Iraqi civilians

ANKARA, Turkey - August 22, 2011 / Associated Press

**TURKISH AIRSTRIKES** on suspected rebel targets in northern Iraq killed seven civilians yesterday, Iraqi officials said.

Hassan Abdullah, the mayor of the town of Qalat Diza, and Captain Ali Mohammed of the Iraqi Army's border guards said seven Iraqi civilians died in an attack on Kortak mountain, located on Mount Qandil, near the Iraqi-Iranian border.

The two officials said the bodies were charred and dismembered.

Firat, a news agency close to the Kurdish rebels, also said seven people - including five children and a woman - were killed inside a car while trying to flee raids on the village of Golle, on Qandil.

Turkish warplanes have been striking at suspected rebel positions across the border in Iraq since Wednesday.

The military has confirmed three days of strikes, but Kurdish groups also reported bombings by Turkish jets on Saturday and yesterday.

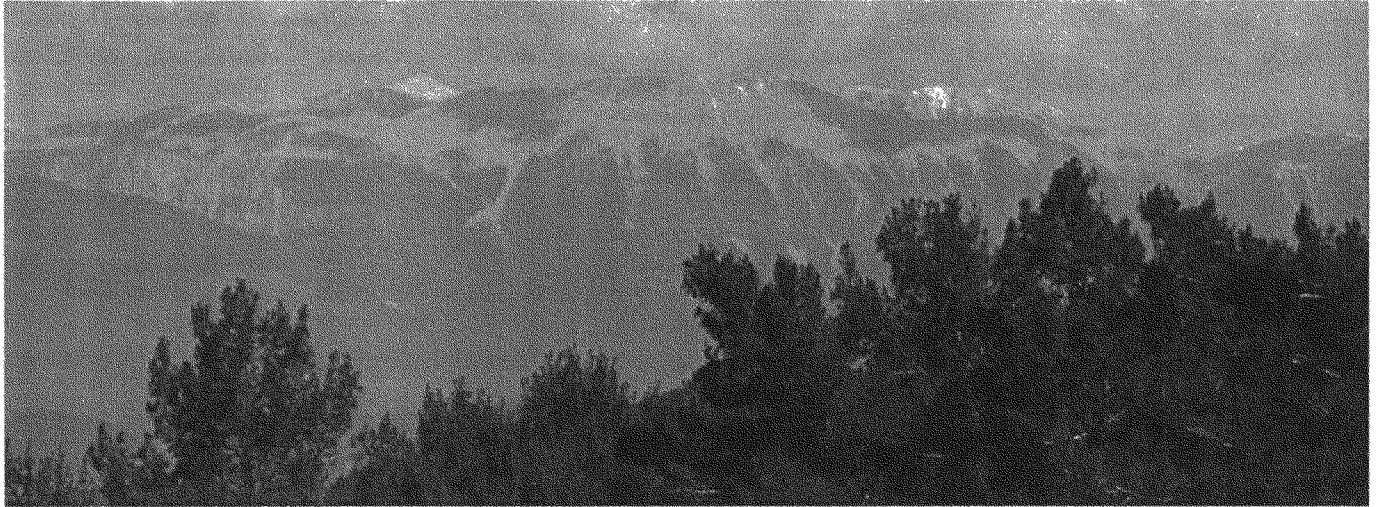
Turkey's latest offensive follows stepped-up attacks by the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party that have killed some 40 soldiers since July.



The party, considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, is fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey.

Turkey's military has said the jets are targeting party sites only - including shelters, anti-aircraft gun positions and ammunition depots - showing the "necessary" care not to harm civilians.

# Turkey Attacks Kurdish Targets in Northern Iraq After Ambush



By SEBNEM ARSU

**I**STANBUL — Turkish warplanes attacked 60 targets in the mountains and border areas of northern Iraq early Thursday in pursuit of Kurdish separatist rebels suspected of responsibility a day earlier for a deadly quadruple bombing ambush on a military convoy in southeast Turkey, the army headquarters said.

Turkish news reports and Kurdish officials in northern Iraq reported more Turkish warplane sorties late Thursday night.

The Kurdish officials in northern Iraq also reported shelling of a Kurdish village near the border with Iran, apparently by Iranian forces, which have periodically lobbed artillery at suspected members of an Iranian Kurdish rebel group known as PJAK that operates in Iran but takes refuge in Iraq.

It was unclear whether the Iranian shelling was a coincidence.

The Turkish airstrikes followed an artillery barrage by Turkish forces targeting 168 locations in northern Iraq, which military intelligence showed were frequented by the P.K.K., or Kurdistan Workers Party, the insurgent group that has been fighting for autonomy in Turkey's southeast since the early 1980s.

"Similar actions of the Turkish Armed Forces inside and outside the country will continue in a determined way until the North of Iraq

would be turned into a secure residential area and the terror organization that uses the area as a launch pad for attacks would be eliminated," a statement by the army command said.

The bombardment of the Qandil and Zap regions in northern Iraq came after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that his patience with the Kurdish rebels had run out. He was reacting to news of the convoy ambush on Wednesday, when eight Turkish soldiers and a village guard were killed and 15 others wounded by four bombs.

Turkish news accounts on Thursday suggested that Mr. Erdogan was planning further military steps.

The P.K.K. has intensified its attacks since July, when talks for a political resolution to the Kurdish autonomy issue stalled over a dispute between the government and the only Kurdish party in Parliament, the Peace and Democracy Party.

Mr. Erdogan's pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party, which won a third term in power in elections held in June, considers Peace and Democracy the political wing of the P.K.K., because it has refused to repudiate the rebel group as a terrorist organization.

Peace and Democracy politicians have been boycotting parliamentary sessions, demanding the release of hundreds of Kurdish activists kept in jail on terrorism-related charges —

including some Peace and Democracy lawmakers elected in June.

The P.K.K. has said it will not lay down its arms until its demands, including the use of Kurdish in public education, amnesty for its militants and the release of Abdullah Ocalan, its imprisoned leader, are met.

In northern Iraq's Kurdistan region, security officials said the Turkish bombings Thursday night caused fires in two villages. They also said that later in the evening, shells began to fall on a village northeast of Erbil near the Iran border, an area that has been subject to periodic shelling by Iran.

Iraq has complained about Turkish violations of its territory before in Turkey's long-running fight with Kurdish militants.

Jabbar Yawar, the secretary general of the official pesh merga militia forces in Iraq's Kurdistan region, said he was not concerned by the military actions of either Turkey or Iran.

"We do not feel that there is any danger to us," Mr. Yawar said. "We have solid diplomatic relations with Turkey and Iran and strong economic ties. The Turkish government did not notify us about these operations, but they have threatened before not to stand silent toward the P.K.K. attacks inside of Turkey."



**TIME**

August 19, 2011

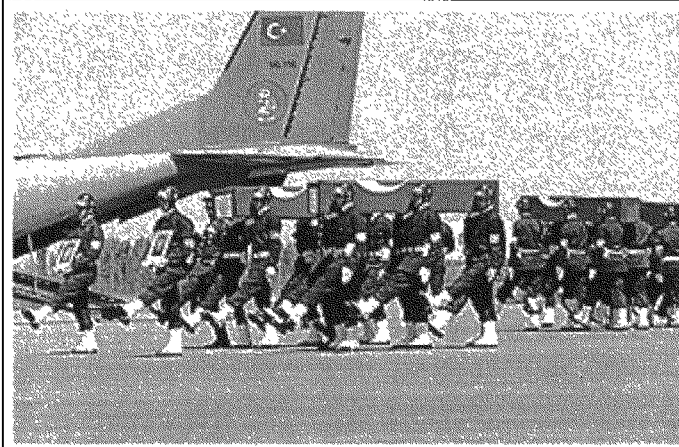
# Why Turkey's Kurdish Conflict Is Making a Worrying Comeback

By Pelin Turgut / Istanbul

A sharp escalation in fighting between Turkey and the Kurdish separatist PKK over the past three weeks has bucked the trend of recent years that saw Turkey inching towards a peaceful solution to three decades of conflict with its restive Kurdish minority. The government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had eased efforts to snuff out the Kurdish language and culture, and once-banned Kurdish music, literature and television flourished. Turkish authorities even took the once unthinkable step of holding secret talks abounding to ending the fighting with Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed PKK leader that Turkey would gladly have hanged after his capture in 1999 if it hadn't been seeking to join the European Union which forbids the death penalty. And in June, a record 36 deputies from a pro-Kurdish party were elected to parliament.

But courts later barred several of those MPs from taking office, deadly PKK attacks are on the rise in recent weeks, and Turkey is reviving a hardline stance many thought had been buried. Fighter jets began bombing PKK positions in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region on Wednesday, following a PKK ambush that killed eight Turkish soldiers. The Turkish military has lost some 40 soldiers this month to PKK attacks, and pro-government newspapers have begun entertaining a 'Sri Lankan model' — a massive military blitz akin to the one that destroyed Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger insurgency at a cost of hundreds of lives, aimed at destroying the PKK in the Kurdish southeast and the northern Iraqi mountains.

Erdogan hinted that elected Kurdish politicians could be rounded up. He refuses to speak to Kurdish party deputies, and will not include them in the critical dis-



Turkish soldiers carry the coffins of soldiers who were killed in an attack by members of the PKK during funerals in Van, on August 18, 2011. AFP / Getty Images

cussions over drafting a new, more democratic constitution — even though the status of the countries 15-20 million Kurds was a key concern in the framing of the next constitution. But the potential consequences of a violent government crackdown are worrying — especially against the backdrop of the Arab Spring. The PKK enjoys huge support in the Kurdish southeast where tens of thousands take to the streets at a moment's notice when called upon.

"The government believes this is containable," says Soli Ozel, professor of international relations at Istanbul's Kadir Has University. "My concern is about the violence we could see in cities. There are so many unknown variables its hard to know what is really happening. Why did the PKK step up its attacks? Why has Erdogan decided to become hardline? How is this related to what's happening with Syria and Iran?" (Both of those countries, as well as Iraq, have substantial Kurdish minorities of their own.)

Some Turkish observers blame the recent wave of PKK attacks on Syria, which shares an 840km border with Turkey, arguing that the regime of President Bashar al-Assad is tacitly backing the rebels in response to Erdogan turning against his former ally. (Syria had during the mid-1990s allowed Ocalan to operate from Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, then under Syrian control,

during a previous round of Syrian-Turkish tensions.) Erdogan warned on Thursday that he considered the unrest in Syria part of Turkey's "internal affairs".

The regional picture is more complicated: Syria's key ally, Iran, has in recent weeks suddenly stepped up its own attacks on PJAK, the PKK's Iranian wing. The U.S., which needs Turkey to do the heavy lifting on Syria, is expected to back Ankara's stance on the PKK. "I think Turkey has America's complete support regarding the PKK," says Soli Ozel. "The US is so dependent on Turkish backing when it comes to Syria and Iraq, I don't think they will think twice about writing the PKK off." (Indeed, the PKK is listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization.) The Iraqi Kurdish leadership, a close US ally, has been largely silent on recent Turkish airstrikes on their region, and has previously cooperated with Turkish military efforts against the PKK.

Erdogan is in a strong domestic political position, having won reelection by a convincing margin in June, and appearing to have prevailed in a showdown with the top military brass earlier this month. But any hopes that Erdogan's rise and the military's decline in political influence would bring a political solution to the Kurdish issue have been dashed by the prime minister's hawkish rhetoric. His immediate plans include more air strikes,

drone attacks and the re-introduction of specially empowered police teams to control the southeast. Human rights groups accused these paramilitary units of widespread abuses during the 1990s.

"You can see that the government hasn't really internalised the idea of a peaceful solution," says Mustafa Gundogdu, Turkey and Iraq desk officer at the Kurdish Human Rights Project in London. "There is no commitment. Before this they were constantly hedging. Now they think

they can end it using the military and the police."

Renewed conflict with the PKK brings with it a wearying sense of déjà vu for many Turks. Much of the '90s was taken up with a dirty war against the PKK during which thousands of people were killed, villages were torched and human rights abuses abounded. And the conflict did not end with the capture of Ocalan. "We're doing the same thing we've done so many times in the recent past," wrote Ismet Berkan in

the mainstream daily Hurriyet. "Yet we believe this time will produce a different result." The difference, this time, may be that the calculations have changed in Syria, Iraq and Iran. The fate of Turkey's Kurds may to some extent rest not only on Ankara's decisions but also on those made in Damascus, Tehran and Erbil. And the consequences of decision made in any of those cities will certainly have an impact in the others.

**TODAYS ZAMAN**

22 August 2011

## Kurdish leader condemns shelling that killed 7 Iraqis

TODAYSZAMAN.COM WITH REUTERS,

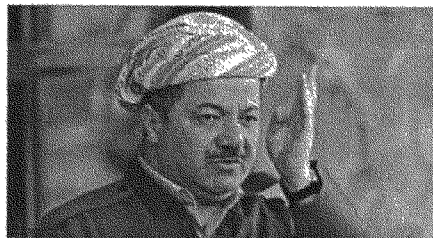
The leader of Iraq's Kurdish region on Monday condemned shelling by Turkish warplanes that killed seven Iraqis, as residents of the semi-autonomous northern area protested against the attacks.

At least 2,000 people demonstrated late on Sunday in the northern town of Rania as the victims were buried, and 300 more marched silently from a bus station to a mosque in mourning on Monday, the town's mayor said.

The protesters demanded an end to Ankara's bombing campaign against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which began on Wednesday and claimed its first civilian casualties on Sunday.

"Turkish warplanes are shelling some areas of the Kurdistan region and as a result of shelling on Sunday, August 21, 2011, seven civilian citizens were martyred," Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani said in a statement.

"At this time I express my concern towards the martyring of those civilians and condemn (the shelling). I stress that the killing and harming of civilians is unjustified," Barzani said. "We demand that such incidents not be repeated."



Masoud Barzani

ted."

Ankara launched the raids against PKK members on Wednesday after increased attacks in southeastern Turkey. The PKK members have killed about 40 Turkish security personnel in just over a month.

The raids are the first against the PKK members in the mountains of northern Iraq in more than a year and are seen as an escalation of the 27-year-old conflict after the collapse of efforts for a negotiated settlement.

Both the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional administration in Arbil have condemned the attacks but they have gained little notice outside Iraq as the world focuses on the war in Libya and unrest in Syria.

Turkey has not confirmed Sunday's strike.

The Firat news agency, which has close links to the PKK, reported

the PKK as saying that three terrorists had been killed in the Turkish air raids since the operation began.

Rania Mayor Barham Ahmed Hama Rasheed said Sunday's victims were a family that once lived in his town and urged the United Nations to intervene to stop the shelling, calling the deaths "calamitous."

"Among those killed there are three people who were under 18 years old, and there was a 3-month-old infant," Rasheed said.

"People are angry and upset."

Kardo Mohammed, a member of the Kurdish parliament, said the shelling constituted a breach of international conventions and agreements between the two countries.

"The Turkish shelling targeted civilians basically, and the proof is the killing of these seven civilians, including children," Mohammed said. "We do not believe that the planes cannot differentiate between civilian and military, or a child and a fighter carrying a rifle."

More than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict since the PKK took up arms for Kurdish self-rule in 1984. Turkish investors have poured into Iraq's Kurdish region in recent years, building homes, offices and shopping malls.

Hawri Kawa, a civic activist in Rania, said: "The protesters were so angry about the Turkish shelling that they burned the Turkish flag."

# Kurdish pawns bind Turkish rook

Asia Times / Hong Kong  
By M K Bhadrakumar

Kurdish insurgents have "constructively engaged" Turkey just as the government in Ankara was rolling up its sleeves for a bit of vigorous action in the Muslim Middle East bent on reclaiming its Ottoman legacy. Ankara has been compelled to train its eyes homeward - for a while, at least. This was also the course Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had exhorted the nation to follow - "Peace at home, Peace abroad."

The net gainer will be the regime in Syria as Turkey's preoccupation with Kurdish insurgents probably gets it a breather. A sigh of exasperation is, perhaps, audible in the Arabian Peninsula where Saudi Arabia has been pinning hopes on Turkey's robust intervention in the Syrian situation, while Iran seems quietly pleased with the developments in the Kurdish mountains.

The clock has been turned back by over two years as the Kurdish

insurgency rears its head in eastern Turkey after a period of relative clam during which it almost seemed tempting to conjecture that a political settlement to the problem of Kurdish separatism was round the corner under the creative leadership of the government led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Since Thursday, the Turkish air force has been undertaking a series of cross-border strikes inside Iraq aimed at liquidating the sanctuaries of Kurdish insurgents. The targets are located in the regions of Hakurk, Avasin-Basyan and Zap in northern Iraq. On Saturday, the Turkish army chief claimed in a communique, "Eighty-five targets were hit accurately and effectively in the morning and then in the evening ... The damage caused by the raids is in the process of being evaluated after recon-

naissance flights over the area."

## Abandoning the political track

Zaman, the pro-government Turkish daily with Islamist leanings, carried an exclusive report on Friday quoting "confidential sources" in Ankara that Turkey was setting up "operational front garrisons" inside northern Iraq where hitherto it used to maintain a low-key intelligence presence to monitor Kurdish activities. Turkey has kept around 2,500 troops inside Iraq for the past decade and a half without the approval of the Iraqi government, but this number will now most certainly go up.

According to the Zaman disclosures, Turkish outposts inside northern Iraq will be fortified to facilitate the extended deployment of troops and special forces who could be pressed into operations at short notice with air cover, while the aerial bombardment will continue to be conducted from Turkish bases. The Turkish government is apparently seeking a mandate from parliament, as provided under law, to allow it to conduct cross-border operations at will in the near term.

The entire strategy seems to be aimed at sustaining pressure on the Kurdish insurgents by Turkish military units stationed permanently inside Iraq. But military analysts feel that at some stage Turkey may have to resort to a full-fledged ground offensive inside Iraq. Clearly, Ankara is "hardening" its line and the old dogmatic thinking, which failed to work in the past few decades, is resurfacing; namely, democratization in the Kurdish regions can be initiated only from a position of strength after "terrorism" has been decisively defeated.

If so, it is a great pity that Erdoğan is turning his back on one of his most attractive projects - the so-called "Kurdish opening". In the past two years or so, he showed great states-

manship and political courage to seek a genuine national reconciliation between Turks and Kurds by acknowledging past injustices and creating space for the flowering of Kurdish culture, art and intellectual endeavor.

For more than 80 years, the Kurdish language (known as Kurmanji) was banned in Turkey and Kurds were harassed for speaking it. Through a series of bold moves under Erdoğan's leadership, Turkey in 2009 began a Kurdish-language television channel known as TRT6, which although an entertainment channel, broke the taboo on the Kurdish language.

Anyhow, the indications are that the nascent moves attributed to Erdoğan in the direction of accelerating the search for political reconciliation with the Kurdish leadership have virtually stalled and the back-channel talks between the government and Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, who is incarcerated in a Turkish prison on a remote island in the Sea of Marmara, have petered out. Ankara is switching to the military track and does not even allow Öcalan's lawyers to visit him.

A qualitative difference from the past, however, is that Turkey's democracy has also matured. Whereas Erdoğan's "new thinking" on the Kurdish problem drew ire from traditionalists and "Kemalists", his current switch to a hardline strategy is being viewed with equal suspicion by the Turkish opposition. It shows how much Turkey has changed and how Erdoğan may be letting go of a splendid opportunity to press ahead on the political track. The leader of the main opposition People's Party (CHP), Kemal Kilicdaroglu, said last week:

*Thirty years of experience [with Kurdish insurgency] have shown that using weapons will not end terror. If terror has not ended in this time, the responsibility falls on the political institution that fai-*

*led to carry out its duties. And now, they are at the point of using weapons again. We have to use the language of peace, we must embrace everyone. We must create a united stance against terror without discrimination. It is everyone's duty to fight against terror, with all political parties participating. Let's all get together and voice our suggestions to end terror, because solving terror is no longer the task of just one party. We need a societal consensus.*

Implied in this criticism is the apprehension that Erdoğan might be "politiiking" for domestic reasons. The CHP, which is rooted in Kemalism and at the fountainhead of Turkish nationalism, has criticized recently that Erdoğan is subserving to Western geopolitical objectives in the Middle East and as receiving US backing as a quid pro quo.

Ankara used to come under heavy international condemnation for violating Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity, but Erdoğan's estimation currently seems to be that the West, especially the United States, would prefer to ignore the Turkish aggression because it is depending on the Islamist government in Ankara to play a lead role in harnessing the "Arab Spring" in the Muslim Middle East and taking it in directions that serve the West's geopolitical objectives. Turkish commentators blithely assume that the West's dependence on Turkey in the present geopolitical context vastly exceeds Ankara's need of the West.

Indeed, so far there has been no adverse comment from Washington or any European capitals regarding the Turkish air strikes in Iraq. Ironically, it was left to Tehran to point out that Turkey is keeping double standards. A commentary in the Tehran Times said:

*The Turkish military's recent massive attacks on Kurdish separatists have raised the question of why Turkey is criticizing the Syrian govern-*

ment for its crackdown on armed terrorists ... No one can deny that the Turkish government has the right to protect its territorial integrity. However, the Turkish government does not seem to recognize such a right for other neighboring countries like Syria.

## Turkey's headaches

Iran's approach is nuanced and it puts the West, especially the US, on the back foot. Tehran hints that it empathizes with Ankara's predicament with regard to the Kurdish insurgency. (Indeed, Iran has also launched military operations in northern Iraq against Kurdish separatists.)

But that is not something that Washington can easily emulate, given the US's nexus with the Iraqi Kurds. The US would also be averse to political turbulence in Iraq at a juncture when it still retains hopes of extending its military presence beyond end-2011. Tehran is gently pointing out that Turkey and Iran (and Syria) have shared interests that ought to be prioritized by Ankara.

The immediate provocation for the Turkish incursions into Iraqi territory was a series of attacks recently by Kurdish insurgents in the eastern provinces, which reportedly have killed 40 soldiers since July alone. On Wednesday, the insurgents attacked a military convoy in Cukurca in the southeastern province of Hakkari, in which nine Turkish soldiers were killed and 15 soldiers were injured. After Wednesday's attack, Erdogan said his government had "run out of patience".

But, evidently, Turkey's Kurdish problem is also a regional problem. To begin with, Iraqi politics is passing through a delicate phase with the recrudescence of violence by Sunni extremists, which will find the Kurds and the Shi'ite forces seeking greater proximity on the same side of the sectarian divide. The government in Baghdad, which has voiced support for the Syrian regime, has now reacted to the Turkish aggression. A Kurdish member of the Iraqi parliament, Shuwan Taha, revealed on

Saturday that the parliamentary committee on security and defense had been tasked with preparing a report on the Turkish air strikes.

The provincial government in northern Iraq led by Kurdish parties also issued a statement on Sunday expressing "indignation and protest" at the Turkish air strikes. It warned that any Turkish ground operations "will have negative reflections on the friendship of the people of the region as a whole and their common interests and will not consolidate security and stability". The statement alleged that Turkey's unilateral actions contradicted international law and "principles of friendship".

