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### **ROJAVA: NEW PROOFS OF TURKISH ABUSES AT AFRIN, ROJAVA-DAMASCUS DISCUSSIONS ARE CONTINUING**

**W**While the Turkish troops and their Syrian auxiliaries still occupy the Afrin region and several international agencies and organisations continue to denounce the violations of Human Rights that the occupiers are committing, the Syrian Kurds continue their sensitive discussions with the Damascus regime, which is preparing to regain the Idlib region, just South of Afrin. The perspective of a battle for Idlib, as that of the Kurds and Damascus drawing closer, cannot fail to worry Ankara ...

After UNO, it is now *Amnesty International* that is directly accus-

ing Turkey in a report, issued on 2nd August, denouncing the intolerable situation created by the occupation forces for the inhabitants of Afrin. The latter "suffer many repeated attacks on their Human Rights committed by Syrian groups armed and equipped by Turkey. (...) These breaches, to which the Turkish armed forces shut their eyes, include arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, the confiscation of property and plundering". UNO demanded that Ankara, as the "occupying power", and thus responsible for the security of the residents, maintain order in Afrin and "put an end to these violations without delay" (*AFP*). In a

distinct enquiry of its own, the Syrian Centre for Human Rights (SCHR) report about 1,000 people arrested by various groups of rebels since the invasion. Basing themselves on dozens of witnesses the 2 reports draw a picture of a situation of anarchy and impunity.

According to the *ANF* news agency, the Yezidis are particularly targeted by the Jihadists, who try to convert them forcibly and oblige them to send their children to the mosque and to attend courses on religion. Those who refuse can be tortured and their protesting used as grounds for arrest as happened in the week of the 13<sup>th</sup> in the villages of Kurzele (Sherawa dis-

trict), Qestal Kishk (Shera district) and at Rajo, in the Afrin region, where about twenty Kurds have been incarcerated. Abuses regarding property, especially olive trees, the most important source of wealth in Afrin, are being continued, especially at Rajo, where the Jihadists again burned down trees.

In parallel to this, Turkey organises the annexation of conquered areas by setting up a network of roads (*Al-Monitor*, 27/08). The first new road, linking al-Bab to al-Ray, was completed at the end of July and a motorway connecting Azaz, at the border, to Mare, North of Aleppo is under way. Another will reach the town of Jerablous, controlled by the Turks. This network will make easier the deployment of troops but also the entry of Turkish goods... Are Syrian areas under Turkish control due to suffer the fate of North Cyprus? Children at school are already learning Turkish and a "National Army" commanded from Ankara is coming into existence. The statement of one of its officers speaks volumes about its "discipline" — he had to order his men to "stop opening fire at random"! (*Challenges*, *Reuters*, 12/08). On the 29<sup>th</sup> the SCHR reported internal fighting between Jihadist militia at Jerablous, and at Idlib, the chaos took the form of explosions and kidnappings while *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*, former *Al-Nusra* Front, Syrian branch of *Al-Qaeda*, hunts down anyone suspected of helping Damascus or ISIS (*Xinhua*).

Another Human Rights defence NGO, *Human Rights Watch* (HRW), went public on 3<sup>rd</sup> August and accused the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of the PYD and the spinal column of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighting ISIS, of recruiting children in the displaced persons camps (*AFP*). On the 5<sup>th</sup> the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political entity

emanating from the SDF, reacted to these accusations by denouncing some possible "irresponsible individual abuses" that in no way represented the "SCD overall strategy". It promised that if these facts turned out to be true to "restore the children to their families and bring those responsible to account". In 2017 UNO had recorded 22 cases of recruiting children in YPG women's section, five times more than the year before. Moreover, in a letter dated 16 July and published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> on the HRW site, the PYD explained that in certain cases the children had been taken away from the camps for their own protection, like the little girl of less than 12 from the Al-Arisha camp, who had been raped and made pregnant, whose family wanted to kill her because of her pregnancy, and who asked herself the YPJ fighters for protection. Her family, who accused them of having forcibly enrolled her, had evidently not mentioned these facts...

All through the month resistance to the occupation of Afrin continued. On 1<sup>st</sup> August the YPG published a video showing the execution of one of the Islamist leaders and claimed the attack on the HQ of the Sultan Mourad Brigade on 28<sup>th</sup> July in the Shara district, in which 2 fighters were killed and another one wounded. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a fresh assessment was made of the deaths in attack of at least 9 rebels killed between 29 July and 2<sup>nd</sup> August, as well as an attack using a booby-trapped motorbike at Basutah, in the Sherawa district, where a Turkish soldier and 4 mercenaries were killed and 3 others seriously wounded. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> another Turkish soldier and 3 terrorists were killed, and two others wounded in an ambush against a jeep. On the 4<sup>th</sup> a YPG assessment covering the whole of July counted 54 occupation forces killed including 23 Turkish troops, 2 captains and 1 lieutenant, plus 31

fighters of the "Free Syrian Army" (*Al-Masdar*). On the 5<sup>th</sup>, a video of the execution of a Kurd, Akash Haji Ahmed, was shown on line. Having served as an informant for the Turkish Army, "a member of the traitors committee set up by the Turkish occupation authorities in the village of Deir Swan", he also sent to displaced people threatening SMS messages to dissuade them from returning. A group calling itself *Operation Olive Wrath* claimed his execution in a declaration confirmed neither by the YPG nor the PYD. On the contrary, after the group had warned the inhabitants of Afrin to "stay away from the places where the mercenaries are settling" in case of fresh attacks and, after a bomb had caused on the 21<sup>st</sup> 3 civilians' deaths in Afrin, the YPG denied any involvement in the latter, accusing the Turkish Secret Service. Meanwhile on the 14<sup>th</sup> they published an assessment covering the second week of August in which they claimed the deaths in 2 separate attacks of several Syrian fighters and some Turkish soldiers and dozens others wounded (*Al-Masdar*). On the 20<sup>th</sup> the execution was announced of a high-ranking commander of the *Jabhat Al-Shamiyah*, Mohammad Mahhou, in the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> in an ambush.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the YPG claimed 2 others ambushes in which 3 rebel chiefs lost their lives. The first, on the 19<sup>th</sup>, was on the Mabata main road and killed one of the *Jabhat al-Shamiya* mercenaries, Muhammad Ardwan. In the second operation it was a member of the *Faylaq al-Sham* group, Abu Muhammad al-Shamali, responsible for setting up the control posts in the Bulbul district roads, who was killed on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 30<sup>th</sup> the YPG declared they had killed the day before near Afrin, in a bomb attack, the military chief of the *Faylaq al-Sham* group, Khaled Obeid and 18 other fighters.

According to the SCHR, YPG units killed at least 108 rebels and Turkish soldiers since March mars (*Kurdistan-24*). On the 31<sup>st</sup>, 2 Turkish troops and 2 Syrian fighters of the *al-Hamza* division were killed near Barbana village (Rajo) in an attack on a control post, which was completely destroyed. Several other fighters were wounded.

At Manbij, the situation has hardly changed, even though this town still arouses much covetousness. On 1<sup>st</sup> August the Iranian agency *Tasnim* announced that the Syrian Army was waiting to enter it following the withdrawal of the SDF, repeating news published in the pro-regime daily *al-Watan*, which said that the local population had set up banners of welcome at the town's main entry points! On the 19<sup>th</sup> the Turkish Army announced the beginning of "joint patrols" with the Americans. This was probably designed for domestic political use and to force the Americans' hand.

In Deir Ezzor Province, on the Iraqi borders, the SDF have continued their anti-ISIS operations, with considerable air support from the international coalition (20 strikes from 30<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> August). The objective is to drive the Jihadists out of the pockets into which they have withdrawn. According to the SCHR, on the 6<sup>th</sup> "at least 28 jihadists (...) were killed by the air strikes and artillery barrages on the Bir al-Meleh region". At the end of July the commander of the French forces in the coalition, General Parisot, suggested that "some hundreds" of jihadists only still controlled a strip of land between the towns of Hajin and Boukamal, warning however that fighting

could still last another two to three months (*AFP*). On the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> the SDF repelled a jihadist attack on the buildings that sheltered American and French troops. This was to the East of Deir Ezzor Province, on the Omar oil fields, one of the largest in Syria. Seven jihadists were killed in the fighting, which lasted till dawn. This was the biggest attack since the SDF regained Omar last October (*SCHR*). On the 26<sup>th</sup> the SDF captured alive six jihadists hiding in a farm, South of Hasakah, who had fled from the fighting in Iraq last summer. (*Al-Masdar*).

Parallel to this, following the announcement on 28<sup>th</sup> July of the creation of "joint committees" to search for a political solution on the basis of "decentralisation", the authorities of the North Syrian Federation have pursued discussions with Damascus. Although agreements have been made like the recent one on the Tabqa Dam and over oil, the differences are so great that it is hard to imagine a rapid agreement... Some State employees were able to gain access to the Tabqa Dam to carry out maintenance in exchange for a percentage of the electricity produced, and as for oil production the regime accepted was said to have accepted to provide its expertise in exchange for sharing the revenues. This kind of "technical" agreement, which first of all seeks to restore government services in areas held by the SDC will be the aim of these committees (*Asharq al-Awsat* in Arabic). These may, perhaps, help establish mutual confidence, despite the memories the Kurds keep of the oppression by the regime... On the 5<sup>th</sup> the executive President of the SDC, Ms. Ilham Ehmed, strongly denied any deal of hand-

ing Raqqa and Hasakah to Damascus, and defended the idea of a "decentralised" Syria, adding that it was just the centralisation that had caused the present crisis (*al-Masdar*). On the 12<sup>th</sup> another member of the SDC, Hesên Eli, pointed out that the rumours that the areas liberated from ISIS by the SDF would immediately be handed to the regime were without basis and that there would be no discussion about this with Damascus. Eli added that the SDC and the regime agreed in describing the Turkish presence as an occupation, adding further: "Discussions are taking place with various world governments, since the invasion of Afrin is an international problem and we are defending Syria's territorial integrity. (...) The liberation of Afrin is our priority" (*ANF*).

On the 13<sup>th</sup> the SDF spokesman, Kino Gabriel, denied rumours of joint participation with the regime's Army in operations on Idlib.

For his part, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid Muallem, questioned in Moscow on the 30<sup>th</sup> during a joint Press conference with Sergueï Lavrov by a correspondent of *Kurdistan 24* on the future rights of the Kurds in the constitution being prepared, avoided the issue by answering "it was not his business but that of the "Constitutional Committee"...

Finally on 27<sup>th</sup> of August the TEV-DEM (Coalition of Kurdish Parties and those of other ethnic groups) in power in Rojava elected two new co-Presidents during its Third Congress, held at Rmeilan (Hasakah Province). They are Ms. Zelal Cegar and Mr. Xerîb Heso (*Rûdaw*).

## TURKEY: ERDOĞAN'S POLICY INCREASES STILL FURTHER THE COUNTRY'S ISOLATION

**W**hile he is approaching the absolute power of which he had been dreaming, Mr. Erdoğan is caught by the failures in his hazardous economic management and his regional political line. As a result of tensions with the United States, Turkey finds itself in a serious financial crisis. On the 10<sup>th</sup> August, "in a single black Friday", the Turkish lire lost 19% of its market value to fall to the historically low rate of 7 lire to the dollar (as against 1,9 in 2003). However Erdoğan still refuses to raise the interest rate of his (nominally independent) Central Bank — a classical method of defending one's currency — preferring instead to denounce an "international conspiracy". After all his anti-Western speeches he becomes aware of the extent of Turkey's economic dependence on the West...

On 1<sup>st</sup> August, after the US pastor Andrew Brunson was placed under house arrest, the White House announced sanctions against the Turkish Ministers of the Interior and Justice — unprecedented measures between NATO allies! While the financial impact remains feeble, its symbolic effect could not be stronger. The US Treasury, that supervises US sanctions, declared that the two Ministries were "the directors of Turkish governmental organisations charged with carrying out serious violations of human rights", showing that the Brunson affair is not the only one at issue. Another factor of Turko-American tension is the trial at New York of the Irano-Turkish businessman Reza Zarrab for Turkish breaches of the US sanc-

tions against Iran. Zarrab, who is cooperating with the enquiries has directly implicated Erdoğan as the one who gave the orders and chief corrupter. The latter has violently attacked the case as a "conspiracy" against his government while Turkey openly declared its opposition to new sanctions against Iran. Finally, in the face of the Turkish project of buying the Russian system of defence against air raids, S-400, at the end of July the US Senators proposed to block delivery to Turkey of the F-35 fighter planes, although some of their parts are produced in Turkey! This proposed law also calls on Turkey to release all the US citizens "wrongly detained": Andrew Brunson of course, but also Serkan Gölge, a bi-national scientist arrested on 23 July 2016 while he was visiting his family, on suspicion of taking part in the Coup d'État (*Business Insider*).

Relations have so deteriorated that some analysts are advising the United States to prepare an alternative to the Incirlik base in case Turkey forbids them to use it...

Inside the country, the HDP was the only major party in Parliament to refuse to condemn the US sanctions, leading some papers to describe the HDP as America's only friend in the country (*SCF*). The leader of the CHP (kemalist), Kemal Kilicdaroglu, although in the opposition, called for sanctions against the United States, while a leader of İyi (extreme Right, a break away from the MHP) suggested the seizing of Trump Towers in Istanbul...

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, at the height of the collapse of the Turkish lira,

Donald Trump announced a 100% increase in the taxes on the import of Turkish aluminium and (especially) steel, which represent 15% of Turkish exports ... On the 12<sup>th</sup>, when the sanctions came into force, the speech (twice postponed) of the Turkish Minister of Finance, Berat Albayrak, the President's son-in-law, could only increase the anxieties of business circles. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the White House and the State Department both made intransigent statements, renewing their demand for the release of Brunson before any discussions and threatening "new measures" (*Kurdistan 24*).

Relations with other countries are also tense. On 1<sup>st</sup> August a Danish Court ruled in favour of the release of a Kurd arrested on 14<sup>th</sup> July, following one of dozens of Turkish demands of extradition sent to Interpol since 2016. Reasons cited: the failure to observe Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights, particularly the absence of torture. Denmark had already invoked this reason for refusing the extradition of another Kurd. In February the Syrian Kurdish leader Salih Muslim had been released by a Czech Court; last week another Kurd living in Switzerland was released despite a Turkish accusation of links with the PKK (*Kurdistan 24*). Arrests and intimidations by Turkey on its own land of binationals of Kurdish origins are also a factor of international tension. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> an Austrian born in Turkey, who had come for his uncle's funeral, was arrested with his partner for having shared on Facebook some reports of German television criticising Ankara's and "Sultan Erdoğan's" Kurdish pol-

icy (*Kronen Zeitung*). He was kept in detention for 4 days then expelled and forbidden entry for 5 years. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, a German of Kurdish origins was arrested for “pro-PKK propaganda” (*Der Tagesspiegel*). According to official figures, at least seven other Germans are at present in prison for “political reasons”.

Arrests and condemnations continue also for Turkish citizens, to the satisfaction of the “sultan” who, as early as 1<sup>st</sup> August promised to “pursue the struggle against the terrorists to the last one”, following a bomb attack at Yüksekova (Hakkari) that killed a baby and its mother and raised considerable feeling (AFP). Still encouraging nationalist feelings, Mr. Erdoğan again repeated that he was not opposed to the restoration of the death penalty it Parliament voted for it...

On the same day, however, in a rare piece of judicial good news, the Turkish Constitutional Court ordered that an indemnity of 200,000 Turkish lira be paid to the HDP Member of Parliament Meral Daniş Beştaş for a judgement that had “violated her right to freedom”. She had been condemned on January 2017 for having participated in the meeting of the HDP’s Executive Council that had called for demonstrations against ISIS’s attack on Kobane. These demonstrations had caused the death of 53 people for which the court considered those who called for the demonstrations responsible. However the Constitutional Court considered that the lower court had not proved that Ms. Beştaş had voted in favour of the demonstrations.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> the Turkish President directly threatened the HDP’s voters, declaring that they would be “considered responsi-

ble” (*Ahval*). 10,000 of its members, so a quarter of them, are in jail, as well as over a hundred mayors and 9 Members of Parliament. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, the woman journalist Hülya Emeç, at present in exile, received 6 months jail sentence for having reported the death by a heart attack of a 48 year old Kurd, Şefik Tunuç, following police harassment. They had carried out 3 raids on his house in a single week in 2014. She was sentenced in accordance with Article 301 of the penal code that punishes insults to the country or its institutions (SCF). On the 10<sup>th</sup> a former HDP candidate at Kayseri, Kenan Marasli, was arrested with three other people for “pro-PKK propaganda” on the social networks (*Turkey Purge*). On the 17<sup>th</sup> the DBP (Democratic Regions Party, a regional ally of the HDP) mayor of a sub-district of Adıyaman Province, Yusuf Yaka, was arrested with 12 other suspects following the deaths of 4 Turkish soldiers during attacks on the PKK. In the following days other members of the BDP were arrested, particularly at Urfa, then, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 6 members of the HDP at Ankara during raids on their homes. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the former HDP member of Parliament Leyla Birlik preferred to flee the country and ask for asylum in Greece (SCF). Sentenced last January to 21 months jail for insult to the President, she was released pending her trial and forbidden to leave the country. According to Greece, 1,839 Turkish citizens have asked for asylum between January and July 2018 — 687 of them in July... (T24)

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, for the first time in years, the Istanbul police attacked the demonstration of the “Saturday Mothers” (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) with water cannons and tear gas. These

women have been protesting every week since 1995 against the “disappearance” of relatives. This time 23 people were arrested, including one of the leaders of the movement, Emine Ocak, who is more than 80 years old.

Furthermore, anti-Kurdish discrimination is becoming increasingly evident in many contexts. An article in the magazine revue *Turkey Dispatches* reveals that imprisoned Kurdish journalists are in greater danger of being detained far from their families. Finding themselves hundreds of miles from the place where they are due to be tried, they have to use the SEGBİS (*Ses ve görüntü bilişim sistemi*) videoconference system to appear before the courts. Not only is this system notorious for poor working but its use has increased tenfold since 2013 (*International Press Institute*)... On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Sports Minister refused the use of a pitch for the season’s opening ceremony to the *Amedspor* football club. The club’s name is a reference to the Kurdish name for the city of Diyarbakir — Amed... The excuse used mentioned burst pipes, although no maintenance had been planned. The club had already been fined by the Turkish Football Association when it had changed its name... (*Ahval*). On the 22<sup>nd</sup> a concert by the Kurdish singer Mem Ararat, from Mardin, was forbidden without any explanation, although authorisation had been obtained and the hall reserved (SCF, *Kurdistan-24*). On the 23<sup>rd</sup> the paper *Welat*, the last national daily in Kurdish, was banned. This paper had been harassed for years by dozens of bans which obliged it to change its name as many times: *Welat*, *Hawar*, *Welatê Me*, *Dengê*, *Azadiya Welat*... This time the periodical’s death could well be for good.

The military operations against the PKK are being pursued, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan, while the Turkish General Staff continues to flood the media with announces reporting the death of terrorists or the destruction of arms caches or shelters. On the first days of the month they published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (“neutralisation” of at least 5 PKK fighters), then on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the Army announced the “neutralisation” of a commander, Ahmet Dorak, better known by his nom de guerre Sahin, near Khwakurk. On the 4<sup>th</sup> a policeman was killed and 8 others wounded in Hakkari province by the explosion of a bomb as their vehicle passed by. On the 12<sup>th</sup> the Minister of the Interior announced the “neutralisation” of another ranking PKK fighter, Ibrahim Çoban, whose nom de guerre is Atakan Mahir, then announced the next day, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, that 2,218 operations had been carried out since the 6<sup>th</sup> in which 35 PKK terrorists had been killed and 128 people suspected of helping the PKK arrested. During the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> the Turkish Air Force bombed intensively several villages in the Bradost region of Iraqi Kurdistan, and another PKK commander, Baris Oner, known as “Tarik the Turk” was killed in the Black Sea region —

one of the few non-Kurdish areas in which PKK fighters operate (*Kurdistan* 24). On the 26<sup>th</sup> the General Staff announced that on the 24<sup>th</sup> a PKK commander, Fecri Demir, nom de guerre Tolhildan, was killed during an offensive supported by army airplanes in the Dogubayazit region. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of the Interior announced “2156 operations since the 20<sup>th</sup> in which 12 terrorists were killed...”. On the 28<sup>th</sup> a civilian was killed in a Turkish air strike near Sidakan in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as the cows of a herd; then on the 31<sup>st</sup> the Turkish Army announced the death of 19 Kurdish fighters in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Nevertheless, it was the targeted assassination by a Turkish strike on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month of a Yezidi leader, the 66-year-old Zekî Şingalî (real name İsmail Özden), in the Shingal (Sinjar) region, that aroused the most condemnations. The plane struck his convoy as he was returning from a ceremony to commemorate 800 people massacred in the village of Kocho, four years ago. Four members of the YBŞ (Sinjar protection units) were also killed and a commander was wounded. The Union of Kurdish Communities (KCK) the coordinator of several parties close to the

PKK, of which Şingalî was a member of the Executive Council, has accused Iraq, the US and the KDP of “violating the air space of Sinjar” and of “having authorised the planes of the Turkish State to attack Sinjar”. The US-led anti-ISIS coalition declared that this action was a “unilateral decision” by Turkey. The HDP condemned the Turkish strike, describing it as an attack on the Yezidis. On the 17<sup>th</sup> the coordination of Yezidi communities demanded the closing of Sinjar air space and sanctions against Turkey and accused Iraq, responsible for the security of its Yezidi citizens, of having let this happen.

The article devoted to the death of Şingalî by the *New York Times* of the 16<sup>th</sup> aroused Turkey’s rage as it mentions that “he was considered a hero by the many members of the Yezidi minority” that he had saved from ISIS. Ibrahim Kalın, the official spokesman of the Turkish president, accused the daily of “justifying (...) the PKK’s terrorism” (*Spoutnik*). On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>, while Şingalî’s funeral was taking place in Sinjar, there were many demonstrations of solidarity in Kurdistan and in the rest of the world, condemning his assassination, and paying homage to him (*Rojinfo*).

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## IRAQ:

### CONFIRMATION OF THE ELECTION RESULTS; POST-ELECTION BARGAINING STILL CONTINUING — AS IS ARABISATION...

**O**n 9<sup>th</sup> August the Iraqi Electoral Commission, after dozens of challenges and a manual recount, finally announced the final results — practically identical to the initial results... The bargaining between coalitions to decide on the next government were resumed, the Kurds trying, despite their divisions, to take part in unity to give weight to their demands. At the same time, Kurdistan also contin-

ued preparing for its parliamentary elections, set for 30<sup>th</sup> September. All this took place in a context of violence affecting the whole of the country: demonstrations against corruption in the South, fresh ISIS attacks in the North — especially in the territories disputed between Kurdistan and the Federal Government, subjected to an Arabisation policy...

The final results of the 12<sup>th</sup> May elections, ratified by the Federal

Court on the 14<sup>th</sup>, are identical to the initial results in 13 of the 18 Iraqi provinces, including Kurdistan (some recounting had to be cancelled following a fire in a warehouse in which some of the ballot boxes had been stored). Moqtada Sadr’s *Sairoon* coalition remains at the top with 54 seats out of 329, followed by the *Fatih* list (the list of the pro-Iranian *Hashd al-Shaabi* militia, 47 or 48 seats) and the *Nasr* list, that of the outgoing Prime Minister Haider

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al-Abadi (42 seats). On the 10<sup>th</sup>, *Nasr* announced a preliminary agreement with *Sairoon*, *Hikma* ("Wisdom" list led by Ammar al-Hakim) and *Wataniya* (a "national" Coalition led by Iyad Allawi) to form the next government. *Nasr's* chief negotiator, Khaled al-Obeidi, added he had also reached an agreement with the KDP. However on the 13<sup>th</sup>, according to *Rûdaw*, another coalition including *Fatih*, State of Law (Maliki) and *Fadhila* (Party of Islamic virtue) was also negotiating with the Kurds...

These negotiations raise the question of Kurdish unity facing Baghdad. Whereas 4 of the Kurdish opposition parties, *Gorran*, the Islamic Union of Kurdistan (*Yekgirtû*), the Coalition for Democracy and Justice (CDJ) and the Islamic Group (*Komal*) stood firm on their rejection of the results, the KDP and the PUK have drawn up a common 30-point agenda and called on the others to join them. This agenda stipulates, *inter alia*, that the governance of Kirkuk must be decided in accordance with Article 140 of the Constitution, *i.e.* by a referendum of the peoples concerned. The 4 parties, while deciding to go to Baghdad separately, finally accepted a conditional dialogue to reach a common agenda in negotiations with the Arab coalitions. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the PUK-KDP delegation even delayed its departure to the Iraqi capital, trying to convince the others to join them...

On the 19<sup>th</sup> *Sairoon*, *Nasr*, *Hikma* and *Wataniya* announced an inter-religious coalition while the KDP leader, Masud Barzani was receiving a high level Sunni delegation in Erbil (*Kurdistan* 24). As they did for the Kurds, the Shi'a coalitions offered the Sunni Arabs some concessions to persuade them to join them. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, to convince the Sunni Arab "National Front" to join the *Fatih* – State of Law coal-

tion, the assistant commander of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* militia ordered the latter to close their offices and withdraw from towns with a Sunni population.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, in preparation of the new Parliament's first session, the outgoing President Fuad Masum met the coalitions leaders Abadi and Maliki. According to the Constitution, the Parliament must elect a new President within 15 days of the results being ratified by the Federal Court. The latter then must within 15 days appoint a Prime Minister, who must himself within 30 days appoint his cabinet, each minister of which must be individually approved by the M.P.s. In the event of failure, the President has another 15 days in which to start the process anew with another Prime Minister... On 27<sup>th</sup> August Masum announced by decree that Parliament would meet on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, which speeded up the bargaining between the Shiite and Sunni Arabs and the Kurds (KDP-PUK). Maliki and Sadr were competing for the support of the last named: "There are signs of agreement between the Kurds and the Sunni Arabs to ally themselves with *Sairoon*" stated Ra'ad Fahmi, leader of the Communist Party and an influential member of *Sairoon*. A senior officer of *Nasr*, Ahmed al-Hamdani, even declared he was even prepared to accept the return of the Peshmergas to Kirkuk... before being contradicted the next day by Abadi, who declared that the subject was not on the table. On the 27<sup>th</sup> a joint *Sairoon* – *Nasr* – *Hikma* – *Wataniyya* delegation went to Erbil to discuss the integration of the KDP-PUK block. Its members met the former President of the Kurdistan Region, Masud Barzani. In parallel to this some Sunni representatives of the "Axis" alliance, who had also met the KDP leader, declared having reached a "common project" with the Kurds. This alliance could

choose the next Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, a post attributed to a Sunni Arab since 2005. The next day encounters brought together the PUK, the KDP and the opposition...

In the South of the country, demonstrations against corruption have been continuing, perhaps less intensely. The Prime Minister Abadi tried at the end of July and in early August to calm demonstrators anger by several measures: replacement of several Ministers (in particular the one in charge of electricity) and election executives, spreading out the debt repayments of farmers, granting funds to hospitals and development projects (*ISHM-Epic*). This has not prevented the resumption of demonstrations on the 10<sup>th</sup> in Najaf and Baghdad Provinces, where the demonstrators gathered in Tahrir Square. On the 15<sup>th</sup> the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq announced the death of a demonstrator arrested in Bassorah and of clashes that broke out with the police in that city. On the 31<sup>st</sup> fresh demonstrations broke out, especially in the port of Umm Qasr.

In the North it is the persistence of ISIS, especially in the disputed areas that gives cause for concern. On the 13<sup>th</sup> a UN report estimated that about 20 to 30,000 jihadists remain, roughly equally divided between Syria and Iraq, including many foreign fighters (*Kurdistan* 24). In the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> ISIS caught some Iraqi troops in an ambush near Makhmur (60 km Southwest of Erbil). On the 10<sup>th</sup> the Iraqi border guards killed 5 jihadists and captured 2 others; on the 11<sup>th</sup> 2 more were killed north of Bayji. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August news was made public of the "clinical death" of ISIS's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and the rise of a new leader, Abu Othman al-Tunisi, a Tunisian. However on the 22<sup>nd</sup> the organisation broad-

cast an audio message from Baghdadi in which he called upon his partisans to “remain unshakable in the fighting” and mentioned recent events such as the issue of the American preacher detained in Turkey... On the 29<sup>th</sup> members of the Iraqi Security forces were killed or severely wounded in a booby-trapped car attack in Anbar Province for which ISIS claimed 28 deaths. That evening at least 11 jihadists were killed by air strikes on Makhmur, and the next morning another attack using a booby-trapped car killed 2 Iraqi officers at a control point near Hawija, West of Kirkuk (*Kurdistan* 24). In the opinion of the KRG deputy Minister for Peshmergas, the Iraqi forces and the *Hashd* militia are incapable of ensuring the security of the disputed areas without the co-operation of the Peshmergas and that this is a problem that has to be tackled as a priority by the new Iraqi government (*Kurdistan* 24).

In parallel to this, the assessment of ISIS’s atrocities is continuing to be drawn up. Unanimously passed by the UN Security Council in 2017, the UN enquiry will soon be starting. It will give the data enabling to bring to trial those responsible. According to the KRG, over 2,500 Yezidi lost their lives from ISIS’s acts of violence and another 6,000, principally women and children, were kidnapped. Four years later over 3,000 women and children are listed as disappeared and 300,000 Yezidis are living in camps in Northern Iraq...

Besides, the policy of Arabisation carried out in several areas still arouse protests. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, representatives of Shabak, Yezidi and Assyrian communities in Mosul Provincial Council wrote to the Council’s President and to the Iraqi Minister of the Interior a joint letter in which they protested against the project of settling 450

families of Arabs originally from other parts of Iraq. They denounced a breach of Article 23 of the 2005 Constitution, according to which “the acquiring of one or several properties to effect a change in the demographic change is forbidden”. In Kirkuk Province, the Kurds complain of being taken to court by Iraqis from the Centre and South of the country who had received title deeds to property under Saddam Husayn. These people, supported by the interim governor of Kirkuk appointed by Baghdad, now claim these properties although, at the fall of that regime, they had returned in exchange for financial compensation, as laid down in the new Constitution. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Kamal Kirkuki, the KDP official in charge of Kirkuk, publicly denounced “a new campaign of Arabisation” whereby 12,000 families had been brought from the South and Centre of the country in the course of a single year.

Another aspect of this same policy, since it had taken control of Kirkuk Province, the Iraqi government had dismissed from their jobs 47 Kurdish officials, beginning with the governor of Kirkuk (*Rûdaw*). This policy arouses resistance. Thus the mayor of Daquq, Amir Khwakaram, challenged his sacking before the Supreme Court which will hear him as well as the present governor in October. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> a delegation of Turcomans and Kurds from Kirkuk secured from the Ministry of Agriculture the suspension for enquiry of a decree authorising Arab families to settle on their land. If the enquiry shows that no consensus is possible, the Minister has promised to definitively annul the contested decree.

Finally the Arabisation process also affects official documents: the Oil Ministry forbade, on the 13<sup>th</sup> the use of Kurdish terms in the *Northern Oil Company’s* docu-

ments, even threatening to sue offenders... (*Kurdistan* 24)

Another point of tension is the exporting of oil. Whereas on the 14<sup>th</sup> the Federal Court postponed for the fourth time making a decision on the KRG’s exports to Turkey, arguing that there were contradictory articles in the text of the Constitution and entrusting the case to an expert, yet on the same day the Iraqi Prime Minister met the Turkish President to discuss opening a new passing point in the border enabling “direct trading” between the two countries — that is “without passing through Kurdistan”. There is also at issue the idea of exporting Kirkuk’s oil to Turkey by a pipeline crossing the same area. This involves making the Pêsh Khabour strip of land into a triple Iraq-Turkey-Syria border post — an area that the Iraqi Army had tried in vain to take from the Peshmergas in October 2017. It is also the place where an oil pipeline already exists — but controlled by the KRG... Kurdish officials have already stressed that their agreement would obviously be necessary for such a project — which in any case is deemed unrealistic until full security has been restored to Kirkuk...

On other levels relations seem better. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, at the demand of the governor of Sulaimaniyeh, Iraqi civil air authorities have discussed with Turkey the problem of banning of flights from the latter to or from Sulaimaniyeh airport (*Rûdaw*).

Finally the Kurdistan Region is actively preparing for its Parliamentary elections, set for 30<sup>th</sup> September. This will be for 111 seats, 100 “general” seats plus 11 “quota seats” reserved for minorities. At the end of July the PUK and the KDP published the lists of their respective candidates, some of whom are already sitting

M.P.s. The Kurdistan Electoral Commission has approved 38 lists covering over 800 candidates. Most of the parties have presented 100 candidates (1 for each seat); on the 13<sup>th</sup> the “New Generation” movement of the former media businessman Shaswar Abdulwahid Qadir announced 50 candidates.

The authorities have besides issued warnings concerning the poor rate of registration by the electors. Voters have to go to the Electoral Commission’s local offices to renew their elector’s card. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, 4 days before the

time limit, less than 5% of the electors had done so. Sulaimaniyeh had the lowest rate of re-registration with 28,000 registrations out of 1.19 million (*i.e.* barely 2.4%), Erbil came next with 41,449 of 1.1 million (3.79%) then Duhok with 30,000 out of 722,000 (4.2%). In the newly created province of Halabja, 6,000 electors had renewed their elector’s card out of 460,300 (8.8%).

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Electoral Commission set the campaign period from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September, then announced on the 19<sup>th</sup> that it had cleansed the elec-

toral list of 200,000 people either deceased or doubled. According to certain parties – *Gorran*, *CDJ*, Islamic Union (*Yekgirtû*), Islamic Group (*Komal*) – the list still had some problems of this type.

Regarding relations between the Kurdish parties, on the day of Eid, the PUK Political Committee apologised to *Gorran* for the attack on its premises in Sulaimaniyeh on the evening of the elections and *Gorran* accepted the apologies. On the 27<sup>th</sup> a PUK delegation visited the scene to confirm the reconciliation (it did not include cadre responsible for the attack).

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## IRAN: MILITARY TENSIONS AND UNCEASING REPRESSION IN KURDISTAN

**T**hroughout August military tensions, which had increased in the previous months, persisted, giving rise to violent clashes between the Kurdish parties and the regime’s repressive forces. Each side claimed deaths suffered by the enemy and the *pasdarans* (Gardians of the Revolution) continued their violent abuses of power against the Kurdish trans-border porters (*kolbars*) and the inhabitants of villages near the borders. In parallel the fate of political prisoners and particularly of Ramin Hossein Panahi, who is still threatened with execution, continued to arouse concern.

At the beginning of the month, the Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan indicated that the regime’s security forces had arrested, without any charges, 27 men from Kurdish villages near the town of Mariwan. These men were taken to an unknown location, and no information regarding their fate was given to their families (*WKI*). Both the KDPI and the

*pasdarans* announced fighting one another for several hours at night the 11<sup>th</sup> and near the town of Oshnavieh (Shno), not far from the borders with the Kurdistan Region. They both claimed dozens of the enemy’s forced killed. One Iranian communiqué described the KDPI’s Peshmergas as “terrorists (...) affiliated to international arrogance”... In the context of the many Turkish bombing raids against the PKK and the Iranian incursions into Iraqi Kurdistan against the Kurdish parties of Rojhelat, the Turkish gendarmerie and Iranian border police met on the 10<sup>th</sup> in the Boralan district, near Maku (Iran), affirming their common aim at fighting the PKK and its Iranian brother party, the PJAK, as well as smuggling.

In response the PJAK launched a call on the 12<sup>th</sup> for the unity of the Kurdish parties against Teheran. It proposed the creation of a multi-party Commission to resolve rivalries, a combined armed force and a shared media platform as well as the formation of a National Democratic

Council that could be later enlarged by accepting new members, as well as a joint Diplomatic Council. The proposal was rejected by the other Kurdish parties, however. A leading cadre of *Komala* considered the plan unrealistic seeing the absence of any previous dialogue, while a leader of the KDPI declared that the PJAK’s project did not match their own strategic objectives since the road maps of the two parties were totally different. Last January, after the murderous attacks on the KDPI base at Koya, in Iraqi Kurdistan, a Commission was created enabling the Kurdish parties to exchange information so as to face up to threats to their safety but the PJAK was not part of it...

On the 16<sup>th</sup> the KDPI claimed it had killed 3 *pasdarans* in an attack of one of their bases at Sardasht (Western Azerbaijan), while on the same day a new armed group, the “*Red Flag Fighters*”, claimed the execution of a police officer in Kermanshah for “the years of suffering he had inflicted on the local Kurdish

population". According to the communiqué, published again in a *Komala* outlet, Major Hassan Maliki had ceaselessly harassed the families of political activists and the citizens of Rwansar.

According to news from Iranian Kurdistan, harassing is indeed permanent, especially against the cross-border porters, the *kolbars*. The endemic poverty often leaves the inhabitants no other means of survival than this type of job, as is shown by the strike launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> by the municipal employees of Sardasht, unpaid for months past. These *kolbars* are considered smugglers by the repressive forces and frequently shot down in the mountains — real cases of unpunished "legal murder". On the 9<sup>th</sup> one of them was killed on his way near Salmas, near the Iran-Turkey border. More than a dozen others were arrested in a raid by repressive forces at Birwan, near Sardasht. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> yet another barely aged 19 was killed on the Iraqi border near Oshnavieh (Shno). On the 25<sup>th</sup> another porter was killed by the explosion of a mine near Penjwîn, on the border between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan. Three other, wounded, were taken to a medical centre at Penjwîn, on the Iraqi side of the border. Although there are still anti-personnel mines left from the Iran-Iraq war, the local inhabitants accuse the regime of having recently laid new ones against the Kurdish fighters...

Moreover the *pasdarans* do not hesitate about attacking civilians or damaging the environment. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, according to the Human Rights Association of Kurdistan, "for reasons of national security" they expelled the inhabitants of 500 border villages in Kermanshah Province and converted the whole region into a military zone (WKI). On the 25<sup>th</sup> they bombed the mountains near Mariwan, provoking a forest fire which killed four

firemen and several ecological activists who had come to fight the fire. This sparked off demonstrations in Mariwan (*Kurdistan* 24). On the 28<sup>th</sup> a new fire broke out near Sardasht whose origins are unknown, but the activists suspect it was started deliberately by the forces of repression to prevent the opposition groups from hiding in the woods... (WKI)

Finally on the 31<sup>st</sup>, *Voice of America* reported the desertion of a Kurdish officer of the Iranian Police who had been obliged to flee Iran after refusing to arrest people taking part in anti-government demonstrations. According to his testimony there have been other desertions even from the Army and the *pasdarans*.

The situation of political prisoners in Iran continues to worry Human Rights defenders. In particular the family of Ramin Hossein Panahi, who had been sentenced to death at the end of an iniquitous trial, expressed from the beginning of the month their fears for his life. It seems that the media associated with the *pasdarans* are waging a veritable campaign to prepare public opinion for his execution. According to an anonymous source close to the family: "The situation in the Kurdistan region (of Iran) is very tense following the fighting with PJAK and the death of border guards (...). For the last few weeks certain sites run by the IRGC [*pasdaran*] and the Intelligence Ministry are daily publishing articles to justify Ramin's death sentence". Panahi's lawyer, Hussein Ahmadi Niyaz, who is also defending other political prisoners as well as the school-girls who were victims of the fire at their school at Shin Abad (Piranshahr) in 2012, was himself briefly arrested on the 5<sup>th</sup> at Sanandaj, a town he had visited to follow up Panahi's case. He was released on bail but... The reason given was that he had not attend-

ed to a summons by a Revolutionary court charging him for having granted interviews to foreign media... However on the 15<sup>th</sup> Niyaz published a joint declaration with two other colleagues in which they indicated that they had been informed by Panahi's family that he had been transferred two days before and without his consent from Sanandaj to the Rajaei Shahr Prison in a Western suburb of Teheran (VOA). This transfer, carried out without informing the family, is illegal, as prisoners should be detained near their homes and their family unless they themselves ask for a transfer. On the 27<sup>th</sup> Ramin's brother, Amjad, declared that the condemned prisoner had started a hunger strike and had been placed in isolation during the night, an operation during which he had been wounded by one of the guards. "We think he may be in one of the Teheran hospitals but at this moment we do not even know (...) if he's been hanged or not" stated Amjad (*Kurdistan* 24).

Other political prisoners from whom, as with Panahi, confessions had frequently been obtained by torture, are in danger of execution. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, *Amnesty International* called on Iran to review its decision to execute Kamal Hassan Ramezan, a Kurd from Rojava arrested at Urumieh in 2014 and accused, at the end of an iniquitous trial without even a lawyer, of having taken part, in 2011 in an armed attack by PJAK in which a *pasdar* had been killed. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> another prisoner, the writer Ali Baderkhani, was severely beaten by common law prisoners encouraged by a prison officer. After a one-week hunger strike, Baderkhani was promised a transfer to the political prisoners' quarter. In fact he was transferred from the isolation cell to the quarter of the workers who beat him up. Baderkhani has published several works under the pen name of

Shiwan, including *Democracy and the Kurds*.

Journalists trying to defend the rights of their fellow citizens are also repressed. This is the case of the Human Rights defender Ejlal Ghavami, who was summoned for the third time in a few months for interrogation at the offices to the Sanandaj offices of the Iranian

Intelligence. At first investigated regarding the anti-government demonstrations last January, Ghavami had been accused in March of spreading false news and anti-government propaganda. He was acquitted but the prosecutors appealed against this decision, so he must appear before the Appeal Court in November. He thinks this fresh summons is

linked to the opening of a new file against him...

Regarding other news, in the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> an earthquake of a magnitude of 6.0 killed at least two people in Kermanshah Province and injured 300 others. Its epicentre seems close to the town of Gezen (Kermanshah), it was felt as far away as Erbil and Baghdad.

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### SCIENCE AND CULTURE: A KURDISH REFUGEE FROM IRAN RECEIVES THE HIGHEST DISTINCTION IN MATHEMATICS

**O**n 1<sup>st</sup> August, the Iranian Kurd Caucher Birkar (a name that could be translated by "the nomadic mathematician"; since *bîrkarî* means "mathematics"), 40 years old, a refugee in the United Kingdom since 2000, received at Rio de Janeiro with three other prize-winners the *Field medal*, a distinction considered equivalent to the Nobel prize for mathematics. Birkar, who lectures at Cambridge University, was rewarded for his contribution to the geometric studies on the Fano Plane. The Field medal, created at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, is awarded every four years since 1936, during the international mathematics Congress, to a maximum of four mathematicians of under 40 years. After receiving his award, Birkar alluded to the Kurdish people in a tweet telling "I hope that this news will bring a smile to the faces of 40 million people".

The award of the Field medal to Birkar received as more publicity than the one voted a few minutes later and was given to him at the same time as a wallet received at the same time as the wallet and into the pockets of which he had placed them both.

The awarding of the medal to Birkar was all the more publicized as it was stolen from him a few minutes after he received it, along with his wallet, in the small bag where he had placed both! Beyond its highly symbolic value, the medal is in 14 carat gold and is worth about 3.440 €. Birkar received however a replacement medal quite quickly, the organizers having prepared in case of any unforeseen event a 5<sup>th</sup> medal on which his name was engraved again...

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August the Turkish authorities moved a Turkish bath building (*hammam*) dating back from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, built at Hasankeyf, to preserve it from being engulfed in the waters of the reservoir lake created by the Ilisu Dam. The operation, which has required enormous financial means has been given still a greater amount of publicity. The building was placed on a rolling platform, especially made to measure, and it took many hours along a specially built road to bring it to its new site, 2 km from the earlier one, inside a "cultural park" created close to the old town. Last year a tomb dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and weighing over 1.1 tons had already been moved there. Six other buildings are due to join them and, according to the governor of Batman province,

Ahmet Deniz, "the new Hasankeyf will be a touristic pearl" (*Anadolu*). But the Ilisu Dam, a part of the gigantic Southeast Anatolia Project ("GAP", for *Anadolu Güneydoğu Projesi*) is strongly criticised for the destruction it will create of the region's heritage since it will engulf the city of Hasankeyf, that is 12,000 years old, a former trading post on the Silk Road, with its vestiges of so many periods: Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abassid, Marwanid, Ayyubid, pre-Ottoman, Ottoman... Although it is now presented as an "integrated development project", the GAP aims essentially at bringing hydro-electric resources to the West of the country, hungry for energy. It is also generating tensions with neighbouring countries downstream of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Syria and Iraq, to whom it cut the water supply, aggravating their chronic water shortages. In June, Turkey announced it would suspend for one month the filling of its reservoirs lakes after a complaint by Iraq.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> the Ministry of National Heritage of the British Government, Michael Ellis, announced its awarding of a budget from its *Cultural Protection Fund* to protect several unique archaeological sites in

Iraqi Kurdistan dating from over 10,000 years. The Fund is concerned with regions affected by conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, and is financing 9 projects. Two zones of Kurdistan are concerned: the region of Garmiyan and the town of Amêdî. Garmiyan suffered continuous damage during the recent period as it lies on the front line in the Iran-Iraq war,

also suffered during the period of repression of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein in the 1990s, and is now quite close to the front line of the struggle against ISIS. Glasgow University has received more than 300,000 pounds to evaluate the damage in the region, that it will do with the help of satellite and aerial imagery, and will issue proposals of solutions for preservation.

The British team will also train local archaeologists and collaborate with teachers in local schools to enhance during the classes the understanding and value of the cultural heritage. Regarding Amêdî, the project, that received 100,000 pounds, aims to document this town's heritage and collaborate with the local authorities in its protection ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

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# Turkish leader's imprisoned challenger



Selahattin Demirtas, the presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party, has been held in a Turkish prison for more than 20 months on 100 charges, including terrorism.

EDİRNE, TURKEY

## Kurdish politician placed third in nation's recent presidential election

BY CARLOTTA GALL

A prominent Kurdish politician, Selahattin Demirtas, once helped Turkey's leader come close to ending the decades-old conflict with Kurdish militants that has killed tens of thousands of people.

Today, Mr. Demirtas is in prison, where he has been for more than 20 months on 100 charges, including terrorism and insulting that same leader, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He has been barred from the mainstream news media.

Yet all of that did not stop him from running for the presidency in Turkey's recent election — and finishing third.

Now that Mr. Erdogan has won the June 24 election, the chances that Mr. Demirtas will be released from prison are dimming. Mr. Erdogan is amassing

power in a new presidential system — allowing him to exert control in nearly every aspect of public life — and has effectively sidelined those who challenge him.

Mr. Demirtas and his supporters say the charges against him are political, aimed at crushing his pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, or H.D.P.

That tactic seems to have failed, even as Mr. Demirtas's own hopes have diminished. The party cleared the 10 percent threshold needed to win a place in Parliament, securing 67 seats in the expanded 600-member legislature.

The result represented the party's third successive electoral success since 2015, when it first won seats in Parliament, and showed that Mr. Demirtas's vision of peace and democracy in Turkey still resonates with Kurds, as well as with some liberals, young people and minority voters.

"Under these circumstances it is a great success that H.D.P. has a place in Parliament," he said in a message posted on Twitter the day after the election.

It was one in a series of notes passed along to his lawyers for posting, his only way of communicating regularly with supporters.

"Whatever my circumstances are," he added, "I want everybody to know that I will continue the struggle without being discouraged."

Members of the opposition alliance against Mr. Erdogan had called for the release of Mr. Demirtas, 45, a former human rights lawyer, but he faces potential life imprisonment if convicted of just some of the charges against him.

Mr. Erdogan has labeled the Peoples' Democratic Party a separatist organization, called for a swift resolution to Mr. Demirtas's trial and even suggested that he would sign the death penalty back into law if Parliament passed it.

Every week, Mr. Demirtas's wife, Basak, 41, travels the length of the country and back — about 2,000 miles — to talk to her husband through a window in the high-security prison at Edirne in western Turkey.

Once a month, the family is allowed to meet in a room. Ms. Demirtas, a schoolteacher, limits her daughters, 12 and 14, to monthly visits because the trip is so grueling.

Childhood sweethearts, the couple grew up in the warren of small streets and ancient monuments of Sur, a neighborhood inside the old walled city of Diyarbakir. The imposing black basalt city walls that date from the Byzantine era encircle the old city like a massive fortress on a hill above the Tigris River.

But the Sur neighborhood is more like an empty parking lot today. The houses have been razed, and the few mosques and historical buildings left are surrounded by stretches of rough ground.

Mr. Erdogan came to power in 2002 offering to make peace with the insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has been fighting the Turkish state for nearly three decades. He came close to achieving that with the help of Mr. Demirtas, whose activists worked as mediators with the insurgents.

But in 2015 the peace talks broke down and both sides returned to violence. For 18 months the Turkish government conducted punitive security operations in 30 Kurdish cities, including Diyarbakir, raising the conflict to a level of urban strife never seen before in Turkey.

**"Whatever my circumstances are, I want everybody to know that I will continue the struggle without being discouraged."**

A United Nations report estimates that around 2,000 people were killed in that period, many of them civilians, while 355,000 Kurds were displaced.

Ms. Demirtas described how government bombing would wake her family up in their apartment across town. "One night it was so bad I thought they were bombing all of Diyarbakir," she said. "Can you imagine that we could hear it

from 20 kilometers away?"

The Turkish government has blamed Mr. Demirtas and his party for encouraging people to resist the government in the cities, along with the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Mr. Demirtas and his followers insist that they espoused only peaceful, democratic means. They accuse the government of waging the military campaign because of the party's surprising success at the polls.

Mr. Demirtas was detained in October 2016. Police officers came for him at 1:30 a.m., though he had spent the previous day alone in their apartment while his wife was at work.

"I could not count them — there were 200 or more," his wife said. "In this block, for 500 meters up to my sister's house, it was all police, special forces with masks."

"I always say he was not detained," she said. "Selahattin was kidnapped." ●



Mr. Demirtas's wife, Basak, casting her ballot in Diyarbaki on Election Day in June. Credit Sertac Kayar/Reuters



## Un réfugié kurde iranien lauréat de la médaille Fields

Rio de Janeiro, 1 août 2018 (AFP)

**LE KURDE IRANIEN CAUCHER BIRKAR, réfugié au Royaume-Uni, est un des quatre lauréats de la médaille Fields, considérée comme le prix Nobel des mathématiques, décernée mercredi à Rio de Janeiro.**

L'Allemand Peter Scholze, âgé de 30 ans seulement, a également été récompensé, ainsi que l'Italien Alessio Figalli et l'Indo-australien Akshay Venkatesh.

Né à Marivan, province kurde à la frontière avec l'Iran, Caucher Birkar, 40 ans, a fait ses études à Téhéran avant de partir pour le Royaume-Uni, où il a obtenu l'asile politique.

Professeur à l'Université de Cambridge, il a été récompensé pour sa contribution aux études géométriques sur le plan de Fano.

"J'espère que cette nouvelle va faire sourire 40 millions de personnes", a réagi sur Twitter le mathématicien, en référence au peuple kurde. Avec tous les conflits qui font rage dans la région, "le Kurdistan n'était pas un endroit où on pourrait imaginer qu'un enfant puisse s'intéresser aux mathématiques", a-t-il ajouté.

Peter Scholze, professeur de l'Université de Bonn, a remporté la médaille Fields grâce à ses travaux sur l'arithmétique et la géométrie algébrique. "Il y a un nombre infini de problèmes. Quand on parvient à en résoudre un, dix de plus font leur apparition", a affirmé le jeune Allemand sur Twitter.

Alessio Figalli (bien Figalli), un Italien 34 ans, a pour sa part été récompensé pour ses contributions à la théorie du transport optimal. Chargé de recherches au CNRS (Centre national de la Recherche scientifique en France) depuis 2007, il est actuellement détaché à l'École polytechnique fédérale de Zurich (Suisse). Boursier du Conseil européen de la recherche (ERC), il a notamment eu comme mentor le Français Cédric Villani, médaillé Fields en 2010.

Le quatrième lauréat, Akshay Venkatesh, 36 ans, est né à New Delhi et a grandi en Australie. Il a été récompensé pour ses travaux sur la théorie analytique des nombres.

La médaille Fields est attribuée depuis 1936 à au maximum quatre mathématiciens de moins de 40 ans.



Ce prix a été proposé en 1923 par le mathématicien canadien John Charles Fields, décédé en 1932. Il a légué ses biens à la science pour financer cette récompense, souvent qualifiée de "prix Nobel" de mathématiques.

Sur les 55 lauréats au total, on compte notamment 13 Américains et 12 Français, les deux nationalités ayant reçu le plus souvent cette récompense.

Les médailles ont été remises lors du Congrès international des mathématiques, qui a lieu tous les quatre ans depuis la fin du XIXe siècle et était organisé pour la première fois dans l'hémisphère sud.

Lors de la cérémonie d'ouverture, marquée par des présentations culturelles d'Indiens d'Amazonie et de danseurs originaires des favelas de Rio, les organisateurs ont annoncé que la prochaine édition aurait lieu à Saint-Petersbourg, en Russie, en 2022. ●



# Sanctions américaines sans précédent contre l'allié turc

## Excédé par le refus d'Ankara de libérer un pasteur, Washington cible deux ministres

ISTANBUL - *correspondante*

**E**n représailles à la détention, en Turquie, du pasteur évangélique américain Andrew Brunson, les Etats-Unis ont décidé, mardi 1<sup>er</sup> août, d'imposer des sanctions aux ministres turcs de l'intérieur et de la justice, Süleyman Soylu et Abdulhamit Gül. Tous deux sont décrits par le département du Trésor des Etats-Unis comme ayant joué « un rôle majeur » dans l'incarcération du pasteur.

Les deux ministres turcs sont désormais interdits d'entrée aux Etats-Unis, leurs avoirs sur le sol américain ont été gelés, aucun citoyen américain ne peut plus commercer avec eux. Ces sanctions sont une première salve. D'autres pourraient suivre. D'ores et déjà, la monnaie turque a décroché, atteignant le seuil symbolique de 5 livres pour 1 dollar.

Ulcérée par l'attitude agressive et clivante du gouvernement turc, l'administration américaine a, selon l'agence Bloomberg, élaboré à l'endroit d'Ankara, son partenaire stratégique dans la région, son alliée au sein de l'OTAN, une « liste Magnitski », semblable à celle qui vise actuellement le gouvernement russe et les oligarques proches du Kremlin.

Voici deux mois que l'affaire Brunson empoisonne la relation entre les deux partenaires. Jugé depuis le printemps par un tribunal d'Izmir, le pasteur Brunson risque trente-cinq années de prison pour « terrorisme » et « espionnage » au profit de deux organisations, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et le réseau du prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, désigné par Ankara comme le cerveau du coup d'Etat manqué du 15 juillet 2016.

### « Nouvel Antéchrist »

Arrêté en décembre 2016, M. Brunson, 50 ans, a été détenu pendant dix-neuf mois à la prison de haute sécurité d'Izmir – dont douze mois sans mise en examen – avant d'être placé, la semaine dernière, en résidence surveillée. L'acte d'accusation du pasteur Brunson est surprenant. Fondé sur les auditions de témoins anonymes évoqués par leurs seuls surnoms (« Feu », « Le Prieur », « Météor »), il mentionne aussi bien le fait que de fervents chrétiens de l'entourage du pasteur perçoivent M. Erdogan comme le « *nouvel Antéchrist* » et retient à charge le recel, sur le téléphone portable du pasteur, de la recette du *maklube*, un mets qui serait le plat préféré des gülenistes.

Depuis 2016, les autorités turques réclament à la justice américaine l'extradition de l'imam Gülen, un ancien allié de M. Erdogan, qui, depuis 1999, dirige son mouvement religieux depuis sa résidence cossue de Pennsylvanie. La justice américaine estime que le dossier d'accusation présenté par Ankara en vue de l'extradition n'est pas convaincant.

Côté turc, l'angle transactionnel est privilégié. « *Vous nous donnez le prédicateur, on vous rend le pasteur* », a coutume de dire M. Erdogan. Justement, les tractations allaient bon train entre le secrétaire d'Etat, Mike Pompeo, et son homologue turc, Mevlüt Çavusoglu. Selon Bloomberg, un arrangement avait presque été trouvé. Les Etats-Unis s'engageaient à réduire l'amende encourue par Halkbank, la banque publique turque accusée d'avoir contourné les sanctions américaines envers l'Iran, et à renvoyer en Turquie le responsable de Halkbank Meh-

### L'acte d'accusation du pasteur retient à charge le recel de la recette du « maklube », qui serait le plat préféré des gülenistes

met, Hakan Atilla, condamné le 16 mai à trente-deux mois de prison par un tribunal de Manhattan pour le même chef d'accusation.

En retour, la libération d'Andrew Brunson devait suivre. Mais le scénario de l'arrangement s'est effondré mercredi 25 juillet lorsqu'un tribunal d'Izmir a placé le pasteur en résidence surveillée. Ulcéré par le refus de la justice turque de libérer « un formidable chrétien et père de famille », le président américain, Donald Trump, a jugé que les sanctions contre les ministres turcs étaient « la mesure appropriée », a souligné mardi le secrétaire d'Etat, Mike Pompeo. Andrew Brunson « doit être ramené à la maison », a indiqué mardi la porte-parole de la diplomatie américaine, Heather Nauert.

Ankara prépare sa revanche. Le ministère turc des affaires étrangères a promis mardi « une riposte sans délai ». Pas question pour la Turquie de « céder aux menaces », a assuré de son côté le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, fustigeant au passage « la mentalité évangéliste et sioniste » des Etats-Unis.

Outre l'affaire Brunson, la politique étrangère du président Erdogan, prompt à embrasser Vladimir Poutine et désireux d'acquiescer les systèmes russes de défense antiaérienne S-400, est une



Andrew Brunson, le 25 juillet, jour de sa sortie de la prison d'Izmir pour être assigné à résidence avec une interdiction de quitter le territoire. / AFP

source d'irritation à Washington. Mercredi, le Congrès a adopté la loi sur le budget de la défense, qui interdit au Pentagone de livrer à la Turquie les avions de combat F-35 qu'elle a commandés, une centaine au total.

Cette interdiction vaut tant qu'Ankara n'aura pas renoncé à l'achat des S-400. L'avion furtif F-35 étant censé pouvoir échapper aux radars russes, les spécialistes américains de l'armement craignent que leurs secrets de fabrication ne se retrouvent très vite à Moscou. Fin juin, les premiers F-35 ont été remis à la Turquie sans pour autant quitter le sol américain, les pilotes turcs étant actuellement formés à leur pilotage depuis une base américaine. ■

MARIE JÉGO

# Amnesty dénonce « un climat de terreur » contre les Kurdes d'Afrin

L'ONG recense les exactions des milices proturques dans la ville syrienne

Les civils d'Afrin, en Syrie, subissent de « graves violations des droits humains » perpétrées par les supplétifs locaux de l'armée turque qui occupent ce territoire kurde depuis le mois de mars, d'après un rapport d'Amnesty International publié jeudi 2 août. En janvier, l'armée turque et ses alliés syriens avaient lancé une offensive contre la poche d'Afrin, alors tenue par les forces kurdes, alliées à la coalition internationale contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI). Celles-ci ont été chassées d'Afrin après trois mois de bataille. D'après l'organisation non gouvernementale, la Turquie donne « toute latitude » à la vingtaine de milices d'orientation islamiste qu'elle soutient pour commettre leurs exactions contre la population kurde.

« Il règne à Afrin un climat de terreur », dénonce Diana Semaan, qui a mené pour Amnesty, pendant plusieurs mois, les recherches ayant permis d'établir les violations perpétrées contre la population kurde. Les groupes armés syriens règnent en maîtres dans l'espace public. Les habitants, majoritairement kurdes, qu'ils perçoivent comme leurs ennemis, se sont vu confisquer leur ville et sentent qu'ils ne sont pas à l'abri de violences arbitraires de leur part. Cette peur paralyse les habitants et rend particulièrement difficile la recherche d'in-

formations. Nous avons la certitude qu'il y a beaucoup plus de cas de disparitions et de tortures que ceux que nous avons pu établir. »

L'accès à Afrin est sous le contrôle des forces turques, qui n'ont pas autorisé les chercheurs d'Amnesty International à se rendre sur place, et limitent drastiquement l'accès des médias indépendants à l'enclave occupée. Les témoignages recueillis à distance, ou auprès d'habitants d'Afrin ayant récemment quitté la zone, permettent toutefois de prendre l'ampleur des violations commises à l'encontre de la population kurde.

## Pillages massifs

Les disparitions forcées et les détentions arbitraires sont notamment devenues un trait distinctif du règne exercé par les forces turques et leurs alliés. « Il s'agit un phénomène d'ampleur que nous n'avons pas pu quantifier avec précision dans sa totalité, du fait des conditions dans lesquelles se sont déroulées nos recherches », indique M<sup>me</sup> Semaan. Les motifs de ces enlèvements sont multiples. « Il existe des cas qui relèvent de la pure répression politique contre les personnes opposées à la présence des forces armées turques et des groupes armés. Mais nous avons également documenté de nombreux enlèvements avec demande de rançon, perpétrés par ces mêmes grou-

pes », précise M<sup>me</sup> Semaan. Dans certains cas, les familles restent sans nouvelles de leur proche, en dépit des sommes versées.

Chaque milice d'Afrin dispose de ses propres lieux de détention. Bien que tous placés sous la férule d'Ankara, les groupes armés présents à Afrin entretiennent des rivalités qui peuvent dégénérer en luttes territoriales, voire en confrontations armées. Les familles des personnes détenues sont ainsi confrontées à une multitude de groupes armés hostiles. Si certains sont libérés après des périodes de captivité émaillées, dans plusieurs cas, d'actes de brutalité ou de torture, d'autres disparaissent dans le chaos ambiant. « Nous avons relevé des cas des personnes déplacées par les combats qui ont tenté de rentrer dans leurs anciennes maisons, dans des zones occupées, et qui ne sont jamais réapparues », indique M<sup>me</sup> Semaan.

Après des pillages massifs, les habitations et les commerces de milliers d'habitants d'Afrin, déplacés par les combats au début de l'année, ont été attribués à des déplacés venus de territoires rebelles, repris entre-temps par le régime syrien. Ajoutées au climat de peur qui frappe la population kurde, ces évolutions laissent planer le spectre d'un remplacement démographique durable. ■

ALLAN KAVAL



# Will Riyadh-Tehran rivalry kill Iraqi Kurdistan's investment drive?

**A visit to Erbil by a Saudi trade delegation in late July has the potential to bear fruit in advancing economic cooperation and investment in the region, helping ease its current financial crisis, but the Saudis' move has raised eyebrows in Tehran.**



Fazel Hawramy  
August 3, 2018  
/www.al-monitor.com

Iraqi Kurdistan, facing an acute financial crisis, has a newfound opportunity to attract desperately needed foreign investment from Saudi Arabia, but regional tensions between Tehran and Riyadh could hamper its efforts.

A large Saudi trade delegation led by Sami Bin Abdullah al-Obeidi, chairperson of the Council of Saudi Chambers, and accompanied by the Saudi ambassador to Iraq and the consul general to Erbil, visited the Iraqi Kurdistan Region July 23-25, meeting with business leaders and government officials, including Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, to explore economic opportunities in the energy, agricultural, industry and tourism sectors. Although no agreements were signed, the parties agreed to work toward expanding economic relations, as Saudi Arabia plans to establish a direct trade link from its Arar border crossing into Anbar province and on to the Kurdistan region.

"Some of [the Saudi businessmen] have expressed the desire to build an entire industrial city in the Kurdistan region and build factories that would export to the rest of Iraq," Abdulaziz al-Shammari, Saudi ambassador to Iraq, told Rudaw on July 25.

In a positive sign for bilateral trading opportunities, Shammari remarked, "The [Arar] border crossing will open in the next 10 months and it will see large-scale trade exchange." He also said to expect direct flights between Erbil and Riyadh in the coming months and raised the possibility of Saudi banks opening branches in the region.

"This is a good beginning for our commercial relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Erbil Gov. Nawzad Hadi told Al-Monitor. The delegation discussed various investment opportunities, with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) also presenting 1,500 projects that have not been finished because of the region's financial crisis.

The invitation to the Saudis was extended by Kurdish officials who took part in an Iraqi delegation to a February conference in Kuwait on Iraq's reconstruction. The Saudis pledged to provide \$1 billion through its Saudi Fund for Development and \$500 million in export credits.

As for possible Saudi contributions to the Kurdistan region, "They can bring in their companies and invest in any sector they want," Nouri Osman, head of the KRG's Board of Investment, told Rudaw on July 24.

The arrival of the Saudi trade delegation is a testament to the Kurdistan region adopting an investor-friendly environment and possessing huge untapped oil and gas resources. Despite such assets, however, the KRG is "choking on debt" and desperately needs to find a solution to the current crisis.

"Perhaps the most intractable, and least discussed [problem] is how to address the insolvency of the semi-autonomous [KRG]. It's a simmering crisis that threatens Iraq's economic future and political unity, and one that the central government [in Baghdad] needs to step up and help defuse," wrote Andrew Snow of United States Institute of Peace on May 9.

Following the Islamic State (IS) attack on northern Iraq in summer 2014, and with the KRG confronting an acute economic crisis mainly due to low oil prices — almost all the KRG's revenue depends on oil sales — many investors, including those in the oil and gas sectors, left Kurdistan, plunging the region deeper into crisis. Now, with the IS security threat under control



Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Iraq Abdulaziz al-Shammari recently accompanied a trade delegation for talks in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan.

and oil prices rising, the KRG is trying to present itself as a destination for regional and international investors.

In early May, the KRG held its fourth economic conference with Iran and signed a memorandum of understanding to expand economic relations and highlight investment opportunities to its eastern neighbor at a time when relations between the two parties had sunk as a result of the KRG proceeding with a Kurdish referendum for independence last fall, which Iran vehemently opposed. Iran has an 1,118-mile border with Iraq, including the Kurdistan region, and 18 border crossings.

On a positive note, Hasan Danaeifar, former ambassador to Iraq who now leads the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture in Iraq (which is an Iranian governmental body), said on Aug. 1 that in the first four months of the Iranian calendar, from March 21 until July 21, Iranian exports to Iraq grew by 25%.

While KRG officials have been relatively successful in attracting foreign investment to their landlocked region despite widespread corruption, tensions — between Iran and the United States and Washington's regional allies, in particular Saudi Arabia — have posed a challenge to Saudis entering the Kurdistan market. Iran, one of the main investors in Iraqi Kurdistan, sees the Kurdistan region as its strategic backyard and looks with suspicion on Saudi activities there.

Tehran has in the past accused Riyadh of trying to foment unrest in Iran by supporting Kurdish armed opposition groups. "[Saudi Arabia] gives money to any anti-revolutionary who comes near the border and says, 'Go carry out operations,'" Mohsen Rezai, former head of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said in 2016. "When they ask, 'Where should we carry out operations?' they say, 'It's not important. We want Iran to become insecure.'"

On July 29, Nazim Dabagh, the KRG's representative in Tehran, told Al-Alam TV, the Arabic-language arm of the Iranian government, that Saudi Arabia's increased interest in trade with Iraqi Kurdistan is curious. Dabagh said he hopes the importance Saudi Arabia seems to be attaching to the Kurdish region is related to protecting the unity of Iraq. Dabagh is a senior member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a strategic ally of Iran in Iraqi Kurdistan.

On the second day of the Saudi delegation's visit, the KRG posted a statement on its website that read in part, "Prime Minister [Nechirvan] Barzani expressed the KRG's readiness to provide assistance and facilities for Saudi companies to invest in the Kurdistan Region and to promote and develop economic and trade relations between Iraq and the Kurdistan Region with Saudi Arabia."

The KRG, beginning to recover from three years of a bloody and costly war with IS, is in dire need of foreign investment to revive and complete a multitude of projects abandoned due to the financial crisis and battles with IS. Saudi largesse would indeed be welcomed as part of the solution from the perspective of the Barzani government, which hopes to strike a balance between Iran and its adversaries to attract maximum investments. This seems, however, to be a case of "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds." Only time will tell whether the Kurds can strike that delicate balance. ♦

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August 3, 2018

# Kurdish forces kill at least 9 Turkish-backed fighters in Afrin: YPG

Wladimir van Wilgenburg / August 03-2018  
www.kurdistan24.net

**ERBIL (Kurdistan 24)** – The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) announced on Friday that they killed at least nine Turkish-backed Syrian rebels between July 29 and Aug. 2 as part of attacks in Syria's Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

"On July 29 our units targeted a military vehicle belonging to the terrorists of Ahrar al-Sham on the road between villages of Faferteen and Burj Haidar of Afrin's Sherawa district. The car has been destroyed but the number of casualties couldn't be determined," the YPG press office said in a statement.

Moreover, the group said it targeted the Hamza Brigade on Monday with a motorcycle bomb in the Basutah village of Afrin's Sherawa district. "A Turkish soldier and 4 mercenaries



Pictures released claimed to be of the aftermath of the attacks on Turkish-backed forces in Afrin, Aug. 3, 2018. (Photo: YPG Media Office)

have been killed, 3 others have been injured seriously in the action," the statement said.

Although the YPG lost Afrin to Turkish troops and Syrian rebels on March 18 as a result of Ankara's "Operation Olive Branch," the group said it would continue its resistance, tar-

geting rebel forces there.

On Thursday, according to the statement, the group ambushed a jeep carrying a number of rival fighters in the village of Kimara, in Afrin's Sherawa district. "A Turkish soldier and 3 terrorists have been killed, 2 others have been injured."

The YPG General Command last week said that the people of Afrin "have never given up the resistance against the Turkish occupation" despite forced immigration, ethnic cleansing, looting, theft, and mass killings.

Turkish forces occupying Afrin are giving allied Syrian armed groups free rein to commit serious human rights abuses against civilians, Amnesty International said in a report released on Thursday.

Analysts say the YPG has continued operations after the fall of Afrin in March to make it as difficult as possible for the Turkish army and Syrian rebel groups to control the region.

"There are Turkish forces in Afrin and the YPG views them as illegitimate and has maintained that it will punish those forces," Aaron Stein, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, told Kurdistan 24.

"Afrin still isn't stable after [Operation] Olive Branch, and there are worrying signs that an insurgency is taking hold." ♦

**S&P Global** 8 August 2018

# Exporting oil via Turkey is main Baghdad-Kurdistan sticking point: Kurdish PM

**Over 200,000 b/d crude shut in on export impasse**  
**Barzani plays down Rosneft dispute with Baghdad**

Sulaimaniya, Iraq — 8 Aug 2018  
/www.spglobal.com

Exporting Kirkuk oil through Turkey is the top item on the long-standing and acrimonious agenda with the federal government, the prime minister of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region has said.