The fact remains that there have been all sorts of interference by foreign elements in Turkey's Kurdish problem, which will make Ankara wary. On the one hand, Turkish commentators suspect Iran's and Syria's hands in stirring up the Kurdish pot at precisely this juncture.

Some Turkish commentators mentioned that Israeli intelligence had lately stepped up its activities in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Israel has been a reliable partner for Turkey in intelligence-sharing, but it is doubtful if such cooperation is feasible in the current climate of ties between the two countries. (Iran alleges that Israel, which has longstanding influence with Kurdish separatists, is stirring up trouble for Ankara.)

Indeed, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu warned in Ankara on Saturday that unless Israel apologized over the deadly 2010 flotilla raid that killed nine Turkish nationals (the Israeli cabinet has resolved not to render an apology) then Turkey's ties with Israel would further deteriorate.

Davutoglu said, "There can be no normalization with Israel if Turkey's demands are not met. Relations will not remain as they are now, they will deteriorate even more ... The current situation cannot be sustained." The thinking in Ankara seems to be to further downgrade Turkey's representation. It has already recalled the Turkish ambassador from Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, Turkey faces yet another problem in eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus has announced plans to begin oil and gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean in the next six weeks, covering a 324,000-hectare economic zone bordering the waters of Israel where massive gas fields have been discovered. Ankara has objected to the drilling and warned of intervention if the exploration goes ahead until the Cyprus problem is resolved, which would ensure the Turkish Cypriot community's share of any natural resources.

Curiously, it is an American oil company, Noble Energy, that Nicosia has engaged for the exploration. Behind Nicosia stands Greece, for sure. (Interestingly, Moscow has also jumped into the fray, voicing support for Nicosia). In short, Turkey finds itself arrayed against a range of interests in the very same eastern Mediterranean region, which forms Syria's coast - Cypriot, Israeli, Greek and American. Its remaining option is to prevail on the Barack Obama administration to put in a persuasive word with Noble Energy to go slow in the exploration work.

All the same, the Syrian opposition held a third conclave on Turkish soil, meeting in Istanbul on Saturday in a move to form a council that could assume power in the event of President Bashar al-Assad stepping down. No doubt, Ankara took a policy decision to allow the conclave to take place and is probably keeping its mediatory options vis-a-vis the Syrian situation open; but then, it also seems to have kept a low profile.

This very same stance of duality also appears in Ankara distancing itself from the US president's demand last week that Assad should go. A Turkish diplomat has been quoted as saying that there has yet to be a unified demand by the Syrian people for Assad to step down.

Turkey's highly professional diplomats are well clued on regional developments. They would be reporting back to Ankara on the series of developments last week on the Palestine front - the killing of Israelis by terrorists in Sinai, Israel's retaliatory attacks on

Gaza and its operations in Sinai in violation of the 1979 peace agreement, and the killing of Egyptian security personnel by Israel leading to a sudden deterioration in Egypt-Israel relations, with Cairo deciding to recall its ambassador in Tel Aviv and Egyptian protesters demanding the "expulsion" of the Israeli ambassador. Ankara would surmise that these developments introduce a new focal point in regional politics.

The Turkish position on these developments is bound to be critical of Israel. On the other hand, the US's and European countries' shyness in coming out with an open stance is all too striking in comparison with a strident position from the Arab League. Turkey would have no problem anticipating that the net beneficiary, again, is going to be the Syrian regime. The point is, Ankara would put all these impressions together and recognize that the desert storm in Sinai can temporarily at least blight the advent of the Arab Spring in Syria.

To be sure, all this may not have a direct impact on the Syrian situation as such, which continues to deteriorate, but it will compel Ankara to rethink its regional strategies. The probability of a robust Turkish intervention in Syria almost certainly diminishes with the Turkish military and intelligence having their hands full in the Kurdish regions.

If the US were to regard Turkey as its preferred North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner - given the preoccupations of its European allies in the Libyan deserts - to play the "lead role" in pushing for regime change in Damascus, Ankara may not be inclined to view things that way.

**Ambassador M K Bhadrakumar was a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service. His assignments included the Soviet Union, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Germany, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait and Turkey.**

# Turquie: escalade militaire au Kurdistan

**L'**aviation turque a pilonné mercredi et jeudi les repaires des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak après une embuscade sanglante dans le sud-est de la Turquie qui a tué 9 personnes.

L'aviation turque a pilonné mercredi et jeudi les repaires des rebelles kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak après une embuscade sanglante dans le sud-est de la Turquie qui a coûté la vie à neuf personnes, signe d'une escalade dans le conflit kurde.

Les chasseurs turcs ont pilonné des positions du PKK dans les montagnes irakiennes, en riposte à l'attaque survenue quelques heures auparavant qui a coûté la vie à huit soldats et un milicien kurde à Cukurca (sud-est), à la frontière irakienne.

## Durcissement d'Ankara sur la question kurde

Ces raids sont les premiers menés par la Turquie en Irak depuis un an. Selon Ankara, 2.000 rebelles sont retranchés en Irak, d'où ils s'infiltrèrent en Turquie pour mener des attaques.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, excédé par l'intensification depuis juillet des attaques du PKK qui ont tué plus de 40 soldats et policiers, a promis de sévir contre le PKK malgré le mois musulman du ramadan, traditionnellement synonyme d'accalmie.

Il a aussi signalé un durcissement de son gouvernement vis-à-vis de la question kurde, évoquant "une nouvelle ère" et averti que "ceux qui ne s'écartent pas du terrorisme vont en payer le prix", un message adressé aux politiciens kurdes jugés trop proches du PKK.

Ces attaques interviennent en effet dans un contexte de tensions poli-



Funérailles d'un soldat turc, le 16 juillet 2011 à Ankara. Huit soldats turcs et un milicien kurde ont été tués mercredi dans une embuscade tendue par des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie. [afp.com/Adem Altan](http://afp.com/Adem Altan)

tiques avec les Kurdes.

## 35 députés kurdes refusent toujours de prêter serment au Parlement

Trente-cinq députés kurdes (sur 550 au total) refusent toujours de prêter serment au Parlement depuis les législatives de juin, pour protester contre le maintien en détention provisoire de cinq des leurs, accusés de collusion avec le PKK.

Lancée en 2009, la politique d'"ouverture" du gouvernement d'Ankara envers la communauté kurde souffre de ces tensions. "Le projet de paix du gouvernement n'était pas assez fort et global (...) C'est pour cette raison qu'il subit des revers", souligne Nuray Mert dans le journal libéral Milliyet.

Cette commentatrice exhorte toutefois le gouvernement d'Ankara à ne pas répondre à la violence par la violence, insistant sur le respect des valeurs démocratiques pour un pays souhaitant adhérer à l'Union européenne.

Nihat Ali Ozcan, un expert en sécurité, prédit une nouvelle escalade armée entre Ankara et le PKK. "Les attaques du PKK vont se poursuivre et la Turquie va y riposter", a-t-il

dit à l'AFP, précisant que la Turquie était habituée à cette situation depuis 1984, l'année où le PKK a entamé sa lutte armée contre Ankara.

Les autorités politiques et militaires turques doivent discuter mercredi, dans le cadre d'une réunion ordinaire du Conseil national de sécurité (MGK), d'une réorganisation des moyens militaires et policiers engagés contre le PKK.

## La main de la Syrie ?

Parmi les mesures envisagées figurent le déploiement dans les zones de combat d'unités spéciales de la police et de troupes militaires entièrement professionnelles, rapporte la presse.

Mehmet Tezkan, de Milliyet, estime que derrière la multiplication des attaques du PKK pourrait se trouver la Syrie voisine, qui abrite aussi une communauté kurde. Les rapports turco-syriens, autrefois excellents, se sont dégradés après les fortes critiques d'Ankara concernant la répression en Syrie.

# L'Iran continue de bombarder la frontière irakienne

Le conflit entre la rébellion kurde et Téhéran déborde en Irak, où l'augmentation du nombre de réfugiés inquiète les autorités locales.

Par Fatma KIZILBOGA

«C'ÉTAIT en fin d'après-midi, nous avons entendu une dizaine de bombes tomber sur la montagne d'en face. Plus tard, j'ai reçu un coup de fil qui m'annonçait la mort de Mohammed. Quand nous sommes arrivés sur place, nous l'avons retrouvé avec la moitié du crâne déchiqueté. Il avait 13 ans.» Voilà près de trois semaines qu'Antari raconte le récit de la mort de son fils aîné à quiconque voudra l'entendre. L'histoire d'un jeune berger parti sur les chemins d'une transhumance trop proche de la frontière iranienne, touché à la tête par un tir de canon. La douleur du père, assis en tailleur sous une tente funéraire de fortune, laisse aujourd'hui place à la colère. «Seuls les villageois des environs viennent prendre de nos nouvelles. Le gouvernement, lui, préfère nous ignorer», explique-t-il, amer.

Situé dans le triangle entre la Turquie, l'Iran et l'Irak, les monts du Qandil abritent depuis le début des années 1980 la rébellion kurde en lutte contre Ankara et Téhéran. Longtemps accusées de fermer les yeux sur la présence de ces groupes considérés comme terroristes par ses voisins, mais également par les États-Unis et l'Union européenne, les autorités locales kurdes irakiennes mettent en avant leur impuissance à chasser une guérilla parfaitement maîtresse d'un territoire montagneux étalé sur près de dix mille mètres carrés. Créé en 2004, le Pjak, le Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan, autrement connu comme la branche iranienne



du PKK, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, exige l'autonomie politique, ainsi que davantage de droits culturels pour la communauté kurde d'Iran. Des concessions que refuse Téhéran, décidé à liquider le mouvement.

## De plus en plus de réfugiés

Face à l'intensification des combats qui ont repris le mois dernier, les travaux des agriculteurs et éleveurs de la région s'organisent en fonction de l'humeur belliqueuse des deux protagonistes. «Les bombardements n'ont pas d'heure. Il faut savoir sentir la tension, mais aussi avoir de la chance», explique Avjin. La montagne adossée à sa maison marque la frontière avec l'Iran. À 500 mètres de là, des impacts d'obus sur des rochers venus atterrir au milieu de la rivière témoignent de la violence des échanges. En dépit du danger auquel elle fait quotidiennement face, la femme refuse d'abandonner ses terres. «Pour aller où ? Ces parcelles représentent tout mon bien, et de toute façon personne n'en voudrait. Quant à m'installer en ville,

c'est simple, je n'en ai pas les moyens. Autant mourir ici», rétorque-t-elle.

À 58 ans, Azad, n'a pas encore dit son dernier mot. Cet apiculteur compte bien récolter le miel de ses abeilles, envers et contre tous. «Le mois prochain, si Dieu le veut. En attendant, notre travail ressemble à une partie de cache-cache», ironise-t-il. Une quinzaine de ruches alignées sur le sol, voilà toute sa richesse. L'argent qu'il percevra de la vente de ce nectar lui permettra de faire vivre sa famille l'hiver prochain. En un mois de pilonnage de l'armée iranienne, l'homme explique n'avoir quitté sa maison qu'une fois. «Quelques heures seulement, le temps de voir les tirs se calmer. Même s'il fallait vraiment partir en urgence, on ne pourrait pas s'éloigner d'ici assez rapidement. Les routes sont nos pires ennemis. À défaut de nous défendre, l'État devrait au moins nous offrir les moyens de fuir», explique-t-il.

Plus bas dans les plaines, de nouveaux villages se dessinent à l'horizon. Celui de familles kurdes irakiennes originaires de cette frontière, venues trouver refuge dans

des tentes fournies par l'UNHCR, le Haut-commissariat pour les réfugiés des Nations unies. Selon les chiffres compilés depuis le mois de juillet par le CICR, le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, plus de 900 nouveaux déplacés sont aujourd'hui dispersés dans la région du Qandil. Comme la famille Dilshad, ces personnes déplorent des conditions de vie misérables, sous des températures dépassant les 40 degrés à l'ombre. «Quatre de mes enfants sont atteints de déshydratation, et le premier dispensaire se trouve à une heure d'ici. Le Pjak attaque l'Iran, qui nous vise à son tour. Il se trompe de cibles», se lamente Gulan. En réalité, Téhéran accuse les villageois de la région de soutenir la rébellion. «Qui oserait s'opposer à des gens armés ? Je défie quiconque de refuser de céder une brebis ou des légumes à des combattants affamés», se défend la femme.

Si l'Iran reproche aux autorités irakiennes leur incapacité à maîtriser cette partie de leur frontière commune, l'intensification de ces bombardements est perçue par certains comme un avertissement. Selon un diplomate européen à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, ces tirs d'artillerie lourde reflètent une tentative d'intimidation des autorités iraniennes. «Le problème entre Téhéran et la rébellion kurde ne date pas d'hier. Les Kurdes restent les principaux alliés des États-Unis en Irak, et ont déclaré à plusieurs reprises être en faveur d'une extension de la présence des troupes américaines. Un scénario qui dérange les Iraniens, dont l'influence prospère dans la partie arabe de l'Irak», analyse-t-il. ■

Le Monde Vendredi 19 août 2011

# Bernardino Leon : « Le régime syrien sait que sa survie est en jeu »

Le représentant spécial des Vingt-Sept pour la région dément avoir proposé à Damas la tenue d'une conférence à Madrid



## Entretien

Bruxelles  
Bureau européen

Représentant spécial de l'Union européenne (UE) pour la rive sud de la Méditerranée, le diplomate espagnol Bernardino Leon aurait, selon le quotidien *El País*, proposé un plan de sortie de crise au président de la Syrie, Bachar Al-Assad.

D'après l'édition du 15 août de ce journal, cette mission effectuée pour le compte du chef du gouvernement espagnol, le socialiste José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, avec le soutien de la Turquie, se serait appuyée sur une proposition en trois points : un arrêt de la répression, une conférence nationale avec l'opposition organisée à Madrid et la constitution d'un gouvernement de transition. Le tout couplé avec un exil du clan Assad en Espagne, où il entretiendrait, notamment, des relations privilégiées avec la famille royale. L'initiative se serait toutefois heurtée à un refus de la part des autorités syriennes.

Interrogé mardi 16 août, le porte-parole de Catherine Ashton, la haute représentante de l'UE pour la politique étrangère, a indiqué que M. Leon s'était rendu en Syrie avant sa nomination à une fonction européenne, en juillet. Mercredi, l'intéressé démentait, dans un entretien au *Monde*, la teneur des informations d'*El País*.

**Vous êtes-vous rendu récemment en Syrie ? Pour quelles raisons ?**

J'ai assisté aux funérailles du père de l'un de mes amis. Pour une visite privée, avec un passeport ordinaire, avant ma nomination par M<sup>me</sup> Ashton. Je précise ceci pour éviter toute confusion : mon nouveau rôle consiste notamment à favoriser le processus de transition dans une série de pays, mais je ne considère pas que la Syrie soit en transition.

**Avez-vous rencontré des proches du régime ?**

Oui, sans me rendre dans des

**« Damas espère que sa place stratégique dans la région lui vaudra l'indulgence de la communauté internationale... »**

bâtiments officiels et sans avoir un contact quelconque avec le président. Pour livrer un message : « Vous ne voyez pas la réalité telle qu'elle est. Les violences ont atteint un niveau insupportable et sont condamnées par la communauté internationale. »

J'ai indiqué à mes interlocuteurs que, s'ils espéraient faire croire aux gestes politiques qu'envisagerait le régime, il fallait d'abord faire cesser les violences, arrêter puis juger leurs auteurs – et pas seulement des subalternes. Ensuite, ouvrir la porte à une véritable transition, convoquer une conférence avec l'opposition et légaliser les partis. Mais je n'ai, en aucune manière, évoqué une conférence à Madrid.

**Comment voyez-vous l'évolution du pays ?**

De manière pessimiste pour ce qui est de sa situation interne. Le régime a détruit la possibilité d'un dialogue avec une opposition organisée et encouragé un renforcement du sectarisme et des clivages. Les violences se poursuivent et la population, qui considère qu'un point de non-retour a été franchi, va continuer à se battre. Le régime Assad, qui a vu ce qui s'est déroulé en Egypte ou en Tunisie, sait que sa survie même est en jeu et se montrera d'autant plus dur. La communauté internationale se doit, dès lors, de multiplier et d'accentuer ses pressions.

**L'armée pourrait-elle se désolidariser ?**

C'est d'autant plus difficile à estimer qu'elle n'a pas eu, comme dans des pays voisins, de tradition d'échange d'officiers avec des pays occidentaux. Jusqu'ici, on n'a

constaté aucun mouvement porteur d'espoir, même si de hauts gradés se rendent sans doute compte qu'ils sont les outils d'un véritable massacre. On pourrait aussi tableur, comme en Libye, sur des défections et des fuites de militaires à l'étranger, mais chacun sait qu'elles feraient, elles aussi, l'objet d'une répression brutale.

**Quelles sont les conséquences possibles pour la région ?**

La région connaît déjà un changement généralisé et le régime est conscient de la place stratégique de la Syrie sur la carte, espérant que cela lui vaudra en définitive l'indulgence de la communauté internationale. Or cela ne sera pas le cas, car cette communauté perd patience.

**Elle reste toutefois divisée et l'Europe elle-même ne parle pas d'une seule voix sur ce dossier...**

Le problème n'est pas l'Europe même si, c'est vrai, le consensus au sein du Conseil n'a pas été réalisé. Mais on y travaille et on va y arriver. Notez, par ailleurs, que les pressions se multiplient dans la région elle-même, de la part de la Ligue arabe ou du roi d'Arabie saoudite par exemple.

**Comment jugez-vous l'évolution du conflit en Libye ?**

J'espère que l'ensemble du territoire pourra bientôt entrer dans un processus de transition.

**En fait, comment concevez-vous votre mission de représentant spécial dans la région ?**

Je pense que les changements vécus par une série de pays sont définitifs et irréversibles. Je vais donc me concentrer sur la transition et la transformation, avec des interlocuteurs politiques de haut niveau. Nous avons évoqué la Syrie et la Libye, mais je précise que je ne suis pas un gestionnaire de crises et de conflits.

**En Tunisie, en Egypte, la colère monte contre les prétendues lenteurs dans la mise en place de nouvelles structures...**

L'organisation d'élections, la mise en place de nouvelles institutions, le dialogue entre les forces

politiques : tout cela réclame, bien sûr, du temps et ce n'est pas facile à faire comprendre à des populations qui ont fait chuter des dictatures et engagé des changements historiques. Elles savaient contre qui elles se battaient, elles doivent désormais déterminer pourquoi et cela entraîne de nouveaux clivages. Les islamistes, par exemple, tentent d'orienter le processus dans une direction, les laïcs dans une autre. Il me semble cependant que, dans les deux pays, les principaux partis sont conscients du risque de rupture du consensus et travaillent à le reconstruire...

**Rencontrez-vous un sentiment anti-occidental ? On a beaucoup reproché à l'Europe la tiédeur de son soutien aux révolutions et la durée de celui aux dictateurs...**

Ce sentiment existe et, j'en tiens compte. Nous avons sans doute trop mis l'accent sur la stabilité, pas assez sur la démocratie. Cela nécessite des explications, importantes et symboliques pour nos interlocuteurs. L'UE doit désormais démontrer un engagement profond, véritable, pratique. Ce défi suppose des moyens pour notre politique de voisinage avec le Sud à un moment où, mes interlocuteurs en sont conscients, nous traversons une grave crise financière.

**La priorité des priorités est-elle économique ?**

Ces pays ont vu leurs recettes, notamment touristiques, fondre alors que le pétrole et le coût de leur dette augmentaient et qu'ils ambitionnaient de bâtir des démocraties où, entre autres, l'éducation et la santé ne devaient plus être réservées à une minorité. Il faut donc agir à court terme sur le plan économique. Toutes les institutions européennes en sont conscientes. ■

Propos recueillis par  
Jean-Pierre Stroobants

AFP

## La Turquie s'éloigne d'un règlement pacifique de la question kurde

ISTANBUL, 19 août 2011 (AFP)

**LA TURQUIE S'ÉLOIGNE** d'un règlement pacifique de la question kurde et risque d'entrer dans un nouveau cycle de violences, estimaient vendredi des analystes au troisième jour de raids aériens turcs contre des bases des rebelles kurdes en Irak.

L'armée a déclenché ces frappes en riposte à une embuscade meurtrière des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

"Nous entrons dans une ère où le langage de la guerre et de la violence va l'emporter", jugeait l'éditorialiste Soli Ozel dans le quotidien Haber Turk, avertissant des conséquences d'une recrudescence de la violence.

"Le plus dangereux, c'est de laisser dans le désespoir les Turcs, les Kurdes, la majorité des gens qui vivent dans ce pays, alors même qu'à chaque occasion ils montrent avec leurs votes qu'ils n'en peuvent plus de la terreur et de la guerre", poursuivait-il.

Le gouvernement islamo-conservateur du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait adopté une politique plus conciliante sur la question kurde, entamant des contacts avec le chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné à vie.

Un changement qui avait laissé espérer des progrès vers une issue au conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts depuis que le PKK a pris les armes contre les forces d'Ankara en 1984 pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est, peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes.

Cette revendication s'est muée en demande d'autonomie au sein d'un système fédéral, défendue par la principale formation kurde, le Parti de la paix et de la démocratie (BDP).

Et lors des législatives de juin dernier, le "bloc kurde" soutenu par le BDP, a réalisé un score historique, remportant 36 députés contre 20 au Parlement sortant.

Le parti de M. Erdogan, l'AKP, a toutefois largement remporté le scrutin.

Fin juillet, Abdullah Öcalan a accusé Ankara d'intransigeance et exigé sa

libération. Puis, après une série d'attaques lancées par le PKK, le gouvernement a choisi la manière forte.

Le PKK, qui a officiellement décrété un cessez-le-feu, dit de son côté qu'une quarantaine de ses combattants ont été tués depuis le scrutin du 12 juin.

Après la nouvelle embuscade qui a tué mercredi neuf membres des forces turques dans le sud-est de la Turquie, M. Erdogan a lancé: "Notre patience est à bout".

Signalant un raidissement, il a évoqué "une nouvelle ère", avertissant que "ceux qui ne s'écartent pas du terrorisme vont en payer le prix", un message adressé aux politiciens kurdes jugés trop proches du PKK.

Il a ensuite réuni le Conseil national de sécurité (MGK), qui rassemble les plus hautes autorités politiques et militaires, qui s'est également prononcé en faveur d'un durcissement contre le PKK.

Aucune activité qui pourrait menacer l'unité indivisible de la nation turque ne sera tolérée, a assuré le MGK, soulignant que la lutte contre "le terrorisme du PKK sera poursuivie avec détermination, sans pour autant renoncer aux principes de l'Etat de droit".

La politologue Nuray Mert affiche son pessimisme. "Une nouvelle atmosphère, un cadre politique dans lequel ceux qui veulent la paix où ne pensent pas comme le gouvernement sont ciblés émerge clairement", dit-elle.

Au contraire, l'éditorialiste İsmail Kucukkaya juge dans le quotidien Aksam que les responsables turcs ont "commencé à tracer deux voies parallèles en faisant la différence entre la lutte contre la terreur séparatiste et la poursuite de la politique de démocratisation" des institutions du pays.

"L'organisation terroriste veut un nouveau cycle, veut la guerre, et cherche à verser davantage de sang. Le gouvernement prend des mesures pour briser ce cycle", estime-t-il.

Le député kurde Aysel Tugluk juge pour sa part que "le Premier ministre utilise sa victoire électorale pour défaire ses adversaires". "Les espoirs d'une solution se sont sérieusement amenuisés", dit-il, estimant que les Kurdes ont perdu confiance dans le gouvernement.

leParisien

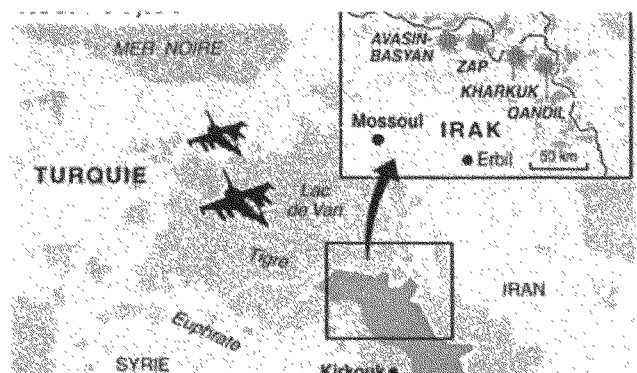
20 août 2011

## Les Turcs bombardent 85 cibles du PKK en Irak

**O**n ne connaît, pour l'heure, ni le nombre de victimes, ni l'étendue des dégâts. L'armée turque a annoncé que son aviation avait mené, ce vendredi, deux séries de raids dans le nord de l'Irak et bombardé 85 cibles de rebelles kurdes.

Voilà un an que la Turquie n'avait pas eu recours au bombardement aérien des positions rebelles kurdes dans la montagne irakienne. Mais une nouvelle attaque des membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le sud-est de la Turquie, frontalière de l'Irak, vient de tuer neuf membres de ses services de sécurité.

Selon un communiqué de l'état-major des armées, les cibles bombardées se situent dans les zones de Hakurk, Avasin-Basyan et Zap, dans le nord de l'Irak, où le PKK dispose de bases arrières pour attaquer la Turquie. «Les dégâts occasionnés par les raids sont en cours d'évaluation après des vols de reconnaissance sur la zone», ajoute le texte.



La Turquie a adopté jeudi une «nouvelle stratégie» qui prévoit notamment de combattre les rebelles avec des troupes militaires entièrement professionnelles mais aussi avec des unités spéciales de la police.

Depuis juillet, les attaques attribuées par les autorités turques au PKK ont coûté la vie à une quarantaine de soldats et de policiers, poussant Ankara à adopter une ligne plus dure dans ce conflit dure depuis 1984, date à laquelle le PKK a pris les armes. (afp)



Le Monde

Vendredi 19 août 2011

# L'aviation turque bombarde la rébellion kurde en territoire irakien

Une dizaine de soldats turcs ont été tués dans une embuscade des rebelles kurdes du PKK

Istanbul

Correspondance

Dans la nuit du mercredi 17 au jeudi 18 août, une quinzaine d'avions de combat turcs ont bombardé une soixantaine d'objectifs kurdes, dont plusieurs camps du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) situés en territoire irakien et notamment dans les villages des monts Qandil, qui abritent les chefs politiques et militaires de l'organisation kurde.

Ces opérations ont été organisées en réaction aux attaques de la guérilla kurde menées mercredi dans la province d'Hakkari, une zone frontalière avec l'Irak et l'Iran. Au cours de ces attaques revendiquées par les rebelles kurdes du PKK, onze militaires turcs et un milicien progouvernemental ont été tués.

Les combats ont eu lieu à proximité de la ville garnison de Çukurca, une base militaire perchée sur une crête montagneuse, à la frontière avec l'Irak. Des mines anti-chars avaient été déposées sur la route d'un convoi de l'armée turque et les assaillants se sont ensuite retranchés côté irakien, dans les montagnes qui servent de repaire au PKK. La guérilla kurde, qui a déclenché la lutte armée contre la Turquie il y a 27 ans, le 15 août 1984, a multiplié, ces dernières semaines, les embuscades meurtrières contre les véhicules des forces de sécurité, dans des zones montagneuses difficiles d'accès. Une vingtaine de militaires ont été tués en deux semaines et déjà, en juillet, un assaut avait fait 20 morts, à Silvan, à l'est de Diyarbakir.

Le PKK a également perpétré plusieurs actes de sabotage contre le gazoduc irano-turc et l'approvisionnement en gaz, vital pour la Turquie, a dû être interrompu par deux fois, le 5 et le 12 août. L'enlèvement d'un entrepreneur à Bingöl (Est) et la bombe déposée contre un chantier de barrage ont eux aussi été revendiqués par le PKK. Une série de barrages controversés a déjà englouti villages et vallées dans cette région de Haute Mésopotamie. Les rebelles menacent désormais de représailles tous ceux qui, fonctionnaire ou hommes d'affaires, coopèrent avec l'Etat.

Ce regain d'activité de la guérilla kurde a fait bondir le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan qui a promis « à ceux qui utilisent le terrorisme et la violence, de leur en faire payer le prix ». Le chef du gouvernement pensait retarder l'échéance jusqu'à « la fin du ramadan », mais il n'a pas pris le risque de laisser le champ libre à ses adversaires politiques. A l'ouest de la Turquie, la rhétorique nationaliste est de mise et les funérailles des soldats « martyrs » occupent les gros titres de la presse, dénonçant « les attaques traîtresses des terroristes ». « Il faut agir. Il faut réduire Qandil à un tas de cendres », a martelé Devlet Bahçeli, le leader du parti ultranationaliste MHP. Le gouvernement de M. Erdogan a annoncé qu'il allait faire évoluer la lutte antiterroriste, en renforçant le rôle donné aux forces spéciales de la police et en donnant plus de pouvoirs aux préfets.

En revanche, l'ouverture démocratique en direction des Kurdes,

affichée par le gouvernement turc depuis 2008, n'est plus d'actualité. Le dialogue politique est au point mort depuis que les 35 députés du Parti de la paix et de la démocratie

L'ouverture démocratique en direction des Kurdes n'est plus d'actualité

(BDP), le parti kurde légal proche du PKK, élus le 12 juin, ont refusé de prêter serment au Parlement. Ils protestent contre le maintien en détention provisoire de plusieurs d'entre eux, accusés de « collusion avec une organisation terroriste ». Les négociations discrètement menées par l'administration turque avec le leader emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, semblent loin de pouvoir aboutir. « Le PKK hésite entre reprendre des combats intenses et déposer les armes, dans le cas où l'Etat parviendrait à un accord avec Öcalan », estime Emre Uslu, un ancien policier expert en matière de sécurité.

L'aviation turque bombarde régulièrement les camps où sont retranchés quelques milliers de cadres et de combattants du PKK, dans les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien, sans parvenir à décapiter la rébellion. Ces dernières semaines, l'Iran a lui aussi mené une offensive contre la guérilla kurde du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK), une excroissance iranienne du PKK. Le régime iranien affirme avoir tué une cinquantaine de militants kurdes dans ces opérations et les troupes iraniennes ont pénétré en territoire irakien, sur les hauteurs des monts Qandil. La rumeur de l'arrestation de Murat Karayilan, le chef militaire du PKK, a parcouru les médias turcs, la semaine dernière, rapidement démentie par Téhéran et par le PKK. ■

Guillaume Perrier

# Turkish bombing campaign against PKK signals shift in strategy

**The Turkish government's six-day campaign that has killed up to 100 Kurdish rebels in Iraq suggests emphasis on military might over diplomacy in dealing with the guerrillas.**

*By Alexander Christie-Miller,  
Correspondent*

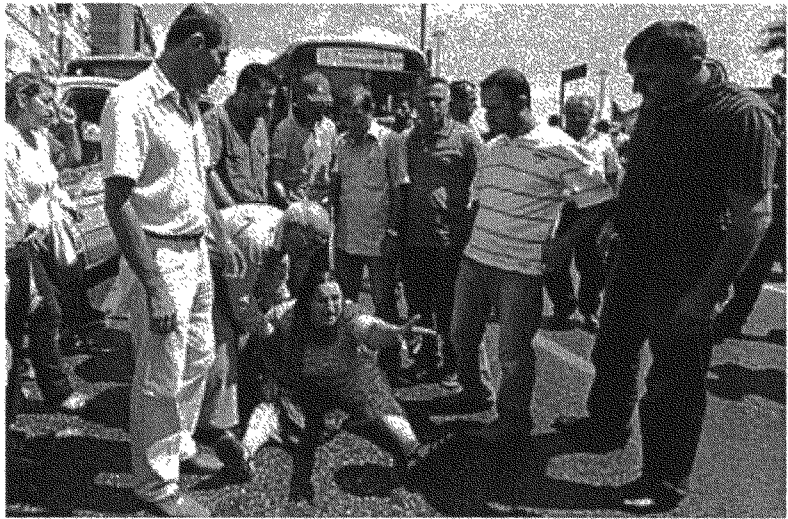
Turkey has cracked down hard on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq, responding to their attacks by hitting guerrilla bases with air strikes. The bombing campaign, coming amid rising tensions with the country's significant Kurdish minority, signals a shift away from diplomacy to military might in dealing with the rebels.

Turkish leaders today claimed to have killed up to 100 Kurdish rebels following six days of intense bombing of their bases. The bombing campaign was launched following an ambush last week in which the rebels killed eight Turkish soldiers near the Iraqi border, after which Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his government had "run out of patience."

"The state is obliged to carry out these operations for the peace of the nation and it is the natural right of the state to do so," said Mr. Erdogan yesterday. Despite reports of civilian casualties and condemnation from the president of autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, Erdogan vowed to continue the attacks on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a separatist guerrilla outfit that has been fighting the Turkish state for 26 years. Turkey, the US, and the European Union have all designated the group to be a terrorist organization.

## Rising tension between government, Kurdish minority

The assault comes amid rising tensions between the Turkish government and the country's Kurdish minority since June elections. Candidates backed by the Kurds, who make up almost a fifth of Turkey's population, performed well in the poll, garnering



A pro-Kurdish demonstrator sits to block the main road during a protest against Turkish air strikes over northern Iraq, in central Istanbul on Sunday. Turkish warplanes backed by heavy artillery struck Kurdish guerrilla targets in northern Iraq overnight, the military said on Saturday, a third consecutive night of raids. (Murad Sezer/Reuters)

36 seats. But after some members of parliament were barred because of PKK-related convictions, the Kurdish bloc boycotted parliament – a boycott that is still in effect.

In recent years Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has repeatedly said it plans to redress the long-running grievances of the country's 15 million Kurds, who are seeking greater cultural and political autonomy. Among other initiatives, the government has loosened restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language, launching a Kurdish state TV channel.

But partly as a result of a backlash among Turkish nationalists, the government's rhetoric has become increasingly hostile in recent months.

"Even before this last PKK attack, the government was preparing to increase pressure, but the latest attack has forced them to step forward," says Gokhan Bacik, director of the Middle East Research Centre at Zirve University in southern Turkey.

## Backed by US intelligence?

The Turkish Army has often bombed PKK positions in the Qandil Mountains of Northern Iraq, a safe haven for the rebels, but seldom with

such apparently devastating effect.

Professor Bacik says the bombing may also have been aided by US intelligence. According to the Turkish Army, some 2,000 fighters are hiding in the mountains. The government of Iraqi Kurdistan has repeatedly claimed it is not able to eject the rebel group.

"I call on Turkey to stop these operations," said Iraqi Kurdistan's President Massud Barzani on Monday. "Actions that injure people and destroy their property cannot be justified."

But Bacik says that in spite of its protests, the bombing campaign was unlikely to seriously alter Turkey's relationship with the autonomous Iraqi region.

"They can protest, but they have no leverage with which to control Turkey, and it is not a strong government," he says.

In recent years, Turkey has developed massive economic influence over northern Iraq. More than half of the 2,000 foreign companies working in northern Iraq are Turkish, and 75 percent of all goods sold in the region are Turkish made.



# Turkey's Military Strikes Could Herald Closure For Kurdish Opening

by Robert Tait  
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

As initiatives go, it seemed more in line with closure than opening new doors.

Turkey gave a response of sorts to its "Kurdish question" on August 23 when its armed forces announced that it had killed 100 militants from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in more than 80 sorties over northern Iraq in the past week.

On the same day, the army transported around 2,000 commandos to the Iraqi border in mini-buses in a clear statement of intent to the PKK that there was more to come.

Such is the state of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's much-vaunted "Kurdish Opening" less than three years after it was launched amid heady talk of a historic breakthrough in the Turkish state's troubled relationship with the country's estimated 14 million Kurds.

Under Erdogan's vision, a vicious conflict that has killed around 40,000 people since 1984 was to be replaced by a new age of harmony in which long-suppressed Kurdish cultural distinctions would be recognized in the form of having their own television channels and guaranteed rights to speak their language in public. Erdogan, a social conservative and former Islamist, once broke the mold in Turkish politics by becoming the first national leader to admit that the country had a Kurdish issue. It seemed a far cry from the unifying ideology of the modern state in which Kurds' ethnic distinctiveness was officially denied and covered up with the derogatory label of "mountain Turks."

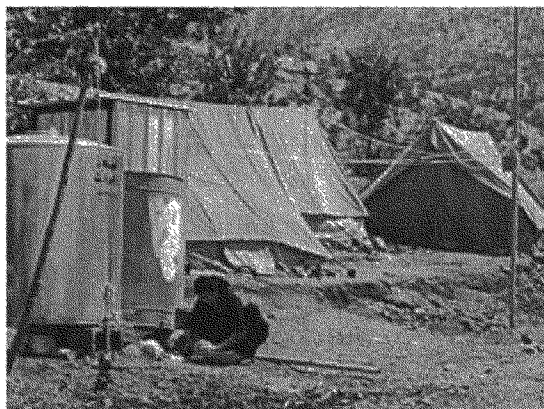
So how -- just weeks after the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) won its third consecutive landslide election victory -- has it come to this?

## Closing The Opening

The government's hawkish approach is a response to a series of attacks by the PKK in recent weeks that have killed around two dozen Turkish soldiers.

Yet it also comes against an uneasy political backdrop that has seen the Kurds' democratically elected representatives as alienated as ever.

A woman washes dishes at a refugee camp near Qandil Mountain, a border zone in northeastern Iraq where Kurds have fled offensives in Turkey and Iran.



A woman washes dishes at a refugee camp near Qandil Mountain, a border zone in northeastern Iraq where Kurds have fled offensives in Turkey and Iran.

Having won a record 36 seats in last June's general election, the main Kurdish party, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), has since boycotted the Turkish National Assembly in protest over the presence in jail of six of its elected members for "terrorism" offenses.

Turkey's judiciary has refused to free the six, as well as a large number of other local municipal representatives in custody for supposed links to the PKK.

And Erdogan -- having vowed to seek consensus on the framing of a new constitution that could give Turkey a French-style presidential system -- has taken an equally uncompromising line by cutting off contact with the BDP and even declaring the Kurdish issue "solved" during the recent election campaign.

Cengiz Aktar, professor of European Union studies at Istanbul's Bahcesehir University, believes such a hard-line policy is out of step with what the situation needs. He says that the BDP "may come back in early October when the parliament reopens but before they boycotted anything, the government decided to boycott them, which he describes as a "joke."

"How on Earth [can] a Turkish government refuse to talk to the main political party representing the Kurds for a new social contract, of which the Kurds should be not only part and parcel, but also take full responsibility and join in to ensure that this conflict will be solved one [and] for all?" Aktar asks.

## A 'Kurdish Spring'?

At the same time, Aktar acknowledges the PKK's contribution to the deteriorating political landscape with its resort to a renewed campaign of violence. "In my opinion, the answer to the crisis regarding the six MPs was not warranting the violent action the

PKK has undertaken," he says. "That made things worse and the government had to defend itself and the country because among the population, the discontent was very, very high."

The military offensive's ferocity stands in stark contrast to criticisms by Erdogan and his foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, of the bloody crackdown by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad on opposition protests in neighboring Syria, which has its own Kurdish minority.

Prime Minister Erdogan is dealing from a position of strength, analysts say

Turkish officials insist that the raids are aimed not at civilians but at damaging PKK infrastructure and rooting out its fighters

Yet there are some who believe Turkey's Kurds could draw inspiration from the so-called Arab Spring that has inspired the revolt in countries like Syria, Egypt, and Libya, all of whose protest movements Erdogan has endorsed.

"With a bit of luck and political wisdom...the entire Kurdish people could take advantage of the ongoing Arab Spring and prepare the ground for a long-anticipated independent Kurdistan, linking up with Iraq's ongoing autonomy, the Iranian Kurdish enclave, and perhaps even the Syrian Kurdish minorities," an Israeli defense specialist, David Eshel, wrote in a blog on August 12. [www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2011/8/turkey3317.htm](http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2011/8/turkey3317.htm)

He was writing after the Congress for a Democratic Society (DTK), an umbrella movement for Turkey's Kurds, issued a declaration in Diyarbakir on July 14 proclaiming "democratic autonomy."

## Erdogan Holds The Cards

Yet to some seasoned analysts, such forecasts are wildly premature and far-fetched. Soli Ozel, professor of international relations at Bilgi University in Istanbul, dismisses the DTK's plan as "nonsensical" and says Erdogan is acting from a position of strength.

"He wishes to either make sure that the BDP are going to be submitting to his will or he will keep them really out of the political equation of dealing with the Kurdish issue," Ozel says. "He is forcing them to do things that are perhaps not to their own liking and I think he's going to succeed."

Assisting the prime minister in this endeavor, Ozel believes, are signs of declining support among Kurds for the PKK's tactics, as witnessed by a recent call from Kurdish civil groups for an end to violence.

As for the "Kurdish Opening," only time will tell whether it's still alive. But with the prime minister apparently setting his sights on becoming president of a reformed Turkey, any revival will be on Erdogan's terms.

"Is the 'Kurdish Opening' dead? Certainly, it's not as alive as it used to be and we're not quite sure of the direction that it's taking," Ozel says. "I think the prime minister would not wish to risk his political fortune to become the president of the Turkish republic in a presidential system by making an opening that the Turkish public opinion is not terrible happy about, because nobody really explained to it why we needed to have it."

☆☆☆



August 27, 2011

## Turkey and Iran try to ignite Kurdish-Kurdish war, Iraqi MP says

**BAGHDAD / Aswat Al-Iraq:** Kurdish Alliance MP warned that Iran and Turkey are trying to ignite a Kurdish-Kurdish war through pressing Iraqi Kurds to fight against Turkish and Iranian opposition Kurds.

MP Mahmoud Othman told Aswat al-Iraq that "this matter is clear through the pressures put against Kurdish region government".

He called both countries to solve their Kurdish questions internally through dialogue and not resorting to violence.

"It seems that peaceful choice does not satisfy both countries and their continued desire to fight against PKK and PJAK parties, while both parties have their rights in freedom", he added.

The Iranian bombardment continued for the last two months,



while the Turkish started before two weeks which led to a number of casualties and material losses in the border villages.

The Turkish army is continuing its raids, under the pretext of chasing PKK members in the Iraqi mountains, following 30-Turkish casualties inflicted by the PKK members last week.

Turkey announced it will continue its operations till terminating the PKK members and stop their military actions inside Turkey.

# Sulaimaniya Protesters burn Turkish flag

Sulaimaniya - August 23, 2011 - (AKnews)

**AROUND** two hundred people gathered in central Sulaimaniya last night to voice their condemnation of the Turkish and Iranian bombardments of the Kurdistan Region.

The rally in the city's Salem Street culminated in the burning of the Turkish flag.

The aerial attacks and shelling – targeting Kurdish rebel groups the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party) and its offshoot the PJAK (the Party of Free Life for Kurdistan) – have also claimed the lives of Kurdish civilians and displaced hundreds of families.

The victims of the latest aerial attack by Turkey included a five-month-old child.

To date, both countries have focused their attacks on the Qandil mountain range - connecting their borders with Iraqi Kurdistan – where the outlawed Kurdish separatist guerillas have their bases.

The area has been subjected to sporadic shelling from both countries since 2006, but in recent weeks the military offensives have intensified.

On July 16 Iran stepped up its campaign to dislodge the PJAK from Qandil in a series of attacks that were responsible for killing four civilians, injuring five and displacing close to a thousand.

Turkey began a series of air strikes in the region on Wednesday after eight Turkish soldiers were killed by the PKK earlier the same day in the border regions of southeast Turkey.

On Sunday, a family of seven – including three small children – were killed when their car was struck by a rocket fired from a Turkish fighter jet. The charred remains of the family were so badly burned, it was almost impossible to identify them.

Yesterday's protestors in Sulaimaniya raised aloft the photograph of Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK's imprisoned leader, before setting fire to Turkey's flag.

This bombardment has caused immense material damage and taken the lives of civilians in the bordering territories, causing others to abandon their homes," a statement from the protestors reads, "...and this is a far cry from all neighborly and humanitarian values as well as a breach of international principles".

The statement went on to demand that the three presidencies of the Kurdistan Region intervene to bring to an end its



*Iraqi Kurdish protesters burn Turkish flag and protest against Turkish bombardments of the Iraqi Kurdistan, in Sulaimaniyah city, Kurdistan region, Iraq, August 22, 2011.*

neighbors offensives and the ensuing Kurdish civilian bloodshed.

One protestor, Kosar Mahmoud, told AKnews that the Kurdistan Region is at its most vulnerable.

"From the one side the Arabs are terrorizing Kurds in the disputed areas (areas under territorial dispute between Baghdad and Erbil) and from the other side, its neighbors are bombarding Kurdish land," he said.

Condemning the "cold-blooded procrastination" of the authorities, Mahmoud said it was time to respond "severely" to the Turkish and Iranian attacks.

Many protestors expressed their rage towards the Iraqi government for saying nothing while its territories are being bombed and its sovereignty violated.

"Turkey is killing our children, women and old men," Mahmoud said, "...how do you expect our youth not to burn the Turkish flag?"

Fellow protestor Mohammed Mustafa told AKnews: "Iran and Turkey are disrespecting all the rights of their neighbor (Kurdistan), therefore, we have gathered on this street to tell both of them we oppose their behavior and the slaughter of our civilians".

Kardo Kareem, one of the many youths present in yesterday's rally, reiterated the calls for a "tough" response from Kurdish and Iraqi government, saying they may end the incursions and put an end to the "martyrdom and displacement" of Kurdish civilians.

Kareem said that burning the Turkish flag expressed "the climax of our opposition".

"Turkey should well realize that in times of peace and dialogue, this flag is flown in Erbil (the Kurdish capital) but in times of opposition we will burn it because the blood and life of a single Kurd for us are more sacred than this flag."