More than 200,000 b/d of crude from the Kirkuk area, managed by the state-run North Oil Company, is shut in due to a lack of export outlet. Another 230,000 b/d is sent to local refineries and a refinery and power plant in Baghdad.

"We offered to help export Kirkuk's oil through Turkey," Nechirvan Barzani told a press conference covered by local television Tuesday. "This is the main oil-related issue that we are discussing now."

Kurdistan built a pipeline in 2013 that connects to the Turkish side of the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline, and has been exporting crude produced by the Kurdistan Regional

Government's contracts since 2014.

It remains the sole practical export outlet of northern Iraq crude, as the Iraqi leg of the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline was destroyed by insurgents in early 2014.

Kurdistan fields are exporting 350,000 b/d, industry sources told S&P Global Platts, about half the existing capacity of the pipeline.

This year we have widened the Forum's coverage with dedicated sessions on LNG and Blockchain, to give you the fullest picture possible of the connections between regional and global markets.

Kurdistan and the federal government have long been in dispute over the rights to sign oil contracts with international oil companies and to export oil. The disputes are the premise of an ongoing legal battle in the Iraqi federal court.

Kurdistan's subsequent export via the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline is being contested by Baghdad in an International Chamber of Commerce's Paris arbitration case against Turkey.

Negotiations, however, have been strained by numerous factors over the past year. Most recently, the disputed May 12 national elections have yet to produce a clear winner

and leading electoral blocs are balancing a need to obtain support from the Kurdistan delegation while also showing a hard line against the Kurds so as not to jeopardize their nationalist credentials.

On Oct. 16, 2017, the federal government retook some disputed fields in Kirkuk, which Kurdistan had been operating since mid 2014. A month earlier, Kurdistan held an independence referendum that Baghdad warned would elicit a harsh response.

In early 2017, Rosneft signed the first of a number of deals with Kurdistan, buying oil that Baghdad said is akin to smuggling, signing production sharing contracts that Baghdad said are illegitimate, and purchasing a 60% stake in the Kurdistan export pipeline.

Baghdad has given mixed responses to the Rosneft deal. Various senior officials have reiterated the federal government's hegemony over the oil sector, but have not come close to threatening Rosneft as it has other oil companies that have signed upstream or oil purchase deals with Kurdistan.

"We don't have any disagreement with Baghdad over Rosneft oil deals," Barzani told the press conference. "We are looking for a constitutional solution for all oil related issues." ♦

# Syrie: Amnesty appelle Ankara à stopper de "graves violations" à Afrine

Istanbul, 2 août 2018 (AFP)

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL a exhorté jeudi la Turquie à mettre un terme aux "graves violations des droits de l'homme" à Afrine, ancien bastion d'une milice kurde dans le nord de la Syrie, accusant Ankara de "fermer les yeux" sur les exactions.**

Dans un rapport publié jeudi, l'ONG affirme que les résidents d'Afrine "endurent de multiples atteintes aux droits de l'homme, qui sont pour la plupart le fait de groupes armés syriens équipés et armés par la Turquie".

"Ces violations, sur lesquelles les forces armées turques ferment les yeux, englobent des détentions arbitraires, des disparitions forcées, la confiscation de biens et des pillages", énumère l'ONG dans son rapport.

Les forces turques, soutenues par des groupes rebelles syriens équipés et formés par Ankara, ont pris la région d'Afrine en mars après une offensive militaire de deux mois qui a entraîné l'exode de dizaine de milliers de personnes.

Nommée "Rameau d'olivier", cette opération visait à déloger d'Afrine les Unités de protection du peuple (YPG), une milice kurde soutenue par Washington mais considérée comme "terroriste" par Ankara.

Si Ankara a toujours démenti viser les populations, plusieurs dizaines de civils ont été tués dans les bombardements turcs pendant l'offensive, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Depuis le début de l'opération, "des affirmations infondées similaires à propos des civils ont émergé et elles ont été réfutées sur la base de documents et d'informations", a indiqué à l'AFP une source diplomatique turque interrogée au sujet du rapport d'Amnesty.

Cette même source a affirmé que des enquêtes avaient été menées sur les témoignages faisant état de pillages à grande échelle par des groupes armés syriens alliés d'Ankara lors de la prise de la ville d'Afrine en mars. "Les mesures nécessaires ont rapidement été prises".

Elle a en outre assuré que les rebelles syriens avaient "interdiction" de fouiller des villages et d'établir des points de contrôle à leur propre initiative.

Selon Amnesty, des militaires turcs et des combattants syriens alliés ont "réquisitionné des écoles" à Afrine, empêchant plusieurs milliers d'enfants de poursuivre leur scolarité.

"L'offensive et l'occupation par l'armée turque exacerbent la souffrance des habitants d'Afrine, qui ont déjà subi pendant des années un conflit meurtrier", déclare Lynn Maalouf, directrice de recherches sur le Moyen-Orient à Amnesty, citée dans le rapport.

L'ONG exhorte Ankara à "mettre sans délai un terme aux violations", estimant que la Turquie, en tant que "force d'occupation", est responsable de la sécurité des résidents et du maintien de l'ordre à Afrine.

La source diplomatique turque a affirmé que la Turquie conduisait des travaux pour rétablir les infrastructures, les hôpitaux et les écoles à Afrine.

Selon elle, 80.000 habitants d'Afrine sont déjà rentrés chez eux, et de l'aide humanitaire est régulièrement convoyée en coopération avec l'ONU.

Avant l'opération "Rameau d'Olivier", la Turquie avait lancé une première offensive dans le nord de la Syrie contre les YPG et les jihadistes du groupe Etat islamique (EI). ●

TheNational August 2, 2018

## Turkey turning 'blind eye' to Syrian rebel abuses in Afrin

### Amnesty accuses Turkish army of giving fighters 'free rein' to commit crimes against residents

Richard Hall / August 2, 2018  
<https://www.thenational.ae>

Turkey is turning a "blind eye" to kidnap, torture, extortion and looting by Syrian armed groups against the civilian population in the northern Syrian city of Afrin, according to rights groups.

Turkey launched an invasion of Afrin alongside an array of Syrian rebel groups in January this year to push out the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian Kurdish militia that Ankara views as a terrorist organisation, but which the US has worked alongside in the fight against ISIS.

In a new report released Thursday, Amnesty International accused Turkey's armed forces of giving rebel fighters "free rein" to commit a litany of crimes against residents since the takeover and turning a "blind eye" to the violations.

In a separate investigation, the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights said this week that as many as 1,000 people have been detained by various rebel groups since

they completed their takeover of the Kurdish-majority territory.

Citing dozens of witnesses in the city, and many who have since fled, the two reports paint a picture of lawlessness and impunity among armed groups some six months after they swept into the city alongside Turkish forces.

"Turkey's military offensive and occupation have exacerbated the suffering of Afrin residents, who have already endured years of bloody conflict," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty's Middle East Research Director.

"We heard appalling stories of people being detained, tortured or forcibly disappeared by Syrian armed groups, who continue to wreak havoc on civilians, unchecked by Turkish forces."

A Turkish diplomatic source described the allegations as "unfounded," adding that earlier reports of looting "were promptly investigated and necessary measures were immediately taken by the Turkish Armed Forces".

Operation Olive Branch, as it was dubbed by Ankara, led to the



Turkey-backed opposition fighters of the Free Syrian Army patrol the northwestern city of Afrin, Syria, during a Turkish government-organised media tour into northern Syria, Saturday, March 24, 2018. AP

displacement of more than 100,000 people — mostly Kurds — from the area.

Since the end of the offensive in March, Turkey has made efforts to bring a sense of normality to Afrin, opening schools and hospitals, and investing in infrastructure.

Turkish soldiers maintain a heavy presence in the city. Hami Aksoy, spokesman for the foreign ministry, said last month that those forces would stay there to "continue with the development of the

region".

But while many Syrians welcomed Turkey's occupation of the area, the Kurdish majority who previously lived in the area view it as an occupation. While it has opened schools, the rebel groups its supports and even Turkish soldiers themselves have taken over others. The arrival of Arab and Turkmen families from outside of the area has led to fears among Kurds of a permanent displacement. ➤

➤ Turkey claims that some 80,000 residents have returned to Afrin, but according to the UN almost 134,000 people remain displaced in surrounding towns and villages. Many are afraid to return, and the YPG is preventing others from going back, Amnesty said.

Family members of those detained by rebels said many were taken on suspicion of involvement with the YPG, an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has fought a guerilla war in Turkey's southeast since the 1980s.

Arin, a former resident of Afrin who fled during the Turkish invasion, told The National that her uncle was detained by rebels and

hasn't been seen since in four months.

"He went back to his home 10 days after the Afrin invasion, but it had been taken over and turned into a military base by the rebels," she said by phone from Kobani, a Kurdish city in Syria's northeast.

"He asked the soldiers if he could check on it and they took him in his own car. From that day he disappeared. Two guys later came to his wife and told her they were keeping the car."

One man who was held in a jail in the border town of Azaz told Amnesty that he witnessed beatings of detainees by Syrian rebels.

"I wasn't tortured, but I saw men being beaten in front of me by members of Sultan Mourad just for

fun, and at night the sound of men screaming echoed through the building. I was released without seeing a judge. I thought I would never make it out of there," he said, referring to a rebel unit backed by Turkey.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory documented similar abuses in its investigation. It said civilians were "investigated, tortured, and insulted."

Amnesty said locals had reported at least 86 instances of arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance. The Observatory said a total of one thousand people had been detained, of whom more than half were released after paying bribes or ransoms.

Since its forces were ousted from the Afrin region, the YPG has carried out a string of hit-and-run attacks on Turkish and Syrian rebel forces there. In recent weeks, those attacks appear to have increased. The group claimed to have killed more than a dozen Turkish-backed fighters in the last few days of July.

Amnesty said it was Turkey's responsibility as the "occupying power" to protect the welfare of civilians in Afrin.

"Without further delay, Turkey must end violations by pro-Turkish armed groups, hold perpetrators accountable, and commit to helping Afrin residents rebuild their lives," Ms Maalouf said. ●

REUTERS

## Erdogan vows action against 'economic terrorists' over lira plunge

ANKARA- August 13, 2018 Tuvan Gumrukcu (Reuters)

**PRESIDENT Tayyip Erdogan on Monday accused "economic terrorists" of plotting to harm Turkey by spreading false reports and said they would face the full force of the law, as authorities launched investigations of those suspected of involvement.**

The lira currency, which has lost more than 40 percent against the U.S. dollar this year, pulled back from a record low of 7.24 earlier on Monday after the central bank pledged to provide liquidity, but it remained under selling pressure and its meltdown continued to rattle global markets.

"There are economic terrorists on social media," Erdogan told a gathering of Turkish ambassadors at the presidential palace in Ankara, adding that the judiciary and financial authorities were taking action in response.

"They are truly a network of treason," he added. "We will not give them the time of day... We will make those spreading speculations pay the necessary price".

Erdogan, who gained sweeping new powers following his re-election in June, said rumors had been spread that authorities might impose capital controls in response to the slump in the currency, which tumbled as much as 18 percent on Friday alone.

The interior ministry said it had so far identified 346 social media accounts carrying posts about the exchange rate that it said created a negative perception of the economy. It said it would take legal measures against them but did not say what these would be.

Separately, the Istanbul and Ankara prosecutor's offices launched investigations into individuals suspected of being involved in actions that threaten Turkey's economic security, broadcaster CNN Turk and state news agency Anadolu reported.

Turkey's Capital Markets Board (SPK) and financial crime board have also said they would take legal steps against those who spread misinformation about financial institutions and firms, or reports that the government would seize foreign-currency deposits.

Earlier on Monday, Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, who is also Erdogan's



Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan addresses Turkish Ambassadors during a meeting in Ankara, Turkey August 13, 2018. Kayhan Ozer/Presidential Palace/Handout via REUTERS

son-in-law, said Turkey would start rolling out an economic action plan on Monday.

Albayrak stressed the importance of budget discipline, and ruled out any seizure or conversion of dollar-denominated bank deposits into lira.

Economists say the lira's fall is due to worries about Erdogan's influence over the economy, his repeated calls for lower interest rates, and worsening ties with the United States over the detention of a Christian pastor and other disputes.

Erdogan reiterated on Monday his view that the currency's crash had no economic basis, saying that U.S. sanctions imposed on Turkey over the terrorism trial of the pastor, Andrew Brunson, represented a "stab in the back" by a NATO ally.

The lira stood at 6.89 against the U.S. dollar at 1511 GMT - after Erdogan's comments - up from a record low of 7.24 to the dollar reached in early Monday trade. ●

AP Associated Press

## 4 soldiers killed in Turkey; 3 of them in friendly fire

16 August 2018 ANKARA, Turkey (AP) -

**TURKISH OFFICIALS say four soldiers have been killed in violence in**

**southeastern Turkey where troops are battling Kurdish rebels - three of them as a result of a friendly fire. Several soldiers were injured.**

The governor's office for Adiyaman province says one of the soldiers died when the rebels detonated a roadside bomb as a military vehicle passed by.

Another group of soldiers arrived at the scene inside a civilian vehicle to help evacuate injured comrades. However, they were shot at by another military unit who mistook them for Kurdish rebels, the governor's office said.

The three-decade-long conflict between government troops and the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, has killed tens of thousands of people. he group is considered a terror organization by Turkey and its allies. ●

# Festering economic woes fuel wave of protests across Iran

TEHRAN

BY THOMAS ERDBRINK

Across Iran's heartland, from the sweltering heat of its southern cities to the bustling capital, protesters have taken to the streets with increasing intensity in recent months, much to the satisfaction of the Trump administration, which is hoping the civil unrest will put pressure on Iranian leaders.

Some demonstrations — about the weak economy, strict Islamic rules, water shortages, religious disputes, local grievances — have turned deadly. The protesters have shouted harsh slogans against clerical leaders and their policies.

The events are broadly shared on social media and on the dozens of Persian-language satellite channels beaming into the Islamic republic.

In the past week, protests were held in the cities of Arak, Isfahan, Karaj and Shiraz, as people — in the hundreds, perhaps more — took to the streets, chanting slogans like “death to high prices,” but also criticizing top officials. A smaller protest was held in Tehran, where some people were arrested, according to videos taken at the scene.

In the city of Eshtehard, west of the capital, protesters attacked a religious school on Thursday, forcing 500 clerics in training to flee, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency reported.

Truck drivers who went on strike in May for higher wages have restarted their strike. The strike has left some gasoline stations empty in parts of the country, including Caspian Sea areas north of Tehran.

Iran's currency, the rial, has lost nearly 80 percent of its value compared with a year ago, weakened at least in part because the Trump administration withdrew the United States from the nuclear agreement with Iran in May and restored American economic sanctions. The first batch of those restored sanctions is set to take effect on Monday.

President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, who supported the nuclear agreement, is under fire not only from hard-liners but also from the Iranians who voted for him — the vast middle class. Both groups say his policies have failed.

The demonstrations began after a week of unprecedented nationwide protests in January. In more than 80 cities, including Tehran, people took to the streets with economic demands and calls for more freedoms. In total, 25 people were killed and more than 4,000



IRANIAN LABOR NEWS AGENCY, ILNA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shops closed in the grand bazaar in Tehran during a protest in June. Iran's currency, the rial, has lost nearly 80 percent of its value compared with a year ago.

were arrested.

The protests over the past six months have been relatively isolated, sporadic, scattered and much smaller than the antigovernment demonstrations in 2009, when millions took to the streets. But they reflect a common theme of rising dissatisfaction, many say.

Activists critical of the government concede that the demonstrations have not threatened Iran's leadership. Security forces, mindful of the 2009 upheavals, are now much better equipped to crush any organized antigovernment demonstrations. The protesters share neither unifying leadership nor a clear agenda.

While many in Iran's large middle class are unhappy, most watch from the sidelines, adverse to uncertainty.

“There is no vision, no leadership, and the protests will not lead to any chain reaction across the country, at this point,” said Bahman Amoei, a well-known political activist who has spent several stints in jail for his activities.

“I have to admit that the state, its security and propaganda machine, is capable of engineering public opinion very successfully and persuade the wider populace that the status quo is in their favor and change will be too costly,” he said.

However, for the country of 80 million, long one of the calmest in the Middle East, the growing list of demonstrations and strikes is remarkable.

In July, brokers of Tehran's vast bazaar marched across the city protesting high prices and clashing with security forces near the Parliament building.

Protesters in the southern border city of Khorramshahr clashed with security forces for days over water shortages. Defying risk of arrest, women have protested the compulsory Islamic head scarf. In February, deadly clashes erupted between members of a religious minority and security forces. In March, protests over water shortages spread to Isfahan, Iran's third largest city.

There also have been strikes, most notably in the Kurdish regions, where bazaars closed in April to protest restrictions on border trade. Truckers went on strike the next month. In the city of Kazeroun, two people were killed in clashes over plans to redraw its borders.

Videos show that some protesters have gone well beyond strictly economic grievances to challenge Iran's foreign policy and religious rules. Secular protest slogans aimed at Iran's leadership also criticize its support for Syria and groups in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon. Often protesters evoke the name of Reza Shah, an authoritarian who industrialized Iran at the beginning of the 20th century, with a very firm hand. In Khorramshahr, videos showed protesters shouting, “You have plundered us in the name of religion!”

Because of travel restrictions placed on foreign reporters, it is hard to determine the scope of demonstrations and clashes around the country.

Interviews with protesters in Tehran suggest that they are exasperated with what many view as the government's economic incompetence and corruption. One said he felt as if his life were shrinking by the day and he simply could not

take it anymore.

"We had been given bad news for days, our hearts were full of anger," said the protester, Hassan Seyedi, a broker at the Alaedine electronics bazaar in Tehran.

The protests have compounded the increasingly dire predicament Iran's leaders face as they prepare to deal with the restored American sanctions. Foreign investors are leaving the country, and the Iranian government, anticipating less oil income, has tightened the use of foreign currency. That move has accelerated the decline in the rial, driving anger that seems more aimed at Iran's leaders than the United States.

Hard-liners have consistently played

down the protests. "Around a hundred people take to the streets in cities populated by five million people," said Hamidreza Taraghi, a political analyst. He accused Iran's enemies, most notably the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel, of helping foreign-based opposition groups. "Foreign powers are seeking to seize upon our economical problems and create unrest."

At Tehran's grand bazaar, things were back to normal after the protests and strike last month. In the gold trading area, one merchant, Mostafa Arabzadeh, admitted that he had also closed his shop. "To protect my valuables," he said.

Mr. Arabzadeh said he disliked the

protesters and felt they were playing into the hands of Iran's enemies. "People that are angry forget we have one thing the rest of the region doesn't have: peace and stability," he said, adding, "We should cherish that."

But many agreed that the protests and the strikes would continue in one form or another. "People are no longer afraid to show their dissatisfaction," said Abolghasem Golbaf, a publisher.

When schools reopen after the summer break, Mr. Golbaf said, students and professors would very likely join the demonstrations, possibly presenting a new challenge to security forces. "People want their voices heard," he said. ●

Courrier

11 AOÛT 2018

# Turquie. La crise diplomatique avec les États-Unis fait dévisser la monnaie

Courrier international - Paris 11/08/2018  
www.courrierinternational.com

**La livre turque a plongé face au dollar et à l'euro suite à l'annonce par Washington d'une augmentation drastique des taxes douanières sur l'aluminium et l'acier turcs. Un coup très dur dans une économie déjà fragilisée.**

La livre turque a accusé vendredi 10 août une chute spectaculaire face au dollar et à l'euro, perdant jusqu'à 24 % de sa valeur face au dollar en une journée, alors qu'elle accusait déjà une baisse constante depuis le début de l'année.

Cet effondrement fait suite aux décisions annoncées par Donald Trump le 10 août de doubler les taxes à l'importation d'acier et d'aluminium turcs, portant respectivement ces taxes à 50 % et 20 %, annonçait CNN rapportant le commentaire qu'ajoutait le président américain à cette occasion :

**" les relations avec la Turquie ne sont pas bonnes en ce moment."**

La tension diplomatique entre les États-Unis et la Turquie ne fait que croître avec le contentieux qui les oppose sur l'affaire du pasteur américain Andrew Brunson. Détenu depuis près de deux ans en Turquie, ce pasteur est accusé par la Turquie de liens avec le PKK, le parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan considéré comme une

organisation terroriste par les autorités turques. Il a été libéré de prison le mois dernier mais reste en résidence surveillée dans le pays où il vit depuis plus de 20 ans.

**Erdogan donne de la voix dans le New York Times**

Cette crise n'est toujours pas résolue et le 1er août dernier, l'imposition de sanctions économiques américaines contre Ankara laissait déjà craindre une aggravation de la relation entre les deux pays et des conséquences durables sur la fragile économie turque.

Ce week-end, au beau milieu de la déroute de sa monnaie, le président turc Erdogan expose dans le **New York Times** son point de vue sur la situation entre les deux pays.

"Les États-Unis ont constamment échoué à comprendre et à respecter les préoccupations du peuple turc, estime-t-il. "Et ces dernières années, notre partenariat [au sein de l'OTAN] a été mis à l'épreuve par des désaccords."

En conclusion, prévient le président turc dans cette tribune :

**" Si cette tendance à l'unilatéralisme et au manque de respect ne s'inversait pas, nous nous verrions obligés de commencer à chercher d'autres amis et alliés."**

Cependant, analysent les médias, le dévissage de la monnaie turque n'est pas seulement dû à cette escalade diplomatique mais aux fragilités de l'édifice économique du pays.

"Le miracle économique turc que l'on a attribué ces quinze dernières années à Erdogan était

davantage une illusion qu'une réalité, écrit ainsi le journal israélien **Ha'aretz**. "L'économie turque a connu une croissance rapide, qui dépassait même celle de la Chine, mais ses fondations étaient bancales."

Les capitaux étrangers ont afflué dans le pays, développe le journal, mais cet argent n'a pas été investi à bon escient dans des infrastructures, dans des équipements industriels ou dans la recherche, le développement et l'éducation. "Il a servi à financer de grands projets de construction de plus en plus grandioses mais donnant peu de solidité à l'économie."

Aujourd'hui, analyse **The Independent** à Londres, la confiance des investisseurs dans la Turquie est minée par la crise diplomatique avec les États-Unis, mais aussi par "une inflation de 15 % et un déficit courant de 7 % de son PIB, ce qui signifie qu'elle dépend étroitement des financements étrangers."

Autant de paramètres qui n'auraient rien de si inquiétant dans le contexte d'une économie émergente comme celle de la Turquie, poursuit le quotidien britannique, "mais le président Erdogan a une telle tendance à l'autoritarisme capricieux que les investisseurs doutent de sa capacité à gérer la crise de façon rationnelle."

Le journal rapporte à titre d'exemple la réaction du président turc face à la chute de sa monnaie : "N'oubliez pas, s'ils ont les dollars, nous, nous avons notre peuple et notre Dieu."

Il n'empêche, conclut un éditorialiste du quotidien turc **Hürriyet Daily News** : pour "sauver la Turquie", dont les relations internationales se sont détériorées ces dernières années avec nombre de pays occidentaux et dont l'économie a reposé sur un modèle de court terme, "il faut d'abord en finir au plus vite avec cette affaire Branson." ♦

Sabine Grandadam



# Turkish deal that sparked Trump's fury

**Amberin Zaman**

**OPINION**

Turkey's relations with the United States have been unremittingly rotten for some time. They took a sharp turn for the worse when last week the U.S. Treasury slapped Turkey's interior and justice ministers with sanctions inspired by the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which have been used to target criminals and human rights abusers such as Slobodan Tesic, the Serbian arms dealer; Mukhtar Hamid Shah, an organ trafficker from Pakistan; and Yahya Jammeh, the former president of Gambia.

The sanctions freeze the assets of the targeted individuals in the United States and prohibit American citizens and companies from engaging in transactions with them.

**With relations souring, the focus should be on freeing imprisoned Americans and the Turkish staff of the U.S. Embassy.**

ize Kurds and help plan a failed coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The lawyers for Mr. Brunson have pointed out that because he and his wife returned to Turkey after the July 2016 coup and sought permanent residency in the country, they could not have been involved in the coup. President Trump and several senators have vouched for Mr. Brunson's innocence and described his imprisonment as Turkey's using him as a political bargaining chip.

On July 26, President Trump threatened "large sanctions" if Turkey did not release the pastor immediately. Turkey's battered lira fell further, losing 2.3 percent of its value against the dollar after Mr. Trump tweeted his threat. The Turkish lira has lost 27 percent of its value this year.

Mr. Trump was furious because he believed he had a deal. Reports suggest it hugely benefited Turkey. In exchange for the pastor's freedom, Washington reportedly considered lowering a multibillion-dollar fine against the Turkish state-owned Halkbank for evading United States sanctions against Iran. It also offered to let a senior Turkish executive, convicted

by a federal court in Manhattan for participating in the scheme, to serve out the rest of his sentence back home.

Mr. Trump threw in an extra sweetener by persuading Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to extradite a Turkish woman accused of having links to Hamas. But when Mr. Erdogan came up with last-minute demands — reportedly that the investigation by American authorities against Halkbank be dropped — the deal fell through and Mr. Brunson was placed under house arrest. Turkey missed a great opportunity; the United States imposed the sanctions.

Mr. Erdogan described the sanctions on his ministerial colleagues as a "Zionist Evangelist plot" and vowed to retaliate in kind by imposing sanctions on the American counterparts of the Turkish ministers.

Pro-government Turkish newspapers are baying for United States troops to be kicked out of Incirlik, a Turkish air base used in the fight against Islamic State militants and other critical missions, but the Turkish government has not moved in that direction yet.

The crisis between the two NATO allies is the worst since the United States imposed an arms embargo on Turkey over its 1974 invasion of Cyprus. But even if Mr. Brunson is allowed to leave, Turkish-American relations won't improve significantly.

Turkey is holding several United States citizens, including Serkan Golge, a Turkish-American NASA scientist, who was visiting Turkey after the coup and was arrested after a disgruntled relative claimed he had links to coup plotters. Three Turkish nationals working for American consulates in Turkey are also under detention on a cocktail of specious terror charges.

Congress has lined up its own set of sanctions, which include freezing the sale of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey, as retaliation for the imprisonments and

Turkey's plans to acquire the Russian-made S-400 missile system, which the Pentagon sees as compromising NATO security.

The Turkish government's supporters in the Trump administration argue for de-escalation because they see the relationship with Turkey as too valuable to forsake. They argue that punitive measures would drive Mr. Erdogan fully into the embrace of Russia, China and Iran. And Mr. Erdogan, who is hailed by a large number of Muslims as a fearless champion of the Palestinian cause, could cut Turkey's ties to Israel. They are wrong.

Should Washington stick to its guns, it might just help nudge Mr. Erdogan back to the democratic path of reform.

**Mr. Erdogan might talk tough, but Turkey needs NATO and he is aware of it.**

After all, Turkey has far more to lose from a rupture than the United States does. The Americans don't have the kind of economic leverage the Europeans have over Turkey. But infuriated by Turkish

recalcitrance, Congress now wants the Trump administration to block future funding for Turkey from global lenders like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — assistance it might need given its economic troubles.

As Mr. Erdogan continues to systematically hollow out Turkey's democratic institutions, foreign investors continue to flee. As economic troubles mount, Mr. Erdogan's sizable pool of supporters in the Turkish business community might rethink their loyalty. Unlike Iran, Turkey does not have oil to subsidize the follies of its leaders.

Despite its cooperation with Russia against the Syrian Kurds, Turkey is nervous about Russian expansionism in the Black Sea and South Caucasus.

Turkey does not recognize the annexation of Crimea, champions the cause of ethnic Crimean Tatars and has closed its ports to traffic from Crimea in protest. Mr. Erdogan might talk tough, but Turkey needs NATO and he is aware of it.

Easing pressure on Turkey before all innocent American citizens and Turkish diplomatic staff are freed would reinforce Turkey's claims that the Trump administration "only cares about Christians" and that it is raising a storm over Mr. Brunson to please Mr. Trump's evangelical base. It would also encourage Mr. Erdogan to believe he can continue to behave badly and get away with it.

Paranoia about purported Western designs to weaken and fragment Turkey — notably through the establishment of an independent Kurdish state — has been embedded in the Turkish mind since the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Allied powers at the end of World War I. It is a measure of both Turkey's insecurity and arrogance that it believes it is the object of such plans. Turkey's once omnipotent generals, and now Mr. Erdogan, have manipulated those fears to justify the oppression of their own citizens and consolidate their grip.

Pressingly, the United States must

ensure that Mr. Brunson, other American citizens and the Turkish staff of the United States embassy who are in prison are freed immediately. The longer it holds out, the harder it will be to step back and salvage the relationship because the Turkish government will get trapped further by its own

rhetoric about American plots. Mr. Erdogan's near total control of the media means he can spin freeing Mr. Brunson and others as a victory.

**AMBERIN ZAMAN**, a former Turkey correspondent for *The Economist*, is a columnist for *Al-Monitor*.

*The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.*

International **New York Times** AUGUST 9, 2018

# U.S. dispute bolsters Erdogan

ISTANBUL

## Despite deep divisions, Turks back their president in diplomatic tit-for-tat

BY CARLOTTA GALL

In their recent encounter at a NATO summit meeting, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and President Trump gave each other a fist-bump, as Mr. Trump declared, "I like him, I like him."

The lovefest was short-lived. Days later, the Trump administration imposed financial sanctions against two ministers of Mr. Erdogan's cabinet, sending the Turkish currency, the lira, plummeting and a stream of nationalist invective pouring forth from the Turkish media. Mr. Erdogan retaliated last weekend with sanctions of his own against his ministers' American counterparts.

The tit-for-tat exchange has led many to fear that the longtime allies were headed toward an irreparable rift, created by two leaders who each pride themselves on driving a hard bargain, in this case over Turkey's detention of an American pastor, Andrew Brunson, who was swept up in Mr. Erdogan's crack-down after a failed coup in 2016 and accused of espionage.

Combative politics is written in Mr. Erdogan's DNA, one Turkish columnist said, and for that matter, it seems, in Mr. Trump's. Indeed, according to diplomats, the several phone calls that have taken place between the two men this year have been stormy.

In the nationalistic mood of the moment, many Turks have even applauded Mr. Erdogan's riposte.

Across the spectrum, Turkish politicians, despite their deep divisions, took a united front against the United States for freezing the assets of the Turkish interior and justice ministers last week.

Most of the opposition parties in the Turkish Parliament condemned the United States sanctions in a joint state-

ment, and the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other business organizations denounced the sanctions by the United States.

The Ceyhan municipal council, in Turkey's southern province of Adana, announced that it had revoked its sister-city status with Frisco, Tex., because of the dispute.

Supporters of Mr. Erdogan took to Twitter with the hashtag #Emperyalizmekoleolmayacagiz (#We will not be slaves to imperialism), even while acknowledging that the political crisis will not help an already souring economy.

"I have my own company and dollar affects almost our entire business," said

a Twitter post by Erkan Babur, an engineer from Tokat, a province in the Black Sea region, and a local executive member of the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party. "But we are not born as bosses from our mothers. And it is not the dollar that made us the boss."

"We will close down our company if necessary and paint shoes, sell bagels, thanks to God, but never make Turkey bait for you," he added.

Newspapers, most of them now under control of businessmen close to the president, took fiercely anti-American stances as well.

"Know your limits, U.S.," said one headline in the daily *Milliyet*. Even the newspaper *Sozcu*, an aggressive nationalist opponent of Mr. Erdogan, called on the government not to bow its head. "Stand tall, that's enough for us," one headline read.

Even before Mr. Erdogan ordered matching sanctions on Saturday against two American officials, some analysts had predicted that he would escalate the dispute.

Soner Cagaptay, the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, predicted an "irrational response from Ankara."

"Half of Turkey, including many in Erdogan's circles, has drunk the Kool-Aid and believes that Erdogan is under attack (by his domestic and foreign adversaries) because he's out to make Turkey great again," Mr. Cagaptay wrote in a text message.



POOL PHOTO BY GIANLUIGI GUERCIA

**President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed sanctions against two American officials.**

## Combative politics is written in Recep Tayyip Erdogan's DNA. And for that matter, in President Trump's.

Kemal Can, writing in the opposition newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, said much of the dispute was driven by Mr. Erdogan's personal style.

"Sometimes a cunning tradesman, sometimes a stubborn toughness, sometimes glowering, sometimes bowing, but always with confidence that he would make it happen in the end," Mr.

Can wrote. "A mental state manages this style that Erdogan himself strongly believes in as he molds his close circle around the same religious belief."

Mr. Erdogan's propensity to surround himself with yes-men may have led him to misjudge domestic politics in the United States and miscalculate how far he could push Washington, he and others said.

"It is the thinking that 'we are so valuable that America is not going anywhere,'" said Ahmet Kasim Han, associate professor in international relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul.

Not only is it wrong, but dangerous, Mr. Han said. "This leads to an escalation that becomes very hard to control and it can really lead to a point where it can all break up."

The combination of the personalities

of Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Trump leaves everyone guessing as to the outcome, Asli Aydintasbas, a fellow of the European Council on Foreign Relations, raised in a column on its website.

"It is possible that, in seven or eight months, Brunson will be sitting in his home in North Carolina, Atilla will be back in Turkey, and Trump will be raving about Erdogan on Twitter once again," Ms. Aydintasbas wrote, describing a proposed deal to exchange the pastor for Mehmet Hakan Atilla, a Turkish banker convicted by an American court.

"But it is also possible that Turkey will become the next Venezuela, clashing with the West and dealing with a dire economic downturn," she added. "No

one can be sure."

Yet Mr. Erdogan, some analysts pointed out, can also be a pragmatist, capable of conducting an about-face on policy when it suits him.

Officials close to him have continued to offer assurances that an agreement would be found. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has repeated that negotiations were continuing, and reports surfaced Tuesday that a Turkish delegation would travel to Washington within days.

Sedat Ergin, a former Washington correspondent for the newspaper Hurriyet who has followed American-Turkish relations for more than 40 years, suggested that damage control for the economy would be Mr. Erdogan's pri-

ority.

He described the current crisis as the worst he had seen since the weapons embargo over Cyprus by the United States against Turkey 40 years ago.

"It feels like a journey back in time," Mr. Ergin wrote in a column for Hurriyet Daily News over the weekend.

Both sides were to blame, he said. Turkey did not grasp the grievances that Mr. Brunson's case caused to the United States. And Washington, he said, had made no progress on the extradition of Fethullah Gulen, who is accused of instigating the 2016 failed coup, and it had disregarded Turkey's security concerns in Syria for far too long. ●



AUGUST 10, 2018

# Iran's Economic Worries Mount as Iraq Applies New US Sanctions

Edward Yeranian / August 10, 2018  
<https://www.voanews.com>

**CAIRO** — Iraq has begun to apply new U.S. economic sanctions against Iran, turning back shipments of Iranian goods at a number of border crossings, according to Al Hurra TV, quoting Iranian merchants.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who is straddling the political fence as he seeks a second term following parliamentary elections in May, told journalists Wednesday that he was "totally opposed to the principle of sanctions, given the price [Baghdad] itself had paid for international sanctions [under Saddam Hussein]."

Nonetheless, Abadi said he would apply them, since "the world does business in dollars and it would hurt the interests of the Iraqi people" if he ignored them.

Iran is Iraq's second-largest trading partner after Turkey, causing concern that strict implementation of sanctions could hurt the economies of both countries. Iraq imported more than \$6.5 billion in goods and services from Iran last year, including consumer goods, building materials, raw materials, natural gas and electricity.