*By Kamaran Hama-Kareem and Idris Abu-Bakir*

REUTERS

## Iraqi Kurds flee Iranian and Turkish bombardment

Auguste 24, 2011 -(Reuters) - By Patrick Markey

**MANGORAYATI, Iraq** - First shelling from neighbouring Iran drove Iraqi Kurdish farmer Haider Rasul from his village, now weeks later bombardments from Turkish warplanes hunting Kurdish rebels stopped him going back.

Along the Iraqi northern Kurdish region's borders with Iran and Turkey, hundreds of refugees have fled since mid-July to small camps to escape attacks by Iraq's neighbours on rebels hiding along the frontier in their long war for Kurdish self-rule.

Iraqi Kurds say they are caught in the middle as Turkey and Iran attack their villages across the border while Ankara and Tehran court their local government with foreign investment that has helped make the Kurdish region the most stable part of Iraq.

Since mid-July, when Iran began shelling, farmers abandoned crops and livestock for small refugee camps on the parched hillsides at the foot of Qandil mountains where Turkish jets now fly low across the frontier to hunt Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels taking refuge in northern Iraq and southern Turkey.

"I came here after the Iranian shelling, and now I have to stay because of the Turkish warplanes," Rasul said at a camp where a dozen tents browned by dust sit along a river bed.

"Some people say Turkey is our friend. We see it different here. Here we see their real policy."

Iran and Turkey have in the past bombed suspected hideouts of the Turkish Kurd PKK and their Iranian Kurdish offshoot PJAK, but Turkey's week-long military campaign has triggered Iraqi Kurdish protests after seven civilians were killed by a Turkish air strike near the town of Rania near the Iranian border.

A Iraqi Kurdish farmer, his wife, three children and two grandchildren were killed when a Turkish jet destroyed their vehicle on a mountain road.

Iraqi Kurdish President Masoud Barzani on Tuesday called on rebel groups and foreign governments to stop fighting.

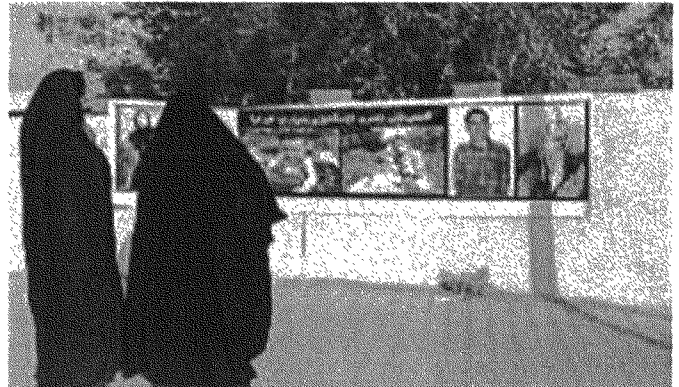
"The main victims of these bombardments and military actions are the people of the Kurdistan region. I am certain that fighting and violence will not lead to any resolution. At the end of the day, peaceful means must be pursued," Barzani said in a statement.

About 250 protesters marched towards the Turkish consulate on Wednesday in Arbil, the Iraqi Kurdish capital, waving green, red and white Kurdish flags and chanting "No to the Turkish bombings."

### TRICKY BALANCE

Managing the PKK presence is a tricky task for Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish government with Iran to the east, Turkey to the north and to the south a fragile, power-sharing central Iraqi government with whom the Kurds still disagree about territorial and oil rights.

That balance is even more sensitive with Baghdad and



Women look at pictures of civilians Kurds killed by shelling by Turkish warplanes in the northern Kurdish town of Rania in Sulaimaniyah province, Kurdistan region, Iraq. 23, 2011. Photo: Reuters/Thaier al-Sudani.

Washington now debating whether American troops stay on in Iraq after a 2011 deadline, more than eight years after the U.S. invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Semi-autonomous since 1991, Iraqi Kurdistan is often touted as the "other" Iraq because it has become a safe haven and a destination for investment when almost daily violence and bombings still affects the rest of the country.

Turkey is a big investor in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdish north, putting money into oil, hotels and shopping malls. The Kurdish capital Arbil is awash in Turkish businesses.

But Kurdish lawmakers have been the most vocal in calling for U.S. presence in Iraq to act as a buffer against internal divisions and incursions by neighbouring countries.

Turkey's military said on Tuesday it had killed up to 100 Kurdish rebels in six days of air strikes on northern Iraq, but guerrillas still launched more attacks far inside Turkey.

Turkey's strikes are the first in the mountains of northern Iraq in more than a year and are meant as retaliation for an escalation of guerrilla attacks after the collapse of efforts to negotiate a settlement to the 27-year-old conflict.

A PKK spokesman dismissed the Turkish claim as propaganda and the casualties could not be independently confirmed.

Those competing claims mean little in the Iraqi village of Sone along the Iranian border, where shells last month tore chunks off a school roof and crashed into Hamed Hussein's family home, leaving a crater in the concrete floor of one bedroom.

"Now we don't know whether to stay or leave," he said standing amid the shattered glass and debris.

Nearby in another refugee camp, Mohammed Rosul says he escaped from Iranian shelling like many of his neighbours and now listens at night with his children to Turkish jets overhead.

"Iran knows we are just civilians, and still they attack us," he said. "Are these children PJAK rebels?"

# Américains et Européens poussent Assad à se retirer

Barack Obama, suivi par la France, l'Allemagne et le Royaume-Uni, a pour la première fois sommé le président Assad de quitter le pouvoir. Depuis cinq mois, la féroce répression en Syrie a fait plus de 2 000 morts, et le régime s'est livré à d'atroces exactions, confirme un rapport de l'ONU. Même s'ils s'entendent sur les sanctions à imposer contre Damas, les Européens restent divisés sur l'après-Assad.



A Washington, le 18 août, Hillary Clinton a déclaré que les sanctions à l'encontre du pétrole syrien devaient « toucher le cœur du régime ».

JEWEL SAMAD/AFP PHOTO

Le changement de régime en Syrie est-il désormais programmé? C'est ce que semblent signaler les déclarations faites, jeudi 18 août, de manière coordonnée, par le président américain Barack Obama, suivi de son homologue français, Nicolas Sarkozy, du premier ministre britannique, David Cameron, et de la chancelière allemande, Angela Merkel. Après cinq mois d'une féroce

répression armée en Syrie qui a fait plus de 2 000 morts et des milliers de disparus, les Occidentaux ont franchi le pas de l'appel au changement de régime, et cherchent désormais à faire voter une résolution de sanctions à l'ONU. « Pour le bien du peuple syrien, le moment est venu pour le président Assad de démissionner », a annoncé M. Obama dans un communiqué. « Les appels au dialogue

et aux réformes sont restés lettre morte tandis qu'il emprisonne, torture et massacre son propre peuple », ajoute le texte. Dans une déclaration commune, les trois dirigeants européens ont adressé ce message : « Le président Assad, qui a recours à la force militaire brutale contre son propre peuple et qui porte la responsabilité de la situation, a perdu toute légitimité et ne peut plus prétendre diri-

ger le pays, affirment MM. Sarkozy, Cameron, et M<sup>me</sup> Merkel. Nous l'appelons à (...) quitter le pouvoir, dans l'intérêt supérieur de la Syrie et de l'unité de son peuple. » La haute représentante de l'Union européenne, Catherine Ashton, a fait un commentaire similaire. Le pouvoir syrien a réagi en dénonçant une « guerre diplomatique ». M. Obama a ordonné, jeudi, le gel des avoirs du gouvernement

## Robert Malley : « La légitimité du pouvoir est exsangue »

### Entretien

New York  
Correspondant

Ancien conseiller du président Bill Clinton pour les affaires israélo-arabes de 1998 à 2001, Robert Malley dirige le programme Moyen-Orient de l'International Crisis Group (ICG). **L'administration Obama a-t-elle été lente à réagir ?**

Elle a été plus lente que d'autres à aboutir à la conclusion que ce régime est incapable de se réformer. Initialement, de nombreux éléments au département d'Etat ont investi de gros efforts sur une possible paix israélo-syrienne. De plus, longtemps Washington a cru pouvoir user du levier turc en Syrie, et la peur du chaos possible si le régime Assad chutait a joué. Des diplomates ont reçu des appels de chrétiens syriens leur rappelant ce qui

s'est passé pour leurs frères en Irak après le renversement de Saddam Hussein. La troisième raison de cette lenteur tient à la volonté de ne pas monter en première ligne dans le soutien à l'opposition syrienne pour ne pas lui nuire aux yeux de l'opinion arabe.

Beaucoup à Washington ont gardé un traumatisme de 1991 en Irak, où [après la première guerre du Golfe] les Etats-Unis avaient appelé les chiites à se soulever sans rien faire ensuite quand ils ont été terriblement réprimés. **Qu'est-ce qui l'a fait basculer ?**

Les pressions internes ont joué. Médias et opposition républicaine ont martelé ce paradoxe d'une intervention américaine en Libye et de la passivité de facto face à un régime qui tue 2 000 civils.

Un processus s'est mis en place où, à chaque aggravation de la répression, Washington a haussé le ton. Depuis dix jours, le basculement était annoncé. L'administra-

tion a d'abord évoqué la perte de légitimité du régime, puis appelé aux sanctions. L'étape actuelle est la suite logique.

**Pour aller vers quoi ? Hillary Clinton exige des sanctions sur les exportations pétrolières syriennes. Qu'en pensez-vous ?**

La Syrie n'a que peu de sources de devises. Elle ne dispose que de très peu de pétrole, mais son terminal de Lattaquié permet d'en exporter et de le raffiner. Or Damas, avec Téhéran, fait une énorme pression sur le régime de Bagdad pour que du pétrole irakien soit exporté à partir du terminal syrien. Je ne suis pas certain de l'efficacité de l'appel américain. Peut-être s'agit-il d'un réflexe sur le mode « Il faut bien faire quelque chose ».

**Imaginez-vous possible une intervention militaire occidentale contre Damas ?**

Je ne crois pas que quiconque en ait envie à Washington. Ses

effets ricochets sur l'Irak, le Liban, la Palestine, seraient potentiellement catastrophiques. Le problème est que désormais rien ne pesera sur Damas. Sa vieille garde aux commandes, le régime joue sa survie. Il a une très longue pratique de l'isolement international et s'en est toujours sorti. Son ossature – ses services de sécurité – ne craque pas jusqu'ici.

Il voit ce qui se passe en Egypte ou en Tunisie et ses cadres ne croient aucune promesse : ils savent que leur tête sera mise à prix si le pouvoir chute. Mais, cette fois, il y a une différence essentielle : en interne comme en externe, sa légitimité est exsangue. Ses soutiens habituels, la Russie ou la Chine, chancellent. Les minorités alaouite et chrétienne ne lui apportent qu'un soutien passif, par peur des lendemains. Les six mois à venir seront déterminants. ■

Propos recueillis par  
Sylvain Cypel

syrien et interdit les importations aux Etats-Unis de produits pétroliers en provenance de Syrie. Les Européens préparent aussi de nouvelles sanctions. Vendredi, à Bruxelles, les ambassadeurs des Vingt-Sept devaient examiner une série de mesures visant en particulier les secteurs pétrolier et bancaire syriens. Les décisions américaines devraient peser sur les débats, indiquaient des diplomates, alors que les Européens semblent encore divisés quant aux conséquences d'une stabilisation de la Syrie.

L'effort diplomatique des Occidentaux se déploie sur plusieurs fronts. Celui, notamment, du Conseil des droits de l'homme de l'ONU qui doit, lundi 22 août, se réunir en session extraordinaire à Genève.

Les Européens, forts d'un certain soutien des pays arabes, espèrent parvenir à une résolution appelant à une saisine de la Cour pénale internationale (CPI), et décidant de la création d'une commis-

sion d'enquête internationale sur la Syrie. Jeudi, la haute représentante des Nations unies pour les droits de l'homme, Navi Pillay, a informé le Conseil de sécurité, à New York, de la situation en Syrie, après la publication d'un rapport de l'ONU où la répression est décrite comme « *pouvant relever de crimes contre l'humanité* ».

L'activation de la justice internationale ainsi que le vote de sanctions à l'ONU sont cependant loin d'être acquis, en raison du droit de veto de la Russie et de la Chine au Conseil de sécurité.

#### « Et après ? »

Les Occidentaux veulent contourner l'obstacle en essayant de convaincre les pays « émergents » du groupe « IBAS » (Inde, Brésil, Afrique du Sud), qui siègent au Conseil de sécurité et expriment une grande hostilité à toute politique de pressions visant à un changement de régime, qu'ils assim-

lent à du « néo-colonialisme ». Pour ces pays, l'intervention de l'OTAN en Libye agit comme un puissant repoussoir. Le groupe IBAS a tenté au début du mois une médiation à Damas, tandis que la Russie, elle, a fait savoir qu'elle poursuivrait ses ventes d'armes à la Syrie.

Les Occidentaux misent avant tout sur le retournement de conjoncture au Moyen-Orient vis-à-vis de Bachar Al-Assad. L'administration Obama avait accordé du temps au premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan pour tenter d'amener le dirigeant syrien à résipiscence. La Turquie a été dépitée par l'absence de résultats. Son ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, déclarait, le 15 août : « *Le temps des paroles est fini.* »

Les attaques spectaculaires lancées ces dernières semaines par l'armée syrienne contre plusieurs villes ont achevé de braquer de nombreux acteurs régionaux contre le

dirigeant syrien, en particulier l'Arabie saoudite. Washington l'a observé de près. « *Cela ne surprendra personne si les Etats-Unis disent qu'Assad doit partir. Et Après?* », déclarait le 16 août la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Hillary Clinton. *Mais si la Turquie le dit, l'Arabie aussi, et d'autres encore, le régime d'Assad ne pourra l'ignorer.* » Le dernier appui régional du pouvoir allaouite est l'Iran, et certains s'interrogent déjà sur la réaction de Téhéran en cas de chute du régime de Damas.

Au-delà de l'effort pour accroître les sanctions, la difficulté tient aussi au fait que l'opposition syrienne peine à se fédérer. Les Occidentaux n'ont pas de partenaire clair avec qui prendre langue. ■

Natalie Nougayrède avec  
Sylvain Cypel (à New York) et  
Jean-Pierre Stroobants  
(à Bruxelles)

**L'EXPRESS** 21 août 2011

## Nord de l'Irak: sept civils tués dans un raid aérien de l'armée turque

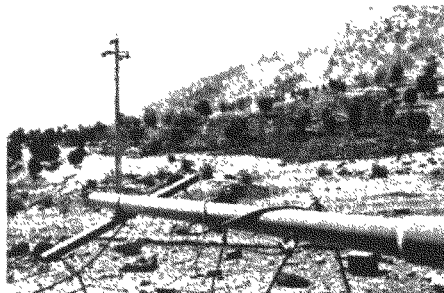
**SOULAYMANIYEH (Irak), 21 août 2011 (AFP)** — Un raid aérien de l'armée turque, mené dans le cadre d'opérations contre des séparatistes kurdes, a fait sept morts dimanche dans un village du nord de l'Irak, a annoncé un responsable local à l'AFP.

"Sept personnes, dont des femmes et des enfants, ont été tuées dans un raid de l'armée turque contre une voiture civile dans le village de Kortek" dans la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, a déclaré Hassan Abdallah, responsable du secteur de Qalat Dizah, en évoquant un bilan encore provisoire.

Selon lui, l'armée turque a également bombardé dimanche des positions rebelles kurdes aux alentours de Sidakan et Choman, dans la province voisine d'Erbil.

L'armée turque bombarde pour le cinquième jour consécutif le Kurdistan irakien. C'est la première fois que des victimes sont recensées.

La Turquie a décidé de procéder à des bombardements aériens --auxquels elle n'avait pas recouru depuis plus d'un an-- après une attaque mercredi des membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le sud-est de



la Turquie qui a tué neuf membres de ses services de sécurité.

Un porte-parole du PKK, Ahmed Denis, a par ailleurs indiqué dimanche que l'aviation turque avait bombardé les secteurs de Qandil, Khowakirk, Haftan, Jabal Mattine et Jabal Karra, le long de la frontière irako-turque.

L'artillerie a également mené dimanche matin des bombardements contre les localités de Khowakirk, Zakarus et Ifsahim, a-t-il dit.

Le porte-parole a indiqué qu'il pensait que l'armée turque était en train de préparer une incursion dans le nord de l'Irak.

"L'armée turque est en train de se préparer à la frontière avec le Kurdistan irakien, pour lancer une

attaque contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan", a-t-il estimé.

Le PKK, né dans le sud-est de la Turquie à majorité kurde, a pris les armes en 1984, ouvrant la voie à un conflit qui a fait plus de 45.000 morts depuis.

Il est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et une bonne partie de la communauté internationale, dont les Etats-Unis.

Selon Ankara, 2.000 rebelles sont retranchés en Irak, d'où ils s'infiltrèrent en Turquie pour mener des attaques.

Depuis juillet, les attaques attribuées par les autorités turques au PKK ont coûté la vie à une quarantaine de soldats et de policiers, poussant Ankara à adopter une ligne plus dure dans ce conflit.

Certains analystes militaires estiment que les frappes aériennes ne suffiront pas à ébranler le PKK dans la montagne irakienne et insistent sur une opération terrestre.

Depuis le début des années 1990, l'armée turque a mené plusieurs incursions terrestres dans le nord de l'Irak pour pourchasser les rebelles dont la dernière, longue de huit jours, remonte à 2008.



## La Turquie, paramètre essentiel de l'équation régionale

## Istanbul

Correspondance

La Turquie est « à bout de patience ». « C'est notre dernier avertissement aux autorités syriennes. Si les opérations ne cessent pas, il n'y aura plus rien à discuter », avait prévenu, mercredi 17 août, le ministre des affaires étrangères Ahmet Davutoglu, juste après le déclenchement de bombardements contre la ville de Lattaquié.

Mais le pouvoir syrien est resté sourd aux rappels à l'ordre de son voisin turc. La répression s'est poursuivie ces derniers jours contre les manifestations appelant à la chute du régime, faisant au moins quarante morts, vendredi, en Syrie.

Samedi 20 août, les chars sont de nouveau entrés à Homs. La Turquie condamne chaque jour un peu plus fermement le « bain de sang en Syrie », prenant ses distances avec son ex-allié. Récemment, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a comparé Bachar Al-Assad au Libyen Mouammar Kadhafi, qui lui aussi a ignoré les injonctions turques à cesser les violences. Pourtant, Ankara se refuse toujours à réclamer explicitement le départ du dictateur syrien, comme l'ont fait ses alliés occidentaux, européens et américains, la semaine dernière.

Le gouvernement turc n'a pas non plus rappelé son ambassadeur, contrairement à l'Arabie saoudite. Vendredi, le Conseil national de sécurité, réuni à Ankara, s'est contenté d'un communiqué diplomatique : « Des réformes politiques en faveur de la démocra-

tie, en accord avec les demandes légitimes du peuple syrien, doivent être mises en œuvre selon un calendrier clairement défini. »

Les manifestants syriens ont peu apprécié la prudence du gouvernement turc, même si ce dernier a démenti avoir octroyé un délai à Bachar Al-Assad, jusqu'à la fin du mois de ramadan (le 29 août), pour mettre en œuvre des réformes démocratiques.

« Les Turcs cherchent à gagner du temps, mais ce temps est suffisant pour un nouveau massacre », déplore Nazir, un jeune Syrien de Jisr-Al-Choghour réfugié à Antioche, côté turc, depuis trois mois. Ankara tente de ménager le régime syrien, en continuant d'interdire, par exemple, aux réfugiés accueillis dans des camps côté turc de communiquer avec l'extérieur. La diplomatie turque joue la montre et veut encore croire à son pouvoir de persuasion. « Rien ne peut se faire sans nous en Syrie », a laissé échapper M. Davutoglu.

Elle a pourtant essuyé quelques déconvenues, la dernière en date lorsque le ministre est rentré bredouille de Damas, le 9 août, après une entrevue « de la dernière chance » avec Bachar Al-Assad. Le rendez-vous a viré au fiasco. Pendant les entretiens à Damas, les troupes continuaient de se déployer au nord. Le jour suivant, l'ambassadeur turc, Omer Onhon, fut invité à venir constater le retrait des troupes de la ville de Hama. Mais, dès le lendemain, l'armée syrienne était de retour.

D'un autre côté, la Turquie ne peut plus se permettre de haus-

ser le ton sans rompre les liens avec Damas. Les condamnations des dernières semaines ont irrité la Syrie, mais aussi l'Iran, son principal allié. En cas de crise avec la Syrie, des turbulences seraient à prévoir avec Téhéran, deuxième fournisseur de gaz à la Turquie. De plus, l'opposition syrienne s'organise ouvertement depuis le territoire turc. La ville d'Antioche, située à 80 km de Lattaquié, et plus encore Istanbul, servent de bases arrière logistiques aux mouvements d'insurrection et de lieu de réunion aux différents groupes politiques hostiles à Bachar Al-Assad. Des oppo-

### La Turquie condamne chaque jour plus fermement le « bain de sang en Syrie », prenant ses distances avec son ex-allié

sants de tous les horizons se sont rassemblés pour la première fois à Antalya, fin mai. Et ce week-end, à Istanbul, les fondations d'un Conseil national, censé former le futur gouvernement de Damas après la chute du régime, ont été posées.

Si la Turquie s'accroche à un espoir de négociation, c'est que l'axe Ankara-Damas constituait le pilier de la diplomatie de bon voisinage mise en place par M. Davutoglu ces dernières années. Après avoir été proches d'un conflit armé à la fin des années 1990, les deux pays sont

soudain devenus les meilleurs amis. M. Erdogan et son « frère Bachar » ont organisé des conseils ministériels en commun, scellé des accords commerciaux, aboli les visas... Début février, encore, le dirigeant turc inaugurait le « barrage de l'Amitié », sur le fleuve Oronte, autrefois sujet de contentieux. En se projetant de nouveau en Syrie, une ancienne province de l'empire ottoman, les Turcs se sont découvert un rôle de médiateur, organisant en 2007 des négociations indirectes entre la Syrie et Israël dans un hôtel d'Istanbul. Un échec. « Finalement, la Turquie n'était peut-être pas aussi influente qu'elle le pensait », estime Soli Ozel, professeur de relations internationales.

La crainte d'une division confessionnelle de la Syrie retarde aussi la rupture. Ankara ne veut pas d'un « second Irak » à sa porte. En cas de partition, la minorité kurde de Syrie, présente au nord-est, près de la frontière turque, pourrait être une source de préoccupation pour la Turquie, un refuge potentiel pour les rebelles du PKK. Les Alaouites, dont fait partie la famille Assad, concentrés dans la région côtière de Lattaquié, pourraient être tentés de se rapprocher des Alaouites turcs, majoritaires dans la région de Hatay, de l'autre côté de la frontière. L'ancien sandjak ottoman d'Alexandrette faisait partie de la Syrie sous mandat français, avant d'être cédé à la Turquie en 1938. Il reste une source de conflit potentiel avec Damas. ■

Guillaume Perrier

## SYRIE L'opposition s'inspire de l'exemple libyen

L'opposition libyenne fait des émules. Plusieurs dizaines d'opposants syriens, dissidents de l'intérieur ou exilés, se sont rassemblés les 20 et 21 août à Istanbul pour créer un Conseil national syrien d'environ 150 délégués chargés de plancher sur la transition démocratique et de former rapidement un exécutif en

cas de chute du régime de Bachar el-Assad.