Merchants in Baghdad told Arab media in recent days that upward of two-thirds of the consumer goods they sell are Iranian-made, raising concerns about a possible closure of the border with Iran. Most analysts point out, though, that the Iraqi government does not



**FILE** - Residents shop for fruits and vegetables at a market in Baghdad's Karrada district. Iraq relies on imports from neighbors like Iran, Syria and Turkey for much of its consumer goods.

control many of its land or sea border crossings and that pro-Iranian Shiite proxy militias are likely to continue illicit trade with Tehran.

Washington-based Gulf analyst Theodore Karasik told VOA that applying the sanctions would be difficult at various levels, especially for "Kurdish factions which are close to Tehran," which he said "would probably have a difficult time implementing the sanctions, and could ignore or work around them."

He added that many Kurds have family ties on both sides of the border, making strict sanctions enforcement more difficult "because the family comes first and not the state."

## FINE LINE

Veteran Saudi analyst and commentator Jamal Khashoggi told VOA that Iraq's Abadi "must maintain good relations with both the U.S. and Iran in order to remain in power." He joked that Abadi "probably has breakfast with the Americans and lunch with the Iranians," and most likely was "telling the Americans that he will respect the sanctions," while claiming to the Iranians that he "is obliged to say that."

Khashoggi said many regional states find themselves in the same dilemma as Iraq. "They are a friend to America and don't want to be on the wrong side of Donald Trump, but they want to maintain their economic relationship with the Iranians," he said.

Khashoggi said that "Qatar, the UAE and Turkey, along with Oman and India, have the same problem as Iraq, so Donald Trump's decision to impose the sanctions is going to have a major impact throughout the Middle East."

Political science professor Hilal Khashan, who teaches at the American University of Beirut, said Iraq has been trying to reach out to its Sunni Gulf state neighbors in order to diversify its strategic relations. He noted that Iraqi delegations approached both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait recently, "and there was talk about linking the Iraqi electricity network to the Gulf Cooperation Council grid, via Kuwait."

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Khashan said the Saudis were noncommittal "because they do not completely trust the Iraqi government or Abadi." Moreover, he posited that even if they wanted to "open up to Iraq," the Iranians would "probably not allow them to go very far."

Khashoggi said the Saudis, nevertheless, are "interested in improving the relationship with Iraq," which he said "has improved in recent times." He said Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman began to open up to Iraq "two years ago, and continued along that path, with some hiccups, here and there." By maintaining dialogue with Iraq, Khashoggi said, "Saudi Arabia is hoping that it could weaken Iranian influence in Iraq."

Analyst Karasik believes the U.S. would be wise to attempt to focus the implementation of sanctions by Iraq against Iran on key industries that help Iran maintain its foothold in Iraq.

"That type of pressure on Baghdad must be carefully calibrated because of the economic relationship between the two countries, so that Iraq's economy doesn't suffer at a time when it needs to be boosted," he said.

Political turbulence and a wave of rioting across parts of southern Iraq have created fresh instability in the country at a time when government security forces and the Shiite militias backing them up were on the verge of destroying the militant Islamic State group. ■



**FILE** - An Iraqi merchant receives a delivery of Iranian-made air coolers, at his shop in central Baghdad.

# Kurdistan turc

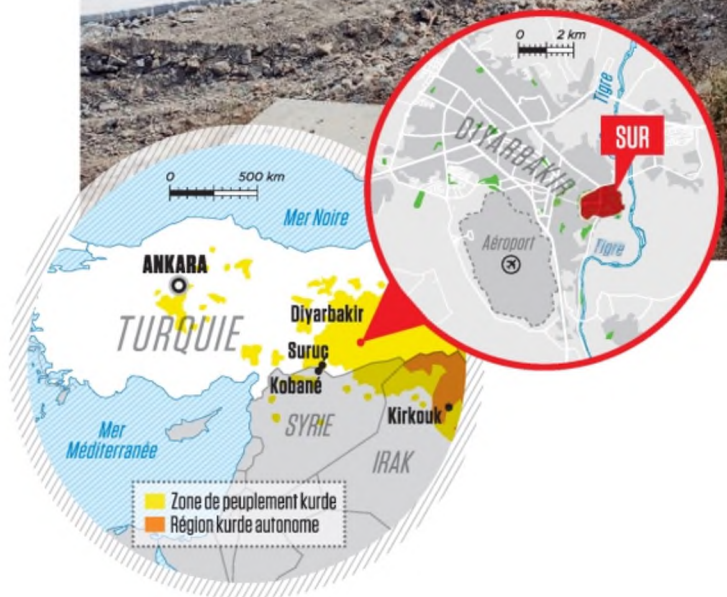
## Main basse sur la ville

*Le gouvernement turc a profité du conflit avec les Kurdes pour **détruire des quartiers entiers de Diyarbakir** et exproprier la population. Retour sur l'éradication de Sur, centre historique de la capitale*

De notre envoyé spécial **FILIPPO ORTONA**  
Photos **EMIN ÖZMEN**

**D**errière les anciennes et imposantes murailles de Diyarbakir, la capitale informelle du Kurdistan turc, dans le sud-est anatolien, s'étend un énorme terrain vague, une friche sauvage bordée par une poignée de bâtiments grisâtres, construits récemment. Il est difficile de s'imaginer qu'ici, il y a deux ans à peine, se trouvait un quartier historique datant de plus de 3000 ans, une ville entière, l'une des plus vieilles du monde : Sur. Bordée d'un côté par le Tigre et de l'autre par la forteresse de İç Kale et les jardins de l'Hevsel – tous deux classés au patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco –, cette zone abritait près de 100 000 habitants, un huitième de la population de Diyarbakir. Ils vivaient entassés dans un labyrinthe de ruelles étroites et de maisons en basalte noir. Un joyau culturel inestimable, où ont longtemps cohabité Arméniens, Kurdes et juifs.

Mais aujourd'hui, près de la moitié de ce trésor a été détruite. Rasée par l'Etat turc. Lorsqu'en 2015 se sont interrompus les pourparlers de paix entamés





deux ans auparavant entre les pouvoirs publics et le PKK (Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan), le Sud-Est à majorité kurde de la Turquie s'est embrasé. Les militants du YDG-H (Mouvement de la Jeunesse patriotique révolutionnaire), une branche du PKK, ont déclaré l'autonomie de la région, et se sont retranchés dans les quartiers populaires de plusieurs villes, dont ceux de Cizre, sur les bords du Tigre, et celui de Sur. Des barricades, des check-points et des armes légères ont surgi un peu partout, maniés par des jeunes gens

▲ *Du haut des remparts de Diyarbakir, les habitants peuvent mesurer les destructions infligées à Sur, le quartier historique.*

au visage masqué. L'affront était impardonnable pour Ankara. En septembre, le gouverneur de la région de Diyarbakir a imposé un couvre-feu. Trois mois après, il était devenu permanent. Tanks et artillerie sont venus renforcer le dispositif des forces spéciales. Un véritable siège a été instauré autour de ces quartiers. Selon la Fédération internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH) de Turquie, le bilan de ce conflit turco-kurde est très lourd. Au moins 2000 personnes – dont plus de 300 civils – y ont perdu la vie. ➤

► Une barrière de plusieurs kilomètres délimite la zone démolie.

► Au moment où les combats faisaient rage, en février 2016, le Premier ministre de l'époque, Ahmet Davutoglu, avait promis un grand plan de restauration dans le respect de l'identité historique de Sur. Ce serait « exactement comme Tolède » avait-il promis, en citant l'exemple de la ville espagnole partiellement détruite pendant la guerre civile et où avait eu lieu, en 1936, le fameux siège de l'Alcazar, soixante-dix jours durant. Mais jusque-là, pas de rénovation en vue. Le plan s'est surtout traduit par la démolition d'une bonne partie de l'ancienne ville et par une cascade d'expropriations.

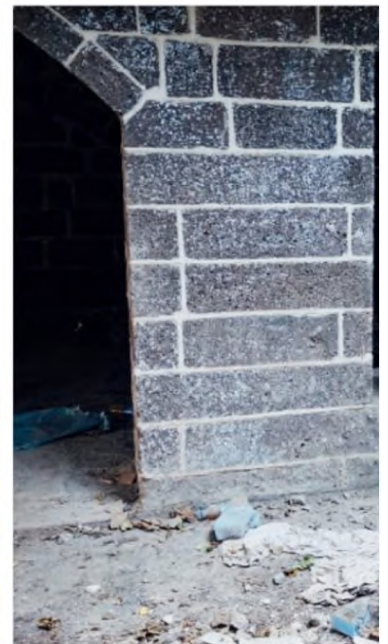
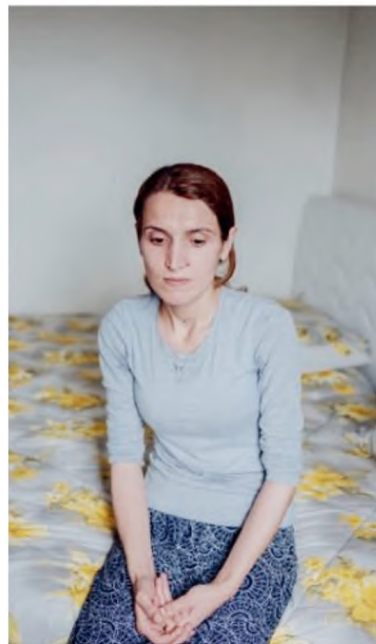
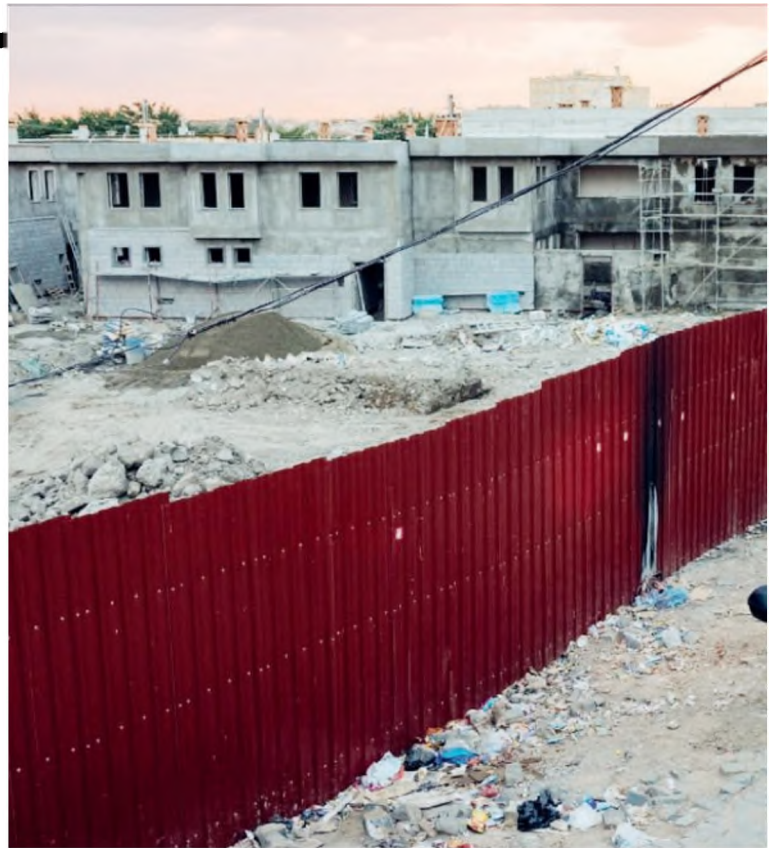
Ce que Talat Çetinkaya, 39 ans, qui milite pour la préservation du quartier, qualifie de « vengeance ». Le but, affirme-t-il, est de récupérer ce qui reste du riche patrimoine historique et architectural de Sur, tout en éjectant ses habitants, les Kurdes pauvres et hostiles à l'Etat turc. Le gouvernement, via son agence de construction publique, Toki, « veut faire de Sur une zone touristique, mais les bénéfices générés par cette transformation n'iront pas dans les poches des locaux ». Selon lui, ce sont les investisseurs privés proches du gouvernement qui profiteront de la gentrification.

Le siège de Sur a redessiné la carte de la ville. Avec plus de 20 000 personnes déplacées à la fin du conflit, le quartier avait déjà perdu une partie de sa population. Les autorités ont offert des dédommagements à ceux qui avaient dû quitter leur maison... et ont exproprié ceux qui restaient dans la vieille ville. Selon Ahmet Ozmen, 39 ans, président de l'Association des avocats de Sur, l'Etat turc aurait exproprié 82% des habitants en 2016. Le montant des dédommagements a été âprement critiqué par les victimes de l'opération, ainsi que par des ONG internationales.

Dans un rapport publié en 2016 par Amnesty International, on lit que « la plupart des familles [de Sur] ont reçu [...] des compensations pour la perte de leur maison allant de 3 000 à 5 000 livres turques [de 500 à 900 euros, NDLR], même si, dans la majorité des cas, ils estimaient la valeur de leur propriété à 40 000 livres turques au minimum [7 000 euros] ». De nombreuses familles ont tenté de résister. Certaines ont refusé ce maigre compromis financier avec les autorités et même engagé des procès contre l'administration régionale et l'Etat. Bilan ? Plusieurs maisons tout simplement détruites.

**“LE  
GOUVERNEMENT  
VEUT  
TRANSFORMER  
LE QUARTIER  
DE SUR  
EN ZONE  
TOURISTIQUE.”**

UN HABITANT



C'est ce qui est arrivé à Mehmet Ali, 60 ans, et aux siens. Ils se sont résolus à s'installer sur les décombres de leur propre maison, aux abords du district d'Ali Pasha. Ils vivent désormais dans une grande tente de jute, sans eau ni électricité. Après la fin des combats, le gouvernement avait décidé d'exproprier la famille, mais elle a refusé la compensation proposée. La police est venue plusieurs fois la sommer de partir, sans

◄ Fatma était restée à Sur durant le siège en 2015. Accusée d'être une terroriste, elle a passé un an et demi en prison.

GRANDS FORMATS



▲ Mehmet Ali a refusé la compensation pour expropriation proposée par le gouvernement. Il vit désormais dans une tente, sur les décombres de sa maison.

succès. Puis, un jour, « ils ont dit : "Ce n'est pas chez vous ici, c'est chez nous", ils nous ont jetés dehors, raconte Mehmet Ali, et ils ont tout démoli ». Les draps de la famille s'étendent en partie sur le nouveau mur de Sur, une barrière de chantier longue de plusieurs kilomètres, qui délimite la zone démolie.

Un peu plus loin, là où la barrière laisse la place à des grilles de la police, on aperçoit les ruines de la maison d'Emrullah Yilmaz, 32 ans.

Lui aussi a été exproprié. Il est en train de contester la procédure en justice. Mais sans beaucoup d'espoir. Cet ancien interprète de l'armée américaine, blessé dans un blindé à Mossoul, une mésaventure dont il garde une cicatrice à la jambe, était retourné dans son pays natal en 2015, peu de temps avant qu'éclate le conflit, et avait commencé à restaurer la vieille maison familiale. Aujourd'hui, la cour est envahie par les

décombres et la bâtisse est en ruine. La mort programmée du quartier l'afflige. Avant la guerre, dit-il, les rues de Sur étaient remplies de passants, de commerces. C'est ici, en « suivant les touristes avec un dictionnaire à la main », qu'il avait appris l'anglais. Maintenant, s'insurge-t-il, l'Etat est en train de « détruire cette culture » populaire pour « annihiler l'héritage kurde, arménien, assyrien, et faire en sorte que tout soit en accord avec la tradition ottomane ».

Si Emrullah Yilmaz et Mehmet Ali ont décidé de rester, s'ils ont dit non au compromis proposé par l'agence Toki et les institutions turques, la plupart des autres habitants ont accepté les dédommagements offerts. C'est le cas de la famille Ates, aujourd'hui installée dans une cité anonyme, perdue dans la banlieue de Diyarbakir, et où ils payent un loyer modéré. Ils habitaient dans le quartier de Hasirli, aux abords de Sur, l'un des six districts frappés par les combats. Fatma, une des trois filles de la famille, âgée de 28 ans, a grandi ici. Elle raconte leur histoire.

Sa famille est originaire de Seyrantepe, un village à une centaine de kilomètres de Diyarbakir. Elle a dû le quitter dans les années 1990, pendant l'une des phases les plus dures des combats entre le PKK et l'armée turque, et comme des milliers d'autres réfugiés, elle s'est alors installée à Sur. Modeste, la famille est vouée à la cause kurde, comme beaucoup d'habitants du quartier. Quand, vingt ans après, la guerre est descendue des villages de montagne pour se déployer dans les ruelles de la vieille ville, la mère a refusé de quitter la zone et les jeunes combattants. Le 20 février 2016, un obus de mortier a frappé la maison où ils étaient réfugiés.

Fatma montre une vidéo sur son portable. On la voit avec une de ses deux sœurs et son père s'approcher d'un peloton de soldats, au milieu des ruines, en trainant un gros tapis. Dedans gît la mère de Fatma, malade. Elle est morte quelques jours plus tard, alors que toute la famille était encore détenue par la police. A ce moment-là, les civils restés au sein de la zone de guerre étaient considérés comme des collaborateurs des combattants, voire des terroristes. Fatma a dû purger un an et demi de prison avec son père. Sa sœur est toujours en détention.

« Quand je suis passée devant le juge, il m'a dit : "Vous allez payer pour les crimes de votre mère" », explique Fatma. Les policiers lui ont cassé un bras pendant le procès. Encore aujourd'hui, cette jeune fille pâle et émaciée est assignée à résidence. Elle doit pointer chaque jour au commissariat. Pourtant, elle dit n'avoir « jamais eu de regrets » d'être restée à Sur. « On va panser toutes les plaies » avait assuré en février 2016 l'ancien Premier ministre Ahmet Davutoglu, en présentant un « plan d'action » pour « réparer » les dégâts provoqués par la guerre dans le Kurdistan turc. C'était deux semaines avant la mort de la mère de Fatma. Deux ans ont passé. La jeune fille soupire, « la douleur est toujours là. Elle ne partira jamais ». ■

▲ Emrullah Yilmaz, dans la cour de sa maison : « L'Etat veut annihiler l'héritage kurde, arménien et assyrien. »

# En négociant avec le régime, les Kurdes syriens vont tenter de sauver leur autonomie

Par AFP — 9 août 2018  
<http://www.liberation.fr>

Après des années d'une autonomie de facto acquise à la faveur de la guerre, les Kurdes de Syrie, acculés à des négociations avec le régime, vont tenter de sauver leurs acquis face à un pouvoir réticent à toute idée d'autogestion.

Minorité longtemps opprimée en Syrie, les Kurdes ont proclamé une semi-autonomie dès 2013, deux ans après le début de la guerre qui ravage ce pays.

Ils ont ensuite proclamé une vaste «région fédérale», le Rojava, sur les territoires du Nord récupérés après le retrait des forces du régime de Bachar al-Assad ou conquis en chassant les jihadistes du groupe Etat islamique (EI) avec le soutien des Etats-Unis.

Les Kurdes se sont dotés d'une Constitution et ont établi des écoles dispensant des cours dans leur langue.

S'ils contrôlent désormais environ 30% du territoire syrien --dont d'importants champs pétroliers--, l'avancée du régime qui a maintenant la main sur les deux-tiers restants du pays, les a forcé à négocier avec Damas. Cette décision s'est également imposée à l'aune d'une volonté affichée des Etats-Unis, leur principal soutien, de se retirer du pays.

Le 26 juillet, une première réunion officielle a eu lieu à Damas.

«Nous essayons de préserver tout ce que nous avons construit en terme d'autonomie, qu'il s'agisse des institutions, de la démocratie», explique à l'AFP Saleh Mouslem, l'un des principaux dirigeants kurdes.

«La mentalité ambiante (en Syrie) n'est pas favorable» à l'instauration «dans l'immédiat» de ce type de gouvernance, d'où la nécessité d'y procéder «par étapes», ajoute-t-il.

Jusqu'en 2011, un seul parti était autorisé en Syrie, pays au pouvoir très centralisé où le président Bachar al-Assad a succédé à son père Hafez.

Les Kurdes ont subi des décennies de marginalisation politique et culturelle. Ils ne pouvaient pas enseigner leur langue ni célébrer leurs fêtes et traditions, certains étant même privés de nationalité.

- «L'ÉQUATION A CHANGÉ» -

Mais «la Syrie ne sera pas comme avant. Un système démocratique et décentralisé doit être adopté (...)\", veut croire M.



Photo d'un drapeau des Unites de protection du peuple kurde (YPG), le 17 octobre 2017 lors de la libération de la ville syrienne de Raqa. (AFP/Archives/BULENT KILIC)

Mouslem.

Damas insiste de son côté sur le rétablissement de son autorité sur l'ensemble du pays. Le président Bachar al-Assad a même menacé de recourir à l'option militaire, faute d'un accord négocié en ce sens avec les autorités kurdes.

Pour Mutlu Civiroglu, un analyste indépendant basé à Washington qui commente régulièrement les évolutions liées aux Kurdes syriens dans les médias internationaux, «d'une manière ou d'une autre, régime et forces kurdes trouveront une solution, soit de manière pacifique, soit en se combattant».

Les Kurdes, fer de lance de la lutte anti-EI, comptent sur leurs propres gains sur le terrain pour imposer certaines conditions.

«Nous n'étions même pas pris en compte (par le régime) auparavant (...) Mais l'équation a changé grâce à notre volonté, notre organisation et notre autodéfense», estime M. Mouslem.

Selon lui, les pourparlers avec le régime n'aboutiront pas à une simple «passation de pouvoir» dans les zones kurdes.

«Nous réclamons que chacun puisse vivre et s'exprimer librement indépendamment de sa couleur (politique ou ethnique). Les droits culturels, politiques ainsi que l'administration autonome n'ont pas besoin d'être négociés», et «constituent un modèle pour toute la Syrie», dit-il.

Selon certains analystes, le régime envisagerait lui une simple reconnaissance des droits culturels de la minorité kurde exigeant en contrepartie la fin du système autonome mis en place depuis cinq ans.

Mais Ilham Ahmad, qui a mené la délégation kurde aux premières négociations avec le régime fin juillet, souligne: l'autogestion

est l'un des «gains de notre guerre contre Daech» (acronyme arabe de l'EI).

- «LIGNE ROUGE» -

«L'Etat syrien n'acceptera jamais une administration autonome», estime Bassam Abou Abdallah, directeur du Centre de Damas pour les études stratégiques. Il soutient que les Kurdes devraient se satisfaire d'une réactivation de la loi syrienne no. 107 datant de 2012 qui prévoit d'accorder davantage de prérogatives aux municipalités.

Pour cet analyste, les forces kurdes syriennes devront être démantelées mais Ilham Ahmad dément elle toute discussion à ce sujet.

Les Kurdes «gèrent leurs propres affaires avec brio depuis plusieurs années (...) Ils n'accepteront pas un retour en arrière, c'est pour eux une ligne rouge», estime de son côté M. Civiroglu.

Le fossé entre les positions des deux camps rendront les pourparlers très longs, estime Haid Haid, analyste au groupe de réflexion britannique Chatham House.

Et de poursuivre: «Enhardi par ses récents acquis militaires, le régime semble plus que jamais déterminé à empêcher la création de centres de pouvoir parallèles en Syrie» ♦ AFP



# Ankara et Washington : les raisons de la discorde

Les Echos Source AFP Le 10/08/2018  
www.lesechos.fr

**L'offensive de Trump contre l'acier et l'aluminium turcs s'ajoute à une longue liste de dossiers empoisonnant les relations entre les Etats-Unis et la Turquie depuis deux ans.**

Les tensions entre Washington et Ankara ont franchi un nouveau palier ce vendredi avec l'annonce par le président américain Donald Trump d'une forte augmentation des droits de douane sur l'acier et l'aluminium importés de Turquie aux Etats-Unis.

La livre turque, en chute libre depuis le début de l'année, a perdu le même jour 19 % de sa valeur face au dollar. Une offensive économique qui fait suite à deux années de relations tendues entre ces deux pays alliés au sein de l'Otan. Retour sur les dossiers qui enveniment les relations entre Washington et Ankara.

## • LE PRÉDICATEUR FETHULLAH GÜLEN

La présence aux Etats-Unis depuis 1999 du prédicateur turc Fethullah Gülen est probablement le principal objet de la colère d'Ankara.

La Turquie accuse en effet cet ancien allié du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan d'avoir fomenté le putsch manqué du 15 juillet 2016 et, depuis, traque sans relâche ses partisans.

Ankara a demandé à plusieurs reprises l'extradition de Fethullah Gülen, qui dément toute implication dans le coup d'Etat avorté.

Mais à ce jour, ces demandes sont restées lettre morte. « La question est 'y a-t-il des preuves suffisamment claires de l'implication personnelle de Fethullah Gülen ?' », a demandé fin juillet un haut responsable américain.

## • LES AMÉRICAINS DÉTENUS EN TURQUIE

La détention pendant un an et demi, suivie du placement en résidence surveillée la semaine dernière, d'un pasteur américain, Andrew Brunson, a été l'affaire qui a fait éclater la crise actuelle entre Ankara et Washington.

Andrew Brunson, qui dirigeait une église protestante à Izmir, une ville turque sur la mer Egée, est accusé d'espionnage et d'avoir agi pour le compte du réseau de Fethullah Gülen, mais aussi pour le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Ces deux organisations sont considérées comme ter-



Donald Trump et Recep Tayyip Erdogan lors du sommet de l'Otan le 11 juillet 2018 à Bruxelles. - Tatyana Zenkovich/AP/SIPA

roristes par la Turquie.

C'est en appelant à sa libération immédiate que Washington a menacé la Turquie de sanctions, avant de mettre cette menace à exécution dès le 1er août.

Outre Andrew Brunson, deux employés locaux des missions américaines en Turquie sont en détention et un autre en résidence surveillée.

## • LE PROCÈS HALKBANK

En mai, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, l'ex-directeur général adjoint de la banque publique turque Halkbank, a été condamné par un tribunal américain à 32 mois d'emprisonnement pour fraude bancaire et conspiration dans une affaire qui porte sur des milliards de dollars. Il a fait appel et Ankara a vivement protesté après sa condamnation.

En outre, une amende colossale pourrait être infligée à Halkbank, une perspective qui inquiète le pouvoir turc.

Un homme d'affaires turco-iranien, Reza Zarrab, est au cœur de cette affaire explosive. Au cours du procès, il a impliqué le président Erdogan et des ministres du gouvernement turc. Ankara a qualifié ce procès de « complot » manigancé par Fethullah Gülen.

## • LES MILICES KURDES EN SYRIE

La Turquie ne cesse de reprocher aux Etats-Unis le soutien apporté en Syrie aux Unités de protection du peuple kurde (YPG) pour lutter contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI). Ankara voit en effet dans cette milice une émanation du PKK, classé « terroriste » par la Turquie mais aussi les Etats-Unis.

Après une première offensive en 2016 ayant visé les combattants kurdes et les jihadistes, la Turquie a déclenché cette année une opération pour déloger les YPG de l'enclave syrienne d'Afrine.

Elle a menacé d'étendre cette offensive vers Minbej où sont basés des soldats américains. Mais Ankara et Washington se sont accordés

sur une « feuille de route » prévoyant le retrait des YPG de Minbej et l'instauration de patrouilles communes.

La Turquie a assuré en début de semaine que cet accord ne serait pas affecté par les tensions actuelles. « Je ne vois pas comment cette feuille de route pourrait fonctionner avec les sanctions imposées à la Turquie », estime toutefois Asli Aydintasbas, une chercheuse à l'European Council on Foreign Relations.

## • LE RAPPROCHEMENT ENTRE ANKARA ET MOSCOU

Ankara et Moscou coopèrent étroitement sur le dossier syrien, mais le principal sujet d'inquiétude pour Washington est l'accord conclu en vue de l'achat par la Turquie de systèmes de défense antiaérienne russe S-400, incompatibles avec les systèmes de défense de l'Otan.

Le Congrès américain a voté début août un budget interdisant au Pentagone de remettre à la Turquie le moindre avion de combat F-35 tant qu'Ankara ne se serait pas engagé à ne pas finaliser ses négociations sur l'achat de S-400.

## • LA BASE D'INCIRLIK

Dès le début de la crise avec les Etats-Unis, début août, des éditorialistes proches d'Ankara ont appelé à « fermer » la base aérienne d'Incirlik, située dans le sud de la Turquie et utilisée par les Etats-Unis pour frapper les djihadistes en Syrie.

Plusieurs engins nucléaires sont notamment déployés sur cette base turque qui a été ouverte il y a plus d'un demi-siècle et qui est également utilisée par l'Otan.

Les Britanniques y ont des avions de chasse et les Allemands, qui y étaient aussi présents, en ont retiré leurs appareils et leurs hommes l'an dernier après une dégradation des relations entre Berlin et Ankara. ♦

# Three Kurdish groups in Iran are now fighting the IRGC

Kurdish fighters vow to resist regime's crackdown as groups search for more united strategy amid sanctions on Tehran.

By Seth J. Frantzman / August 12, 2018  
/www.jpost.c

The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said on Sunday that they had killed "10 militants" in the Kurdish region of Iran. The same day the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) said they had engaged in "heavy clashes" with the IRGC near the city of Oshnavieh and had killed 12 "IRGC terrorists."

The battles come amidst a rise in tensions in Iran with US sanctions kicking in and after six months of protests in various parts of the country, including the Kurdish region. Sensing the regime is strained and the Kurdish groups are now trying to carry out more public attacks on Iran's IRGC.

On Sunday, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) suggested forming a more united front of Kurdish groups opposing the Iranian regime.

There are several Iranian Kurdish groups that have been resisting the regime over the last decade. The PDKI was a thorn in the side of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the 1980s during a time of tremendous upheaval when the country was transformed by the theocratic government and the war against Iraq.

In 1989, Iranian agents assassinated Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, secretary-general of the PDKI, in Vienna. It viewed the Kurdish fighters as such a threat that it even threatened to invade Iraq and shelled their positions in Iraq where many Iranian Kurds had fled.

Over the last several years, the PDKI has increased its activity against Tehran's regime, sending its Peshmerga, or soldiers, back into Iran. Until this year clashes were rare. But in the last six months as Tehran has been challenged by widespread economic protests the IRGC and PDKI have fought several small battles, resulting in deaths on both sides.

Iran has also sought to carry out assassinations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. These assassinations have not only targeted PDKI, but also members of other groups such as the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) and activists.

Iqbal Muradi of the Kurdistan Human Rights Association, was found gunned down on July 17 outside of Penjwen in Iraq, just two kilometers from the Iranian border. His body was found in a river near the town.

Revenge for his murder came swiftly. Members of PJAK attacked an Iranian base in the village of Dari near the city of Marivan, killing 11 members of the Iranian Basij militia on July 21. The fighters then slipped away back into the lush mountainous terrain along the border. Around the same time PJAK released the names of four of their men killed in



Kurdish PDKI members on patrol near the Iran-Iraq border last year.. (photo credit: Courtesy)

recent clashes with Iran in Marivan and Paveh. On August 10 a third Kurdish group in Iran, the PAK was reported to have killed five IRGC members in Paveh.

It's clear from statements that the Kurdish groups attempt to focus their attacks on the IRGC, which is the most ideological of the regime's security forces. Tehran has responded by shelling Kurdish bases in Iraq. Yet the Kurdish groups have continued to expand their presence, tweeting photos of their forces armed and walking through villages in western Iran. They've also sought out support from the West in their campaign.

PDKI leader Mustafa Hijri and Abdullah Mohtadi of Komala, another Iranian Kurdish party, travelled to Washington in June for meetings. Hijri was also at the French consulate in Erbil in northern Iraq for France's National Day in mid-July. The Kurdish groups have different origins in Iran. PJAK is connected to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) while PDKI has better relations with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) which is the leading party in the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

**T**HE TENSIONS in Iran are rising amidst the conflict. Last month an oil truck, alleged to have been delivering oil from Iraq to the IRGC caught fire in Smandaj near Marivan, killing 20 people. When police arrived to secure the scene local people, many of them Kurds, attacked the police and rioted.

The IRGC has said it wants to take action against the increasing clashes. But it doesn't know the best course of action. An attack on bases in Iraq could destabilize the border. Suppressing Kurds could lead to more support

for the groups. In addition Iran and Iraq are besieged by other problems.

Iran's attempt to influence politics in Iraq has hit a reef as Baghdad's politicians now must choose between support for US sanctions and support for its friends in Iran. Widespread economic protests in Basra and elsewhere have rejected Iran's influence. ISIS is again escalating terror attacks. And Tehran faces protests in the very heart of the capital.

A rebellion in the Kurdish region with three or four armed groups fighting the IRGC and enjoying support from the local people is the last thing Iran needs. This is especially true because the IRGC is involved in clandestine importation of oil from Kirkuk that travels through the mountain roads of the Kurdish region.

The recent clashes have also shown that the Kurdish groups can inflict damage on the regime.

Over the summer, more than two dozen members of the Iranian security forces, mostly from the IRGC, have been killed and wounded. "We will hunt down anyone who has Kurdish blood on their hands. Leave the IRGC and do not take orders from the Islamist regime before it is too late," the PDKI's fighters said on July 11.

The last month has shown it is more than just rhetoric. ♦



August 13, 2018

## Iranian Kurdish party promises revenge after death of six fighters

Wladimir van Wilgenburg / August 13-2018

<http://www.kurdistan24.net>

**ERBIL (Kurdistan 24.net)** – The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) on Monday confirmed the death of six of its fighters, in a clash that happened two days ago. Some of them took their own lives to avoid capture.

Moreover, they said 12 of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) were killed.

The Central Command of the PDKI's Peshmerga fighters in a statement said they were ambushed on Aug. 11 by a large group of IRGC forces on Mount Kelashin, outside the Kurdish city of Shno (Oshnavieh) in Iranian Kurdistan.

"During the ensuing battle, which lasted for five hours, twelve members of the IRGC were killed, and eight others were severely injured."

"The Peshmerga platoon was attacked from three sides. Unfortunately, one Peshmerga was martyred in the first wave of attacks and three others were injured," the statement said.

"Due to the lack of opportunity to transfer the three injured Peshmergas, and following a heroic battle that lasted for over two hours, the three injured Peshmergas took their own lives with hand grenades," it added.

However, the remaining Peshmerga fighters managed to breach the ambush and flank the IRGC, killing and injuring soldiers.

"Unfortunately, two other Peshmergas were martyred in the counterattack," the PDKI said.

After the IRGC was pushed back, they resorted to shelling the Peshmerga positions, injuring two



Kurdish fighters.

Eventually, after the five-hour battle, the remaining Peshmerga fighters made a "tactical withdrawal from the battleground."

In the battle, Abdulsalam Abdi, Suleiman Mohamedzadeh, Abdulwahid Sohrabi, Ismail Eranmensch, Osman Rahmani, and Mehran Tehapor were killed.

"The Central Command of Kurdistan's Peshmerga Forces vows to avenge the martyred Peshmergas and to continue the struggle against the Islamist regime until victory is achieved," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the IRGC claimed they were attacked, and that they killed 11 PDKI fighters.

According to experts, Iranian Kurdish parties have recently stepped up their activities amid a new policy by the Trump administration toward Iran.