Trouver un dénominateur commun à tous ces opposants n'est pas évident. Laïques et islamistes, la seule opposition vraiment structurée en Syrie, sont aux antipodes. Tous ont pourtant la volonté de parvenir à construire un avenir consensuel.

Alors que ces opposants se retrouvaient à Istanbul, Bachar el-Assad, dans une interview à la télévision syrienne, a promis d'organiser des législatives en février 2012. Avant ce scrutin, les Syriens



22 août, Homs. La répression continue.

devraient avoir le droit de créer des partis. Encore faudrait-il que les opposants puissent s'exprimer. Car, malgré les promesses présidentielles, la répression se poursuit ■ GUILLAUME PERRIER (À ISTANBUL)

# Baghdad wants Turkey to stop N Iraq air raids



*The president of the autonomous Kurdish region Massoud Barzani.*

**SULAIMANIYAH/ BAGDAD/TEHRAN**

Iraq summoned Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad to demand an immediate halt to air strikes along its northern border, Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari says on Thursday while the president of the regional Kurdish administration says the Kurdish militants' presence in the border areas provides an excuse for Turkey to carry out air strikes. The president of the autonomous Kurdish region Massoud Barzani.

The president of the autonomous Kurdish region said Wednesday that Kurdish militants provide an excuse for Iran and Turkey to bomb his homeland, whereas Baghdad-based government urged Turkey to stop the bombardment.

Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq, called for an end to the violence on all sides, and in a statement posted Wednesday implicitly accused the Kurdish militants of provoking the two countries.

Since 1984, Turkey has been fighting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, who use northern Iraq as a base for hit-and-run attacks on Turkish targets. Along the Iranian border, Kurdish militants from the Iranian Party for Free Life in Kurdistan, or PJAK, an offshoot of the PKK, have battled Iran for years. Both groups are seeking autonomy in their countries.

The PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

"The presence of armed PJAK and PKK members in the mountainous border areas provides an excuse for our two neighboring countries to commit these attacks," Barzani said in the statement.

He said that if the groups continue to

use violence and Iraqi territory as bases from which to attack Iran and Turkey it "will lead to the spread of violence to the Kurdistan Region and this will not in any way help the legitimate Kurdish question."

In Ankara, Iraq's ambassador to Turkey, Abdul Amir Kamil Abi Tabikh, suggested that his country would not object to any ground incursion by Turkish troops to chase the Kurdish militants "as long as the operation is in line with the bilateral treaties." "Turkey's safety means Iraq's safety," Turkey's Anatolia news agency quoted the ambassador as saying.

The Iraqi Kurdish region's vice president said Thursday on Iraq opposed any action against Iran's "security," as Tehran said it would continue its operation against Kurdish militants near the border area.

"Considering the historic support and strategic relations with the Islamic republic, Iraq will oppose any action that is against Iran's security," Nechirvan Barzani said in a meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"We believe that the security of Iran is as important as that of Iraq and problems must be solved through cooperation," Barzani, son of president of the autonomous Kurdish region Massoud Barzani, was quoted as saying by the Iranian president's website.

Iran intends to continue the operation "to secure our borders, for the terrorists not to infiltrate and harm our people," an operations commander, Colonel Hamid Ahmadi, told foreign media in Tehran on August 17.

In July, Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards launched a major offensive against militants from PJAK targeting their bases along the Iran-Iraq border. The Guards said they destroyed PJAK compounds inside Iraqi territory, while claiming to have kil-

led more than 50 militants and losing eight men in the fighting.

Meanwhile, Iraq summoned Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad to demand an immediate halt to air strikes along its northern border, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said on Thursday.

Turkey last week launched a series of attacks on PKK in northern Iraq. Iraqi authorities said a Turkish air strike killed seven Iraqi civilians on Sunday. "Yesterday the Turkish ambassador was summoned here to the foreign ministry. He was handed a ... protest, diplomatic note about the continued bombing," Zebari said in an interview. "We demanded an immediate stop to these air strikes." The Turkish military said on Tuesday it had killed up to 100 PKK members in six days of air strikes in response to an escalation of guerrilla attacks after the collapse of efforts to negotiate a settlement of the 27-year-old conflict.

Turkey killed as many as 100 PKK members in air and ground bombardments on 481 targets in northern Iraq, the General Staff in Ankara said in a preliminary report on its website Tuesday. More than 80 PKK members were wounded, the Turkish military said, adding that the operations will continue.

*Compiled from AP, Reuters and AFP by the Daily News staff.*

**EDITORIAL**

## Turkey's Kurdish woes

The recent Turkish strikes on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq portends more trouble in the coming weeks.

While sporadic military action in the troubled semi-autonomous Kurdish region is nothing new, the latest episode has come after a hiatus of a year. Ankara's decision to use force against rebel bases in neighbouring Iraq followed a number of guerrilla attacks by the banned Kurdistan Worker's Party, PKK rebels on Turkish security personnel. Turkish military forces' claim of killing at least 100 PKK rebels is being disputed by the Kurds who have alleged that the main targets were civilian habitats. It is feared that the growing anger over the deaths of some civilians including children might further fuel reprisals by the rebel group in the form of terror attacks elsewhere in Turkey.

What is indeed unfortunate is that the government of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan failed to reach a negotiated settlement despite an encouraging initiative launched some two years back. The "Kurdish Initiative", dismissed by many Kurds in Turkey as an eye wash, did make some progress in bridging the divide between the

Kurds and Ankara. Greater cultural freedom, the government's recognition of the problem and more liberty to use the Kurdish language was encouraging. However, the Kurds' main grievance against the Turkish government has been the political persecutions of Kurdish leaders and people. The PKK head Abdullah Ocalan continues to be imprisoned, allegedly a fate that faces many others who dare to speak for greater political autonomy. In any case, the situation at present may have led to a reversal in even the marginal progress achieved.

The fact remains that the 27-year-old Kurdish quest for autonomy has seen too much blood being spilled to hope for an early settlement. Furthermore, there is little room for improvement unless the Kurdish people's genuine grievances are met. Obtaining the trust and confidence of the Kurds in order to integrate them in the mainstream political process is important. It will not come unless reforms that are urgently needed on priority basis are introduced and ethnicity based prosecution is abandoned. The reforms that help in uplifting the lives of the Kurdish minority need not be against the country's national interest. It is therefore important to make concessions on both sides and abandon maximalist positions. Resorting to violence by either side is not an option and neither will it deliver the solution sought by Ankara or the Kurds. More importantly, Erdogan must display the same political maturity in dealing with the crisis at home that he has earned kudos for in dealing with regional crises.

## PKK's Karayılan reported to be in Kandil

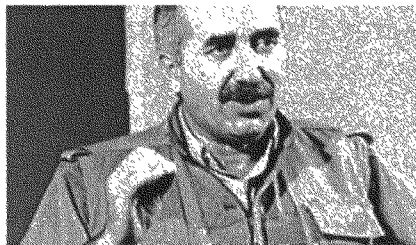
News reports earlier this month suggested that Karayılan had been captured by Iranian security forces.

**TODAY'S ZAMAN, ISTANBUL**

A news report has indicated that militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) senior leader Murat Karayılan, who was previously reported to have been captured by Iranian security forces, is neither in Iran nor at the main headquarters of the PKK in the Kandil Mountains.

Published by the Radikal daily and based on information from undisclosed sources in Ankara, the news report suggests that Karayılan is currently hiding in the Kandil Mountains and changes his location frequently so as to not be captured by Turkish security forces who are staging operations in the area against the PKK.

"Karayılan does not stay in one area for more than one or two days.



He moves around the residential areas of Kandil and does not leave a trace. He is mobile," the daily quoted from an unnamed "high-level official."

The daily also indicates that the PKK's hawkish leaders, Cemil Bayık and Syrian Fehman Hüseyin, have been receiving support from Iran and Syria as they have teamed together with other PKK leaders Mustafa Karasu, Duran Kalkan, Ali Haydar Kaytan and Sabri Ok. Those people reportedly do not agree with

the PKK's jailed leader, Abdullah Öcalan, and his supporter, Karayılan.

The report further says the Syrian member of the PKK, Hüseyin, has become increasingly more powerful in the PKK as Syria and Iran are trying to use the PKK against Turkey since Ankara is putting pressure on the Syrian regime. Hüseyin is also reported to have played a role in the violent acts of the People's Defense Forces (HPG), an arm of the PKK and the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), an affiliate of the PKK.

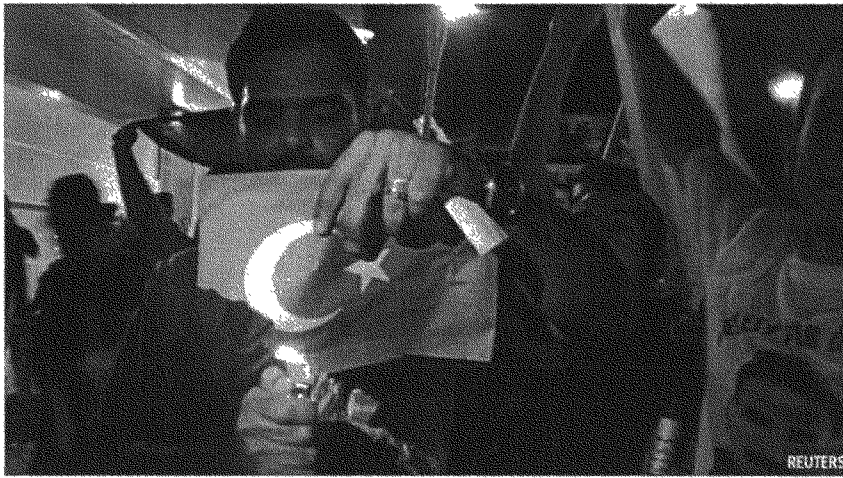
News reports earlier this month suggested that Karayılan had been captured by Iranian security forces. Both Turkish and Iranian officials have denied the reports.

(Cihan)

# Turkey and the Kurds Giving war a chance

The Turkish response to a surge in Kurdish violence has been swift and hard

DIYARBAKIR AND ULUDERE



**THE** dull thud of mortar shells echoes across the barren mountains separating Turkey from Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Columns of armoured vehicles trundle along the border as Turkish F-16 fighter jets screech over their targets: rebels of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On a nearby peak hundreds of Kurdish "peace mothers" keep vigil for their sons; some of them soldiers in the Turkish army, others PKK fighters inside Iraq. They won't come down, they say, until Turkey halts its air strikes. The army is blocking buses containing thousands of Kurds who want to join the protests, paralysing traffic in the narrow mountain roads. "They are being used by the PKK—we won't allow it," says a stony-faced corporal.

The scenes are ominously reminiscent of the worst excesses of the 1990s, when some 3,000 Kurdish villages were emptied and destroyed,

and torture and extra-judicial killings of dissidents were rife. But life has since got better for Turkey's 14m Kurds, particularly under Recep Tayyip Erdogan's conservative Justice and Development (AK) party, which has ruled the country since 2002.

Mr Erdogan is the first Turkish leader to acknowledge the state's "mistakes" in its handling of the Kurds. In a slew of groundbreaking reforms, AK has eased restrictions on the Kurds' long-banned mother tongue, poured money into their impoverished region and launched secret talks with the PKK's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. In 2009 a deal to disarm the rebels seemed within reach.

This collapsed after a string of deadly PKK attacks. Yet the government continued to talk to Mr Ocalan, who, despite having spent the last 12 years behind bars, has largely retained his grip on the PKK. But everything changed last month



when the rebels escalated the violence, killing more than 40 Turkish soldiers and policemen.

Matters came to a head when the PKK set off a landmine in the township of Cukurca near the Iraqi border, killing nine soldiers. Declaring that his patience had run out, Mr Erdogan ordered a wave of air strikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq. The army claims that at least 100 rebels have been killed since the operation started on August 17th. The PKK says it has lost only three men. A war of words has erupted over the reported killing of seven Iraqi Kurdish civilians, two of them babies, by a stray Turkish bomb. The army has dismissed footage of their dismembered bodies as "PKK propaganda". But Masoud Barzani, head of the Iraqi Kurds' semi-independent enclave, insists that the claims are real and has angrily called for an immediate end to the Turkish offensive.

America, which has backed Turkey in its battle against the PKK (it shares satellite intelligence on the rebels), is getting nervous. The fitful entente between the Turks and the Iraqi Kurds is crucial to America's quest to keep Iraq stable. But Turkey insists its attacks will continue.

What can Turkey hope to achieve? Not a lot, probably. Previous incursions into Iraq have damaged PKK bases and killed many rebels. But the fighters keep coming back, and in greater numbers. Lack of co-ordination, and mutual mis-

trust, between the army and the police do not help. Mr Erdogan has often admitted that the Kurdish problem cannot be solved by military means alone, and he has vowed to continue his reforms. Yet officials close to the prime minister say he is fed up with the Kurds' unrelenting demands.

The Kurds reply that the impasse is entirely Turkey's fault. "We are treated like pariahs," insists Ayla Akat Ata, one of 35 deputies from the pro-Kurdish BDP party elected to parliament in a general election in June. Six of her fellow deputies remain in prison, mostly on terrorism charges. The BDP is boycotting parliament until the government agrees to legal changes that would set them free. At least 3,500 other pro-Kurdish figures, including several elected mayors, have been imprisoned on AK's watch. Evidence

"proving" their links to the PKK includes their sporting chequered Palestinian-style scarves and attending rebel funerals.

The BDP's wishlist includes regional autonomy, Kurdish-language education, an amnesty for PKK fighters and an end to laws that land not only Kurds but dissidents of all stripes in jail. When Mr Erdogan begins to draft the new constitution he has promised, he will have to accommodate some of these demands. But even if he meets all of them it is not clear that the violence will cease, says a senior Turkish security official in a border province.

The PKK began as a home-grown movement fed by genuine grievances. But it has since evolved into a complex network spanning Europe and the Middle East, with connections to organised crime and rogue elements in the Turkish security forces, who have profi-

ted from the war and want it to continue. (Both the United States and the European Union brand the PKK a terrorist organisation.)

Equally unhelpfully, Syria and Iran have long used the PKK as leverage against Turkey. Turkish intelligence sources claim that the Cukurca attack was ordered by Fehman Hussein, a Syrian PKK commander. In a further twist, Murat Karayilan, the senior PKK commander in northern Iraq, who is seen as a moderate and who was involved in brokering the now-defunct deal with Turkey, has gone missing. Rumour is rife that he is in Iranian hands. Amid the speculation, one truth stands out: the Kurds and their problems will be around for a long time to come.

**REUTERS**

## Iraq's cabinet approves delayed draft oil law

BAGHDAD, August 28, 2011 - (Reuters)

**IRAQ'S CABINET** has approved a long-awaited draft oil law and sent it to parliament for final passage, a measure seen as key for foreign investors seeking more solid legal guarantees.

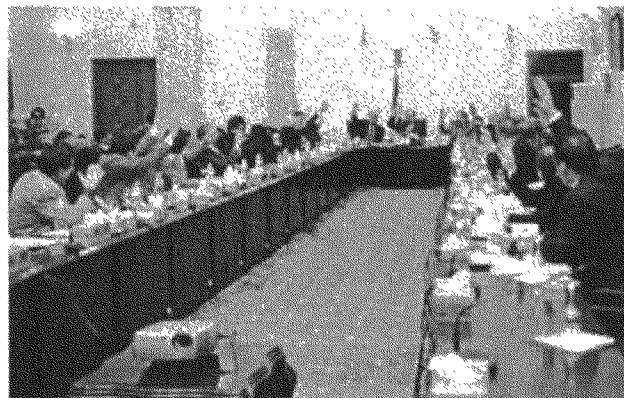
The new hydrocarbons law has been in the making for years but has faced opposition over who controls the world's fourth largest oil reserves, mainly from semi-autonomous Kurdistan in the north of Iraq.

"The draft of the oil and gas law has been approved and referred to parliament," a cabinet statement said on Sunday.

Iraq's parliament last month warned the government it would force through a new draft of the law if the cabinet continued to hold up the original legislation, regarded by investors to be a crucial mark of stability in the OPEC country.

"Any other previous drafts should be considered void and should be withdrawn. This draft is the only one presented to parliament," the statement said.

Investors have been waiting for the law's approval to



assure a more stable legal framework for exploration. The law is also seen as pivotal to reconciling Iraq's factions -- especially Iraqi Arabs and Kurds -- as the country rebuilds after years of war.

Even without the law, Iraq is already developing oil-fields, signing billions of dollars in contracts with international companies under legislation dating back to before 2003 when a U.S. invasion ousted Saddam Hussein.

The draft oil law was approved by cabinet in 2007 but faced opposition in parliament and was sent back to the government for amendments. In June, Iraq made some changes to the law, which were being reviewed by the cabinet's energy committee.



23 août 2011

# La Turquie dit avoir tué une centaine de rebelles kurdes en Irak

ANKARA (AFP) - L'armée turque a annoncé mardi que les raids aériens menés depuis plusieurs jours dans le nord de l'Irak ont tué près d'une centaine de rebelles kurdes, tandis que Massoud Barzani, président de cette région irakienne, a réclamé la fin des opérations turques.

Le gouvernement turc a ordonné ces bombardements le 17 août en riposte à une attaque des rebelles kurdes à la frontière irakienne de la Turquie qui a coûté la vie à neuf membres des forces de sécurité.

Ils marquent une nette escalade dans le conflit kurde, qui dure depuis que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a pris les armes en 1984 contre les forces d'Ankara et a fait quelque 45.000 morts.

L'aviation turque n'avait pas bombardé les repaires du PKK en Irak depuis plus d'un an.

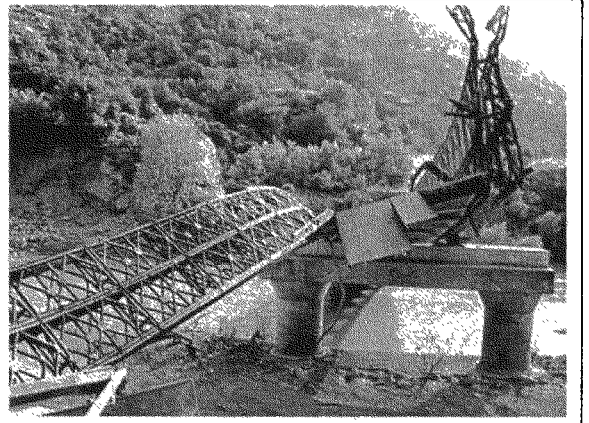
Entre 90 et 100 rebelles kurdes ont été tués et 80 autres blessés dans les bombardements, a affirmé l'état-major dans un communiqué en ligne.

Il s'agit d'un premier bilan fourni par l'armée turque sur ses bombardements de cibles appartenant au PKK dans la montagne irakienne. La Turquie estime à environ 2.000 le nombre de rebelles retranchés dans cette zone.

Le communiqué précise que 14 installations, 8 dépôts de vivres, un autre de munitions, neuf canons de DCA, 18 cavernes et 79 refuges ont été frappés lors des opérations qui ont visé un total de 132 cibles "soigneusement déterminés à l'avance grâce à une analyse méticuleuse pour épargner les zones de peuplement civil".

L'armée ajoute que si nécessaire, les raids aériens se poursuivront, en Turquie

Un pont détruit dans la province de Dahuk, dans le nord de l'Irak, samedi après un raid de l'aviation turque. L'armée turque déclare avoir tué une centaine de séparatistes kurdes dans le nord de l'Irak lors d'une série d'opérations la semaine dernière.



et à l'extérieur des frontières.

Les rebelles ont nié avoir subi autant de pertes.

"Seulement trois combattants du PKK ont été tués dans la province de Dohouk. Pour l'instant aujourd'hui il n'y a pas eu de raids. Tout est calme", a assuré à l'AFP Ahmet Deniz, un porte-parole du PKK en Irak.

Le président de la région autonome kurde d'Irak s'est de son côté inquiété dans un communiqué publié lundi des pertes civiles et a dénoncé les opérations turques.

"Je demande à la Turquie d'arrêter ces opérations (...) aucune action blessant les gens et détruisant leur propriété ne peut être justifiée", a souligné M. Barzani.

Selon les autorités kurdes, sept civils, dont des enfants, ont été tués alors qu'ils tentaient de fuir les raids

Depuis début juillet, les attaques du PKK en Turquie ont coûté la vie à une quarantaine de soldats et de policiers, poussant le gouvernement d'Ankara à adopter une ligne plus dure dans ce conflit malgré une initiative pro-kurde

lancée en 2009 par le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Tôt mardi, un groupe de rebelles a attaqué avec des fusils mitrailleurs un poste de gendarmerie à Ergani (sud-est de la Turquie), tuant un soldat et blessant trois autres, a-t-on indiqué de source de sécurité locale.

La Turquie a adopté jeudi dernier une "nouvelle stratégie" qui prévoit notamment de combattre les rebelles avec des troupes militaires entièrement professionnelles mais aussi avec des unités spéciales de la police, lourdement armées.

Outre des opérations aériennes, depuis le début des années 1990, l'armée turque a mené plusieurs incursions terrestres dans le nord de l'Irak pour pourchasser les rebelles dont la dernière, longue de huit jours, remonte à 2008.

Les Etats Unis, alliés de la Turquie au sein de l'Otan et qui considèrent le PKK comme un mouvement terroriste, fournissent généralement des renseignements aux Turcs sur le PKK en Irak.

LE FIGARO 28 août 2011

## Turquie: 3 soldats et 1 milicien tués

Trois militaires et un milicien turcs ont été tués dans deux attaques dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont indiqué aujourd'hui des sources au sein des forces de sécurité et l'agence de presse Anatolie qui imputent les

attaques aux rebelles kurdes.

Trois soldats ont péri à l'aube dans l'explosion d'une mine télécommandée au passage de leur véhicule à Semdinli, près de la frontière avec l'Iran et l'Irak. Trois autres soldats ont été blessés, selon les forces de sécurité,

qui ont accusé le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Par ailleurs, un milicien a été tué et trois autres blessés dans la nuit de hier à aujourd'hui lors de l'attaque d'un poste de police à Midyat, près de la frontière syrienne.

Selon l'agence Anatolie, des rebelles du PKK ont ouvert le feu sur les miliciens - des villageois armés assu-

rant la sécurité avec l'armée turque contre les rebelles.