"Iranian Kurdish parties have significantly

The PDKI reignited a conflict with the Islamic Republic in June 2016, 20 years after laying down their weapons in 1996 to prevent jeopardizing Kurdish gains made in northern Iraq. (Photo: Archive)

increased operational activity in Iran over the past few months, especially PDKI, with the rightful assumption that renewed US-imposed sanctions coupled with ongoing anti-government protests will weaken the Iranian regime," Ceng Sagnic, the coordinator of the Kurdish Studies Program at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies in Tel Aviv, told Kurdistan 24.

"The demonstration of strength and militant capabilities by these parties are also messages to the US and other Western states that Iranian Kurdish groups are willing to collaborate should the US-led camp decide to weaken the regime further," he added.

The PDKI reignited a conflict with the Islamic Republic in June 2016, 20 years after laying down their weapons in 1996 to prevent jeopardizing Kurdish gains made in northern Iraq.

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) have also recently clashed with Iranian forces. ♦



August 13, 2018

## Turkish warplanes bombard Bradost, in Kurdistan Region

Ari Khalidi/August 22-2018/kurdistan24.net

**ERBIL (Kurdistan 24)** - Turkish warplanes on Wednesday continued to bombard perceived PKK targets in Kurdistan Region's Bradost area in northern Erbil Province, near the border with Turkey.

A Kurdistan 24 reporter in Bradost said Shikew, Malemala, Robe Rola, Gire Shivan, Khwakurk, and Geliye Resh villages witnessed intense bombing overnight.

There was no information available regarding casualties among either civilians or members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a group that has been fighting a decades-long insurgency with the Turkish state over Kurdish rights and self-rule.

Airstrikes Turkey conducts have killed

dozens of civilians in mountainous areas of northern Erbil and Duhok Provinces since Ankara reignited its war on the PKK in mid-2015, following the collapse of peace talks between them.

The Turkish army maintains a ground invasion, in some places up 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) deep into the Kurdistan Region.

In May, Turkey announced that it had constructed a military outpost in Khwakurk to use as a base from which to launch attacks against the PKK. Those attacks, however, have caused the injury and death of local residents unaffiliated to the group and have forced villagers from the area to flee for their lives. Earlier, in March, Turkish jets struck and killed four people who were celebrating the Kurdish new year of Newroz in Erbil's Choman district.

Both Choman and Bradost are near the Qandil mountain range sprawling along the Iraq-



Members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) inspect a crater caused by a Turkish airstrike in the Qandil mountains, Kurdistan, July 29, 2015. (Photo: AFP)

Iran border where the PKK has its headquarters.

Meanwhile, in the Black Sea region of northern Turkey, officials announced the killing of high-ranking PKK commander Baris Oner, code-named "Tarik, the Turk," and another fighter from Iranian Kurdistan in the district of Kurtun. ♦

# Les rebelles syriens créent une Armée nationale avec la Turquie



Des combattants de l'Armée nationale, en cours de création par des insurgés syriens avec l'aide de la Turquie, qui pourrait être un obstacle au plan de Bachar al Assad de reprendre le contrôle du nord-ouest du pays, dernier grand bastion rebelle en Syrie - pour peu que ses membres fassent taire leurs rivalités délétères. /Photo prise le 5 août 2018/REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

Par Khalil Ashawi Reuters 12 août 2018  
[www.challenges.fr/](http://www.challenges.fr/)

**AZAZ** Syrie (Reuters) - L'Armée nationale en cours de création par des insurgés syriens avec l'aide de la Turquie pourrait être un obstacle au plan de Bachar al Assad de reprendre le contrôle du nord-ouest du pays, dernier grand bastion rebelle en Syrie - pour peu que ses membres fassent taire leurs rivalités délétères.

Bachar al Assad, soutenu par la Russie et l'Iran, a promis de récupérer "chaque centimètre" du territoire syrien. Bien qu'il ait reconquis la majeure partie de la Syrie, le nord-ouest du pays est la dernière grande zone encore aux mains des combattants qui veulent le renverser. Ils s'y sont regroupés dans le cadre d'accords d'évacuation d'autres zones conclues chaque fois que des parties du pays étaient reprises par Damas.

Le nord-ouest de la Syrie est limitrophe de la Turquie et comprend essentiellement la province d'Idlib, une partie de la province de Hama et une partie de la province d'Alep.

Selon le colonel Haitham Afissi, chef de l'Armée nationale, la mise en place de cette force qui réunit quelque 35.000 combattants provenant de certaines des milices les plus importantes de la guerre en Syrie, n'est pas chose facile.

"Nous sommes au début. Nous sommes confrontés à de nombreuses difficultés, mais nous travaillons à les surmonter", déclare le colonel rencontré à Azaz, près de la frontière turque.

Ainsi, récemment, il raconte avoir dû ordonner à ses combattants de cesser "d'ouvrir le feu au hasard", de porter l'uniforme et de coopérer avec la police militaire nouvellement créée qui représente "la force du droit et de la justice et non un concurrent aux autres groupes".

Les groupes armés se sont également vu interdire de gérer leurs propres prisons et tribunaux et de procéder à des arrestations extrajudiciaires.

## TROIS ENNEMIS

Le soutien turc inclut les salaires des combattants, le soutien logistique "et les armes si nécessaire".

Les soldats de l'Armée nationale font également l'objet d'attaques. Un certain nombre de recrues ont été blessées dans un bombardement le 5 août dernier à al Bab alors que se déroulait la cérémonie de remise de leurs diplômes.

Selon le colonel Afissi, il s'agit du travail d'un "ennemi de la révolution, qu'il soit interne ou externe". Le coupable a été identifié, mais le colonel ne veut pas donner son identité.

De nombreux efforts précédents visant à unifier la rébellion ont échoué, en raison notamment des rivalités sur le terrain.

Ce pourrait être différent avec l'Armée nationale en raison de la présence de la Turquie sur le terrain.

L'armée turque a poussé vers le Nord-Ouest syrien à la faveur de deux campagnes. La première dite "Bouclier de l'Euphrate", qui a démarré en 2016, a chassé l'État isla-

mique des territoires situés entre Azaz et Djarablous. La seconde, dite "Rameau d'olivier", a permis de prendre la région voisine d'Afrin aux milices kurdes YPG au début de cette année.

La région est importante pour la Turquie en raison de ce qu'elle considère comme une menace des YPG (Unités de protection du peuple) pour sa sécurité nationale. Ankara considère les YPG comme une émanation du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en lutte depuis plus de 30 ans contre le pouvoir turc.

Le colonel Afissi énumère trois ennemis: Assad, le PKK et l'État islamique.

La Turquie a également installé 12 postes militaires dans la province d'Idlib et dans les zones adjacentes situées au sud-ouest d'Afrin, dans le cadre d'un accord avec la Russie et l'Iran. L'objectif déclaré est de parvenir à un accord de "désescalade" dans la région d'Idlib.

Selon le colonel Afissi, l'Armée nationale pourrait être rapidement fusionnée avec les rebelles soutenus par la Turquie à Idlib si nécessaire.

La situation à Idlib est compliquée par la présence de djihadistes bien armés qui se sont battus avec les autres groupes.

"Nous sommes prêts et tendons la main à tous les groupes qui représentent les objectifs de la révolution", déclare le colonel. ●

# De plus en plus isolé, Erdogan s'en remet à Poutine

## Le maintien de la sphère d'influence turque dans le nord de la Syrie dépend du bon vouloir de Moscou.

Par Marie Jégo (Istanbul, correspondante) 13.08.2018

Confrontée à une crise diplomatique sans précédent avec les Etats-Unis, affaiblie par la crise financière et l'effondrement record de sa monnaie, la Turquie se cherche « de nouveaux alliés », a prévenu le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dimanche 12 août au soir, face à ses partisans à Trabzon (région de la mer Noire). Il s'agit, selon le chef de l'Etat turc, de riposter à un « complot politique » fomenté par Washington.

La crise actuelle pousse Ankara, membre de l'OTAN depuis 1952, à se réfugier plus avant dans les bras de la Russie. Le ministre russe des affaires étrangères, Sergueï Lavrov, est attendu à Ankara, lundi 13 et mardi 14 août, pour des entretiens avec son homologue turc, Mevlut Çavusoglu. Il y sera notamment question du dossier syrien et du sort de l'enclave rebelle d'Idlib, dernier territoire tenu par des groupes armés d'opposition et djihadistes qui échappe au contrôle de Damas.

Ces derniers jours, des frappes aériennes et terrestres menées par les forces du régime se sont abattues sur ce secteur, faisant des dizaines de morts. Limitrophe de la Turquie, la région risque d'être la cible d'une prochaine offensive du régime syrien, avide de reconquérir l'ensemble de son territoire avec l'aide de ses alliés russe et iranien.

### LIGNES DE FRACTURE

Ankara, qui se pose en protecteur de l'opposition et dispose d'une influence certaine dans la région d'Idlib par l'intermédiaire de groupes armés alliés, ne voit pas d'un bon œil la possibilité d'une attaque de grande ampleur des forces de Bachar Al-Assad. A la mi-juillet, lors

d'un entretien par téléphone avec son homologue russe, le président Erdogan a menacé de quitter le processus d'Astana en cas d'offensive sur la province.

Ce dispositif établi avec Moscou et Téhéran a permis de créer des « zones de désescalade » garanties entre les trois puissances entre les divers groupes armés de l'opposition et le régime sur plusieurs lignes de fracture du territoire syrien. Toutes ont été reconquises par Damas et ses alliés depuis le début de l'année, à l'exception d'Idlib, où Ankara possède douze postes militaires qui font office de tampon entre les forces d'opposition et celles du régime syrien.

Le maintien du statu quo dans cette région de 2,5 millions d'habitants est un enjeu majeur pour la Turquie, qui craint plus que tout une nouvelle arrivée de réfugiés. Quelque 3,5 millions de Syriens sont déjà hébergés par la Turquie. Pas question pour Ankara de faire face à de nouveaux afflux de population, d'autant plus que des dizaines de milliers de combattants se trouvent parmi les civils, regroupés à Idlib au fur et à mesure des accords d'évacuation conclus dans les zones rebelles reprises par Damas depuis le début de l'année.

### « RETOUR À LA MAISON »

Recep Tayyip Erdogan est à la merci de Moscou, dont dépend le maintien de sa sphère d'influence dans le nord de la Syrie. Depuis 2016, l'armée turque et ses supplétifs syriens occupent, en effet, une portion de territoire de 90 kilomètres de long située entre les villes d'Azaz et de Djarabulus, conquise lors de l'opération militaire baptisée « Bouclier de l'Euphrate ». Les militaires turcs contrôlent également la région kurde d'Afrin, adjacente à Idlib, qui a été prise aux forces kurdes syri-



Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Trabzon, sur la mer Noire, le 12 août. MURAT KULA / AFP

ennes au début de 2018 avec l'aval du Kremlin.

« Comme la Turquie ne peut plus compter sur le soutien américain, c'est le moment rêvé pour la Russie de contrer les rebelles à Idlib. Ankara devra se plier au plan russe, en contrepartie du maintien de sa présence au nord d'Idlib, si toutefois Poutine sait se montrer généreux », expliquait Soner Cagaptay, directeur du programme d'études turques au Washington Institute, sur son compte Twitter samedi 11 août.

Les zones conquises par l'armée turque sont vouées à être repeuplées de réfugiés syriens accueillis depuis 2011 en Turquie. Le président Erdogan a ainsi déclaré à plusieurs reprises ces derniers mois que tout serait fait pour faciliter « le retour à la maison de tous nos invités ». Le 2 août, Ankara a annoncé le démantèlement de cinq camps de réfugiés situés dans les régions de Gaziantep, Adiyaman et Mardin, dont le camp de Nizip, visité par la chancelière allemande, Angela Merkel, en avril 2016. Au total, 34 180 personnes vont être sorties de ces camps pour être réinstallées au plus près de la frontière turco-syrienne, à Kilis, au Haray, à Sanliurfa.

Par ailleurs, le sort des réfugiés du conflit syrien est au cœur d'un plan élaboré par Moscou et Ankara pour inciter l'Allemagne et la France à

financer la reconstruction de la Syrie, condition de leur retour. La Russie, secouée par une chute du rouble à l'annonce de nouvelles sanctions américaines, n'a pas les moyens de la financer. D'après une source proche du ministère russe des affaires étrangères, Moscou considère que « les puissances occidentales doivent, elles aussi, assumer leur part de responsabilité dans la destruction de la Syrie ».

### GROS OEUVRE

Dans le plan envisagé à grands traits par MM. Erdogan et Poutine, les entreprises turques du bâtiment, affectées par la crise financière qui secoue le pays, se referaient une santé en se chargeant du gros œuvre, Moscou conduirait la normalisation politique tandis que les Etats européens assumeraient la note.

A cette fin, M. Erdogan a convoqué, le 7 septembre à Istanbul, un sommet sur la Syrie auquel sont censés participer la Russie, l'Allemagne et la France et auquel le président turc entend donner des airs de front anti-Trump. Si Moscou a confirmé, lundi, un sommet à quatre « prévu dans un avenir proche », Berlin et Paris n'ont pas répondu officiellement à l'invitation de M. Erdogan. ■

# Key discussion between Syrian Kurdish-led council and Damascus: autonomy or decentralization?

by Meghan Bodette 14/08/2018 <https://theregion.org/>

One of the committees established by talks between the Syrian Democratic Council and Syrian government will address local and autonomous administration, SDC member Hesên Mihemed Elî told Hawar News Agency. Sources familiar with the meeting confirm that the Syrian government delegation has proposed Syrian Legislative Decree 107 as a framework for decentralization, while the SDC maintains that more autonomy is necessary.

Legislative Decree 107, passed in August of 2011, allows for local administration through elected councils at the local and provincial level. The councils would have control over certain projects and receive funding through the state budget, but remain under central oversight. Article 12 states that "each administrative unit shall have a council based in the centre of the unit, which shall consist of elected members in accordance with the provisions of the General Elections Law by universal, secret, direct and equal suffrage." The decree defines an "administrative unit" as a governorate, city, town, or municipality.

The local and regional councils that already exist in Northern Syria, while superficially similar, are far more complex and autonomous. The smallest unit of local governance is the commune, which is formed at the neighbourhood or village level. Above that are town, district, and regional councils, then provincial (canton) councils, then a council comprising all the cantons of Rojava. These are more differentiated than the administrative units defined under the Syrian decentralization law— and it is unclear as to which of them would see any decentralization at all, though SDC representatives have stated that no SDF-liberated territory will be handed over to full Syrian government control.

Northern Syria has also institutionalized specific committees within each local council— including parallel women's institutions— mandated gender



parity, and ensured that religious and ethnic minority representation is guaranteed. Local democracy functions not only to meet material needs, but also to promote and develop the practice of equality. Decree 107 defines the responsibilities of local councils as including economic, social, cultural, and urban development— broad categories whose specific interpretation would likely be left to negotiations.

Another point of contention between the SDC model and the Decree 107 proposal will likely be the role of a state-appointed governor with significant powers over the local council. All officials in Northern Syrian councils are elected, and a council's leadership is elected from the council members themselves. Whether the principles of equal representation integral to governance in Northern Syria would be reflected in such appointments is unclear.

So far, no final plan has been proposed, and there will likely be several more rounds of talks before any concrete proposals take shape. According to al-Watan's news on Tuesday, SDC has been to Damascus for the second round of talks with the state. SDC went for new talks on local administration and decentralization, al-Watan cited its co-chair Riad Darar as saying on Tuesday.

"All the discussions happening now are ... to find out the other side's point of view," he said. The talks "need a lot of reflection to make decisions, and so the matter was left to other meetings". ♦

## MilitaryTimes August 14, 2018

# Kurds meet with Syrian government to discuss self-rule as Assad demands US troops withdraw

By: Philip Issa, The Associated Press  
August 14, 2018  
[www.militarytimes.com](http://www.militarytimes.com)

**BEIRUT** — Representatives from Syria's Kurdish-run northeastern region met with the government in Damascus last week to discuss self-administration in a postwar Syria, a leading Kurdish official said Tuesday.

It was the second meeting between the two sides, and they agreed to continue their discussions, said Ilham Ahmed, the co-president of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Council.

The SDC delegation pressed for constitutional reforms to enshrine regional self-administration, said Ahmed, who described the government's response as "not positive."

"We have lots of work ahead of us, and I don't think this will be easy," said Ahmed.

Syrian President Bashar Assad threatened to attack a region held by U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria, saying in an interview broadcast on Russia Today channel on

Thursday that American troops should leave the country.

The Syrian government has vowed to reassert its rule over the whole country after surviving seven years of civil war.

President Bashar Assad is demanding the departure of U.S. troops, who are embedded with the military arm of the SDC, the Syrian Democratic Forces, in the northeast Rojava region.

U.S. forces supported the Syrian Democratic Forces in their campaign against the Islamic State group in northeastern Syria. An estimated 2,000 U.S. troops and military advisers are in northern Syria, and the U.S. operates air bases in the Kurdish-administered region.

Ahmed said the Kurdish-run region would not participate in nationwide local elections slated for next month, despite pressure from the government.

She said the SDC delegation met with officials from Damascus's authority on local administration and the ruling Baath Party's National



Security Bureau, which oversees all intelligence operations in Syria.

Also Tuesday, Syrian state media said five drones were shot down in the coastal Latakia province as they approached a Russian air base in the area.

The air base, known as Hemeimeem, is the headquarters for Russia's military operations in support of Assad's forces. Russia has been a major ally and has turned the tide of the civil war in his favor.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group says the drones were downed late Monday. It says this is the fifth time in as many days that drones have been shot down as they tried to reach the air base.

The Observatory and Syrian state media say the drones were launched by rebels holding territory in the neighboring Idlib province in northwestern Syria. ●

# U.S.-Turkey Tensions Could Stall Progress Against ISIS, Officials Say

By Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt  
Aug. 14, 2018  
www.nytimes.com

WASHINGTON — American and European intelligence and counterterrorism officials said on Tuesday that the escalating tensions between President Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey could jeopardize information sharing and law enforcement cooperation between the two countries as they fight the Islamic State in Syria.

Military commanders said plans were still underway for American and Turkish troops to conduct joint patrols near Manbij, a former Islamic State hotbed in northern Syria that was liberated by Kurdish fighters.

“That’ll start very soon,” Maj. Gen. Felix Gedney, the British deputy commander of the American-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, told reporters at the Pentagon.

But intelligence officials conceded that the most recent strain between Turkey and the United States — over American sanctions to punish Turkey for the detention of Andrew Brunson, an evangelical pastor from North Carolina — could halt new progress against the Islamic State.

A senior American intelligence official and a senior European counterterrorism official separately expressed concern that Turkey would withhold information about suspected Islamic State fighters and intelligence operations to root out extremists in Syria.

Additionally, they said, Turkey might obscure missions that its security forces are conducting to prevent foreign fighters from entering Syria. Both officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter.

The Americans have other reasons to worry about Turkey’s reliability as a battlefield partner.

Seth G. Jones, who leads the Transnational Threats Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said Turkey had provided assistance to Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadist group that has evolved from Jabhat al-Nusra, a Qaeda affiliate in northern Syria.

Mr. Jones said Turkey was using those jihadist groups to fight Kurdish forces in Syria. At least some of the Turkish support has been sent to extremists around Idlib, one of the last opposition strongholds that is now coming under fire from the Syrian government.

“A major concern is that while Turkey has taken some steps to root out cells of ISIS fighters, the Erdogan government has supported



American troops driving from the Kurdish-controlled city of Manbij, in Syria, toward their outpost near the Turkish border. Credit: Ivor Prickett for The New York Times

some other jihadist groups,” Mr. Jones said.

The Pentagon has for years sought to strike a balance between its NATO ally Turkey and the Kurdish fighters that have proved to be the most reliable ground force against the Islamic State in Syria.

Turkey believes the American-backed Kurdish fighters in Syria are linked to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or P.K.K., which both Turkey and the United States have designated as a terrorist organization.

Mr. Erdogan maintained on Tuesday that “there is no difference” between the Islamic State and the P.K.K.

“We do not discriminate between terrorist organizations,” Mr. Erdogan said at a news conference in Ankara, the Turkish capital. “There is no difference between ISIS’s butchers and P.K.K.’s murderers for us.”

At the moment, Kurdish and Turkish forces are each conducting patrols in Syria. While Turkish troops are securing Manbij, General Gedney said, American-backed Syrian Democratic Forces are preparing for a final assault on the Islamic State in the Hajin area, more than 200 miles away, and reinforcing checkpoints in the Middle Euphrates Valley.

Other specialists said that Turkey’s government had stiffened its border enforcement and efforts to root out Islamic extremists.

“Turkish policing of ISIS cells has been aggressive for years,” said Aaron Stein, a Turkey specialist at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank. “Turkish officials are cognizant of the dangers these men and women pose, following the wave of ISIS attacks that aggressive police action have largely stopped.”

As talks stall over Mr. Brunson’s release, the Trump administration is considering a range of further sanctions against Turkey — including limits on Turkish Airlines, accor-

ding to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss delicate negotiations.

The administration is also demanding the release of Serkan Golge, a NASA scientist who has been imprisoned for nearly a year, and three Turkish citizens who worked for the State Department in Turkey, the official said.

But the official said that if Mr. Brunson was not released by Wednesday, more sanctions could soon be put in place.

“Certainly the president has a great deal of frustration on the fact that Pastor Brunson has not been released, as well as the fact that other U.S. citizens and employees of diplomatic facilities have not been released,” Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, told reporters on Tuesday. “And we’re going to continue to call on Turkey to do the right thing and release those individuals.”

Additionally, during a meeting on Monday at the White House, Turkey’s ambassador to the United States asked for concessions for the Turkish state-owned bank, known as Halkbank, and one of its executives, according to a person familiar with the conversation.

The bank is under investigation by the United States Treasury Department on suspicion of violating sanctions against Iran. One of the bank’s top executives, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, is serving time in an American prison after being convicted of charges related to helping orchestrate a billion-dollar scheme to evade the sanctions.

The Turks have sought leniency in the sanction process, and the extradition of Mr. Atilla to serve a prison sentence in Turkey. ●

*Gardiner Harris, Kenneth Vogel and Adam Goldman contributed reporting from Washington, and Carlotta Gall from Istanbul.*

# 30,000 ISIL fighters are still in Iraq and Syria – much higher than previous estimates, new reports say

**The U.S. military has not released any figures since last year, but comments by military officials had indicated there were little more than 10,000 fighters left**

Liz Sly / August 14, 2018  
<https://nationalpost.com>

**B**EIRUT – The Islamic State may still have in excess of 30,000 fighters in Syria and Iraq and appears to have rebounded from some of its worst setbacks, according to two new reports that call into question whether the militants are as close to defeat as the U.S. military has suggested.

The figures, contained in reports by the U.S. government and the United Nations, are far higher than previous estimates of Islamic State strength following its major defeats last year, when the militants were driven out of their territory in Iraq and most of their key strongholds in Syria. The U.S. military has not released any figures since last year, but comments by military officials had indicated there were not many more than 10,000 fighters left.

U.S. military officials disputed the new assessments but declined to give alternative numbers, saying it is against military policy. The figures “seemed high,” said Col. Sean Ryan, the U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad, but he added that “with all the variables, there is really no way to know.”

“As far as we are concerned, ISIL remains a threat as long as they have the capability to launch terror attacks anywhere, and we will pursue them until they are completely defeated,” he said.

The U.S. government report attributed its numbers to the Defense Department but acknowledged that such estimates “have varied sharply among sources and over time.” The report was delivered to Congress by the Lead Inspector General, an office created in 2013 to oversee the U.S. military’s operations overseas against the Islamic State. Quoting Defense Department officials, the report put the number of fighters in Iraq at between 15,500 and 17,100 and in Syria at 14,000.

The second report was written by the UN



*Although the Islamic State is close to total territorial defeat, it remains a potent threat to the stability of Iraq and Syria, the reports say. YouTube via AFP/Getty Images*

Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, which monitors the impact of UN sanctions, and offered a similar figure. Quoting unnamed member states, it said there are believed to be between 20,000 and 30,000 Islamic State fighters across Iraq and Syria, divided roughly equally between the two countries. Some of them are active on the battlefield, while others are hiding out in communities or remote areas, it said. The figure includes “a significant component” of foreign fighters.

**A**t its peak, the Islamic State is thought to have mustered an army of about 100,000 men, spread across the vast area spanning Syria and Iraq that once composed its self-proclaimed caliphate. They included as many as 30,000 foreign fighters from all over the world, a small number of whom have escaped and made their way back home.

Both new reports note, however, that although the Islamic State is close to total territorial defeat, it remains a potent threat to the stability of Iraq and Syria. Taken together, the reports suggest that the military campaign still has a long way to go before the Islamic State can be said to have been vanquished, despite President Donald Trump’s assertion last month that the battle against the group was “98 percent” finished.

In Syria, the Islamic State has “rallied,” the UN report said, attributing this to a two-month pause in operations after the United States’ mostly Kurdish allies stopped confronting the militants in order to send fighters to battle the Turkish incursion into the northern Syrian

district of Afrin.

This pause “prolonged access by ISIL and gave it a breathing space to prepare for the next phase of its evolution into a global covert network,” the UN report said, using another name for the group.

The Islamic State’s bureaucracy remains essentially intact, the UN report continued, although the group has lost most of its territory, many of its senior leaders have been killed and its structures have been disrupted. Its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, remains in overall control, but he has been obliged to delegate authority across a wide area.

“The collective discipline of ISIL is intact,” the report said. “The general security and finance bureaus of ISIL are intact. The group’s immigration and logistics coordination office is also intact, although it is having difficulty communicating and its chief has been killed.”

In another sign that the group continues to function, the Islamic State’s news agency Amaq remains in operation in eastern Syria. Although its output dipped last September and October, it has now stabilized at a higher level, the report said.

In Iraq, the U.S. government report noted that although the group no longer controls territory, fighters organized in small cells continue to plant bombs and conduct kidnappings. It cited a recent uptick in attacks attributed to the Islamic State in the provinces of Kirkuk, Diyala and Salahuddin as a sign of its “resilience” as it seeks to reinvent itself as an underground insurgent force.

**T**he U.S. government report said an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 of the 14,000 Islamic State fighters in Syria are in a pocket of territory bordering areas held by the U.S. military and its allies. Although the report did not specify where the others are, it is likely that they are in a larger area that is surrounded by Syrian government forces and their allies.

Commenting on the report during a video-linked news conference at the Pentagon, Maj. Gen. Felix Gedney, the British deputy commander for strategy and support with the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State, said he believes there are at least 1,000 Islamic State fighters remaining in the pocket of territory. Speaking from Baghdad, he also said the new numbers seem “high” but did not offer an alternative assessment. ♦





August 15, 2018

# YPG kills 10 in targeted bombing of militant group in Afrin city center

Wladimir van Wilgenburg / August 15-2018  
<http://www.kurdistan24.net>

**ERBIL (Kurdistan 24)** – The People's Protection Units (YPG) on Wednesday said they killed 10 and injured another 20 in an attack on the Turkish army and the rebel al-Hamza Division group on Sunday.

"Within the scope of the resistance in Afrin, our units continue to target the occupying Turkish army elements and their allied terrorist groups," the YPG said in a statement.

"On Aug. 12, our forces targeted Turkish troops and Firqat al-Hamza (Hamza Division) terrorists with two separate bombing operations on the road leading to the Tirandah neighborhood in Afrin city center," said it added.

According to the Kurdish forces, "10 terrorists have been eliminated, [and] at least 20 others have been injured as a result of the operation."

The Turkish army and its military police are on high alert in Afrin city since Tuesday night after several attacks by the YPG on Turkish-backed forces.

A report released on Aug. 6 by the Department of Defense Inspector General mentioned that the US stopped funding the Hamza Division in December 2017.

The report mentioned that some of the Liwa al-Hamza fighters, culled from several



Hamza Division fighters seen lined up in Azaz, Syria, on Feb. 24, 2018. (Photo: Anadolu Agency)

smaller rebel groups, fought in Afrin against members of the Kurdish YPG.

Furthermore, it said that "while some insurgent violence continued, Turkey solidified control over Afrin."

Turkish-backed forces took control of Afrin in March and have brought in settlers from other provinces, like al-Ghouta and Homs.

According to USAID, over 137,000 people were displaced from Afrin.

"Our fight in Afrin is to drive out those strangers," Nuri Mahmoud, the spokesperson for the People's Protection Units (YPG), previously told Kurdistan 24.

YPG top commander Sipan Hemo told

Asharq al-Awsat last week that the YPG's military operations in Afrin continue and will grow in intensity over time.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the YPG has carried out over 100 attacks against forces controlling the area.

Turkey claims it has expedited humanitarian efforts to help daily life in the town return to normal, the Turkish pro-government Daily Sabah reported.

The pro-government daily also reported that YPG fighters are believed to be hiding in mountainous areas in Afrin's northwest Rajo district.

However, a UN report in June detailed large-scale human rights abuses by Turkish-backed forces in Afrin, including looting, the abduction of civilians, confiscation of civilian property, arbitrary arrests, and occupation of homes.

In early August, Amnesty International called on Turkey to rein in rebel abuses.

Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director, called Turkey an "occupying power in Afrin," adding it "is responsible for the welfare of the civilian population and maintaining law and order."

"So far, [Turkey's] armed forces have failed utterly in these duties." ♦



August 15, 2018

# Turkey strikes YBS vehicles in Shingal, killing local PKK leader

By Rudaw.net 15/8/2018

**ERBIL, Kurdistan Region** — Turkish war planes struck YBS-held areas of Shingal on Wednesday, killing local PKK head Zaki Shingali.

Khal Ali, a former YBS commander and a current Hashd al-Shaabi official, confirmed the killing of Zaki Shingali, the leader of all PKK forces in Shingal.

He added four YBS fighters were killed and Haval Mazlum, the general commander of YBS in Shingal was wounded.

The Turkish military confirmed a joint operation between it and national intelligence carried out a joint operation on Wednesday in Shingal against the PKK and KCK, killing Ismail Ozden, also known as Zaki Shingali.

**TSK ve MİB tarafından 15 Ağustos 2018 tarihinde gerçekleştirilen müşterek operasyonla, kırmızı listede aranan PKK/KCK bölücü terör örgütünün sözde**



**yürütme konseyi üyesi ve Irak kuzeyi Sincar Sorumlusu Mam Zeki Şengali kod adlı İsmail Özden etkisiz hale getirilmiştir.**

— TSK (@TSKGnkur) August 15, 2018

Acting Snune Mayor Khudaida Chuke told Rudaw that the jets targeted checkpoints of the Shingal Protection Units (YBS).

Qasim Shasho, a Peshmerga commander in Shingal, told Rudaw

An image from August 15, 2018, shows the damage of the Turkish air strikes in Shingal. Photo: Submitted to Rudaw

Turkish forces targeted a convoy of four YBS vehicles.

A Yezidi activist group tweeted they were "very worried" about "more than five explosions."

The YBS, with ties to the PKK, has previously said it would only incorporate locals.

Snune is a sub-district of Shingal, located in northwestern Iraq in the Kurdistan Region. The Shingal region is the Yezidi homeland.



An archive photo of the slain local PKK leader Zaki Shingali speaking to Rudaw.

A Yezidi organization's executive director, Yazda co-founder Murad Ismael, tweeted that ISIS survivors were in the southern Shingal town of Kocho to mourn four years after the genocide.

The YBS convoy had returned from the fourth anniversary of the Yezidis massacre in Kocho village while they were targeted in the Sikne area near Snune, according to Shasho.

The bombing came a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi visited Ankara where he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Abadi had said in his meeting with Erdogan that Iraq would not allow any group to threaten neighboring Turkey using Iraq's territory. ■

# Comment l'affaire du pasteur accusé d'espionnage a ruiné la relation américano-turque

**L'ultimatum fixé par Washington aux autorités turques pour la libération d'Andrew Brunson, détenu depuis octobre 2016, expire mercredi soir. L'affaire est à l'origine de la chute de la devise turque.**

Par Marie Jégo (Istanbul, correspondante) 15.08.2018 lemonde.fr

En octobre 2016, quand la police turque arrête Andrew Brunson, un pasteur évangélique américain installé depuis plus de vingt ans en Turquie, personne ne pouvait imaginer la suite. Vingt-deux mois plus tard, l'affaire judiciaire autour de ce modeste homme d'Eglise a mis la relation américano-turque au tapis, tout en faisant chuter la devise turque, au point d'envoyer une onde de choc sur les marchés financiers de la planète.

En dépit des appels répétés du président américain, Donald Trump, de libérer le pasteur et de le renvoyer aux Etats-Unis, aucun signe d'apaisement n'est en vue. Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ne plie pas.

Aux yeux du numéro un turc, l'effondrement de la devise nationale, survenu après l'annonce du doublement des taxes sur l'acier et l'aluminium turcs à destination des Etats-Unis, est le fruit d'un complot. Il s'agit d'un « putsch » auquel la Turquie répondra avec « tous les moyens à sa disposition ». Le mot « guerre » est manié à l'envi dans ses discours. Il l'a encore prononcé lundi 13 août à la réunion annuelle des ambassadeurs, à Ankara : « Le secret des pays qui réussissent réside dans leur préparation à la guerre. »

Donc, pas question de libérer Andrew Brunson. Mercredi 15 août, un tribunal turc a ainsi rejeté un nouvel appel de l'avocat du pasteur, Cem Halavurt, pour la levée de son assignation à résidence et de son interdiction de quitter le territoire. Un petit espoir subsiste toutefois car une autre cour de justice va examiner sa requête.



Andrew Brunson, le 25 juillet, jour de sa sortie de la prison d'Izmir, pour être assigné à résidence avec une interdiction de quitter le territoire.

## D'AUTRES SANCTIONS POURRAIENT SUIVRE

Contre toute attente, le même jour, un tribunal d'Istanbul a ordonné la remise en liberté conditionnelle du président d'Amnesty International, Taner Kiliç, écroué depuis plus d'un an pour appartenance à une organisation terroriste. Or, M. Kiliç est mentionné en tant que complice dans l'acte d'accusation du pasteur Brunson, un texte ponctué de suppositions délirantes.

Le temps presse. L'ultimatum fixé par les Américains aux autorités turques expire mercredi soir, heure de Washington. D'autres sanctions pourraient suivre. Ulcérée, l'administration américaine demande non plus la seule libération du pasteur, mais aussi celle de quinze autres personnes.

« Nous en appelons à nouveau aux autorités turques pour ce cas et tous les autres cas de citoyens américains injustement détenus en Turquie, tout comme les employés turcs des missions diplomatiques des Etats-Unis. Leurs cas doivent être résolus au plus vite de façon juste et transparente, c'est ce que demande

mon gouvernement », a déclaré mardi Jeffrey Hovenier, le chargé d'affaires de l'ambassade américaine à Ankara (il n'y a plus d'ambassadeur depuis novembre 2017) après avoir rendu visite au pasteur. Celui-ci a été placé depuis peu en résidence surveillée à son domicile, à Izmir. Affaibli par ses vingt et un mois de détention, il a perdu 20 kg et son moral est au plus bas.

## LIENS PRÉSUMÉS AVEC LE PRÉDICATEUR FETHULLAH GÜLEN

Qui est le pasteur Brunson ? Bien connu des habitants de la ville d'Izmir, parlant parfaitement le turc, ce quinquagénaire au visage poupin n'avait jamais eu d'ennuis avec les autorités, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit convoqué en octobre 2016 par l'office des migrations pour ce qu'il pensait être une simple histoire de permis de séjour.