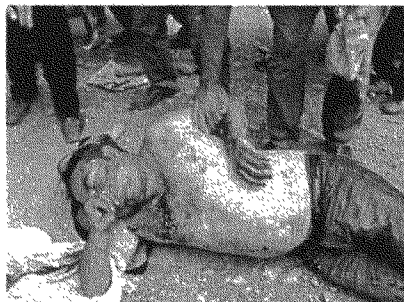
Deux rebelles sont morts dans l'explosion d'une mine qu'ils tentaient de poser à Yuksekova. Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, s'est engagé dans la lutte armée en 1984. On estime que ce conflit a fait 45.000 morts depuis cette date.(AFP)

## Turquie : un élu régional kurde tué au cours d'une manifestation

**DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), (AFP)** — Un responsable politique kurde a été tué dimanche dans le sud-est de la Turquie au cours de la dispersion d'une manifestation de protestation contre les raids aériens de l'armée turque contre les bases rebelles kurdes en Irak, ont annoncé des sources des services de sécurité et des témoins.

Yildirim Ayhan, membre de l'assemblée de la province de Van (sud-est) est mort lorsqu'une cartouche de gaz lacrymogène au poivre l'a atteint à la poitrine, au moment où la police militaire tentait de disperser une foule de manifestants dans la ville de Cukurca, selon ces sources.

"Les officiers ont soudain donné l'ordre aux soldats qui nous faisaient face d'intervenir. Ils ont commencé à tirer des gaz lacrymo-



gènes. L'une des cartouches a atteint Ayhan et nous l'avons vu en train de s'effondrer", a déclaré un témoin à l'AFP.

"Le sang coulait de sa poitrine", a raconté un autre témoin.

Plusieurs milliers de personnes venues de seize provinces avaient entamé samedi une marche en direction de la frontière turco-irakienne afin de protester contre les bombardements de l'armée turque visant les bases des rebelles du

Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak.

Parmi les manifestants figuraient des élus du parti pro-kurde Parti de la Paix et de la Démocratie (BDP) dont Yildirim Ayhan était membre.

Des photographies de Yildirim Ayhan gisant au sol, avec une plaie sanglante à la poitrine, ont été publiées dimanche par les médias favorables à la cause kurde.

L'armée turque a déclenché le 17 août une campagne visant des positions du PKK au Kurdistan irakien, à la suite de la mort de neuf membres des forces de sécurité dans l'attaque d'une unité militaire par les rebelles à Cukurca.

## L'armée turque dit avoir tué entre 145 et 160 rebelles kurdes

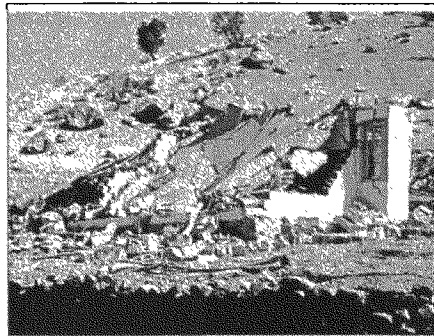
Daren Butler - Reuters

L'armée turque a annoncé lundi avoir tué entre 145 et 160 séparatistes kurdes lors de bombardements aériens et d'artillerie menés à partir de la mi-août dans le nord de l'Irak.

L'offensive militaire contre des bases présumées du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, sans précédent depuis plus d'un an, a fait suite à des attaques du PKK qui ont fait plus de 40 morts dans les rangs des forces de sécurité turques au cours du mois de juillet.

Le bilan n'a pu être confirmé. Le PKK dit de son côté avoir perdu trois combattants dans les raids.

Dans un communiqué, l'état-major de l'armée turque dit également avoir blessé plus de 100 séparatistes lors de



*Décombres d'un bâtiment détruit après un bombardement de l'armée turque dans la province de Dahuk, dans le nord de l'Irak. L'armée turque indique avoir tué entre 145 et 160 séparatistes kurdes lors de bombardements aériens et d'artillerie menés à partir de la mi-août dans le nord de l'Irak. (Reuters)*

ces opérations qui ont attisé les tensions entre la Turquie et les autorités du Kurdistan irakien, semi-autonome.

Vendredi, les députés kurdes d'Irak ont exigé des excuses de la part d'Ankara, dénonçant notamment la mort de sept civils dans un raid aérien mené la semaine dernière et réclamant la fermeture des bases mili-

taires turques établies sur le sol irakien.

Selon l'Irak, l'armée turque compte toujours 1.300 militaires sur le territoire irakien, répartis dans des petits postes d'observation créés dans les années 1990 avec l'accord de l'ancien régime.

# Turkey, Iran attacks test Iraqi Kurdistan

- *Turkey, Iran attack Kurdish rebels in Iraq*
- *Baghdad sees neighbours vie for influence*
- *Civilian deaths fuelling Arbil-Ankara tensions*

**BAMARNE, Iraq**

**By Patrick Markey - (Reuters)**

U.S. troops may be leaving Iraq, but in northern Iraqi Kurdistan another NATO power is keeping its outposts and flexing its muscle, dispatching warplanes over the Iraqi border to bomb separatist rebels.

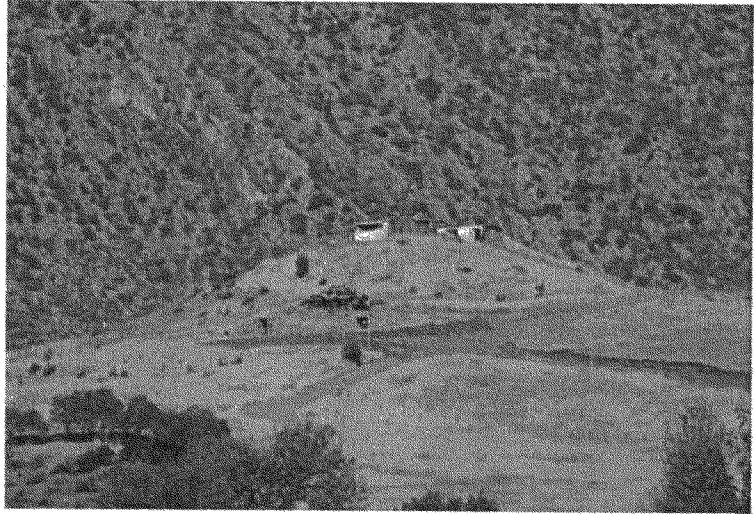
Dotted along the parched Kurdish mountains inside Iraq, Turkey has 1,300 soldiers in a handful of observation posts set up in the 1990s with Iraqi consent as Kurdish PKK rebels launched attacks in their fight for self-rule.

Turkey has attacked PKK bases in Iraq for years. But its air strikes and recent Iranian shelling across the border are fanning Iraqi concerns over its neighbours vying for influence in the oil-endowed region once U.S. troops leave in 2011.

Ties between Arbil, the Kurdistan capital, and Ankara have frayed since a Turkish air strike killed a family of seven on last week, according to Iraqi officials, prompting Baghdad to summon the Turkish envoy and Kurdish lawmakers to demand that Turkey should close its bases.

"We have seen escalations of heavy bombardments across the border, air attacks, for targets which don't merit that, so therefore one can conclude that it may have something to do with post-2011," Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told Reuters.

Managing their neighbours is a delicate task for Iraqi Kurdish leaders who must weigh incursions by Ankara and Tehran against Turkish investment that has helped make semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan the most stable part of a still violent country.



A tank is seen outside a Turkish military observation point in the mountains of the northern Iraqi region of Dohuk August 24, 2011. U.S. troops may be leaving Iraq, but in northern Iraqi Kurdistan another NATO power is keeping its outposts and flexing its muscle dispatching warplanes over the border to bomb separatist rebels for the first time in over a year. REUTERS/Thaier al-Sudani

Iraq says Turkey has 1,300 soldiers in towns like Bamarne, where blast-wall blocks surrounded an outpost and tanks, trucks and armored vehicles were parked inside during a recent visit. Guards kept watch on the valley from perimeter towers.

Little stirred on the hillside Turkish observation post near Sheladeze at the foot of Iraqi Kurdish mountains. Outside a tank sat idly on a spot overlooking the road into town, where Kurdish men haggled over fruit prices at a market square.

"No-one asked us whether those troops can be here. It's like you staying in my house as a guest but you really hate me and attack me," said Abdullah Ganju, a local government worker sitting on the side of the market.

## SEMI-AUTONOMOUS, SAFE HAVEN

Muslim Turkey, a long-time member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a rising diplomatic and political power in the Middle East where its businesses are aggressively seeking opportunities. But its raids on Iraq are unlikely to reassure Arab nations who may be uncomfortable with Turkey's assertive policy, said Gareth Jenkins, an Istanbul-based analyst.

Turkey has made no official statement

on the civilian deaths but Turkish diplomatic sources say the claims are rebel propaganda. Ankara says the strikes on PKK fighters sheltering in Iraq have killed around 100 PKK rebels. The PKK dismissed those claims, saying only a few fighters were killed.

Ankara launched air strikes in retaliation for assaults in Turkey by the PKK, who have killed 40 Turkish troops over the past month in their 27-year-old fight for Kurd self-rule.

Yet Iraqi Kurdistan has already become a safe haven since it was established after the first Gulf war. Turkish investors pump cash into hotels and shopping malls in Arbil while Spanish and British oil firms sign deals to work in a region that may have up to 45 billion barrels in crude reserves.

"Our region has been developed and has seen progress because our relationship with Turkey has developed," Arbil Governor Nawzad Hadi told Reuters. "We have to look at reality."

Eight years after the U.S. invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, Iraq still battles a stubborn al Qaeda-tied Sunni insurgency and Shi'ite militias. Violence has dropped off sharply but bombings and assassinations hit almost daily.

American and Iraqi officials are in talks



about whether some U.S. troops will stay in Iraq as trainers, but the withdrawal is going as scheduled for now when a security pact ends in 2011.

### BIGGER PRIZE

Iraqi Kurdistan has long played regional real politik as its ruling parties, the PUK and KDP, have been aligned at times with Tehran and Ankara. The PKK were once openly backed by Syria.

Arbil's ties with the central Iraqi government are also often strained by disputes between Kurds and Iraqi Arabs over territory and oil rights.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in March became the first Turkish leader to visit the Kurdish region whose economic

boom has been funded by its share of Iraq's oil wealth.

"The Iraqi Kurds have good cooperation with the Turks. There is a bigger prize here than the PKK," said one Western diplomat. "It's a nuanced balance and they are playing it well."

Border incidents are now also easier to resolve with a joint U.S., Iraqi and Turkish coordination office in Arbil.

But with Syria's border closed because of turmoil against President Bashar al-Assad, Baghdad worries foreign fighters may instead use Kurdistan's porous border and PKK areas for shelter and to enter Iraq, an Iraqi security source said.

Iraqi Kurdish officials acknowledge they

are unable to control the PKK in the remote Qandil mountains and say neighbours must resolve conflicts with their own Kurdish minorities through negotiations.

For Iraqi Kurds living on the border, where hundreds of farmers fled to camps to evade Iranian shells and now Turkish air raids, talks not bombs will end Ankara's war with the PKK.

"Turkey's policy looks contradictory," said Abu Baker Wasi, a local Kurdish official in Rania near where the seven civilians were killed. "They make these large investments and then they attack our villages."

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. AUGUST 29, 2011

## Turkey says its air strikes in northern Iraq have killed up to 160 Kurdish rebels

Associated Press

**A**NKARA, Turkey --Turkey's military said Monday that its airstrikes and artillery fire on suspected Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq have killed an estimated 145 to 160 guerrillas and wounded as many as 100.

The military also said those casualty figures for this month's offensive didn't include its latest airstrikes on rebel targets Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, said Monday that only three rebels and seven civilians, including four children, have been killed since the Turkish attacks began Aug. 17, but it vowed to respond with its own attacks.

The PKK, which is considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the European Union, is fighting for autonomy in Turkey's mostly Kurdish southeast region, and it routinely launches attacks from its bases in northern Iraq.

The casualty estimates by Turkish forces and the PKK often



differ dramatically during such offensives in northern Iraq, and relief agencies, rights groups and the Iraqi government are rarely able to provide their own estimates.

The military said its air force attacks on Thursday, Friday and Saturday included 21 sorties that hit rebel targets in the Zap and Gara regions of northern Iraq along the rugged border of the two countries. Artillery units inside Turkey also shelled rebel targets in Iraq.

The military said it has tried to avoid civilian casualties in its attacks.

Meanwhile, the rebels appeared to keep up their own sporadic attacks.

A small bomb exploded on a

beach in a Mediterranean resort of Kemer in Turkey's Antalya province on Sunday, slightly injuring about 10 people, including at least four Swedes. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey have carried out deadly attacks at such tourist resorts.

A funeral also was held Monday in the Turkish town of Cukurca near the Iraqi border for a Kurdish activist who died Sunday when hundreds of Kurdish activists clashed with police while trying to cross into Iraq to serve as "human shields" against the Turkish offensive. Some of the mourners at the funeral threw stones at police.

Tens of thousands of people have died since the PKK rebels began their campaign in Turkey in 1984.



## Turkey, Syria Approaching Diplomatic Rift

**Dorian Jones**

Turkey's prime minister and its president have announced they have lost confidence in the Syrian leadership, while the foreign minister warned that Ankara will side with the Syrian protesters against Damascus if forced to choose. The statements are seen as a possible final diplomatic breaking point between the former close allies.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul, in an interview over the weekend, described the government gestures in Syria as too little, too late as the Syrian crackdown against opposition continues. That message was followed up by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a TV address to the nation Sunday in which he strongly attacked Damascus.

He said a government cannot survive by force or brutality or by shooting and killing unarmed people taking to the streets. He said the only solution is to silence arms immediately and listen to the demands of the people. Mr. Erdogan said the world saw the end of those who did not choose this way in Tunisia and in Egypt, and now observes with sorrow what is being lived in Libya.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in a TV interview last week said Turkey would always side with the people against the Syrian government, if it came down to a choice. The sustained verbal attack comes weeks after an ultimatum by Mr. Davutoglu calling for an immediate cessation of violence by the Syrian security forces.

Despite the continuation of the crackdown, however, Ankara appeared to have done little, drawing criticism from both the opposition and the media. But a Turkish diplomatic source says diplomacy works to a different calendar than 24-hour journalism, and repercussions are occurring. He said earlier this month, the Turkish foreign minister for the first

time met with Syrian opposition leaders.

Diplomatic Columnist Semih Idiz said Ankara may have been "too reluctant to meet with the opposition."

"But there was no reluctance in allowing the opposition to meet in Turkey. So this is the next step. We are now at the stage [where] there is nothing left to be said to Syria. So at this point, given that nothing Turkey has recommended has been followed through by Syria and the violence is continuing," said Idiz. "So under these circumstances, Turkey sees little option but courting the opposition a little."

Syrian opposition leaders had criticized Ankara for failing to reach out to them. But Istanbul has become a regular venue for their meetings.

Last week, some opposition groups announced the formation of a Syrian transitional council, along the lines of what the rebels have done in Libya. International relations expert Soli Ozel says Turkey's ruling AK party with its Islamic roots will find it easy to develop ties with the Syrian opposition.

"Ideologically they have far more sympathy for the [Muslim] brotherhood, which is probably the backbone of the opposition," said Ozel.

But Ankara still resists calls from its Western allies to support Syrian sanctions, claiming it hurts the people more than the government. It also has stopped short of calling for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to stand down, or to follow the stance of Saudi Arabia and Tunisia in recalling their ambassadors earlier this month.

Political scientist Nuray Mert says even with the hardening of Ankara's stance towards its neighbor, it still has to tread carefully.

"Our relations [are] very complicated in many ways, including the Kurdish



A Syrian demonstrator in Turkey makes the victory sign as she protests against the government of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad after Friday prayers in Istanbul, August 12, 2011  
REUTERS

dimension. But it's also related [to] the problem concerning Iran. If there is going to be a regime change in Syria, the whole power balance will change," said Mert. "Because if Iran loses Syria, they will lose an important base of power in the Middle East, in the region. So it will be a major defeat for Iran and within this framework if Turkey sides with the dissidents and supports some sort of regime change. Iran will take it directly against itself."

Earlier this month, Mr. Assad reached out to his Kurdish minority, offering them nationality. Observers say with Syrian Kurds making up a large part of the Kurdish rebel group, the PKK, which is fighting the Turkish state, Ankara is increasingly concerned Damascus could be tempted to play the Kurdish card against it, as it did in the 1990s.

Turkey's ruling AK party also has developed unprecedented political and economic ties with Tehran. According to the media, last week, Mr. Erdogan spoke for nearly an hour on the phone in Istanbul with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about Syria. As the violence continues in Syria, observers warn Turkey's regional balancing act can only become more difficult.

# The Kurdish Problem

Morton Abramowitz

Whatever his impressive domestic achievements, Turkish prime minister Erdogan has done a lot of fancy footwork this year trying to repair a vigorous and much-advertised Middle East involvement. Once the avowed comrade of Qaddafi, Bashir, Assad and Ahmedinejad, he has now emerged as a rousing democrat, defender of the Arab revolts. He seems to have been successful in burying the past—at least in Turkey where public criticism is increasingly muted and he reigns supreme. In Syria, he has joined the West by distancing Turkey from Assad but not yet disowning him, incurring the wrath of both Syria and its staunchest ally, Iran, which has sent warnings to Ankara. In Libya, which once bestowed upon him the Qaddafi human-rights award [3], he is trying desperately to restore the huge Turkish economic stake by fervently and helpfully embracing the rebels. But for all his foreign-policy activism, he can no longer escape his biggest problem, an internal one: the growing difficulties with his own twelve million or so Kurds.

In the period between 2005–2009, Erdogan became the first Turkish leader to do much for the Kurds, bringing in significant investment and notably accepting the ‘Kurdish reality.’ He implemented some modest reforms on expressions of Kurdish identity—whether he believed in them or did so to guarantee the vote in southeast Turkey and a route to a new presidency is not clear. But the basic issue has advanced lit-

tle, and today intensified military activity on the part of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) has once again shattered a deceptive Turkish calm. Some forty Turkish soldiers have been killed and many wounded in the southeast over the past two months. In response, Erdogan has shifted gear and publicly declared his intent to finally destroy the PKK and, along the way, to undermine the major domestic Kurdish political party.

Erdogan has resorted to the usual military tactics—bombing the PKK in Northern Iraq and intensifying military activities in the southeast. He also seems intent on turning the ground war in Turkey over to special police units and the gendarmerie rather than to the army, which he distrusts and whose tactics he has publicly belittled. There are fears he might mount another large ground operation in Northern Iraq, but that is unlikely and certainly unwelcome to the Turkish military, which has been under great pressure from ongoing investigations and detentions. Politically, at least for the moment, he appears to have fallen back on traditional Turkish nationalism instead of the Islamic communalism he used to espouse to bind in the southeast. Peace with the PKK seems a long way off.

The next page-turner will be the promised new Turkish constitution sometime this autumn and what reforms he will secure in that document for the Kurds. Top AKP leadership rhetoric on the new constitution has been democratic and conciliatory, but with popular nationalist feeling running high and Kurds deeply skeptical, not much can be expected. Many fear



violence will extend to Turkey’s major cities and to urbanized Kurdish youth. That has always been a concern that has not yet materialized, although small-scale clashes like car burnings, attacks on coffee shops and flash mobs are on the rise. With the schism with Iran the possibility of urban violence may have increased.

This time, however, Turkey’s internal Kurdish issue may turn international. Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Iran—Turkey’s next-door neighbors, are all agitating.

Turkish elites have always been haunted by the possible establishment of an independent or even autonomous Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq, which took place after the first defeat of Iraq and gained even greater credence with its enormous economic success after the second Iraq war. One might dispute this, but I believe the present, virtually independent and flourishing Kurdish entity has had a major psychological impact on the outlook of the Kurds next door in Turkey as they consider their own position. It has helped make it unclear what will now politically satisfy Turkey’s Kurds. Northern Iraq has been also the military home of the PKK, which is allowed to operate, with misgivings, by the Kurdish regional government and receives help from friendly Iraqi Kurds. Erdogan impressively changed Turkey’s long-standing isolation policy; rather he embra-

ced Iraq’s Kurdish government and invested heavily in the region. The Iraqi Kurds are increasingly troubled by what is happening in Turkey and seemingly caught in the middle. Turkey has pushed the United States hard to help defeat the PKK in Iraq. They have gotten significant American intelligence support but no willingness to attack PKK forces or try to make the Iraqi Kurds do so.

Syrian-Turkish relations have long been troubled. Syria once housed PKK leader and Kurdish idol Abdullah Ocalan until the Turkish government scared the Syrians into expelling him; the Americans found him and turned him over to Ankara. Erdogan embraced Assad, thinking he had the influence to change the Syrian president and ultimately change Syrian-Israeli relations. He either did not or could not because of his own increasing frictions with Israel after the 2008-09 attack on Gaza, and now relations with Syria are in shambles. He remains fearful of what might follow Assad’s demise and worried about Syria cooperating with Iran to undermine Turkey on the Kurdish issue. Some two million Kurds live in Syria, so far very meekly, although there are some indications of ferment. Attacks on them and a much greater flow of Kurdish refugees into Turkey could traumatize even today’s much-stronger Ankara. Interestingly, President Obama has apparently relied heavily on Erdogan’s views on

Syria in managing American policy toward Damascus.

The Turkish-Iranian honeymoon has come to an end over Assad. Iran helps to keep Assad going. While Iran has been tough on its own Kurds (and although right now an Iranian counterpart of the PKK operating from Northern Iraq is doing battle with Iran), relations with Turkey have become increasingly testy. An unspoken Turkish-Iranian military coordination against the PKK

appears to continue for now, and while one cannot preclude its deepening, there has been increasing concern that Iran is sending signals to Turkey that it could reverse that policy if it so chose. Tehran could also use its assets in Ankara to help generate PKK violence in the cities. Turkey is not without means to counter Iran. This is an important, evolving, highly volatile tale with repercussions for other Turkish-Iranian issues.

So the Kurdish issue now has a bigger canvas. Turkey must see it in a broad, long-term perspective. Right now Turkey's domestic prospects for resolving the Kurdish issue look bad, and one cannot be optimistic that we will not see a lot more violence. Ocalan still remains the leader of most of Turkey's Kurds, although some are skeptical his control of the PKK is what it used to be. Many Kurds are not happy with the growing violence. Whether Erdogan can pro-

duce a domestic political solution that satisfies both nationalists and Kurds is increasingly in doubt, particularly if PKK violence continues. The United States and the European Union might help on the regional aspects, but Turks have long had deep suspicions about Western interest in Kurds. Erdogan alone is in the hot seat.

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30 august 2011

Report News >> The Arab Spring  
Comment

## Syrian Kurds Seek Autonomy

Hopes that uprising will lead to a better future for  
Kurdish minority.

By Kawa Youssef - The Arab Spring  
Arab Spring Issue 28, 30 Aug 2011

Since the Syrian uprisings started, the country's Kurds have acted in partnership with the Arabs.

All the opposition movements in Syria say the Kurds are their brothers. That may be true, but unfortunately brother-and-sister relationships don't often work out in politics. It's much better to be partners.

Kurds and Arabs have very little in common. We have different languages and practise our faith in different ways. Most of the Kurds in Syria are Sunni Muslims, but there are also Christians and Yezidis among them. There used to be Jewish Kurds, but they emigrated to Israel. We have long been discriminated against by the Syrian regime.