Mais lorsqu'il se rend à la convocation, il est arrêté. On lui reproche ses liens présumés avec le mouvement du prédicateur musulman Fethullah Gülen, accusé par Ankara d'avoir fomenté le coup d'Etat raté du 15 juillet 2016. Cette tentative de soulèvement d'une partie de l'armée a

conduit à une vague de répression sans précédent. Plus de 160 000 fonctionnaires ont été limogés, plus de 60 000 personnes ont été écrouées.

Incarcéré, transféré de prison en prison, Andrew Brunson va devoir attendre six mois avant d'être mis en examen. Les autorités turques lui reprochent ce qu'elles décrivent comme des rencontres avec des gülenistes ainsi qu'avec des Kurdes présumés membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), la rébellion kurde autonomiste devenue la bête noire d'Ankara. Il est également accusé d'espionnage, autant d'accusations qu'il dément catégoriquement.

L'acte d'accusation évoque la présence sur son téléphone portable de la recette du mak-lube, le « mets préféré des gülenistes », selon la pensée officielle post-coup d'Etat, ainsi que l'utilisation du mot « Kurdistan ». « Le suspect a préparé une bible en kurde, intitulée "Ziyajin", dans le but de séparer les citoyens kurdes en leur assurant qu'ils sont la treizième tribu perdue (...). Il s'agit d'une synergie conçue pour diviser et conquérir la République de Turquie », y est-il écrit.

Comme c'est le cas lors des procès des suspects arrêtés après la tentative de coup d'Etat, l'accusation repose essentiellement sur des témoins anonymes. L'un d'eux explique : « A plusieurs reprises le témoin a aperçu le suspect Andrew Craig Brunson, à l'église, dans des cafés, à la plage, en train de marcher, d'être assis ou de parler à des personnes qui n'avaient rien à voir avec sa congrégation mais dont l'apparence et le style peuvent être décrits comme gülenistes. » ■

# Turquie. Erdogan impuissant face à la crise économique

La livre turque plonge face à l'euro et au dollar. En pleine déroute monétaire, le président souffle sur les braises du complotisme pour faire oublier sa responsabilité, estime ce journaliste turc d'opposition.

↳ Dessin de Kamensky, Autriche.



—Gazete Duvar Istanbul

Jusqu'à nos jours, quel pouvoir politique a déjà admis sa responsabilité dans une crise économique? On ne peut donc pas en vouloir au président Recep Tayyip Erdogan de faire de même.

Il a donc recours, comme tous les régimes autoritaires, à l'argument facile des "puissances extérieures" et, sans hésiter, qualifie la crise de "guerre économique". Les journalistes, les hommes d'affaires à la solde du pouvoir ainsi que Berat Albayrak [ministre des Finances et gendre du président] lui emboîtent le pas. Le sociologue français Gustave Le Bon [1841-1931], un des meilleurs spécialistes de la psychologie des foules, dont les travaux ont largement inspiré les inventeurs du fascisme, disait que les foules étaient facilement influençables et propres à se laisser gagner par l'irrationnel et guider par leur inconscient et par leurs instincts, non par les faits mais par les images et les symboles. Le discours prononcé samedi 11 août par Erdogan dans la ville de Bayburt a été une incroyable symphonie, articulante recours aux symboles, persuasion et populisme de droite.

**Discours surréaliste.** Alors même que le cours du dollar était en train de battre des records face à la livre turque, le président n'a pas symboles de "leurs dieux" et non de "notre Allah" et dont on se sert perfidement pour attaquer la Turquie. Dans un accès de lyrisme, il a enjoint aux épargnants turcs de se défaire de leurs bas de laine et de courir comme on court vers le front, leur argent sous le bras, convertir leur or et leurs devises en livres turques.

Pour beaucoup de gens, le discours d'Erdogan peut sembler surréaliste. Il peut même être l'objet de railleries. Mais rien ne peut plus infléchir sa décision de transformer cette crise en une nouvelle "guerre d'indépendance". Et que ceux qui doutent de l'efficacité de cette tactique se remémorent les travaux de Le Bon sur la propension des hommes à se laisser dominer par leur inconscient.

Une crise est un temps d'effondrement. Et cet effondrement peut être bénéfique à Erdogan comme il peut lui nuire. Souvenons-nous de la crise financière de 2001. Dans les pires moments, le Premier ministre de l'époque, Bülent Ecevit, accusait, lui, les "spéculateurs" d'avoir

créé la crise. Mais ses tentatives de diversion et son éloquence ont été vaines, et il s'est rapidement fait emporter par la vague de la crise.

Et après l'intervention du Fonds monétaire international est venue l'heure du bilan. La monnaie turque s'était dépréciée vis-à-vis du dollar; les banques, qui avaient perdu de leur valeur, étaient devenues la proie des grands groupes comme HSBC ou Citibank; 400 000 PME avaient mis la clé sous la porte et 120 000 personnes avaient perdu leur emploi.

**Déclin général.** Mais l'effondrement n'était pas qu'économique, il avait gagné le monde politique. Les politiciens aussi ont perdu de leur valeur aux yeux des citoyens qui les ont jugés responsables de la situation et ont fini par les chasser en mettant leur bulletin dans l'urne. Aujourd'hui, à mesure que la crise prend de l'ampleur, nous vivons ce même effondrement. Ce n'est pas seulement la livre turque qui s'effondre mais aussi le monde du travail, la vie en général et notre avenir. Erdogan sait que sa politique économique est impuissante à juguler la crise, que cette dernière est déjà là, alors il tisse des murs pour que les gens ne se rendent pas compte de la réalité. Et à ceux qui voient leurs économies fondre rapidement, il tricote un bouclier avec les "valeurs nationales et spirituelles". Il n'a plus que cette solution, il ne peut que proclamer sa "guerre d'indépendance" et continuer à diriger en attribuant une valeur politique à cet effondrement. Alors que pour un nombre croissant de personnes la situation économique devient critique et que l'effondrement se généralise, il a plus que jamais besoin de souffler sur les braises du feu qu'il a allumé. Reste à voir dans quelle direction le vent va souffler...

—Bahadır Özgür  
Publié le 12 août

## Un dangereux engrenage

●●● Depuis le début de l'année, la livre turque a perdu 40 % de sa valeur face au dollar et à l'euro. Sur fond de conflit avec les États-Unis, elle a vécu un vendredi noir ce 10 août, s'effondrant de 16 % dans la journée et faisant souffler un vent de panique sur les marchés mondiaux.

Selon **The Economist**, c'est Donald Trump qui "a jeté la livre turque sous le bus", en annonçant vendredi qu'il allait doubler les taxes sur l'aluminium et l'acier importés de Turquie, portant ces taxes à 20 % et 50 %. Cette déclaration a couronné une semaine tendue entre les deux pays, lors de laquelle le Trésor américain a décidé le gel des actifs de deux ministres d'Erdogan en raison de leur rôle dans l'arrestation et la détention d'un pasteur américain en Turquie.

La confiance des investisseurs dans la Turquie est minée par la crise diplomatique avec les États-Unis, analyse **The Independent**, mais aussi par "une inflation de 15 % et un déficit courant de 7 % de son PIB, ce qui signifie qu'elle dépend étroitement des financements étrangers". Autant de paramètres qui n'auraient rien de si inquiétant dans le contexte d'une économie émergente comme celle de la Turquie, poursuit le quotidien britannique, "mais le président Erdogan a une telle tendance à l'autoritarisme capricieux que les investisseurs doutent de sa capacité à gérer la crise de façon rationnelle".

Lundi 13 août, alors que le cours de la livre turque atteignait son plus bas niveau historique, la banque centrale d'Ankara annonçait une série de mesures pour renflouer le système financier du pays et stabiliser sa monnaie, notamment en fournissant "toutes les liquidités nécessaires" aux banques turques. Pour le **Financial Times**, "un effondrement de l'économie turque serait dangereux pour d'autres régions d'Asie et d'Europe" et engendrerait "des risques géostratégiques majeurs".

# Riyad annonce une contribution de 100 millions de dollars pour le nord-est de la Syrie

OLJ 18/08/2018

www.lorientlejour.com

L'Arabie saoudite a annoncé hier une contribution de 100 millions de dollars pour des projets de la coalition internationale conduite par les États-Unis pour stabiliser le nord-est de la Syrie autrefois occupé par le groupe État islamique.

Le royaume saoudien a souligné que sa contribution est la plus importante à ce jour pour ces zones du nord-est de la Syrie désormais contrôlées par des forces arabo-kurdes soutenues par la coalition internationale antijihadiste. Il précise que cette somme a été débloquée à la suite d'un engagement pris par Riyad lors d'une réunion internationale le 12 juillet à Bruxelles.

« Cette contribution substantielle jouera un rôle crucial dans les efforts de la coalition internationale pour revitaliser des communautés, notamment à Raqqa, qui ont été dévastées par les terroristes de l'EI », affirme Riyad en évoquant des projets liés à la santé, l'agriculture, l'électricité, l'eau, l'éducation et le transport.

L'EI a perdu le contrôle de la plupart de son « califat » autoproclamé à cheval sur la Syrie et l'Irak, notamment après avoir été chassé en 2017 de Mossoul et de Raqqa, ses deux places fortes dans ces pays.

Le régime du président syrien Bachar el-Assad, qui a perdu le contrôle sur ces régions, a qualifié

cette contribution « d'inacceptable moralement », selon des propos rapportés par l'agence de presse officielle syrienne SANA. Le régime reproche à l'Arabie saoudite d'avoir encouragé des mouvements « terroristes en Syrie », dans la guerre qui ravage le pays depuis plus de sept ans.

Cette annonce intervient alors que l'administration de Donald Trump envisage de revoir à la baisse les fonds alloués à des programmes d'aide au Moyen-Orient, notamment en Syrie et dans la bande de Gaza. Il s'agit d'une « contribution importante, essentielle pour la stabilisation et les premiers efforts de reconstruction », a dit le département d'État dans un communiqué à propos de l'aide saoudienne. « Elle arrive à un moment important de la campagne », a-t-il noté. Il faut que les alliés des États-Unis contribuent à renforcer la stabilité et la sécurité dans la région, a-t-il ajouté dans le communiqué. « Les programmes de stabilisation et de reconstruction sont essentiels pour garantir que l'EI ne puisse pas réapparaître et utiliser la Syrie comme base pour menacer les populations de la région ou préparer des attaques contre la communauté internationale. »

## 18 JIHADISTES DE L'EI TUÉS PAR UN RAID AÉRIEN

Sur le terrain, au moins 18 jihadistes de l'EI ont été tués dans un raid aérien visant leur ultime bastion de l'est de la Syrie, a annoncé hier l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH).



Des déplacés syriens de Deir ez-Zor recevant de l'aide dans un camp à Hassaké. AFP / Delil Souleiman

Les frappes ont visé jeudi soir la localité de Soussa, dans la province de Deir ez-Zor frontalière de l'Irak, tuant « au moins 18 combattants de l'EI », la plupart étrangers, selon l'OSDH. Un haut commandant jihadiste, de nationalité irakienne, figure parmi les victimes, selon cette ONG qui dispose d'un vaste réseau de sources dans le pays en guerre.

L'Observatoire n'était pas en mesure de dire si ces raids ont été menés par l'aviation de Bagdad ou par la coalition internationale anti-EI emmenée par Washington, deux acteurs qui interviennent dans ce secteur. L'armée irakienne a, elle, annoncé dans un communiqué avoir tué « des éléments » de l'EI dans un raid aérien en Syrie ciblant jeudi une « cellule de commande » des jihadistes. Il n'était pas possible de savoir de source indépendante si le raid évoqué par l'OSDH cor-

respond à celui évoqué par l'armée irakienne.

Fin juillet, le commandant des forces françaises au sein de la coalition internationale, le général François Parisot, avait assuré que les jihadistes ne contrôlaient plus qu'une bande de territoire entre les villes de Hajine et de Boukamal, près de la frontière irakienne, évaluant le nombre de combattants de l'EI à « quelques centaines ». Il avait toutefois averti que les combats contre les derniers jihadistes à Deir ez-Zor devaient encore durer « au moins deux ou trois mois ».

Cependant, dans un rapport présenté lundi, des observateurs de l'ONU ont affirmé qu'entre 20 000 et 30 000 combattants de l'EI, dont des étrangers, sont encore présents en Irak et en Syrie. ♦

AFP

## L'ONU enquête sur les crimes de l'EI en Irak

Nations unies (Etats-Unis), 23 août 2018 (AFP)

DES ENQUÊTEURS des Nations unies ont commencé à recueillir en Irak des preuves des massacres et autres atrocités perpétrés par l'organisation jihadiste Etat islamique (EI) à l'encontre notamment de la minorité kurdophone yazidie, selon une lettre rendue publique jeudi.

Le secrétaire général de l'ONU Antonio Guterres a informé le Conseil de sécurité dans une lettre envoyée le 17 août que les enquêteurs commenceraient leur travail trois jours plus tard, sous la direction du Britannique Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, avocat spécialisé dans les droits de l'homme.

Le Conseil a adopté à l'unanimité en 2017 une résolution ouvrant la voie à une

enquête afin que les membres de l'EI répondent de leurs crimes devant la justice.

Des femmes yazidies ont été prises en otage et utilisées comme esclaves sexuelles par l'EI lorsque l'organisation jihadiste a pris le contrôle de la région irakienne de Sinjar en août 2014.

Les Nations unies ont qualifié les massacres des Yazidis de "génocide" potentiel.

Des dizaines de milliers de Yazidis ont fui les massacres d'août 2014 dans le Sinjar et une commission d'enquête de l'ONU sur les droits de l'homme a fait état d'atrocités, notamment à l'encontre des femmes et des filles.

Antonio Guterres a indiqué au Conseil que M. Khan, qui a été nommé en février, avait effectué une première mission en Irak du 6 au 14 août.

Les enquêteurs sont chargés, selon les termes de la résolution de l'ONU, de réunir des preuves sur "des crimes de guerre, des crimes contre l'humanité ou un génocide", destinées à être utilisées dans des tribunaux irakiens pour les procès de membres de l'EI. ●

# Kurds prize 'real partnership' in Iraq's next gov't, Masoud Barzani tells US envoy

By Rudaw.net / 20/8/2018

**ERBIL, Kurdistan Region** – Kurdish parties prioritize the principal of "real partnership" in a federal Iraq, President Masoud Barzani told US envoy Brett McGurk when they met on Monday to discuss the formation of Iraq's new government.

Barzani, president of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), also raised the "latest political developments of the region and field changes in the ISIS war in Syria and Western Iraq" during his meeting with the US Special Presidential Envoy for Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Hours after Iraq's federal court approved the results of the May 12 parliamentary election on Sunday, Iraqi political parties launched efforts to form alliances in a contest to announce the biggest bloc.

Four Iraqi parties – Sayirun, Nasr, Hikma, and Watanya – announced an initial agreement on Sunday night, which will be turned into the biggest bloc once other parties are brought on board.

"In a national Iraqi decision springing from the interest of our country, and responding to the demands of the people, we agreed today to form the core of an alliance that will seek to form the parliamentary bloc that can form the government," read a joint statement issued following the meeting.

The new alliance is seen as being pro-US, while the as yet unannounced alliance between State of Law, led by former PM Nouri Maliki, and the Fatih (Conquest) alliance, led by Hadi Amiri, is deemed to be pro-Iran.

The latter claims it has the backing of Kurdish parties – something the Kurdish parties, particularly the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), are yet to confirm.

However, Ahmed Jumaa, a member of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's Nasr (Victory) Alliance, told Rudaw during Sunday's meeting "all our brothers sent a clear message to our brothers in Kurdistan that a bloc was not announce typically because our brothers from Kurdistan were



US envoy Brett McGurk (L) meets with KDP President Masoud Barzani, August 20, 2018. Photo: Office of Masoud Barzani

not present in the meeting."

"Therefore, we as the Nasr Alliance insist that all ethnic and religious groups shall join the bloc. In fact, we believe that our Kurdish brothers are the main members of this bloc. We also expect them to play an effective role in the formation of the biggest bloc," he said.

"Disputed matters between Baghdad and Erbil have to be put on the table and the constitution shall be the judge," he added.

Solutions have to be found for issues like the Peshmerga, Kirkuk,

airports, border control, and the Kurdish share of the budget, "because they both have a shared and historic political experience."

The US Embassy in Iraq issued a statement on Monday hailing the long delayed election result.

"We welcome Sunday's certification of national election results by the Federal Supreme Court and are encouraged by the commitment of Iraq's newly elected leaders to form a new government on Iraq's constitutional timeline." ■

The New York Times AUGUST 14, 2018

# Turkish Airstrike in Iraqi Territory Kills a Kurdish Militant Leader

By Rukmini Callimachi — Aug. 16, 2018  
/www.nytimes.com

A Turkish airstrike this week killed a senior leader of an organization banned in Turkey as his convoy was leaving a village in northern Iraq, officials said.

The airstrike was the latest of many that Turkey has carried out in Iraqi territory, with the permission of the Iraqi government, in an effort to weaken the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which Turkey considers a terrorist organization.

But the target in Wednesday's strike, a man known as Zaki Shingali, is considered a hero to many members of the embattled Yazidi minority in northern Iraq, whose women and girls were forced into sexual enslavement by the Islamic State and whose men were killed by the thousands.

When the Islamic State overran the area in 2014, government troops fled and left civilians to fend for themselves. The Kurdistan Workers' Party, which maintains bases in the Sinjar mountains of northern Iraq, came to the aid of stranded Yazidis. The organization, also known as the

P.K.K., the initials of its Kurdish name, created a security corridor that allowed civilians to flee, say survivors of the massacre and regional experts.

Zaki Shingali, an ethnic Yazidi and a Turkish citizen, was leaving a service commemorating the fourth anniversary of the killings on Wednesday in Kojo, the Yazidi village that suffered the greatest losses.

He died from his wounds early Thursday, said Mahmoud Shingali, the coordinator for civil affairs between Sinjar and the federal government in Baghdad. Turkey described Zaki Shingali as the most senior P.K.K. leader in the Sinjar area, according to a pro-government newspaper, who appeared on the country's most-wanted "red list."

Online, Yazidi activists and survivors of the massacre posted messages criticizing Turkey and commemorating Zaki Shingali, whose real name was Ismael Özden.

"We don't want Sinjar to be a hotbed of the P.K.K. and we don't want to be the enemies of Turkey," said Murad Ismael, who co-founded Yazda, a group providing support to Yazidi women raped by Islamic State militants. "But Turkey wat-

ched patiently as the Yazidi genocide unfolded and did nothing."

"Mam Zaki was one of the first who arrived to help us," Mr. Ismael added, using a Kurdish word that means uncle.

Nadia Murad, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee who was abducted from her village on Sinjar mountain and repeatedly raped by Islamic State fighters before escaping, wrote in an email: "Mam Zaki was a fine human who came to the rescue of Yazidis. For this we are thankful. That said, Sinjar cannot be a place for people to fight their wars."

As many as 40,000 people are believed to have been killed in decades of conflict between Turkish soldiers and P.K.K. fighters. The P.K.K. has found refuge in Iraq's remote mountains, and in recent years, Turkey has been fighting the group outside its borders, including carrying out airstrikes on Iraqi soil.

The continued P.K.K. presence in the Sinjar region of Iraq, the ancestral homeland of the Yazidi people, has created a complicated and increasingly tense dynamic.

Numerous armed groups have tried to lay claim to the rugged landscape and its collection of villages. The area was overwhelmingly Yazidi until 2014, when they were forced to flee the Islamic State's advance and seek shelter in refugee camps set up hours from their homes. Years later, a sizable portion of the community is still living in those same open-air tent cities, unable to return as the struggle for control unfolds on the mountain.

One of the players in that battle for control is the P.K.K., which is also considered as a terrorist organization by the United States. ■

# The West must face reality in Turkey

## OPINION



By Richard N. Haass /  
August 19, 2018  
<http://www.atimes.com>

Now that Turkey is at loggerheads with its erstwhile ally the United States, the country's currency crisis has morphed into a political problem of the first order. The immediate issue is Turkey's refusal to release the American pastor Andrew Brunson, who is being held on charges of terrorism, espionage and subversion for his alleged role in the failed July 2016 coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The US government is right to object to Brunson's detention. But its reaction has been counterproductive. In particular, the imposition of additional tariffs on imports of Turkish steel and aluminum could further undermine confidence in Turkey's economy, triggering a wider crisis that would do serious harm to the global economy. Moreover, tariffs allow Erdoğan to blame his country's economic woes on the US, rather than on his own government's incompetence.

It is still possible that the Turkish government will find a way to release Brunson, and that US President Donald Trump, anxious to demonstrate fealty to the evangelicals who form a core part of his base, will rescind the tariffs. But even if the immediate crisis is resolved, the structural crisis in US-Turkish relations – and Western-Turkish relations generally – will remain.

We are witnessing the gradual but steady demise of a relationship that is already an alliance in name only. Though the Trump administration is right to have confronted Turkey, it chose not only the wrong response, but also the wrong issue.

The relationship between Turkey and the West has long been predicated on two principles, neither of which obtains any longer. The first is that Turkey is a part of the West, which implies that it is a liberal democracy. Yet Turkey is neither liberal nor a democracy. It has in effect been subjected to one-party rule under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), and power has become concentrated in the hands of Erdoğan, who is also the AKP's leader.

Under Erdoğan, checks and balances have largely been eliminated from the Turkish political system, and the president controls the media, the bureaucracy, and the courts. The same failed coup that Erdoğan



cites as grounds to imprison Brunson has also served as an excuse for detaining thousands of others. At this point, it is impossible to see how Erdoğan's Turkey could ever qualify for membership in the European Union.

The second principle underlying Turkey's "Western" status is alignment on foreign policy. Turkey recently bought more than 100 advanced F-35 fighter jets from the US. Yet, in recent years, Turkey has also supported jihadist groups in Syria, moved closer to Iran, and contracted to purchase S-400 surface-to-air missiles from Russia.

Above all, Turkey and the US find themselves on different sides in Syria. While the Syrian Kurds have been close partners of the US, they have been deemed terrorists by Turkey because of their ties to Kurdish groups inside Turkey that historically have sought autonomy, if not independence. Against this backdrop, it is not far-fetched to imagine US and Turkish forces coming to blows.

Some might say that the current level of US-Turkish friction is nothing new; the two countries have long had their share of differences. The Turks were not happy with the US decision to withdraw medium-range missiles from Turkey as part of the deal that ended the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The two countries clashed repeatedly over the Turkish intervention and subsequent occupation of Northern Cyprus in 1974, and over US support for Greece.

Turkey refused to give US military forces access to Incirlik Air Base during the Iraq war in 2003. And in recent years, the Turkish government has been infuriated by America's refusal to extradite the Pennsylvania-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, who Erdoğan believes masterminded the 2016 coup attempt.

Still, what we are seeing today is something different. The anti-Soviet glue that

kept the two countries close during the Cold War is long gone. What we have now is a loveless marriage in which the two parties continue to cohabitate under the same roof, even though there is no longer any real connection between them.

The problem is that the NATO treaty provides no mechanism for divorce. Turkey can withdraw from the alliance, but it cannot be forced out. Given this reality, the US and the EU should maintain a two-pronged approach toward Turkey.

First, policymakers should criticize Turkish policy when warranted. But they must also reduce their reliance on access to Turkish bases such as Incirlik, deny Turkey access to advanced military hardware like F-35s, and reconsider the policy of basing

**We are witnessing the gradual but steady demise of a relationship that is already an alliance in name only. Though the Trump administration is right to have confronted Turkey, it chose not only the wrong response, but also the wrong issue**

nuclear weapons in Turkey.

Moreover, the US should not extradite Gülen unless Turkey can prove his involvement in the coup with evidence that would stand up in a US court and satisfy the provisions of the 1981 mutual extradition treaty. Nor should the US abandon the Kurds, given their invaluable role in the fight against Islamic State (ISIS).

Second, the US and Europe should wait until the Erdoğan era is over, and then approach Turkey's new leadership with a grand bargain. The offer should be Western support in exchange for a Turkish commitment to liberal democracy and to a foreign policy focused on fighting terrorism and pushing back against Russia.

Erdoğan recently warned in *The New York Times* that the US-Turkish partnership "could be in jeopardy," and that Turkey would soon start looking for new friends and allies if US unilateralism and disrespect were not reversed. In fact, the partnership was already in jeopardy, largely because of Turkish actions, and Erdoğan had already begun the process of looking for new friends and allies. It is time for the US and Europe to adjust to this reality. ♦

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REUTERS

# Erdogan invokes patriotism, Islam as lira remains under pressure

August 20, 2018 / Daren Butler / ISTANBUL (Reuters) -

**PRESIDENT TAYYIP ERDOGAN** appealed to Turks' religious and patriotic feelings ahead of a major Muslim holiday on Monday, promising they would not be brought "to their knees" by an economic crisis that has battered the lira currency.

The lira TRY/TOM=D3 has tumbled some 40 percent this year, hit by worries about Erdogan's influence over monetary policy and a worsening diplomatic rift with the United States. The sell-off has spread to other emerging market currencies and global stocks in recent weeks.

Highlighting the increased tensions, the U.S. embassy in the Turkish capital Ankara came under brief gunfire early on Monday by unknown assailants in an attack condemned by Erdogan's spokesman as a bid "to create chaos". Nobody was hurt. A person was later detained, Anadolu news agency said.

In a pre-recorded address to mark the four-day Eid al-Adha festival, which starts on Tuesday, Erdogan, a pious Muslim, sounded a characteristically defiant note as he lashed out at those selling the lira.

"The attack on our economy has absolutely no difference from attacks on our call to prayer and our flag. The goal is the same. The goal is to bring Turkey and the Turkish people to their knees - to take it prisoner," Erdogan said in the televised address.

"Those who think they can make Turkey give in with the exchange rate will soon see that they are mistaken."

Erdogan stopped short of directly naming any countries or institutions, but he has, in the past, blamed a shadowy "interest rate lobby", Western ratings agencies and financiers.

## DIPLOMATIC RIFT

Much of the recent tension has centered around a U.S. evangelical Christian pastor, Andrew Brunson, who has been detained in Turkey on terrorism charges, which he denies.

Brunson, originally from North Carolina, has lived in Turkey for two decades and has become an unwitting flashpoint for the diplomatic rift.

On Friday, a Turkish court rejected Brunson's appeal for release, drawing a stiff

rebuke from President Donald Trump, who said the United States would not take the detention of the pastor "sitting down".

In response to Brunson's case, Trump - who counts evangelical Christians among his core supporters - has said he would double previously announced tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum imports.

Turkey said on Monday it had initiated a dispute complaint with the World Trade Organisation over the additional tariffs.

The lira weakened to 6.1290 to the dollar by 1546 GMT on Monday, from a close of 6.0100 on Friday.

On Friday two ratings agencies, Moody's and Standard & Poor's, further cut Turkey's sovereign rating into junk territory.

The downgrades confirmed prevailing concerns that Turkey "is unlikely to avoid a significant slowdown in economic activity" and that the lira's fall "poses a risk to financial stability", said Piotr Matys, an emerging markets strategist at Rabobank.

In addition to the lira, Turkey's sovereign dollar bonds fell and the cost of insuring its debt rose.

The German finance minister said on Monday the Turkish currency crisis posed an additional risk to Germany's economy.

However, German Chancellor Angela Merkel told her Christian Democrats at a meeting that she saw no urgent need to offer financial aid to Turkey to ease the crisis, the party's general secretary said.

Qatar and Turkey's central banks last week signed a \$3 billion currency swap agreement, a move designed to provide liquidity and financial stability.

That came days after Qatar's emir approved a \$15 billion package of economic projects, investments and deposits for Turkey. ●



RTL.fr

29 août 2018

## Daesh serait de retour à Raqqa en Syrie

D'après un spécialiste des vidéos de propagande des groupes jihadistes, les terroristes de l'État islamique auraient regagné leur ancienne capitale syrienne pour y perpétrer des attaques.

Cécile De Sèze Journaliste RTL le 29/08/2018

www.rtl.fr

Raqqa est libérée, mais fragile. L'ancienne capitale syrienne de l'État islamique a été reprise par les FDS (Forces démocratiques syriennes) en octobre dernier. Mais depuis, la situation n'est pas stabilisée, comme dans l'ensemble du pays. D'après un expert des vidéos de propagandes des groupes jihadistes dans la région irako-syrienne, Historicoblog4 sur Twitter, l'activité de Daesh n'est plus un lointain souvenir dans la province de Raqqa.

Le groupe terroriste a revendiqué pour la première fois depuis des mois une attaque en juin dernier. Et si le spécialiste précise qu'il peut ne s'agir que d'une revendication opportuniste, "des informations font état de l'infiltration d'éléments de l'État islamique dans la ville", apprend-on sur France Soir.

Plusieurs attaques ont été revendiquées par la formation jihadiste depuis le mois de juillet. Toutefois, certaines peuvent être des revendications



: l'Etat islamique publie des images de l'attaque à l'IED dans Raqqa contre un convoi, revendiquée le 18 août.

d'appropriation d'explosions provoquées par des restes d'explosifs de la bataille de Raqqa à l'automne 2017. Le spécialiste relève un peu moins de 20 revendications pour le seul mois de juillet.

Depuis quelques jours, toutefois, des images diffusées par l'EI "tendent à prouver qu'il y a une cellule active dans la région à l'est de la province de Raqqa", lit-on dans France Soir qui conclut : "Il aura donc fallu moins de neuf mois à l'État islamique pour se réimplanter dans sa capitale syrienne".

L'article rappelle la situation de fond plus que tendue entre les différentes forces présentes dans la ville, à savoir le YPG, branche du PKK (Parti des travailleurs kurdes) syrienne, les FDS mais aussi le groupe Jabhat Thuwar al-Raqqa, formation arabe membre des FDS mais anti-YPG, ou encore le groupe Harakat al-Qiyam, anti-FDS. ●

# Turkey's real problems are tied to political meddling by Erdogan

## Deteriorating relations with US and the actions of market speculators highlight precarious economic position

Stephen Starr - Aug 20, 2018  
<https://www.irishtimes.com>

The Akasya mall on Istanbul's Asian side is built with the city's moneyed residents in mind. The Brooks Brothers, Armani and Burberry stores on site can be found only at select locations in the city.

When it opened in 2014, a metro stop and dedicated cross-city bus line were opened nearby to allow shoppers more easily reach its 257 stores. Inside, on the first floor, the Apple Store occupies the best-positioned space in the mall.

On Tuesday, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for a boycott of US electronics in a spat with Washington fuelled, in part, by Turkey's ongoing detention of American pastor Andrew Brunson. The president singled out Apple's iPhone by name in his combative speech.

The call to boycott follows deepening worries around Turkey's economy that's seen the lira lose one-third of its value against the US dollar this year alone.

But if Mr Erdogan had visited the Apple Store at Akasya mall last Thursday afternoon he might have come away very disappointed indeed. The store's dedicated "Today at Apple" section is jammed with customers and interested onlookers.

This weekend, the store will hold 90-minute information sessions on how to best use "shadows and light" when shooting with your iPhone. A "kids hour", whereby children can bring along their iPad or iPhone to be taught how to use iMovie, is scheduled for Sunday afternoon.

### A NORMAL DAY

Speaking fluent English (something almost unheard of in similar such stores in Istanbul), a member of staff who asked not to be named as they're not authorised to speak to the media, referred to the crowded scene as reflecting a normal day. Clearly, for the dozens of people here, the president's call has been ignored.

The high consumption of products - iPhones included - that's helped drive the Turkish economy over the past decade has in reality been facilitated and encouraged by Erdogan and his ruling AK Party government. He sought to make fast economic growth, fuelled by costly, major infrastructure projects, a cornerstone



*Akasya shopping centre, Istanbul. When it opened in 2014, a metro stop and dedicated cross-city bus line were opened nearby to allow shoppers more easily reach its 257 stores.*

of his political message. For more than a decade, it worked splendidly.

In Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, two underground transport tunnels and a new Bosphorus bridge built at a combined cost of €8 billion have provided thousands of construction jobs and allowed residents commute more easily across the city.

Residential construction has boomed around the country with almost 800,000 housing units constructed every year. The government has vowed to spend \$200 billion to modernise the country and never have Turks had more access to cash.

But now the wheels are starting to come off. Deteriorating relations with the US and the actions of market speculators have only served to highlight Turkey's precarious economic position.

### INFLATION

Its real problems are inbuilt, systematic and tied to political meddling by the president, who refuses to raise interest rates to combat inflation. Unemployment remains stubbornly high at more than 10 per cent and the cost of living has rocketed. According to Turkey's central bank, long-term, private sector foreign debt stands at \$221 billion.

"Some measures taken in the last few days have helped, but they are temporary solutions," says Emre Deliveli, an independent economist. "The real solutions are that they need to make peace with the US and make a huge interest rate hike - 5 per cent. The central bank knows that it needs to do this, but the president is very unwilling to see this happen, and unless things get extremely desperate, I think this won't happen."

As the ninth-biggest steel producer in the world, Donald Trump's declaration on August 3rd that the US would hike taxes on Turkish steel by 50 per cent is another reason fuelling the economic wobbles. Just 5.6 per cent of US steel imports originate in Turkey, but that puts it ahead of Germany, China and Japan, at a value of around \$1 billion dollars.

Recent days have seen Turkey's currency stabilise (on Friday morning, the lira stood at 5.770 to the dollar, firming 0.7 per cent from a close of 5.815) in part because of a \$15 billion pledge of support from Qatar and the central bank's promise this week to provide liquidity to banks as required. Turkish markets will be closed from midday on Monday for the rest of the week for the Muslim Eid al-Adha festival. Bloomberg reports that Turks cashing in dollars - as Erdogan has pleaded with them to do - has helped, too.

Turkey's finance minister held a teleconference with 6,000 international and other investors on Thursday afternoon at which he ruled out the prospect of an IMF bailout and capital control measures, as well as suggesting that investment portfolios would be reviewed. Further evidence of Turkey's combative stance appeared on Wednesday when it issued major new tariffs on US alcoholic beverages, vehicles, leaf tobacco and other products.

Certain aspects of Turkey's economy remain robust. Though inflation is at its highest in 14 years, household spending and consumption is still strong. Turkey is partly cushioned from international market fluctuations because it manufactures and exports high volumes of vehicles, household products and agriculture and electronic goods.

Billboards across Istanbul that previously displayed the image of Erdogan's face now depict ads for the Turkish-made Casper mobile phone. Vestel, a major Turkish electronics manufacturer that employs more than 15,000 workers at its main site, has also come out with a range of phones that should be purchased, according to Erdogan, in place of the iPhone

### SMARTPHONES

But Turkish-made smartphones currently hold a tiny share of the market - the iPhone has about 17 per cent, with Android-operated units far out in front of all competitors.

Economist Deliveli says that Turkish consumers will have to curb spending because relative to their earning power, they have become much poorer. Erdogan doesn't need to =>



⇒ ban iPhones because no one is going to be able to afford them anymore.

Unemployment is starting to increase and certain companies will go bankrupt because they cannot pay off their foreign debt. Worryingly, a government-conducted survey of 1,650 people found that only 13 per cent of those polled actually contributed to savings last year.

Back at the Akasya mall, the apparent serenity among shoppers as their buying power crumbles before their eyes could be down to a couple of factors. That no mainstream Turkish media outlet has reported on the woes facing the lira for fear of attracting the wrath of the

authorities may have lessened their perception of the turmoil.

At the same time, many believe that Turkey is the victim of an international conspiracy, including a provincial AK Party politician who photographed himself burning a roll of US dollar bills as a sign of loyalty to the lira.

#### CONSUMPTION ADDICTION

At a small electronics store on the mall's basement level, Turks' consumption addiction is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that basic iPhone accessories such as leather cases can be bought in nine-month instalments of €4.30 a month.

A young shop employee and proud iPhone X owner says that he doesn't expect the president's threat to ban Apple products to come to fruition. That's despite the fact that BIM, a major supermarket chain store, this week cancelled upcoming sales of iPhones.

The uncertainty that's surrounded Turkey in recent weeks may lift in the short term but is not going to go away. On Thursday, the US treasury secretary vowed further sanctions on Turkey if imprisoned pastor Brunson isn't released soon. With neither side looking like standing down, there are more rocky days ahead for Turkey. ●

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AUGUST 19, 2018

# U.S. Rebuffs Effort to Tether Bank Fine to Pastor's Release

## Trump administration says U.S. minister must be set free before other issues are addressed

By Michael C. Bender Aug. 19, 2018  
<https://www.wsj.com>

**WASHINGTON**—The Trump administration has rejected an effort by Turkey to tie the release of a U.S. pastor with relief for a major Turkish bank facing billions of dollars in U.S. fines, telling Ankara other issues are off the table until the minister is freed, a senior White House official said.

The jailing of Andrew Brunson has triggered the worst crisis between the two countries in decades and helped push the Turkish currency to record lows in recent months. The rejection of a possible trade sets the stage for the U.S. to impose another round of penalties against Ankara as soon as this week.

The administration wants Turkey to release Mr. Brunson and other citizens it holds on disputed terrorism charges, as well as three Turkish nationals who work for the U.S. government.

Turkey, seeking a gesture in exchange, asked the U.S. to drop an investigation into Halkbank, which is facing potentially crippling fines for allegedly violating U.S. sanctions on Iran.

The White House official said the U.S. made clear to Turkey that areas of dispute between the two nations, including the fines Halkbank faces, won't be discussed until Mr. Brunson has been released.

"A real NATO ally wouldn't have arrested Brunson in the first place," the senior White House official said, referring to Turkey's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The Trump administration imposed sanctions against two top Turkish officials earlier this month, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the U.S. was prepared to take tougher steps.

On Friday, President Trump called the charges against Mr. Brunson "phony," adding: "We are not going to take it sitting down."

The U.S. and Turkey have been in prolonged



The Trump administration said it won't link the release of American pastor Andrew Brunson, above, to other issues, such as eliminating U.S. fines a major Turkish bank faces. Photo: Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

negotiations over a major fine against Halkbank, but the talks stalled. Halkbank is also facing further investigation in the U.S.

Halkbank recently complied with a subpoena request from the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets and Control, but its response was deemed insufficient, the White House official said. Washington has told Ankara that Halkbank must comply properly with the U.S. legal process before any discussions about relief could be entertained, the official said.

A Treasury spokesman declined to comment.

The Turkish embassy in Washington didn't respond to a request for comment. Halkbank couldn't be reached for comment. The Turkish government has said accusations that Halkbank helped Iran evade U.S. sanctions are groundless and based on fabricated documents.

The bank, formally known as *Turkiye Halk Bankasi A.S.*, is one of Turkey's largest state lenders. It has denied any wrongdoing.

Other points of dispute between the two nations include Turkey's retaliation against U.S. exports after the Trump administration placed tariffs on imported aluminum and steel. The U.S. Trade Representative's Office has also started a review of Turkey's duty-free access to U.S. markets.

Mr. Brunson, a 50-year-old North Carolina native, has been accused by Turkish officials of aiding the group accused of orchestrating a failed July 2016 military coup and another group of Kurdish separatists battling the Turkish military for greater autonomy. He has been held since October 2016.

Mr. Brunson's fate—he is now held under house arrest—has been a major cause for evangelical Christians and a priority for Mr. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence.

The White House official discussed other national security issues as well, saying there was skepticism at the highest level of the White House about Russia's ability to help remove Iranian forces from Syria. That ran counter to Mr. Trump's optimistic tones after his Helsinki summit with President Vladimir Putin of Russia last month that Moscow and the U.S. would be able to work jointly on the issue.

Syria was the longest subject of discussion between Messrs. Putin and Trump when they and their top advisers met, the official said. The Russian president said during private meetings that he didn't want the Iranians in Syria either, but he wasn't sure Russia was able to achieve that, the official said.

John Bolton, the White House national security adviser, said Sunday on ABC that Mr. Putin told the president he "didn't have the same interest as Iran in Syria, and that he'd like to talk about ways to get them [Iran] out."

"President Putin is very candid in his comments to President Trump, he was to me as well," Mr. Bolton said.

Mr. Bolton said he plans to discuss the situation in Syria when he meets with Israeli and Russian leaders this week. ♦

# PKK feels heat from Turkey as commanders fall

**Baris Oner — code-named Tarik the Turk — is the third high-profile member of the Kurdistan Workers Party to be targeted this month.**



Amberin Zama  
August 22, 2018  
www.al-monitor.com

Turkish security forces have killed a member of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who is on the country's most wanted list, the third high-profile militant to be targeted this month. Okay Memis, the governor of the Black Sea province of Gumushane, said that Baris Oner, a PKK fighter of Turkish background code-named Tarik the Turk, had been killed along with another militant — an ethnic Iranian, code-named Sorej — in clashes with security forces in the rural Yesilkoy area of Gumushane on Aug. 22.

Turkish security officials quoted by the pro-government daily Sabah said Oner was the PKK commander in charge of the outfit's Black Sea region operations and had a bounty of 4 million Turkish liras (\$660,960) on his head. Operations were continuing in the area, with elite gendarmerie forces backed by attack helicopters searching for fleeing militants. Memis claimed the PKK had been immobilized in the Black Sea region as a result of the operation, which started three days ago.

In a related development, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported that another key PKK commander, Yusuf Sungur, had been killed together with his deputy, Serbest Gun, in a weekend operation in the southeastern province of Sirnak. Before that, on Aug. 11, Ibrahim Coban, who was also on the Interior Ministry's most wanted list, was killed in the province of Tunceli in what authorities called an "operation." Details of his death were not revealed, but the successful targeting of top PKK leaders suggests that Turkish intelligence on the group is gaining ground. This in turn may be why the PKK has resumed assassinations of alleged "collaborators." Shopkeeper Mevlut Bengi was killed June 26 in the eastern province of Dogubayazit for his close ties to the ruling Justice and Development Party.

News of Oner and Sungur's deaths have yet to be confirmed by pro-PKK Firat News Agency, which typically records such "martyrdoms."

The killings of Coban, code-named Mahir Atakan, and top PKK militant Zaki Shingali, however, continue to dominate Kurdish media, with a steady flow of eulogies for the men, in particular Shingali, who was an ethnic Yazidi from Turkey. Shingali is credited with rescuing thousands of his ethnic kin from imminent slaughter by the Islamic State in August 2014, as the group raped and pillaged its way across the Yazidi heartland.

A Turkish airstrike targeted Shingali's vehicle on Aug. 15, killing him. Shingali was traveling back from a public event in the Yazidi-dominated town of Kocho in Iraq's Sinjar region. He is the most prominent PKK leader to have been killed by Turkey in recent years.

Aug. 15 marked the fourth anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Yazidis by the Islamic State in Kocho. On the same day 34 years ago, the PKK began its armed campaign, initially for Kurdish independence then autonomy against the Turkish state, and Shingali, whose real name was Ismail Ozden, was among the first to join.

Middle East Eye, a London-based online news outlet covering the region, reported from Ankara that the United States had shared intelligence that helped Turkish forces target Shingali, even as Washington and Ankara continue to spar over Andrew Brunson, the evangelical American pastor being held by Turkey.



Senior Kurdistan Workers Party figure Zaki Shingali, who was killed in a Turkish airstrike, is seen in an undated picture.

The outlet based the report on an interview with an unnamed Turkish diplomat who offered the alleged US tip-off as proof of continued military cooperation between the NATO allies. A Pentagon spokesman neither denied nor confirmed that the United States had provided the information leading to Shingali's death.

Western diplomatic sources, who spoke on condition of strict anonymity to Al-Monitor, professed to be "unaware" of any intelligence sharing related specifically to Shingali.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis offered to help Turkey target top PKK leaders based in the Qandil Mountains in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq during an official visit to Turkey in August 2017, as first reported by Al-Monitor at the time. But defense analysts assert that Turkey would not have needed US help in killing Shingali.

Aaron Stein, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who specializes in security issues and Turkey, told Al-Monitor, "I don't personally think for this strike [against Shingali] the Turks needed American assistance." Stein argued, "The reported details about his presence at the commemoration allowed Ankara to zero in on where he would be. They [Turkey] clearly have friendly contacts in the area who would spot for them."

A well-informed Kurdish source inside Iraqi Kurdistan contacted via WhatsApp concurred. "The attack was clearly carried out with the help of an informant inside the YBS," he said, referring to the Sinjar Resistance Units, the Yazidi militia established by the PKK.

The Kurdish source added, "We believe that a GPS tracking device was planted by Turkish collaborators on comrade Zaki's car."

According to Stein, the operation would have been easy: "The strike was as simple as designating a target with a laser from a high-flying drone. The bomb drop was textbook and the drone did what it was then supposed to do, which is hunt for squinters and ensure that the target was killed."

Stein added that the release of the footage of the strike "suggests that Ankara knew who it was hunting before the strike took place." He noted, "It is also quite clever to leak this story to a friendly outlet like [Middle East Eye] to sow distrust between the United States and the YPG." The YPG is the acronym for the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, which is the Pentagon's top ally against the Islamic State in Syria. The Syrian Kurdish militia has close ties with the PKK and the YBS. Turkey has long pressured Washington to end its relationship with the YPG, saying it is no different from the PKK — that they are all terrorists. ♦

*Amberin Zama is a columnist for Al-Monitor's Turkey Pulse who has covered Turkey, the Kurds and Armenia for The Washington Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Los Angeles Times and the Voice of America.*

# Syria Pressures U.S.-Backed Kurds to Hand Over Control

As Assad works to regain territory, he gives Kurds an ultimatum: negotiate or face the military



Riad Darar and Ilham Ahmed, co-chairs of the Syrian Democratic Council, in Tabqa, Syria, on July 16. Photo: rodi said/Reuters



A mine-detector armored vehicle leads a convoy of U.S.-backed troops toward Manbij, northern Syria, in March. Photo: Hussein Malla/Associated Press

By Raja Abdulrahim  
Aug. 22, 2018  
<https://www.wsj.com>

**BEIRUT**—A U.S.-backed group in Syria is being pressed by the government of President Bashar al-Assad in talks to cede control of its territory to a regime Washington has long sought to unseat.

The Kurdish-led group, the Syrian Democratic Forces, which assisted the U.S. in the fight against Islamic State, controls a region stretching across much of northern and eastern Syria, including major cities such as Raqqah and some of the country's largest oil-and-gas fields.

The U.S. has more than 2,000 troops fighting Islamic State in Syria, indirectly safeguarding the Kurdish administration. President Trump has indicated he wants to withdraw those troops, though there is no timetable for when that might happen.

With the U.S. commitment to Syria in question, Mr. Assad has given the Kurds two options: negotiate or face military action.

Backed by Russia and Iran, the Assad government is pushing to re-establish control over territory it lost during seven years of war. Besides the area under Kurdish administration, Turkish-backed opposition rebels control territory in the country's northwest, while Islamic State still holds a shrinking pocket of land near the Euphrates River.

But the government's efforts to retake the Kurdish-run region, which includes predominantly Arab towns, have been complicated by the presence of foreign powers with diverging interests. A deal with the Kurds would likely bolster Russia's position as the main arbiter in Syria as the U.S. tentatively with-

draws.

An agreement would put the vast majority of Syria back under the control of Mr. Assad, who the U.S. has said repeatedly it wants to oust. However, officials have indicated that other objectives in Syria had become higher priorities, such as the defeat of Islamic State and the removal of Iranian troops from the country.

In July, regime officials met for the first time with the Syrian Democratic Council, the mostly Kurdish political wing of the U.S.-backed force. They agreed to form a committee, with seven members from each side, to discuss a prospective agreement over administrative control of the area, said Sinam Mohamad, the council's foreign representative in the U.S.

Last week, committee members went to Damascus to begin discussions but left without any progress, said Ilham Ahmad, a council leader.

"We are always looking for the political solution," said Ms. Ahmad, who attended the first meeting in Damascus with regime officials. "We have never attacked the regime, so what excuse does the regime have to attack us?"

The Syrian government didn't respond to repeated requests for comment. A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Syria said it isn't involved in the talks between its allies and the regime. A State Department official said the U.S. was aware of reports about meetings between members of the council and the Syrian regime in Damascus. The U.S. isn't involved in the talks, the official said, and favors Syrian territorial integrity as well as a political transition process that considers the interests of all Syrians.

The Syrian regime and Kurdish groups have

coexisted mostly peacefully since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, when the government largely withdrew from the northeast region. That pullout was a bid to appease the minority group—which had been denied many basic rights such as getting a passport—and prevent the Kurds from joining the burgeoning antigovernment uprising at the time.

Kurdish political and armed groups then used the war against Islamic State to expand their territorial control and establish their own government infrastructure and laws in the area. A deal to give up administrative control would be a major blow to their aspirations for autonomy.

Already, they have suffered several setbacks. In January, Turkey—which is trying to stamp down a Kurdish separatist movement in its own territory—captured a Kurdish enclave in Syria's north in a bid to push the Kurdish militia back from near its border. And in June, Turkey got assurances from Washington that Kurdish forces would withdraw from another northern Syrian town that had been the cause of tension between the U.S. and Turkey.

That agreement could be complicated by the continuing spat between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies. Ankara, which appears to be drawing closer to Moscow, has indicated it would welcome regime control near its border.

Russian leaders have previously blamed Western countries for fueling what they called separatist Kurdish sentiment for their own interests.

With its ultimatum—negotiate or face military action—Mr. Assad is deploying a tactic he has used often. In the past two years, regime forces have unleashed devastating military assaults on areas controlled by

rebels or Islamic State militants, including the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta and the southern provinces. The assaults ended only when the antigovernment combatants surrendered and withdrew.

The regime has been brutal against its opponents during the civil war as it tries to re-establish the same environment of fear and fealty that existed in Syria under more than four decades of Assad family rule.

That concern remained even when the Kurdish-led administration was ascendant.

Some residents in the Kurdish region anticipated an eventual return by the Assad regime and took precautions, including registering their properties and vehicles only with the central Damascus government for fear that they could otherwise be confiscated.

But the council's Ms. Mohamad remains hopeful regarding the outcome of talks with the regime, echoing what protesters first called for in the uprising—demands that the Assad regime responded to with a bloody crackdown.

"We are not asking for independence or to secede," she said, referring to the Kurdish north. "We are asking for pluralism and democracy and decentralization. We think this is the solution." ●

—Jessica Donati in Washington contributed to this article.

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VOICE OF AMERICA

August 23, 2018

## Anti-Americanism Rises in Turkey as US-Turkish Tensions Escalate

Dorian Jones - August 23, 2018  
[www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com)

ISTANBUL — Anti-American sentiment has arisen in Turkey, with the Turkish president blaming Washington for the collapse of Turkey's currency.

On Istanbul's main retail shopping street a man declares, "We will bring the Americans to their knees," as he burns dollar bills in front of TV cameras. An outpouring of anti-American anger is being felt across the country.

"Let everyone see this, let everyone love their homeland and nation. No one should burn us with dollars. We burn the dollar; we will boycott American products," a man says as he burns the U.S. currency in Turkey's southern city of Adana.

In a social media video, a man wielding a sledgehammer destroys what appear to be iPhones. The Anti-American gesture is somewhat diminished when the sound of another iPhone rings from one of his supporters.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called for a boycott of iPhones along with other American technology as he whips up anti-U.S. sentiment in increasingly bellicose nationalist speeches.

Erdogan's anger is in response to the collapse of the Turkish currency, which has fallen nearly 40 percent this year, much of the decline occurring in August.

"An attack on our economy is no different from a direct strike against our flag and call to prayer," Erdogan said Monday. "The aim is no different. It is to bring Turkey and the Turkish people to their knees."

U.S. President Donald Trump is blamed for the August currency slide after imposing sanctions and tariffs on Turkey over the ongoing detention of American pastor Andrew Brunson. Erdogan accuses Washington of waging an economic war against its NATO ally.

U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton insisted Wednesday Ankara could end the crisis. "Look, the Turkish government made a big mistake in not releasing Pastor Brunson," Bolton told Reuters news service. "Every day that goes

by that mistake continues, this crisis could be over instantly if they did the right thing as a NATO ally, part of the West, and release Pastor Brunson without condition."

Brunson has been jailed for more than a year on charges of allegedly helping a network led by U.S.-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, who Turkey blames for a failed 2016 coup attempt.

"His statement is proof that the Trump administration is targeting a NATO ally as part of an economic war," Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin wrote in a statement in reply to Bolton's comment.

"There are so many serious problems at the same time that this is one of the worst moments in recent history when it comes to U.S.-Turkish relations," said former Turkish diplomat Aydin Selcen.

"The anti-Americanism in the last decade has hit a record high among all the social classes, and from all the political parties from left to right," Selcen added.

For decades, anti-Americanism has been rife in Turkish popular culture. Films and TV shows often show Americans conspiring against Turkey. However, analysts suggest a more fundamental problem underscores existing tensions, a failure of Turkish-U.S. relations to adapt to the post-cold war era.

During the cold war, U.S. military power provided a shield against the Soviet Union. U.S. President Harry Truman's deployment of the battleship Missouri to Istanbul in 1946 at a time of high tension between Ankara and Moscow is widely seen as the symbolic beginning of a strategic partnership.

"There is a structural problem in Turkish-American relations that dates back all the way to the end of the cold war," international relations expert Soli Ozel of Istanbul's Kadir Has University said.

"That is the interests have diverged, and the two countries have never really been able to figure out what the common base upon which they would build their relations again would be. And those issues have never been resolved quite frankly," Ozel added.



People change money at a currency exchange office in Istanbul, Turkey, Aug. 17, 2018.

The 2016 failed coup in Turkey in which more than 250 people died continues to foul bilateral ties. Ankara still suspects American involvement. Because of Turkey's strategic importance, Washington has long been suspected of having a hand in all three of Turkey's military coups.

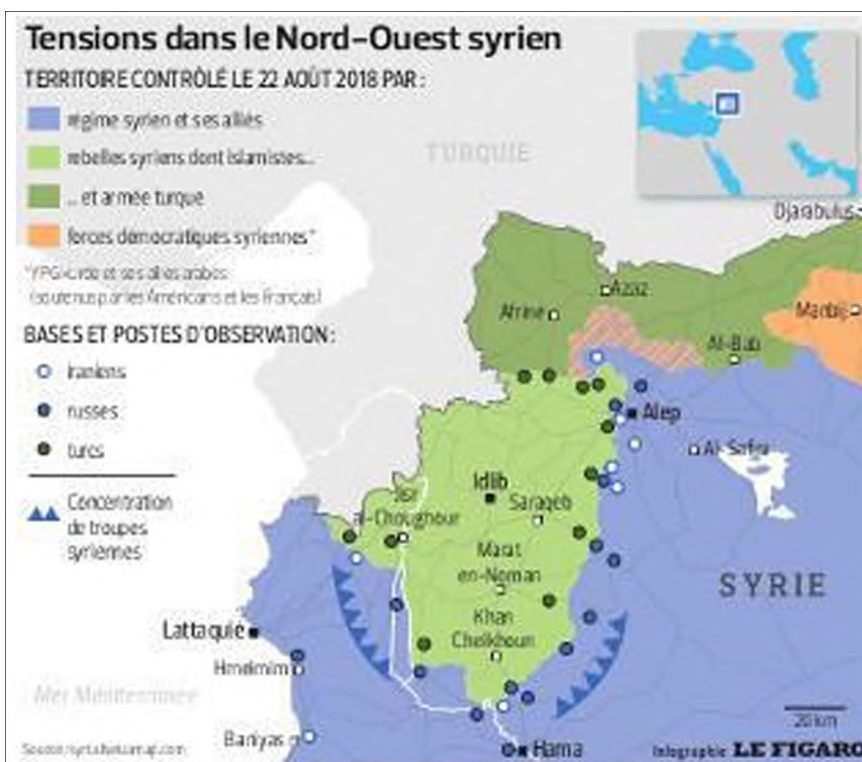
"Anti-Americanism existed within the elites themselves. They never trusted the Americans," Ozel said. "The [Turkish] foreign minister Mr. [Ihsan Sabri] Caglayan Gil said after one of our periodic coups that the CIA was responsible for the coup of 12th March '71. So in a way the United States and its maleficence, if you will, has always been accepted as the environment by Turkish politicians."

"However, now the cold war is not there," Ozel added, "and Turkey has got a taste of acting as an autonomous actor. It has no patience for American meddling and America blocking what it wants to do."

As is the way with Turkish diplomacy, tensions with Washington invariably mean Ankara is looking to Europe. Past difficulties with the European Union appear on hold, and shared anger directed at U.S. President Donald Trump is providing a useful common ground. However, analysts warn, given Turkey's myriad of differences with Europe, Ankara may have to pay a high diplomatic price for any reduction in diplomatic tensions. ■

# Sept ans après, Bachar el-Assad à nouveau maître de la Syrie

Épaulé par les forces russes, le régime syrien s'apprête à donner l'assaut sur Idlib, ultime refuge de l'opposition. Pour Damas, c'est le dernier acte de la reconquête d'un pays ruiné par une guerre qui a fait 500 000 morts.



**DELPHINE MINOUI** @DelphineMinoui  
CORRESPONDANTE À ISTANBUL

C'EST LA DERNIÈRE enclave de l'opposition syrienne qui échappe au contrôle de Damas. Située dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, dans une région montagneuse frontalière de la Turquie, la province d'Idlib retient son souffle. «*La question n'est plus de savoir si une offensive sur Idlib aura lieu, mais quand elle aura lieu*», confie via WhatsApp un habitant de Saraqeb, une bourgade de cette province anti-Assad. Après sa récente reconquête du Sud, le régime de Damas semble prêt à tout pour reprendre la

main sur cette parcelle de territoire devenue l'ultime refuge des groupes rebelles, dont certains djihadistes, chassés du reste du pays.

Depuis plusieurs semaines, raids aériens et tirs d'artillerie s'y enchaînent à un rythme accéléré, tandis que des renforts militaires se pressent aux portes de la province. «*Idlib est désormais notre but*», a prévenu jeudi dernier Bachar el-Assad devant des médias russes. Quelques jours

plus tôt, les habitants de la province avaient déjà reçu un ultimatum sous forme de tracts largués par hélicoptères. «*Votre coopération avec l'armée arabe syrienne vous libérera de la domination des activistes et des terroristes et protégera vo-*

*tre vie et celle de vos familles*», annonce le document que les militants anti-Assad se sont empressés de relayer sur les réseaux sociaux. Signé du commandement militaire de l'armée syrienne, le papier précise: «*Nous vous appelons à adhérer (aux accords) de réconciliation locale comme d'autres en Syrie l'ont fait.*»

«*Accepter ce chantage, c'est signer notre arrêt de mort*», s'empare Abou Shadi (un nom d'emprunt), un activiste d'Alep-Est, installé à Idlib depuis l'évacuation forcée, fin 2016, des quartiers rebelles de sa ville. Il parle en connaissance de cause. Son cousin est porté «*disparu*» depuis qu'il a rejoint la zone sous contrôle du régime, où il a été enrôlé dans l'armée. Les options d'Abou Shadi sont néanmoins limitées: «*Si nous refusons la reddition, on se fera bombarder, car nous n'avons aucune échappatoire.*»

Ces deux dernières années, la population de la province d'Idlib a quasiment doublé avec l'arrivée de déplacés venant, comme lui, d'anciennes zones assiégées par le régime: Daraya, Homs et plus récemment la Ghouta orientale et Deraa. Mais contrairement aux précédentes évacuations, les quelque 2,5 à 3,5 millions d'habitants de l'enclave d'Idlib n'ont pas d'issue de secours: à la frontière turque, où s'entassent des villages de tentes, un mur bloque leur horizon déjà bien bouché.

## Une zone tampon

Pour prévenir un massacre, la Turquie joue la carte des négociations. Engagée dans le processus d'Astana aux côtés des Russes et des Iraniens, elle dispose d'une douzaine de postes d'observation à Idlib, qu'elle considère comme une «*ligne rouge*» à ne pas franchir. Ankara, qui cherche aussi à défendre ses intérêts, espère maintenir un «*protectorat*» sur la zone frontalière, lui permettant de faire tampon contre les milices kurdes, mais aussi d'éviter un nouvel afflux de Syriens sur son territoire, où vivent déjà près de 4 millions de réfugiés.

À cette fin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a convoqué le 7 septembre à Istanbul un sommet sur la Syrie auxquels ont été conviées la Russie, l'Allemagne et la France (mais dont la présence n'a pas été confirmée). «*Nous devons déterminer qui sont les groupes terroristes et les éliminer*», a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie turque, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, lors d'un entretien avec son homologue russe, en insistant sur la nécessité de faire la distinction entre djihadistes et factions rebelles soutenues par Ankara. Mais Moscou, qui joue la carte de la normalisation, entend imposer son propre tempo. Selon plusieurs sources, la Russie aurait discrètement lancé l'idée d'arrêter l'avancée militaire sur Idlib, en échange d'un engagement de la part des pays occidentaux à aider à la reconstruction des villes et des infrastructures dévastées en Syrie. Une proposition inacceptable pour les organisations de défense

des droits de l'homme. « Par le passé, les forces et services de renseignements syriens ont détourné d'importantes sommes d'aide

humanitaire pour financer leur massacre », rappelle Kenneth Roth, le directeur de Human Rights Watch. ■

**LE FIGARO** 23 août 2018

## Le retour des exilés, un symbole savamment mis en scène par le régime

EMMANUEL GRYNZSPAN [@\\_zerez](#)  
ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL À JDEIDET YABOUS ET NASSAB

DE RETOUR dans leur patrie, les réfugiés syriens doivent embrasser le culte de Bachar el-Assad dès la frontière. Lundi 13 août, un décor fermement planté dans l'idéologie officielle s'offre aux passagers du premier convoi arrivant de Beyrouth au poste de Jdeidet Yabous. Des dizaines de portraits du président, collés sur des panneaux, dessinés sur les murs, gravés dans la pierre, cernent le nouveau venu. Le drapeau tricolore à deux étoiles du régime flotte où que porte le regard. Un groupe d'adolescents de l'Union révolutionnaire de la jeunesse, une branche du parti Baas au pouvoir, s'égosille sur des slogans à la gloire du régime et de la Syrie. Des tentes ont été dressées pour les dignitaires locaux et les réfugiés attendus. Des fourgons médicaux sont garés, à côté de blindés légers de la police militaire russe, et des bus chargés de journalistes invités par le régime syrien et l'armée russe.

Tous attendent, écrasés par la chaleur, le retour des premiers compatriotes. Le docteur Mohammed Nader el-Nachawati se tient derrière son stand depuis 7 heures du matin. « Je suis médecin généraliste à Damas. On m'a demandé de venir pour assurer l'accueil des réfugiés », explique-t-il en français. À sa gauche, une infirmière, souriante et muette, porte le voile des sunnites.

« C'est la première fois que je travaille à la frontière et je ne sais pas si je serai là demain », confie le médecin approchant l'âge de la retraite. Il assure pourtant savoir que les Syriens exilés « reviennent de leur plein gré car ils ne rêvent que de regagner leur patrie » et que lui-même n'a jamais eu le désir de partir.

L'air débonnaire, appuyé sur sa camionnette du Centre de planning familial syrien, le gynécologue Ghayat Abdel Rahmane tient le même discours. S'exprimant en russe - il a étudié à Moscou -, ce quadragénaire est intarissable sur les problèmes de malnutrition qu'il observe chez les femmes enceintes revenant du Liban. Au détour de la conversation, il révèle que ses cinq frères et ses deux sœurs, tous ses cadets, se sont exilés il y a trois ans aux Pays-Bas, « où ils sont très bien installés. Ils ne veulent pas revenir ici ». Mais lui n'a



Distribution d'aide humanitaire par des militaires russes à des réfugiés, la semaine dernière, à Rastan, à proximité de Homs. SERGEI GRITS/AP

« aucune envie de partir. » Nuançant son discours optimiste sur l'enthousiasme des réfugiés à rentrer en Syrie, il admet que « certains ont peur, mais il n'y aura pas de châtement. Bien sûr que certains subissent des interrogatoires, mais si la personne n'a rien fait, il ne lui arrivera rien ».

### Peur et malaise

Rares sont les Syriens présents à la cérémonie d'accueil à accepter de parler franchement. Toute question frôlant - même de loin - la politique crée un malaise. Et personne n'accepte de dévoiler sa confession religieuse. Alaouite, chrétien, sunnite ? Les regards se détournent, un sourire gêné se dessine aux coins des lèvres, on fait semblant de ne pas comprendre...

Le convoi de réfugiés finit par s'approcher vers 15 heures. Cinq autobus arrivent en file indienne, affichant chacun des portraits d'Assad sur le pare-brise et les fenêtres. À moitié vides, ils déversent au compte-gouttes leurs passagers; en grande majorité des femmes et des enfants en bas âge, mais sans bagage. Avant de poser pied à terre, les réfugiés sont cernés par une meute de journalistes braquant caméras et micros. Certains tiennent une pancarte à l'effigie du président syrien. En deuxième ligne, des activistes du régime leur distribuent bouteilles d'eau, sodas, friandises et cartes SIM avec un mois offert.

Rares sont les hommes, surtout jeunes, parmi la cinquantaine de réfugiés. L'un d'eux, Ahmed Hamdan, 23 ans, raconte, à travers un traducteur assermenté par les autorités, être parti vivre à Beyrouth en 2014 parce qu'il ne trouvait pas de travail chez lui. « J'ai travaillé comme ouvrier dans le bâtiment », raconte le jeune homme pourtant frêle. Il explique d'un ton las avoir été « contacté par téléphone par les services libanais de sécurité, qui l'ont invité à faire partie du convoi ». Selon lui, « tout le monde veut revenir au pays ». Il dit encore vouloir « servir son pays », puis s'échappe, l'air gêné. Encore moins disert, Ihab Waheb, 36 ans, qui porte son fils de 2 ans, confie juste avoir contacté les services syriens de sécurité, qui ont ensuite appelé leurs homologues libanais, pour l'informer du convoi.

### Faire passer un message

Le lendemain, la police militaire russe et les autorités syriennes organisent une réception similaire, cette fois au sud du pays, dans la province de Daraa. Au poste de Nassab, à la frontière jordanienne, le même décor lourdement focalisé sur l'image du président vainqueur émerge du désert brûlant. Seule différence : un trou béant défigure le sommet massif de l'arche enjambant la route, trace des violents combats qui secouaient encore la région tout récemment. Cinquante familles de réfugiés sont attendues par le gouverneur, des

dizaines de militaires syriens et russes, et par un groupe d'enfants en rang d'oignon portant le drapeau du parti Baas. Des efforts déployés pour rien : les réfugiés promis n'arriveront pas. Visiblement contrarié, le gouverneur de la province Mohammad al-Hanouus indique « avoir tout préparé pour recevoir les réfugiés, mais la raison de leur non-venue est à mettre sur le compte de l'autre camp », désignant du bras sans la nommer la Jordanie. Quelque 1,4 million de Syriens seraient réfugiés de l'autre côté de la frontière, selon Amman.

Damas invite ses voisins, mais surtout ses alliés, à coopérer pour permettre le retour des 5,6 millions de Syriens exilés depuis le début du conflit en 2011.

Le vice-ministre syrien des Affaires étrangères, Faisal Mekdad, qui coordonne

cette opération, a résumé la ligne officielle, durant une conférence de presse lundi 13 août à Damas. Niant toute erreur du régime, il place l'entière responsabilité du conflit sur « les terroristes », les problèmes économiques « créés par les pays étrangers ayant instauré des sanctions contre la Syrie » et « les médias étrangers qui ont menti sans vergogne et soutenu les terroristes ».

D'où l'initiative d'inviter une vingtaine de journalistes étrangers « pour faire passer le message aux Syriens exilés que la Syrie a beaucoup changé depuis douze ans », assure le vice-ministre syrien des Affaires étrangères. « Nous garantissons le retour de tous les réfugiés » sur la base d'une « réconciliation nationale ». Faisal Mekdad va jusqu'à clamer que « l'armée syrienne ne prendra ja-

mais les armes contre ses propres citoyens ».

Mais la peur dans les yeux des interlocuteurs syriens du Figaro suggère que, derrière le suffocant culte de la personnalité de Bachar el-Assad, les méthodes brutales du régime n'ont pas changé. Les promesses de paix et de réconciliation sonnent encore faux face au déchaînement de violence qui a secoué le pays pendant huit ans et se poursuit aujourd'hui dans la province d'Idlib. Les efforts déployés pour appâter les exilés apparaissent comme l'écume d'une vague revancharde du régime. ■

LE FIGARO

23 août 2018

## Voyage au cœur de la Syrie « pacifiée » par les forces russes



Point de contrôle tenu par des soldats russes à l'entrée d'Abou Douhour, une cité de l'est de la province d'Idlib.

GEORGE OURFALIAN/AFP

Les villageois ne méritent pas qu'on les aide. Ils sont avec nos ennemis et tout peut recommencer.

UN POLICIER SYRIEN, SUPPLÉMENTAIRE DES RUSSES, AU COURS D'UNE DISTRIBUTION ALIMENTAIRE DANS LA ZONE D'IDLIB

L'ARMÉE RUSSE plante son drapeau tricolore aux quatre coins de la Syrie. Elle semble y être à l'aise et non pas « coincée », comme l'affirmait mercredi le conseiller pour la sécurité nationale américain, John Bolton. La semaine dernière, Moscou a embarqué une trentaine de reporters internationaux, dont un journaliste du Figaro, pour un voyage de propagande à travers les deux tiers du territoire contrôlé par Damas. Objectif : montrer un pays stabilisé, réconcilié, désireux de voir rentrer les Syriens réfugiés à l'étranger. L'armée russe

joue désormais la partition de l'aide humanitaire et des bons offices censés raccommo-der l'opposition modérée avec le pouvoir de Bachar el-Assad.

L'armée russe fait visiter une exploitation agricole au nord-ouest de la ville de Hama. C'est une vallée bien irriguée permettant l'arboriculture, la pousse des cucurbitacées et d'arachide. Le propriétaire, Ahmad al-Tawii, raconte que des combats se sont déroulés à la lisière de son exploitation et qu'il a retrouvé des mines sur son terrain. Ses travailleurs, dont une partie ont été dépla-

cés par la guerre, attendent patiemment sous les arbres que la chaleur torride du milieu d'après-midi se retire.