In 2004, clashes between supporters of the local Kurdish team in the northeast town of Qamishli and fans of the Arab team they were playing led to fighting in which many people were killed, and others were arrested and mistreated. No one came to our aid then.

Kurds are now staging peaceful demonstrations against the regime in the areas where they are in the majority. A few have been killed, although the numbers don't compare to those elsewhere. Kurdish-dominated demonstrations have not been attacked, and Kurdish protestors in Damascus and Aleppo have largely escaped serious injury.

It seems the regime does not want to kill us, and I believe that is because the Allawite regime believes the Kurds are the only section of society that might stick by it.

It is doing its best to win the Kurds over. In April, for example,

the government finally granted citizenship to around 3,000 Kurds. But since the number of disenfranchised Kurds is close to 300,000, the gesture was almost worthless.

In any case, Kurds are now less concerned about gaining citizenship than with pressing for autonomy. I would say 99 per cent of them want an independent Kurdish region. We look at Iraqi Kurdistan and ask why we can't have the same.

We are aware that this is unattainable at the moment, so for now our ambition is a Kurdish state within a federal Syria. Once we acquire the knowledge we need to run our own country, maybe one day we will be able to go beyond that.

Some activists say that if the whole of Syria achieves democracy, then the rights of Christians, Kurds and other minorities will be secured. But not everyone believes such promises. As the old saying goes, "The only friends the Kurds have are the mountains."

We don't see ourselves as Syrian and we don't feel Syrian in our hearts, because we have always been treated as outsiders.

I fear conflict between Kurds and Arabs if and when President Bashar al-Assad goes. The Kurds will not sit back quietly, and I don't believe the Arabs will accept a federal solution for Syria, so there could even be civil war.

Even if Assad is toppled or resigns, the state system will remain in place. It is deeply rooted. For instance, security is so tight that you even need a permit to arrange a small wedding party.

Kurds are taking part in the Syrian revolution because our ultimate aim is to be rid of the current regime and create a federal state. That does not mean we want to take away part of Syria, and the international community needs to understand this. We are not guests in Syria - we live in a part of our historical homeland.

My views are shared by lots of Kurds within Syria. Those in the diaspora are less outspoken, but they share the same aim. We are the best of allies for the Arabs, but we have a different agenda.

Originally from Syria and now living in London,  
Kawa Youssef is a 26-year-old student of oil engineering  
and a Kurdish activist.



# Most Syrian Kurdish Parties Boycott Opposition Gathering

By BASSAM MUSTAFA

RUDAW

Kurdish parties largely boycotted a conference to unite Syria's opposition in Istanbul last week, reflecting the deepening schism between the influential Muslim Brotherhood and Kurdish groups.

The gathering, which aimed to create a diverse council to govern Syria in an interim period if President Bashar al-Assad's regime falls, was marred by the absence of several key opposition groups including Syria-based activists and Kurdish leaders.

**"If Turkey doesn't give rights to its 25 million Kurds, how can it defend the rights of the Syrian people and the Kurds there?"**

It was the latest in a series of meetings in Istanbul among mostly exiled Syrian opposition figures. While Kurds have been awarded a key demand – to be recognized as a distinct ethnic group in an interim constitution if the regime falls – the gatherings have also raised fears that Arab nationalists and Islamists are dominating the opposition.

Barzan Bahram, a Syrian Kurdish writer, accused the Muslim Brotherhood of controlling plans for Syria's future and the opposition.

"The Muslim Brotherhood is trying to exploit the change that is about to take place in Syria for their own gain," Bahram told Rudaw. "And the Turkish government is throwing its full support behind the Islamic groups to bring them to the forefront."

He said the Istanbul conference, which Reuters reported was postponed so the groups could reach out to the Syria-based opposition, will not succeed.



Members of Syrian opposition meeting in Istanbul. Photo ArabNews.

Bahram echoed claims by the Kurds and several other Syrian opposition groups that the Muslim Brotherhood is dominating preparations and the vision for Syria's future.

"Any Syrian opposition conference will not succeed without an active participation of the Kurds," Bahram said. "Also the opposition must take into consideration the location of the conferences."

Shelal Gado, a leader in the Leftist Kurdish Party of Syria, told Rudaw that some Kurds may have attended the conference but did not represent an umbrella group of 11 Syrian Kurdish parties.

He said Syria's Kurds will remain suspicious of any conference held in Turkey, arguing that Ankara has its own agenda on Syria and it is hosting conferences to try to drive a wedge between the already-fractured Syrian opposition.

"Turkey is against the Kurds...in all parts of the world," Gado said. "If Turkey doesn't give rights to its 25 million Kurds, how can it defend the rights of the Syrian people and the Kurds there?"

Despite the wider skepticism, some Kurdish parties attended the Istanbul gathering. The Kurdish Union Party and the Kurdish Freedom Party, both of which are members of the umbrella group of 11 Syrian Kurdish parties, attended the conference.

Abdulbaqi Yusuf, a leader of the Kurdish Union Party who attended the gathering in Istanbul told Rudaw, "The meeting was to discuss our position

towards the Syrian regime."

"The meeting was also to form a national assembly—an interim Parliament for the immediate period after the regime change," he said. "Parties with unclear positions on the regime will not take part."

Yusuf dismissed claims that participating in the conference is dividing a Kurdish umbrella group of 11 parties. He also rejected the claim that Turkey has imposed its own agenda on the Syrian opposition.

"We did not feel any Turkish pressure in the meeting," Yusuf said. "But as a major power in the region, without a doubt, Turkey has its own interests. We, the Kurds, managed to present the Kurdish demands."

Yusuf said the main demand of the Kurdish 11-party assembly was the recognition of Kurds as the distinct ethnic group in Syria and addressing Kurdish concerns democratically.

"Both these demands were put in the interim constitution for after the regime change," said Yusuf.

# Turkey stops just short of asking Syrian to resign

BEIRUT

BY ANNE BARNARD

Turkey's president declared on Sunday that he had "lost confidence" in the Syrian government, an exasperated statement that sharply increased international pressure on the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, and stopped just short of calling for him to step down.

"Clearly we have reached a point where anything would be too little too late," the Turkish president, Abdullah Gul, told Anatolia, the Turkish news agency.

Mr. Gul was expressing frustration that Mr. Assad's violent crackdown on protesters calling for his ouster had continued past a 15-day window in which Turkey said it expected reform.

"Today in the world, there is no place for authoritarian administrations, one-party rule, closed regimes," Mr. Gul said.

Such regimes can be "replaced by force" if their leaders fail to make changes, he said, adding, "Everyone should know that we are with the Syrian people."

The harsh statements from Turkey, which has invested enormous diplomatic resources engaging with Syria in recent years and has struggled to mediate the current crisis, dealt a new setback to Mr. Assad.

The Syrian Interior Ministry, meanwhile, urged residents of Damascus to stay home "for their own safety" and not to respond to online calls for protests in the city's squares.

Hours earlier, the Arab League said it would send its secretary general, Nabil el-Araby, to Damascus, the Syrian capital, to seek resolution to the widespread protests and violent crackdown that have, according to the United Nations, claimed 2,200 lives.

In a statement issued after Arab foreign ministers met in Cairo, the Arab League called on Syria to "end the spilling of blood and follow the way of reason before it is too late."

The league did not detail what its proposals would be, but Al Jazeera reported that they would include presidential elections; pulling back the army from cities; releasing political prisoners and those arrested during the protests; and the formation of a national unity government that includes opposition figures.

The mounting tone of alarm from Turkey and Arab states reflects their view that Syria's stability is a linchpin of stabil-

ity in the region as a whole, and it underlines that many of the country's neighbors prefer a managed transfer of power to a chaotic overthrow of Mr. Assad.

The complex tangle of regional and international interests in Syria means that a sudden downfall of the regime would have unpredictable results, especially with many Arab governments in flux after eight months of uprisings.

Syria shares a long desert border with Iraq, where an insurgency is in its ninth year, and it remains officially at war with Israel, which occupies its Golan Heights. It is Iran's crucial ally in the region and a divisive force in neighboring Lebanon. Syria's neighbors also worry about spillover from sectarian and ethnic power struggles that could surface if Mr. Assad falls. Syria's Sunni majority is ruled by minority Alawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam; and like Turkey, Syria has a discontented Kurdish minority.

Even Iran, Syria's staunchest ally, has softened its support in recent days, calling on Syria to be more "patient" with its people and to respect their "legitimate demands," although it did not back down from its earlier stance blaming foreign interference for the unrest.

Syrian protesters in the southern city of Dara'a tried to capitalize on building international pressure, challenging Turkey to stand up for them by raising banners that referred to a call by the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on Aug. 10 for Syria to enact reforms within 15 days.

The banners, according to a witness, Anwar Farres, proclaimed, "The 15 Days Are Over, Mr. Erdogan."

In Dara'a, a funeral for a 14-year-old boy who died after being wounded in clashes on Friday turned into a large protest, while two people were killed as tanks stormed Idlib, near the eastern city of Deir el-Zour, said the Local Coordinating Committees, a protest group. Another person was killed by a sniper in the suburbs of Damascus, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in London.

Mr. Farres said that an unusually large number of troops had stormed fields and houses looking for protesters and that the city was barricaded to prevent people from moving to Damascus. The capital has remained relatively quiet, and large protests there would most likely pose a serious challenge to the regime.

Hwaida Saad contributed reporting.

# Activists say Syrian forces killed 7 who left mosques

BEIRUT

BY NADA BAKRI

Security forces killed at least seven people in southern and central Syria on Tuesday when they opened fire at worshippers emerging from mosques after early prayers marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, activists said.

The Local Coordination Committees, a group of activists who document demonstrations, said four people had been killed in Hara and two in Inkil, both cities in Dara'a Province in the south. A poor region, Dara'a became a flash point for demonstrations against the rule of President Bashar al-Assad more than five months ago, after security forces arrested and tortured teenagers for scrawling anti-government graffiti.

"They don't want us to have any peaceful day," said Um Muhammad, a mother of two from Damascus. "We are grieving this Id, and we were not going to celebrate, so they didn't have to kill more people today," she added, referring to the feast of Id al-Fitr, which marked the end of Ramadan.

The activists also said one person had been killed in Homs, a city in central Syria where other large protests have taken place against the leadership of Mr. Assad. They said heavy gunfire had been heard and phone lines cut.

The Local Coordination Committees also reported a heavy presence of armed troops and plainclothes secret police officers near mosques, which have served as gathering places for protest organizers since the unrest began in mid-March. Many mosques have been attacked and closed since.

Mr. Assad made his annual public appearance at the early prayers for Id al-Fitr, according to a report by the official news agency SANA. He visited a major mosque in Damascus named for his father, Hafez al-Assad, who ruled for three decades. Under both Assads, privileges have accrued to their minority Alawite Muslim sect, sowing bitterness among the Sunni majority in the country.

Security forces raided towns and cities in western, northern and central Syria on Monday, killing at least six people and wounding dozens, activists said.

There were reports that dozens of sol-

diers, possibly encouraged by the rout in Libya of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, had deserted positions in Rastan, a village near Homs, the third-largest city in Syria, and on the outskirts of Damascus, the largest city, to join the popular uprising against Mr. Assad and his Baath Party.

Troops, backed by tanks and armored vehicles, surrounded Rastan, which lies along the main highway leading to Turkey, and began firing machine guns, killing at least one person, according to the Local Coordination Committees.

A woman in Rastan, reached Monday by telephone, said, "Gunfire and explosion rang across the town early this morning, and we heard that tanks are surrounding the town." The woman, who asked to be identified only as Um Ammar, added: "We are so scared, too scared to leave the house. We don't know what they are preparing for us."

Rastan is known to be a reservoir of recruits for the rank and file in the army. Most officers are Alawite, while most

**"They stormed the village, burning houses and crops."**

others are Sunni. Desertions were first reported in the town three months ago after a military assault there to crush big demonstrations against Mr. Assad's rule. Dozens were killed and hundreds were arrested in that operation, human rights activists said.

Troops also entered Qara, a town near Rastan, and tens of protesters were arrested in house raids, residents said.

Residents of Al Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, said gun battles raged Sunday after dozens of soldiers deserted their positions, refusing to fire at protesters trying to march to Damascus.

The Free Officers of Syria, a group of soldiers and officers who left the army last month to protest the crackdown and who say they now represent defectors, published an online statement saying that "large" defections were reported in

Harasta, another suburb of Damascus, and that armed troops loyal to the government were chasing those defectors.

It was the first reported episode around the capital, which had yet to witness large demonstrations. Activists have been trying for months to encourage residents of Damascus and Aleppo, the second-largest Syrian city, to join the demonstrations, without much success.

Residents of Heet, a western town along a landscape of rounded hills bordering Lebanon, said armed forces tried to crush opposition there. "People were running in the fields toward Lebanon trying to escape the gunfire," said Youssef, a resident in Wadi Khaled, a town on the Lebanese side of the border. "They stormed the village, burning houses and crops, and we heard that several people were wounded."

Activists also said five people had been killed in Sarmin, in the northwestern Idlib area when security forces opened fire at residents during search operations.

**Herald** INTERNATIONAL **Tribune** AUGUST 31, 2011

# Parade reflects change in Turkey

ANKARA

## Upending a tradition, president, not general, leads military observance

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

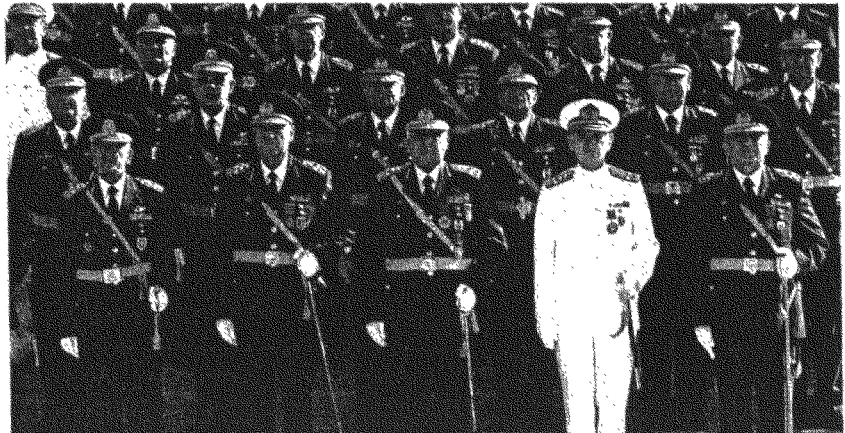
President Abdullah Gul of Turkey led the military parade Tuesday marking the country's war of independence in the latest sign that the Islam-rooted government was imposing greater civilian control over the armed forces.

Mr. Gul, supreme chief of the military under the Constitution, stood as rows of

generals approached in a line and shook his hand at the military's headquarters during the event, which commemorated the 89th anniversary of Turkey's victory over the invading forces of Britain, France, Greece and Italy. In the past, the greetings have always been received by the country's top general.

The gesture follows the resignations of the top four Turkish military commanders in July, including the military chief of staff, in protest over the arrest and prosecution in the past few years of hundreds of retired and active-duty military officers. The defendants are accused of being involved in coup plots.

Since the founding of the Turkish Republic, the military has organized three



The Turkish military chief, Gen. Necdet Ozel, center, joined other military leaders in Ankara on Tuesday to mark the 89th anniversary of the country's war of independence.

coups and has forced four governments out of power.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to draft a new constitution to replace the one written following a military coup in 1980. But some staunch secularists, including members of the military, fear that the government might be trying to raise the profile of Islam in Turkey. The military has customarily viewed its role as protecting a secular republic.

The government denies trying to undermine secularism.

The military is now focusing on Kurdish rebels who have escalated their attacks in a war for autonomy that has killed tens of thousands of people in the

southeast since 1984. The military said Monday that its airstrikes and artillery fire on suspected Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq had killed an estimated 145 to 160 guerrillas and wounded as many as 100 in eight days through Wednesday.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., said only three rebels and seven civilians, including four children, had been killed since the attacks began. It vowed to respond with its own attacks, often instigated from its bases in northern Iraq.

The casualty estimates by Turkish forces and the P.K.K. often differ dramatically during such offensives in northern Iraq, and outsiders are rarely able to provide their own estimates.



# The Evolution of Kurdish Politics in Syria

by Christian Sinclair , Sirwan Kajjo  
August 31, 2011

Over the weekend of July 16-17, representatives of the opposition to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Asad met in Istanbul to choose a "National Salvation Council." Among the diverse attendees were delegates speaking for Syria's Kurds, the largest ethnic minority in the country at more than 2 million people, some 10 percent of the population. All of the multiple Kurdish parties in Syria envision a pluralistic state in which their cultural and linguistic rights are recognized. Those at the Istanbul gathering wanted the name of the country changed from the Syrian Arab Republic to the "Republic of Syria." When the other delegates at the conference refused this request, these Kurds walked out in protest.

Some may have been surprised to learn that there are Kurdish parties in Syria at all. Pending promised revisions, or the collapse of the present regime, Article 8 of the Syrian constitution outlaws all political parties but the ruling Baath and its coalition partners. But opposition parties do exist, and Kurdish parties have been around since 1957. In the 54 years since the founding of the first one, the Kurdish political landscape has evolved and matured -- albeit on the sidelines, since much of the activity has been covert. Parties have split, and split again, with amoeba-like efficiency; they have died just as quickly. Today there is no accurate count of the parties or their members. Membership is a closely guarded secret, in fact, with only 2-3 percent of the members known outside party circles. [1] Most observers, however, believe there are 15 parties, with estimates of total membership ranging from 60,000 to 200,000. The higher numbers come from Kurdish party officials. If they do not exaggerate, then the party members all together would make up about 10 percent of the Kurdish population.

For most of their history, Kurdish political formations in Syria have run up against the precepts of Arab nationalism. The Kurds, with their different language and customs, and their ties to ethnic brethren in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, have been seen as a threat to the project of Arab unity. In 1957, just one year before implementation of the short-lived union between Syria and Egypt as

the United Arab Republic, the power of Arab nationalist ideology was near its zenith. The founding of the first Kurdish party came, in part, in reaction to this state-sponsored program, which aimed to submerge the Kurds in Arab culture. The reactions of Arab oppositionists to the Kurdish platform in Istanbul show that old ideas of Arab nationalism retain considerable purchase. A new Syria is destined to emerge, however, from the months of upheaval engulfing the country in 2011. If that Syria is to be more democratic, Kurdish aspirations will have to be integrated into the broader spectrum of the country's politics, moving the Kurds from the sidelines onto the field.

## 1927-1957

Just who are the Kurdish political parties in Syria? What are their origins and what is their future?

In the three decades prior to the 1957 establishment of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS), Kurds in Syria were viewed with some suspicion, though much less than afterward. The origins of the Kurdish political movement can be traced back to the 1920s, when, like all indigenous political activism, it faced the scrutiny of the French Mandatory authorities. The newly established Republic of Turkey to the north was also keeping an eye on Kurdish developments in Syria. The failure of the Kurdish-led Sheikh Sa'id revolt in Turkey in 1925 led to the exodus of a substantial number of Kurdish fighters to Kurdish regions in northeastern Syria, as well as to Damascus, Aleppo and even Lebanon, where they sought to escape Ankara's aggressive pursuit.

The Kurdish exiles from Turkey quickly engaged in Kurdish society in Syria, becoming a part of the social, cultural and political fabric, but their prime objective remained retaliation against the Turkish government. The first attempt at fighting back against the Turks was the founding of the pan-Kurdish Xoybun (Independence) League, a secular, nationalist group founded on October 5, 1927 at a gathering in Bhamdoun, Lebanon. The league's political branch was led by well-known Kurdish author Celadet Bedirxan, who was assisted by a group of Kurdish intellectuals, many of whom had been educated in various European countries. Syrian Kurdish national figures eagerly joined Xoybun and branches opened across the Kurdish

regions. As Xoybun spread, Kurds in Syria began to consider it an essential center of knowledge and learning in a society dominated by backwardness. Many Kurdish writers, poets and philosophers, such as Cegerxwin and Qedri Can, participated in Xoybun-sponsored activities. The organization offered a space where Syrian Kurdish intellectuals could gain experience speaking about issues of nationalism, self-determination and oppression, providing a foundation for the emergence of the Kurdish political movement. [2]

In 1946, the year Syria gained independence from France, Xoybun was dissolved. Dissolution happened as Kurdish-Soviet relations were on the rise and interest in purely "nationalist" ideas was waning. The Syrian Communist Party was gaining popularity among the Kurds. Former members of Xoybun became active Communists; many of the party's prominent leaders, in turn, were of Kurdish background. In a few short years, the Communists took control of the "Kurdish street" in Syria. But, toeing the line from Moscow, the Communists held a vastly different view of the Kurdish issue than Xoybun had propagated. The party's leadership proclaimed that the Kurdish question in Syria did not have an independent existence. Kurds were simply another group of Syrian citizens who needed to be integrated into a consolidated working class.

## The First Kurdish Political Party

The push was soon on to fashion something new. In the summer of 1957, the KDPS was created as a "left-wing and nationalist" alternative to the Communists, who were led by a Kurd, but did not promote Kurdish rights. [3] The KDPS was, many observers say, just a continuation of Xoybun as most of its founders and leaders had been prominent members of that defunct pan-Kurdish group. [4] The party's founding members chose Nur al-Din Zaza, a leading Kurdish intellectual, as the first president. But political infighting erupted almost immediately over the goals and principles of the KDPS -- and even the party's name.

An early fracas involved Jalal Talabani, the long-time political leader of Iraq's Kurds who since 2005 has served as president of Iraq. Talabani was living in Syria in the 1950s and was a key link to the Kurdish activists in Iraq. In 1960 he forced



the KDPS to change the party's name to the Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Syria. This switch from the word "Kurdish" to the far more provocative "Kurdistan" helped to foment an atmosphere of anxiety among KDPS leaders. Osman Sabri, one of the party's founding fathers, was particularly concerned by the use of "Kurdistan," as the term might imply that the party was insinuating that Kurdish areas of Syria belonged to a greater Kurdistan that straddled national boundaries. [5] This message was not one the party wanted to send.

That unwanted message was partly responsible for the wave of detentions carried out in August 1960. Scores of KDPS cadres, including leading members of the executive committee, were arrested by Syrian state security. While under interrogation, some detainees remained loyal to the party's strict rules of confidentiality; others broke and gave their captors sensitive information about the internal workings of the party. [6] In the end, the whole party structure was revealed, leading to the detention of more than 5,000 people. So began the split between political heavyweights Osman Sabri, on the left, and Nur al-Din Zaza, on the right, which led the Kurds of Syria into further turmoil and political stagnation.

Salah Badreddin, an early member of the Kurdish political movement, describes his own left wing of the party, led by Sabri in the early 1960s, as "national, democratic and peaceful" with "unchangeable principles" and a "decisive, clear stand." The right wing, led by Zaza, he described as "adventurer [sic], bargaining and opportunist," [7] in reference to those who revealed party secrets in the August 1960 crackdown. The two factions unofficially split in 1962, with the official separation coming in 1965. The right wing of the party was taken over by Hamid Hajj Darwish, as Zaza was then in prison. Its ranks consisted mostly of Kurdish "notables," such as urban merchants and professionals, as well as religious leaders and landowners. [8] The left was made up of teachers, students and former Communists.

Four years after the collapse of unity with Egypt, Arab nationalism remained the baseline of political ideas in Syria. At the 1965 KDPS conference, the delegates accordingly asked basic questions: Who are we? What do we want? What is our relationship with the state? What is our relationship to Mulla Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish revolt in Iraq? According to Badreddin's account, Sabri's leftist group would answer: We are a people that wants national rights and self-determination. We are a part of an alliance with democratic

forces within Syria. And, finally, we are part of a struggle under the leadership of Barzani. The right would answer: We are a minority asking for limited cultural rights, we are loyal to the Syrian authorities and we are not swayed by the idea of a pan-Kurdish liberation movement. [9]

In 1970, at a meeting hosted by Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan, an attempt was made to reunite the two factions. In the end, their differences were irreconcilable and a third party was created, also called the KDPS, with PL (Provisional Leadership) added to its acronym, and headed by Daham Miro. The new KDPS-PL was, in effect, a Syrian branch of Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party in Iraq, but it did not take root. Today, its rump is the smallest of three Kurdish parties in Syria that continue to boast the appellation KDPS. The larger two of these groups have added "al-Parti" to their names to advertise their genealogy in the founding KDPS of 1957.

### **Splits and Breakaways**

The right-wing branch coming from the 1965 split was led by Hamid Hajj Darwish and retained the name KDPS for some time. The right subdivided in 1975, around the time that Jalal Talabani announced from Damascus that his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) would break with Barzani in Iraq. Having tied himself to Talabani, Darwish thought a party name change would signal his loyalties, and in 1976, he changed the name of the KDPS to the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. A pro-Barzani faction broke away under the original name and exists to this day. The Progressive Party of Darwish eventually saw two offshoots, one dubbed *Wekhevi* (Equality) and the other the Kurdish National Democratic Party. This side of the Kurdish political spectrum, however, did not see anywhere near the number of fissures that the left did.

In 1975, Osman Sabri saw his left faction of the original KDPS cleave in two. The cause, again, was the developments among the Kurds of Iraq. Salah Badreddin led the anti-PUK faction, *Yekitiya Gel* (Unity of the People), [10] while the pro-PUK branch kept the KDPS name. This group still exists and is led by Nesreddin Ibrahim. In the late 1970s a splinter group emerged from *Yekitiya Gel* calling itself the Kurdish Left Party, also still extant, under the leadership of Mohammad Mousa. In 1980 Badreddin changed the name of *Yekitiya Gel* to the Kurdish Popular Union Party, which split in 1991, with one branch retaining the original name and the other favoring *Yekiti*. In 1994 a faction calling itself the Kurdish Democratic United Party left *Yekiti*. And,

finally, in 2005 some members of the Left Party and the Popular Union Party joined together to form the Kurdish Freedom Party (Azadi). Azadi is led by Kheir al-Din Murad. Today there are five parties with roots in Badreddin's *Yekitiya Gel*.

Most of the splits on left and right were the result of personal differences rather than ideological disagreements. Broadly, as well, the left and right diverge over tactics rather than ideology, with the left-wing groups preferring to organize on the ground and demonstrate party strength through marches and the like, and the right-leaning groups favoring dialogue with the authorities. Ideological similarities have, in fact, led to alliances between left and right factions in the latter years of Bashar al-Asad's regime.

A few other parties that exist today do not have their genesis in the original KDPS. One is the Future Movement, founded in 2005 under Mishal Tammo. The Syrian Democratic Kurdish Party is another. One of the most important, however, is the Democratic Union Party, better known by its Kurdish-language initials, PYD. The PYD was founded in 2003 by former members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the well-known organization in Turkey whose fighters have waged an anti-government insurgency off and on since the 1980s. In 2005, the Kurdish Accord, better known by its Arabic name, *Wifaq*, split from the PYD. Allegations of *Wifaq*'s cooperation with Syrian intelligence services led to armed hostilities between the PYD and *Wifaq*, with at least one *Wifaq* member assassinated by the PYD.

### **Membership and Leadership**

Despite all the splits over the years, almost all the Kurdish parties in Syria follow a similar, complex set of bylaws that determine the conditions for individual membership. Joining a party is not a simple act of registration and receipt of a membership card.

An applicant who wants to join a particular party has to submit a written request explaining the reasons behind his desire to be a member. He must be at least 18 years of age. Thereafter, a specialized body from within the party begins an informal investigation of the applicant to assess whether he has a solid reputation within its designated social and political circles.

Once the application is approved, the applicant is referred to "qualifying cells" for an induction process that may last up to six months. During this months-long training, the applicant attends organizational courses, seminars on Kurdish culture and history, and courses in formal written

Kurdish. In Syria, Kurdish is not an officially recognized language and its use has been restricted by law and through intimidation. Various decrees, for instance, have forbidden the use of Kurdish in workplaces and other public arenas. Though Kurdish is spoken at home and in the street, the Kurdish political party system is the sole institution in Syria through which Kurds can learn Kurdish in an academic setting. Contingent upon passing the courses, junior members are transferred to a higher status, known as a band, which together constitute the mainstay of the party.

A political party is usually divided into several bodies, which are differentiated by their tasks and roles. The central committee is the leading body of the party. It consists of several different fractions divided by function: legal, media relations and the political bureau, which has the highest authority for approval of any decision made by the party. Under the central committee are the local committees, which are made up of subcommittees. The subcommittees are clusters of bands.

The PYD and the Future Movement are the only two Kurdish parties in Syria that do not have these intricate organizational structures. They simply have a leading committee and local branches wherever they have supporters. Additionally, those who wish to obtain membership in these two parties do not have to go through the lengthy process required by other parties. [11]

Membership in any party carries with it certain duties and rights. Members have the right to vote or to be elected to office. They have the right to resign from the party, but must provide sufficient justification. They have the right to freedom of religious expression as well. Duties include attendance at party meetings and conventions, working to implement the party's policies and, of course, preserving the party's secrets. There are also strict laws governing members' behavior, with disciplinary procedures that are taken against members who violate the party's regulations. The most severe punishment is expulsion from the party, which can be ordered if a member fails to account for continued absences from party meetings, is found to have been collaborating with state intelligence services or attempts to destabilize or divide the party. The only body that has the power to expel members from the party is the central committee.

More traditional Kurdish parties still rely on the leadership of a sole figure. There is a certain dependency on these leaders, who themselves become stand-ins for the party. For instance, the leader of one party

calling itself the KDPS, Abdulhakim Bashar, is in office for life, having been appointed in 2008 after the death of Nezir Mustafa, who had led the group for the previous 12 years. Another example would be the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party, which holds a referendum during its general congress to reinstate its leader, Hamid Hajj Darwish. He has been in office since 1965, first with the KDPS and since 1976 as head of the Progressive Party.

Yekiti and the PYD are unique among the Kurdish parties in Syria in that they change their leaders on a regular basis. Yekiti elects a new secretary-general every three years at its party congress. The PYD, according to its website, holds an election for the position of secretary-general every four years and that person can be reelected to a second term.

### **From Hafiz to Bashar**

During the 30-year rule of Hafiz al-Asad (1970-2000), Kurdish political parties operated with limited interference from the government. They were weak and fragmented, and Damascus considered them to pose little threat. In fact, Asad was far more concerned with Kurdish movements in neighboring countries than with Kurds in Syria. He saw the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey as sources of leverage in his various disputes with Baghdad and Ankara.

Syria supported opposition groups in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and allowed the opening of the PUK office in Damascus in 1975. In 1979 Damascus formalized relations with Barzani's party, as well, and in ensuing years sought to weaken the regime in Baghdad by bringing the rival factions among the Kurds of Iraq together. Offices for both parties were established in the Kurdish-dominated city of al-Qamishli, in the northeastern corner of Syria. It was standard for both parties to recruit Kurds in Syria to join their peshmerga, "those who faced death" in the battles with the Iraqi army.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the PKK also operated freely in Syria, which became a breeding ground of sorts for PKK militants. An estimated 20 percent of PKK fighters hold Syrian citizenship. [12] Hafiz al-Asad's regime tolerated the PKK's activities, all the while pretending its personnel were not even present on Syrian soil. By 1998, with Ankara intensifying its efforts to quash the insurgency in southeastern Turkey, this game became impossible to sustain. Wishing to avoid a major confrontation, the Asad regime signed a security accord with Turkey, known as the Adana Agreement, by which

Syria labeled the PKK a terrorist organization, prohibited its activities and those of its affiliates, and agreed to block the supply of weapons, logistical materiel and money to the PKK from Syrian territory. This move forced Abdullah Öcalan out of his Syrian refuge, leading to the PKK leader's eventual capture and imprisonment. The rest of the PKK operatives left the country soon after, leaving something of a vacuum, for their presence had galvanized the Kurds of Syria into ending their relative quiescence.

Bashar al-Asad took over as president after the passing of his father in the summer of 2000. The Kurdish population, at this point, was more politicized than ever before. The Kurdish political parties, though banned, saw it as their obligation to mobilize the Kurds to push for greater political and cultural rights. Members of the various parties and Kurdish cultural activists joined other Syrian intellectuals in the salons of the "Damascus spring," a short-lived thaw in the authoritarian political climate when opposition figures attempted to articulate a program of political reform that the new president might follow. The "spring" soon faded in the capital, but on the Kurdish front the regime did soften its stance, removing much of the state security apparatus from the Kurdish regions and ordering Baath officials to meet with Kurdish party leaders. The parties were emboldened to test the new regime's tolerance of their demands for increased cultural and political rights. They organized a series of demonstrations, in the expectation that the regime might relax some of its repressive laws. [13] This transition period would soon end, however.

On March 8, 2004, the Transitional Administrative Law was adopted in Iraq, a sort of provisional constitution that preserved the autonomous "Kurdistan Regional Government" the two Iraqi Kurdish parties had previously declared. It was a huge victory for the Kurdish cause, and all over Syria, Kurds celebrated the announcement. To monitor the situation, Damascus moved extra security forces into Kurdish areas and placed the troops on alert.

Four days later, on March 12, there was a soccer match in al-Qamishli pitting the local heroes against the team from Dayr al-Zawr. The fans of al-Qamishli's team were mostly Kurds, while those from Dayr al-Zawr were mostly Sunni Arabs. The Dayr al-Zawr fans insulted Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, and held up photographs of Saddam Hussein. The Kurds shouted slogans in support of President George W. Bush. The rival taunts eventually escalated into riots at the

stadium, and the army and other security forces deployed to the scene. Seven Kurds were killed in the ensuing clampdown. The next day, in addition to the funeral marches, there were massive demonstrations in Kurdish cities where Kurdish flags waved amidst the crowds. Syria had never seen demonstrations of this magnitude by Kurds. The reaction of security forces was unparalleled as well. Thirty-two were killed, hundreds wounded and 2,000 arrested over a five-day period. [14] By the end of 2004, most of the 2,000 detained had been released; a final 312 were given amnesty and released in March 2005.

The wave of arrests after the soccer match was followed by intense repression of Kurdish cultural and political expression, wiping away the Kurds' hopes of gains under the new president. In June 2004 the Syrian military intelligence service summoned several Kurdish leaders to warn them that all Kurdish parties in Syria were to cease their political and cultural activities. The Kurds were told, for instance, that the state would no longer tolerate the teaching of the Kurdish language, even in private. The Kurdish activists maintained their ties to other oppositionists. Eight Kurdish parties were signatories to the 2005 Damascus Declaration calling for an end to emergency law, a constitutional convention and other democratizing measures. Those parties that did not sign this document objected that it did not include a provision for constitutional recognition of the Kurds as the largest ethnic minority in the country.

## **Party Demands**

In the early 2000s, the Kurdish parties of Syria coalesced into three broad alliances around several axes, one being their relationship with the Baathist regime. The first group, the Kurdish Alliance, consists of the Left Party, Azadi, the Democratic United Party and the Progressive Party -- three descendants of the left wing of the old KDPS and one of the right. These four parties have been more accommodating toward the state, sometimes agreeing with the state's viewpoint on particular issues. The Progressive Party, for instance, was allowed to open Nur al-Din Zaza Hall, a cultural foundation where the party leader Darwish maintains his offices, because he has not pushed for more than baseline cultural rights for the Kurds. The Kurdish Democratic Front, which stakes out a sort of middle ground, consists of two of the parties named KDPS (under Abdulhakim Bashar and Nesreddin Ibrahim, respectively), Wekhevi and the National Democratic Party. The third coalition, the Coordinating Committee, distinguishes

itself with its more hardline demands upon the regime, to which it is often hostile. The parties in this group are the Future Movement, Yekiti and Azadi, which, in a seeming contradiction, has a hand in the Alliance as well.

In his Decree 49, promulgated on April 7, Bashar al-Asad promised to grant "Syrian Arab" citizenship to some 225,000 Kurds. Most are descendants of the 125,000 in the northeastern Hasaka region who were stripped of citizenship by a 1962 census. These "foreigners," as the regime has called them, make up about three quarters of the stateless Kurds living in Syria. The others, who number about 75,000, are "unregistered" and have no legal status whatsoever. Decree 49 said nothing about them. Beyond the core agenda of citizenship for all Kurds in Syria, the Kurdish parties are divided over exactly what to demand from the state. Some of the parties have similar demands and differentiate themselves only by the tone used in voicing them. The parties' demands can be separated into three, progressively more radical categories: cultural, linguistic and political rights; constitutional recognition of Kurds as a minority in Syria; and autonomy.

Linguistic rights -- recognition of the Kurdish language and the right to teach in Kurdish -- is one of the most widely sought reforms among the Kurds in Syria. Protesters in Kurdish regions often carry signs reading, "We want the Kurdish language taught in schools." For some parties, the political program stops here, with the addition of cultural rights. The Progressive Party, for example, has limited its demands to preserving the cultural identity of the Kurds in Syria. They ask to be allowed to hold festivals celebrating Kurdish literature, song and dance. Such cultural activities, however, are often seen as political by the government, with its commitment to old-style Arab nationalism. Participation in a cultural event sponsored by a Kurdish party, even one with close ties to the government, carries with it the risk of persecution.

A good number of parties, most descended from the left wing of the old KDPS, seek constitutional recognition of the Kurds as an ethnic minority in Syria. In a 2005 interview, Mohamed Mousa, secretary-general of the Left Party, said this measure is needed because some Syrian Arabs believe that Kurds are alien to the country. "These groups must realize that the Kurdish presence in Syria is a natural result of the Sykes-Picot treaty of 1916, which divided the whole region without any consideration for ethnic differences," he concluded. [15] The PYD insists on this demand as well.

While no party seeks full independence from Syria, some have gone so far as to petition for autonomy for the Kurdish regions. Yekiti, at its sixth party convention in 2009, acknowledged the autonomy project and put the idea forward for the consideration of the national movement as a whole. Two weeks after the convention, on December 26, 2009, security forces arrested four senior Yekiti members -- Hasan Saleh, Marouf Mulla Ahmed, Mohamed Mustafa and Anwar Naso -- charging them with "aiming at separating part of the Syrian lands" and "joining an international political or social organization." Autonomy is obviously a sensitive topic for the Syrian authorities. "There used to be a red line on detaining known Kurdish political leaders. But since 2004, this line is no longer there," a Kurdish activist told Human Rights Watch earlier that year. [16]

Intelligence services generally watch Kurdish leaders closely, sometimes excluding them and their families from public-sector employment. The three parties of the Coordinating Committee, given their stance against the government and their more explicit language in demanding Kurdish rights, are the most frequently targeted. The state security presence is high in the Kurdish regions, with around 1,000 agents based in al-Qamishli alone.

The PYD also gets heightened harassment from the state, but for different reasons. Because the party's founders belonged to the PKK, Ankara sees it as little more than a PKK branch in another country, and one that, since 1998, is under treaty obligation not to tolerate PKK activity. The Syrian regime, whose diplomatic and commercial relations with Ankara improved considerably in the era of Bashar al-Asad, has often detained PYD leaders and members in deference to its erstwhile Turkish friend. As one PYD member confirmed, "Our party members are the ones that are most subject to arrest and torture. It is because of Syrian-Turkish relations and because we adopt Öcalan's ideology." [17] The regime may harbor a special fear of the PYD because, as probably the largest Kurdish party in Syria, it is able to mobilize large crowds.

Though some parties attract more unwelcome attention than others, there has been an overall increase in harassment of Kurdish politicians in the mid- to late 2000s. Abdulhakim Bashar, leader of the KDPS, suggests that autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq, the various "Kurdish openings" in Turkey and better networking among Kurds inside and outside Syria have raised the alarm in Damascus. "The fear that Kurdish popular movements

would become a general phenomenon in Syrian society has pushed the authorities to use all repressive means to try to tame the Kurds," he says.

## The Road Ahead

In an effort to unify the Kurdish political voice, a large coalition of nine political parties was formed in December 2009 under the name of the Kurdish Political Congress. The coalition embraced the entirety of the Kurdish Democratic Front and the Coordination Committee, as well as the Left Party and the Syrian Democratic Kurdish Party. As the Syrian uprising spread in the spring of 2011, these original nine parties brought three others, including the PYD, into an expanded coalition known as the National Movement of Kurdish Political Parties. The press often refers to the National Movement simply as "a group of 12 Kurdish political parties." According to Hassan Saleh of Yekiti, the main reason for forming this disparate assemblage of characters was to streamline the Kurds' message in the face of Arab opposition. [18] It is a milestone for cooperation among the Kurdish parties of Syria.

The National Movement held an unprecedented gathering in April, and the next month in al-Qamishli they announced their own plan for resolving the crisis embroiling Syria. The plan calls for an end to one-party rule, a modern, civil state that ensures the rule of law, and true equality for all citizens, among other demands. The program is very similar to those of other opposition groups in the country. And yet, outside the Kurdish press, the National Movement's announcement was largely ignored.

Many of the Kurdish parties believe that the Arab opposition in Syria still does not recognize the Kurds as a major part of the Syrian political equation. No party inside Syria sent official delegates to the Istanbul conference in mid-July, but Mishal Tammo, leader of the Future Movement, attended in his personal capacity. Tammo is one of the Kurds who walked out when the other oppositionists would not acquiesce in removing the term "Arab" from the name of the Syrian state. "Once a democratic state has been established, if the Syrians still turn to the Arabs, we will turn to Erbil and Diyarbakir," he told the press, [19] referring to the official capital of Iraqi Kurdistan and the unofficial capital of the Kurdish nation in southeast Turkey.

The Kurds of Syria have long had a brotherly, but at times chaotic, relationship with the Kurds of Iraq. After the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG) in Iraq in 2004, however, this relationship was altered. The differences among parties in Syria already did not track so closely with the differences between Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, but when these two figures consolidated forces, that correlation ceased entirely. For its part, the unified KRG downgraded its formal links to the parties in Syria, in a demarche to Damascus similar in intent to its gestures to Ankara, notably its relatively muted protests when Turkey attacks PKK fighters based in northern Iraq. Most Kurdish parties in Syria continue to keep offices in Erbil, however. (And the KRG wields clout in those parties' internal affairs; Barzani appointed Abdulhakim Bashar as the new head of the KDPS in 2008, for example.) With many signs pointing to the end of the Asad regime, the KRG may be looking to rebuild more robust ties to its Kurdish political allies in Syria.

For the moment, at any rate, the Kurdish parties in Syria are on their own. They have before them the tasks of reconciliation with the Arab opposition, with each other and, most important, with the Kurdish street. Despite the public disagreements, the Kurdish and Arab opposition parties have tacitly committed to working together until the Asad regime is toppled. The thorny questions of the "Arabness" of Syria and the extent of Kurdish cultural rights, let alone autonomy, are on hold.

As for the Kurdish parties themselves, they disagree with each other as often as they disagree with the Arab opposition. They have always lived in a state of fragmentation, much to their common detriment. Intra-Kurdish differences in Syria, however, have hardly ever escalated to the point of violence, as has happened among Kurdish political factions elsewhere in the Middle East. The demise of the Asad regime, if it comes, will be a litmus test of their mutual tolerance.

Coming to terms with Kurdish youth, who have taken charge of street protests in Kurdish-majority areas, may prove the most difficult task of all. As elsewhere in Syria, the engines of the uprising in majority-Kurdish areas are "local coordinating committees" that are youth-led and politically unaffiliated. The Kurdish committees have called for the "liberation" of the Arab areas of Dar'a, Idlib and Hama, showing the pan-Syrian solidarity against the regime that has characterized the committees in other parts of the country from the time of their emergence. These local activists also believe that a resolution of the Kurdish question will only come about through organizing on the ground. In June, the Future Movement of Mishal

Tammo froze cooperation with other parties on the grounds that the youth should be at the forefront of Kurdish activism.

The young activists say that they are in regular contact with Kurdish party cadres and that a few of the more militant parties back, and take part in, the demonstrations. But if or when the regime falls, it will be the unaffiliated youth, and not the self-declared Kurdish National Movement, that will be able to claim credit. The youth may dismiss the Kurdish parties as being out of touch with their own visions for the future. Syria is moving toward inevitable change. The question is whether the Kurdish National Movement can adapt to the new environment, shedding its ineffectual clandestine past and embracing transparency to become a genuine representative of the Kurdish people in Syria.

## Endnotes

- [1] Landinfo, Kurds in Syria: Groups at Risk and Reactions Against Political Activists (Oslo, June 2010), p. 11.
- [2] Kerim Yildiz, Kurds in Syria (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 29.
- [3] Jordi Tejel, Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 48.
- [4] E-mail interview with Abdulbasit Seyda, Kurdish academic living in Sweden, June 2011.
- [5] Tejel, pp. 48-49.
- [6] Salah Badreddin, The Kurdish National Movement in Syria: A Critical Approach from Inside (Berlin: Kurdish Kawa Cultural Center, 2003), p. 10.
- [7] Ibid., p. 14.
- [8] Tejel, p. 87.
- [9] Badreddin, p. 15.
- [10] David McDowell, A Modern History of the Kurds (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p. 478.
- [11] Interview with Mustafa Mohamed, Kurdish member of Syria's parliament (1991-1995), Washington, DC, July 2011.
- [12] Landinfo, p. 16.
- [13] See Christian Sinclair, "Ten Years of Bashar al-Asad's Syria: Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights," unpublished paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association, San Diego, CA, November 2010.
- [14] See Eva Savelsberg, "The Making of the al-Qamishli Uprising by Kurdish Internet Sites in the Diaspora," unpublished paper presented at the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies, Barcelona, July 2010.
- [15] Tahawwulat, August 2, 2005.
- [16] Human Rights Watch, Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria (New York, November 2009), p. 4.
- [17] Human Rights Watch, p. 43.
- [18] Telephone interview with Hassan Saleh, Yekiti party leader, July 10, 2011.
- [19] Rudaw, July 21, 2011.