### Distribution alimentaire

L'atmosphère paisible est trompeuse. La poche d'Idlib, contrôlée par les rebelles, démarre à 15 km au nord de la ferme. Beaucoup de villages de la région sont à dominante sunnite et ont renforcé les rangs de l'opposition. Un peu plus au sud, une distribution de nourriture est effectuée par l'armée russe dans la ville de Rastan. Des femmes vêtues

d'un hijab noir se pressent près du camion russe, tandis que les hommes sont tenus à l'écart par la police militaire russe. L'atmosphère est tendue et on sent les soldats aux aguets. Un policier syrien, qui observe la scène un peu à l'écart, confie : « Ils [les villageois] ne méritent pas qu'on les aide. Ils sont avec nos ennemis et tout peut recommencer. »

C'est le genre de craquelure que Moscou s'efforce de masquer. On nous donne à voir des usines travaillant à pleine capacité, des officiels syriens souriants et divers interlocuteurs

soigneusement briefés. Au nord d'Alep, une usine textile semble fonctionner comme si la guerre civile n'avait pas eu lieu. D'ininterminables rangées de machines allemandes (achetées avant le conflit) tournent à plein régime dans un vaste hangar. Le propriétaire, Basim Davalibi, raconte que la zone est tombée sous la coupe de rebelles pendant deux ans. « Ils m'ont volé tout le matériel informatique et l'usine a dû cesser de fonctionner », explique-t-il, se disant « ravi que l'ordre soit désormais rétabli grâce à la Russie ». Cette usine est un des rares bâtiments du secteur à n'avoir pas été endommagé par les combats. Toute la région d'Alep est sinistrée.

Les bombardements aériens ont créé une disparité saisissante entre des quartiers totalement détruits et d'autres largement épargnés. Dans le bureau du gouverneur d'Alep, une immense photographie aérienne de la ville occupant tout un mur montre le sort inégal des quartiers. Près de deux tiers sont hachurés au feutre noir. Les quartiers habitables et détruits sont imbriqués les uns dans les autres, contrairement à l'idée reçue

selon laquelle seul l'est d'Alep aurait été détruit par les bombardements.

Le sort de l'illustre citadelle d'Alep, au cœur de la cité, en dit long sur les quatre années de combats endurées par les habitants. Ses murs, tenus jusqu'au bout par l'armée régulière, sont criblés d'impacts. Mais au pied des puissantes murailles, c'est un spectacle de désolation : les bâtiments d'où les rebelles assiégeaient la citadelle ont été presque tous écrasés sous les obus. Cette résilience en fait un symbole du régime. « Nos soldats ont versé leur sang pour protéger la citadelle et nous apporter la victoire finale », raconte fièrement son directeur, Ahmed Gharib, montrant les impacts de grenades dans une salle d'apparat. En fait de victoire finale, les combats se poursuivent aux portes de la ville, à tout juste 5 km à vol d'oiseau.

« Il y avait en permanence 90 hommes défendant la citadelle », raconte un officier syrien qui veut rester anonyme. « Mais nous avons perdu au moins 200 hommes à cours du siège », confie-t-il, suggérant sans le confirmer l'existence d'un tun-

nel secret permettant au régime d'approvisionner la citadelle et l'évacuation des blessés. Sur la porte d'entrée de la citadelle, un immense portrait de Bachar el-Assad accueille les visiteurs. À l'intérieur du monument classé au patrimoine mondial par l'Unesco, des photographies du président rappellent à chaque instant qui est le maître de ces murs médiévaux.

### Propagande du régime

La propagande du régime détonne tout particulièrement dans ce lieu historique, mais sa présence est en fait incontournable. Il n'est pas un bâtiment officiel, pas un commerce, un hôtel, un hôpital ou une école qui n'arbore des photographies de Bachar el-Assad. Son portrait apparaît à une fréquence obsessionnelle, le long des rues et des routes. Dans une moindre mesure, les portraits de Hafez el-Assad accompagnent celui de son fils, plus rarement ceux de Vladimir Poutine (toujours accolés à ceux de Bachar el-Assad) ainsi que, dans les points de contrôle du Hezbollah, celui de son leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Mais jamais un seul signe d'une présence iranien-

né, ni le moindre hommage à leur soutien. Interrogés à ce sujet, tous les interlocuteurs, russes comme syriens, refusent de faire le moindre commentaire. Sujet tabou, comme tant d'autres. Là se trouve la limite des voyages de propagande organisés par la Russie. Les œillères placées sur les journalistes n'empêchent pas de voir les problèmes, mais il est pratiquement impossible de vérifier les affirmations, car les Syriens ont peur de parler.

Seul un discours brutalement manichéen nous est délivré : la responsabilité des destructions va entièrement aux « terroristes » et à leurs soutiens étrangers, tandis que les forces loyales ou alliées à Bachar el-Assad n'ont fait que « protéger la population ». Tout ce qui s'écarte de cette narration n'est que « propagande hostile à la Syrie » et « complice du terrorisme ». Moscou et Damas sont main dans la main pour diffuser un message aussi simple qu'illogique : c'est Bachar ou le chaos. ■

E. G. (A HAMA)

LE FIGARO

23 août 2018

## « Réconciliation », intolérance et effacement de la mémoire



Bachar el-Assad entouré de religieux et de supporters, mardi, dans une mosquée de Damas, à l'occasion de la fête de l'Aïd-el-Kéblr. REUTERS

« RÉCONCILIATION ». C'est un mot amer pour les opposants syriens. Qu'ils soient déplacés ou réfugiés, ils font actuellement l'objet d'une offensive de charme du pouvoir, qui les invite à « revenir » chez eux. « Mais comment envisager la Syrie de demain tant que seule la "vérité officielle" a droit de cité et que toute voix discordante est étouffée ? » s'emporte un dissident en exil.

Plus de sept ans après le début de la révolution, seul un Syrien sur deux vit encore chez lui. Partis sous la contrainte ou pour fuir la violence, la plupart de ces déracinés n'aspirent qu'à rentrer chez eux. Mais les conditions des-



dits «accords de réconciliation» proposés par Damas ne sont guère encourageantes. D'après le site d'information indépendant libanais Al-Modon, qui s'est procuré une copie du formulaire à signer, il est demandé à chaque personne de retour de s'engager à ne pas protester «en dehors des limites de la loi», à ne pas publier de contenu insultant les autorités et à coopérer avec les agents de sécurité. Les signataires doivent aussi dresser la liste de leur participation aux manifestations et fournir leurs informations personnelles (numéro de passeport et adresses courriel). D'après plusieurs témoins, des arrestations et des confiscations de passeport sont déjà en cours.

En fait, le régime s'en cache à peine: il ne conçoit le retour de ses ressortissants que s'ils sont «loyaux» à son égard. «Une Syrie avec 10 millions de personnes fiables, obéissantes envers ses dirigeants est bien meilleure qu'une Syrie composée de 30 millions de vandales», a ainsi crûment prévenu Jamil al-Hassan, le responsable des services de renseignement de l'armée de l'air.

«Le gouvernement d'Assad a

commencé la reconstruction d'une Syrie fondée sur deux principes fondamentaux: une politique de tolérance zéro envers la contestation et l'absence complète de remords concernant les atrocités du passé», déplore l'avocate Mai el-Sadany, du Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy.

Cette «normalisation» forcée va de pair avec une vague de publications d'avis de décès de milliers d'individus emprisonnés ou portés disparus en Syrie, et dont les familles étaient sans nouvelles depuis des années. Comble de l'offense: les dépouilles mortelles des défunts, qui ont pour la plu-

**«Comment envisager la Syrie de demain tant que seule la "vérité officielle" a droit de cité et que toute voix discordante est étouffée?»**

UN DISSIDENT EN EXIL

part péri sous la torture, ne sont pas restituées. Dans la plupart des cas, il est stipulé qu'ils ont perdu la vie à cause d'un «arrêt cardiaque» ou d'un «accident

vasculaire cérébral».

Parallèlement à sa reconquête du territoire, qui vise aujourd'hui l'enclave d'Idlib, dans le nord-ouest du pays, le régime s'applique aussi à effacer toute trace de

la révolution pacifique du printemps 2011: conseils locaux, écoles, bibliothèques souterraines et hôpitaux de fortune...

Des années durant, ces différentes entités, souvent prises en étau entre la menace du régime et celle des djihadistes, ont joué un rôle fondamental dans le processus démocratique des militants pacifistes. Aux yeux du régime, elles ne sont que des nids à «terroristes» à éradiquer. La construction d'un récit officiel de la guerre syrienne s'accompagne d'une campagne de désinformation sur les réseaux sociaux contre les Casques blancs, ces volontaires de la défense civile syrienne qui sauvent des dizaines de vie à chaque bombardement russo-syrien.

Adeptes de l'amnésie et du mensonge, Damas poursuit également sa traque contre les témoins encombrants de ses crimes. Selon plusieurs sources, des citoyens journalistes sont actuellement recherchés pour avoir filmé les gazages chimiques survenus dans la Ghouta orientale. «La stratégie de négation de la responsabilité du régime contribue à son impunité. À l'heure où ce dernier cherche à faire disparaître les preuves, le souvenir est essentiel», prévient le politologue Jonathan Piron sur Twitter. ■

D. M. (À ISTANBUL)

LE FIGARO

23 août 2018

EDITORIAL par Patrick Saint-Paul psaintpaul@lefigaro.fr

## Désordre mondial

Épaulé par ses parrains russe et iranien, Bachar el-Assad prépare l'ultime acte de sa reconquête de la Syrie. Ce n'est plus qu'une question de jours ou de semaines: le régime reprendra Idlib, dernier bastion et refuge des rebelles chassés du reste du pays. Prenant acte de la démission d'un Occident qui a laissé Assad violer impunément ses lignes rouges, Vladimir Poutine a poussé en Syrie le premier pion d'un nouveau désordre mondial.

En 2012, alors que le régime syrien était au bord de l'effondrement, l'Iran et ses gardes révolutionnaires sont entrés en action pour le maintenir en vie. À partir de 2015, les forces russes ont permis à Assad de reprendre des territoires. Fermeement installés en Syrie, Moscou et Téhéran sont les principaux vainqueurs de cette guerre aux côtés d'Assad. Leurs ambitions au Levant ne s'arrêteront pas là.

Désormais Moscou voudrait imposer une normalisation des relations avec Damas. En Europe, certains sont tentés de tourner la page de ce conflit, qui a fait 500 000 morts et jeté sur les routes la moitié de la population

syrienne. La Russie fait miroiter le retour dans un pays en ruines, mais dans un nouveau climat de stabilité garanti par Assad, des quelque six millions de réfugiés syriens. En déferlant sur le Vieux Continent en 2015 et 2016, ils y ont déclenché une crise profonde qui a alimenté une vague populiste.

Dangereux calcul! Comment imaginer Bachar el-Assad en garant de stabilité alors qu'il

**Moscou et Téhéran artisans de la victoire d'Assad**

a mené une guerre sanglante contre son peuple? La politique d'Assad est une machine à fabriquer des extrémistes sunnites, qu'il a souvent manipulés avec le calcul cynique qu'ils confisqueraient la révolte aux rebelles plus «modérés». Il est illusoire de penser que la Russie poussera dehors les Iraniens: l'alliance entre les alaouites et Téhéran est vieille de quatre décennies. Quant à l'espoir d'un retour des réfugiés... Assad n'est pas sur la longueur d'onde de ses alliés. Il semble prêt à tout pour empêcher le retour à un équilibre démographique dominé par des sunnites qui ont failli renverser son pouvoir. ■



«Que les choses soient claires: si le régime syrien emploie des armes chimiques, nous réagissons très fortement, et ils feraient bien de réfléchir un bon moment avant une quelconque décision»

JOHN BOLTON, CONSEILLER À LA SÉCURITÉ NATIONALE DU PRÉSIDENT TRUMP  
RONEN ZVULUN/REUTERS

## Esprit libre

# UNE YÉZIDIE CROISE SON BOURREAU

PAR CAROLINE FOUREST

**C'**est une scène qui révolte. Une survivante du génocide yézidi, Ashwaq Haji, 18 ans, pensait trouver refuge en Allemagne, jusqu'à ce qu'elle y croise plusieurs fois son bourreau. Un seigneur de la guerre de Daech se baladant dans les rues de Stuttgart comme si de rien n'était. Il en a même profité pour l'intimider. Elle est repartie en Irak. Lui vit toujours parmi nous. C'est un peu comme si une rescapée de la Shoah se faisait menacer par un dignitaire nazi dans les rues de New York après-guerre. Au moins, les nazis choisissaient des destinations exotiques, comme l'Amérique latine, loin de leurs victimes. Il fallait monter des commandos pour les retrouver. A notre époque, il suffirait que la police allemande arrête ces seigneurs de la guerre totalitaires, esclavagistes et génocidaires, pour qu'ils soient jugés. Il va bien falloir. Et vite. Car cette histoire contient tous les maux que l'Europe et sa politique d'asile doivent absolument éviter.

**Alors que des milliers d'innocents fuyant la barbarie se noient avant d'échouer sur nos côtes peu accueillantes,** l'asile européen ne peut servir d'abri à leurs tortionnaires. Sinon l'extrême droite – qui confond victimes et bourreaux – finira par convaincre une majorité d'Européens de fermer nos portes aux deux. Leur petit commerce a de quoi fleurir. Entre ce nouvel épisode absurde, le nouvel an tragique à Cologne, les attentats commis par des « revenants » ou ce tribunal suédois qui vient de considérer comme « victime de discrimination » une intégriste qui refuse de serrer la main de son employeur... Détourner le regard ne sert à rien. Au contraire, il faut regarder en face les limites de notre tolérance démocratique, sa grandeur et ses faiblesses. Et le dire haut et fort : c'est Ashwaq qui a sa place en Europe, pas son bourreau.

**La première fois qu'elle l'aperçoit dans les rues de Stuttgart, elle croit à un symptôme posttraumatique.** Comme des milliers de yézidies, Ashwaq a été arrachée à sa vie et aux siens par les djihadistes le 3 août 2014. Les hommes et les femmes

âgées ont été exécutés. Les plus jeunes ont été vendues comme esclaves sexuelles. Ashwaq n'est pas encore majeure lorsqu'elle est achetée 100 dollars par un seigneur de la guerre qui se fait alors appeler Abou Houmam. Pendant trois mois, il la trimbale partout, comme son objet, comme son jouet, comme un bouclier humain dont il peut abuser. Elle le suit contre son gré de Mossoul à Rambusi, où il est en charge des prisonniers.

**Un jour d'octobre, Ashwaq est enfin libre.** Mais elle n'a plus nulle part où aller. La ville où les yézidis ont été raflés est presque entièrement détruite. Elle erre six mois en Irak, avant

de rejoindre l'Allemagne pour se soigner et recommencer à vivre. Ce sont dans ces rues – qu'elle pensait les plus sûres au monde – qu'elle croise son tortionnaire : « J'ai regardé derrière moi. Je ne pouvais pas croire que c'était lui. Je me suis dit : "C'est un homme de Daech. C'est impossible qu'il soit en Allemagne." » C'était pourtant lui. Et si Ashwaq en est sûre aujourd'hui, c'est que le tyran a poussé le vice jusqu'à la suivre et l'aborder : « Il m'a dit en allemand qu'il voulait me poser une question. J'ai répondu en allemand. Il m'a dit : "Tu es bien Ashwaq ? Je suis Abou Houmam et je te connais." » La jeune yézidie tente de nier, mais son prédateur l'a bien identifiée. Il connaît même la date de son arrivée en Allemagne et le quartier où elle vit. Pourquoi s'est-il vanté ? Sans doute pour retrouver un peu de ce pouvoir de terreur qu'il a perdu en se cachant parmi les innocents. Effrayée, Ashwaq est allée trouver la police. La police lui aurait confié ne rien pouvoir faire, car il est aussi



réfugié. Est-ce vrai ? Un mois après, en tout cas, rien n'a bougé. Paniquée à l'idée d'être traquée par Abou Houmam, Ashwaq a fini par repartir en Irak. D'après une interview donnée à Rudaw, principale chaîne de télévision du Kurdistan irakien, il y aurait d'autres cas comme elle : « J'ai entendu d'autres filles qui suivaient le même programme à Stuttgart dire qu'elles avaient vu leurs géoliers de Daech, mais elles n'osent pas parler. » Elles doivent oser. Sinon, nous devons le dire pour elles. Leurs tyrans n'ont pas à trouver refuge dans nos rues. Leur place est devant un tribunal pour crimes contre l'humanité. ■

# Kurds put conditions for allying with Shiites to form government

Shiite parties seek to gain favor with the Kurdish parties to include them in the majority charged with forming the new government, while the Kurds consider this a historical opportunity to impose their conditions on those wishing to ally with them.



Omar Sattar  
August 24, 2018  
www.al-monitor.com

**E**RBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan — The main Kurdish parties are awaiting the formation of the largest “Shiite” parliamentary bloc constitutionally tasked with forming the Iraqi government, to launch negotiations to participate in this government, at a time when the current Shiite division gives the Kurds a central role in the formation of the next government.

After agreeing Aug. 22 to unite the Kurds within a bloc accounting for the total number of the 55 Kurdish seats, in order to continue conducting dialogues formally with Baghdad, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Arez Abdollah announced the Kurds' conditions for participating in the government.

“Our conditions and demands are constitutional and include the implementation of Article 140 of the constitution regarding the disputed territories between Baghdad and Erbil, the existence of a government with true national partnership and achieving harmony and balance until the implementation of the articles of the constitution concerning Iraqi Kurdistan, the budget share, the oil issue and peshmerga salaries.”

He also stressed that “our demands are legitimate and we will join forces with the axis that is consistent with our political vision.”

The Shiite parties are currently split along two lines. The first brings together the State of Law Coalition led by Nouri al-Maliki and the Fatah Alliance led by Hadi al-Amiri, while the second includes Al-Nasr Coalition led by Haider al-Abadi, Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance and the Hikma bloc led by Ammar al-Hakim. Each believes it is capable of forming the largest parliamentary bloc separately from the other once they succeed in swaying the Sunnis and the Kurds.

According to Massoud Barzani's media adviser, Kefah Mahmoud, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Barzani considers itself closer to Maliki's coalition so far, but is not drawing red lines on Abadi's coalition. Mahmoud told Al-Monitor that the KDP has agreed with the PUK on the prerequisites for joining forces with any Shiite bloc, and those include “achieving balance between Iraqi components in state institutions, maintaining a real partnership in state administration and implementing the Iraqi Constitution regarding the status of the disputed areas, including Kirkuk.”

He said, “The normalization of the situation under Article 140 of the constitution is the only solution to the disputed areas. Otherwise conflicts and problems shall persist.”

Mahmoud added, “The Kurds are looking this time for pledges with international guarantees and time frames for fear of false promises as in the past.”

**T**he Kurds are seeking to change the status quo in Kirkuk that followed the Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum on Sept. 25, 2017, and allowed Iraqi security forces and Shiite Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) to take over the oil-rich province expelling peshmerga forces. Therefore, the Kurds are now having reservations about Abadi whose actions came as “punishment to the people of Kurdistan,” according to Mahmoud, and about the Fatah Alliance that represents the PMU factions in control of Kirkuk.

PUK member Saadi Birah told Al-Monitor, “The PUK has set up a joint project with the KDP that states the conditions for allying with the largest parliamentary bloc to form the government. This project consists of 27 clauses, most of which are related to the disputed areas.”

He also noted that “negotiations with other Iraqi parties will take place immediately at the conclusion of discussions between the Shiite blocs.”



*Kurdish supporters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan celebrate after the closing of ballot boxes during the parliamentary election, Kirkuk, Iraq, May 12, 2018. REUTERS/Ako Rasheed*

The Kurdish parties seem for the time being hesitant or unwilling to favor Maliki or Abadi. Before stating their final position, they are waiting to see the pledges and guarantees that both parties will provide. Shiite parties do not dare make any concessions regarding Kirkuk and other disputed areas in Ninevah, Diyala or Salahuddin, so as not to be accused afterward of “waiving” federal gains made by the current government.

Naim Aboudi, spokesman for Asaib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) belonging to the Fatah Alliance, said, “The Sunnis' or Kurds' conditions on the largest bloc in the next government will push the Shiite blocs to realign themselves because the Iraqi street will not show any mercy.”

He added in a tweet, “Fatah is a tenacious ally, but it has rules for agreeing or disagreeing,” underlining that it maintains dialogues “with everyone without compromising our principles and rights.”

It is not unlikely to revive the Shiite alliance again, especially since Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, arrived last week in Iraq, at the same time as Iraq's Federal Supreme Court ratification on the final results of the election. Soleimani is known to have strong relations with all the Shiite parties, and Tehran might seek to unite the Shiite parties allowing them to impose their own conditions on the other Iraqi parties.

**O**n the other hand, the political parties are aware that US envoy to Iraq Brett McGurk, who also arrived in Iraq at the same time as Soleimani, is urging the Kurds and Sunnis to join the Sadr-Hakim-Abadi alliance. Fatah Alliance member Jassem al-Bayati said in a statement to Almaalomah news agency, “Washington is trying through Trump's representative, Brett McGurk, to pressure the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds to support Abadi for a second term.”

He noted that “Abadi's position on the US sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran has increased his chances in Washington for a second term.”

Negotiations for the formation of the largest parliamentary bloc are likely to take more time than expected, perhaps exceeding the time frame stipulated in the constitution, due to the huge complexities on the Iraqi scene that coincide with the height of the US-Iranian conflict. Therefore, the Kurds will not engage in any negotiations with the Shiite parties before the formation of the “largest bloc” and the nomination of an agreeable figure to head the new government, especially if Tehran's support for the Maliki-Amiri axis was established, against Washington's support for the Sadr-Hakim-Abadi axis.

Then the Kurds would prefer to see the Shiites uniting rather than losing the Iranian ally when it comes to the PUK, or the American ally when it comes to the KDP. ♦

*Omar Sattar is an Iraqi journalist and author specializing in political affairs. He has worked for local and Arab media outlets and holds a bachelor's degree in political science*

# Police in Turkey Break Up Mothers' Weekly Vigil

By The New York Times / Aug. 26, 2018  
www.nytimes.com

The Turkish police forcefully dispersed a group of activists, some of them women in their 80s, over the weekend, breaking up a regular vigil in Istanbul to protest the forced disappearances of hundreds of people.

The group, known as the Saturday Mothers, was to hold its 700th meeting on Saturday to demand justice for those who disappeared after a military coup in 1980 and in the ensuing fighting between Turkish security forces and Kurdish insurgents in southeastern Turkey. The police used tear gas to stop the protest and arrested 47 people. All were released by Saturday evening.

Among them was Emine Ocak, who is said to be older than 80. She has attended the vigils



Emine Ocak, who is said to be in her 80s, was detained by the police in Istanbul on Saturday. She has attended vigils regularly since her son disappeared in 1995. Credit Hayri Tunc/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

regularly since her son Hasan disappeared in 1995. His tortured body was eventually found, but his killers have never been identified.

On Saturday, her arrest caused an uproar among the protesters.

"We went to the police bus to take her back," said Sezgin Tanrikulu, an opposition lawmaker who had joined the sit-in. "Her daughter went behind her. They got Ocak off the bus, but took her daughter into custody."

"The police detained people by beating them, though they were just sitting," Mr. Tanrikulu said. "They were neither resisting the

police, nor disobeying the law of gatherings and rallies."

The Saturday Mothers have gathered for a weekly sit-in at Galatasaray Square in central Istanbul since 1995, with occasional breaks because of political pressure. The group is said to have been inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who held regular protests to learn the fates of those who disappeared during Argentina's military dictatorship. Hundreds of Turks are believed to have disappeared while in police custody in the 1980s and '90s, when the country's conflict with the Kurdistan Worker's Party, or P.K.K., was at its peak.

The Saturday Mothers seek the bodies or the burial sites of their loved ones and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Besna Tosun, 35, has taken part in the sit-ins since 1995, the year her father, Fehmi Tosun, was taken from their home. She was also arrested on Saturday.

The police crackdown followed an announcement by the authorities of the district of Beyoglu, where the rally is held, that the meeting would be banned. They said that calls for the protest to take place had been made on social media accounts linked to the P.K.K., which Turkey considers a terrorist organization.

The forceful dispersion of the rally comes two months after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won a new mandate with widespread powers, which activists fear will be used to squeeze freedom of expression in Turkey. ●



AUGUST 28, 2018

# US reportedly installs air defense systems in northern Syria

Ugur Ergan - ANKARA August 28 2018  
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com>

IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED the United States has installed air defense and electronic radar systems in Kobani, which are controlled by the PYD and YPG and in the al-Shaddadi U.S. base in the Hasakah province, in preparation for creating a no-fly zone in northern Syria.

The PYD and YPG are considered by Turkey as the illegal PKK's Syrian offshoot and, thus, designated as terrorist organizations.

Ankara had launched two cross-border operations into northern Syria to disable these groups from establishing what it calls a terror corridor along the Turkish-Syrian border.

The Ankara government is closely monitoring the news regarding the installation of air defense and radar systems reported by some foreign media outlets.

A video circulating on social media purportedly shows U.S. soldiers installing the systems shipped to Kobani with military transport aircraft.

With those systems, the U.S. is said to want to create a no-fly zone in an area stretching from Manbij to Deir ez-Zor.

Turkish security sources said they are monitoring the activities in the region.

"We are looking into those claims [regarding the installment of radar systems]," the sources said. However, the sources neither confirmed nor denied those media reports.

One security official added they are doing what is necessary to collect more accurate information from local intelligence sources.

Radar systems are being installed in the rural areas of Kobani just



across the Turkish border town of Suruç in the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa, foreign media outlets reported citing local sources.

"The U.S. wants to observe military air jets in the region," an American commander in the video footage explained the reason for installing the radar systems.

It is claimed air defense systems are installed against possible Turkish airstrikes on PYD-controlled Kobani and other areas in the region.

The Pentagon established a new military base in Syria's Manbij this year in addition to other military installments across northern Syria.

"We are prepared to stay here [in Syria] to ensure the enduring defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL]," U.S. Department of State representative William Roebuck said on Aug. 26. ■

REUTERS

## Turkish military says kills 19 Kurdish militants in northern Iraq

August 31, 2018 ISTANBUL (Reuters)

The Turkish military killed a total of 19 Kurdish militants on

Friday during air strikes in the northern Iraqi regions of Zap, Gara and Hakurk, it said in a statement on Twitter.

Turkey has in recent months carried out strikes on bases of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, especially its stronghold in the Qandil mountains, where Ankara has also threatened to carry out a ground offensive.

More than 40,000 people have been killed since the PKK launched its insurgency in Turkey in 1984. It is designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. ●

basnews

August 26, 2018

## Masrour Barzani: John McCain Was a Champion and Friend of Kurds

BasNews 26/08/2018 - <http://www.basnews.com>

ERBIL - Chancellor of Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) Masrour Barzani has extended condolences on the death of the US Senator John McCain who passed away at the age of 81 early morning on Sunday due to brain cancer.

John McCain died early morning on Sunday as he had been diagnosed with brain cancer since last year.

"I'm deeply saddened by the passing of Senator John McCain. John was a champion and friend of the Kurdish people. He will be missed dearly. My thoughts are with his family- mb.," the Kurdish top official tweeted.

McCain was a good friend of the Kurds. He visited the Kurdistan Region in 2014 when the Kurdish Peshmerga forces were fighting the Islamic State (IS) on behalf of the world.

He also had been deeply concerned over the October events, last year in which the Iraqi forces overran the Kurdish disputed territories due to political disagreements between Erbil and Baghdad, and he publicly showed his support for the Kurds. ●



Masrour Barzani: John McCain Was a Champion and Friend of Kurds

K24

August 26, 2018

## Four parties agree on alliance to represent Kurds in new Iraqi parliament

Kosar Nawzad / August 26-2018  
[/kurdistan24.net](http://kurdistan24.net)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24.net) – The four Kurdish parties that contested the results of the May 12 national elections have agreed on Sunday to form an independent faction to participate in the new Iraqi government.

A meeting was held between the Islamic Union of Kurdistan (KIU), Gorran (Change) Movement, Islamic Group of Kurdistan (Komal), and Coalition for Democracy and Justice (CDJ) to discuss the groups' goals and plans for the new parliament.

"All four parties have agreed to create a faction in the Iraqi parliament," stated Kawa Mohammed, Gorran representative in the joint committee, during the presser.

He added that they had formed their alliance on the basis of "serving the public's interests, cooperation, and defending the constitutional rights of the citizens of Kurdistan Region."



The meeting between high ranking members of the four Kurdish parties that contests the May 12 Iraqi elections was held on Aug. 26, 2018. (Photo: Social Media)

Mohammed, speaking on behalf of the four new allies, affirmed that they would be engaged in efforts to create a joint administration in areas disputed between Baghdad and Erbil. He also

claimed that they would address Baghdad's monetary obligations to the Kurdistan Region.

The decision is the culmination of multiple post-election meetings that have been taking place between senior members of the parties.

Mohammed did not indicate whether they will be joining the PUK and the KDP in Baghdad. The two leading parties have stated in the past that they welcome any entity who pushes forward a "Kurdish-focused agenda" in the new parliament.

The four parties rejected the results of the election even after the partial manual recount of the votes which took place to address complaints of fraud and ballot-tampering.

The leading Kurdish parties, namely the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have also agreed on a National (Kurdish) Project—the full details of which will be announced soon—to negotiate with Baghdad and form a government.◆

# Derniers préparatifs avant la bataille d'Idlib

BEYROUTH - correspondance

Une nouvelle tragédie humanitaire se profile en Syrie», s'est alarmé Emmanuel Macron, lundi 27 août, lors de son discours annuel aux ambassadeurs, à Paris, alors que la menace d'une offensive plane sur la province d'Idlib. La reprise de ce vaste bastion insurgé du Nord-Ouest de la Syrie figure désormais parmi les priorités du régime de Damas. En s'en emparant, le régime signerait, sans doute, la défaite définitive de la rébellion syrienne.

Des groupes djihadistes et des formations rebelles sous influence turque se partagent le contrôle de cette région. Mais des contacts se sont intensifiés ces dernières semaines entre Ankara et Moscou, qui soutient le régime de Bachar Al-Assad. Ces tractations pourraient sceller le sort de la région d'Idlib, limitrophe de la Turquie, et la plonger dans la guerre.



Des soldats russes et syriens à Abou Al-Douhour, à la limite orientale des territoires tenus par les rebelles syriens dans la région d'Idlib, le 20 août. GEORGE OURFALIAN/AFP

**Une enclave anti-Assad sous influence turque** Près de 3 millions de Syriens vivent à Idlib, dont une moitié de déplacés. Des civils et des combattants anti-Assad y ont été acheminés à mesure que d'autres zones rebelles étaient reprises, ailleurs dans le pays, par les forces progouvernementales. Une bonne partie des habitants dépend entièrement de l'aide humanitaire.

Ankara y a envoyé de premiers observateurs militaires en octo-

bre 2017 et n'a cessé depuis d'accroître son influence. En vertu des accords d'Astana, qui lient la Turquie aux deux parrains étrangers du régime, la Russie et l'Iran, Ankara est le garant de la « désescalade » censée être observée dans la province, et de la mise au pas des groupes djihadistes.

Vulnérables en cas de reprise des combats à grande échelle, une dizaine de postes d'observation de l'armée turque ont été renforcés tout au long de l'été, sur la li-

gne qui sépare rebelles et forces gouvernementales.

Une offensive totale risquerait de causer un désastre humanitaire et serait un camouflet pour Ankara. En effaçant les groupes armés que la Turquie est censée protéger, elle menacerait ses intérêts régionaux. Sa présence dans le Nord syrien est dans les faits essentiellement motivée par sa volonté de contrecarrer l'émergence d'un territoire dominé par les forces kurdes syriennes le long de sa frontière.

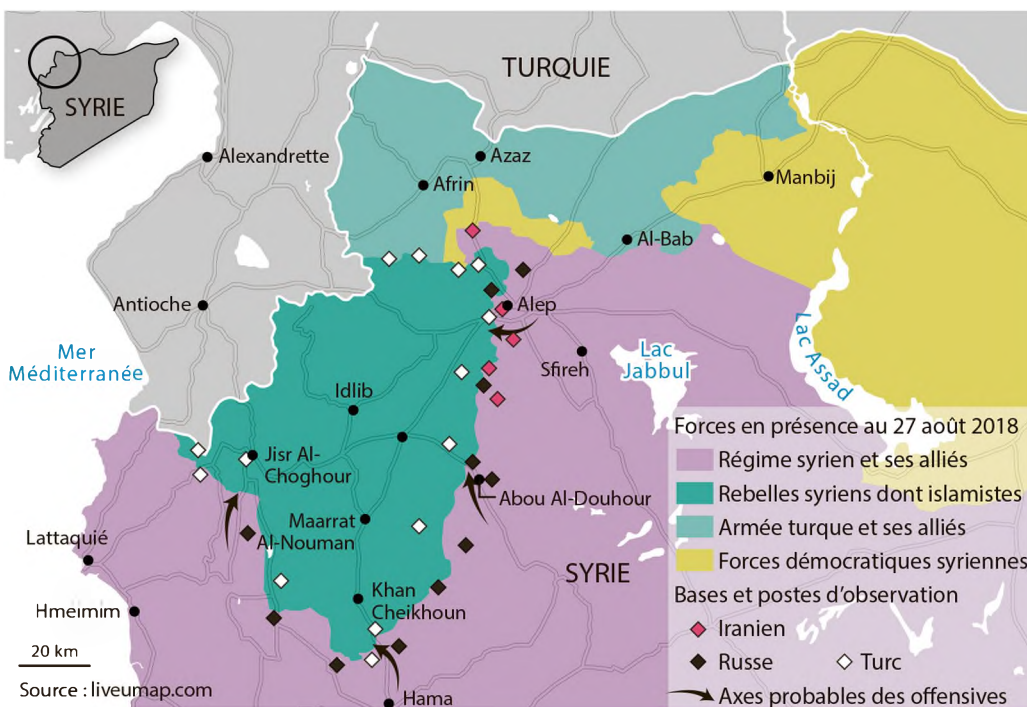
**Chaos et tensions dans la province** Le camp loyaliste tourne les yeux vers Idlib après avoir chassé les groupes rebelles des environs de Damas, au printemps, et reconquis le sud de la Syrie au début de l'été. En janvier, un premier assaut limité, dans le sud-est de l'enclave, avait déjà permis aux forces progouvernementales de sécuriser l'axe Alep-Damas. Au quotidien, les bombardements restent réguliers, dans un territoire qui se déchire entre factions armées rivales.

D'un côté, la coalition djihadiste Hayat Tahrir Al-Cham (HTS), dont le noyau est issu d'Al-Qaïda, regroupe dans son sillage plusieurs milliers de combattants étrangers, dont plusieurs dizaines d'Européens; de l'autre, un assemblage de groupes issus de la rébellion opère désormais sous le label du Front national de libération. Cet attelage est le résultat des efforts de la Turquie pour empêcher les djihadistes de prendre le contrôle complet d'Idlib, après avoir tenté en vain de convaincre HTS de se dissoudre.

La présence des djihadistes dans l'enclave est utilisée par le camp prorégime pour légitimer son offensive, face aux pressions occidentales. Disciplinés et efficaces, les hommes de HTS forment le groupe le plus puissant de la province. Ses chefs excluent toute négociation avec le régime et ses soutiens.

Sur le terrain, ils tentent de consolider leur pouvoir, avant l'assaut du régime. Depuis juillet, des arrestations se sont multipliées contre des hommes accusés de chercher à négocier avec le régime, ou d'appartenir à des cellules dormantes de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), rival djihadiste que HTS présente comme une cinquième colonne du régime de Damas.

Autre signe de crispation : HTS a retenu durant une trentaine d'heures une équipe de la télévision d'Etat turque à un point de contrôle, la semaine passée. Il



pouvait s'agir d'un message adressé à Ankara par les djihadistes, qui s'étaient jusqu'ici accommodés de la présence turque et avaient même accompagné son déploiement.

**Le camp pro-Damas se renforce en périphérie d'Idlib** Début août, l'armée syrienne a largué des tracts sur la province d'Idlib, appelant les habitants à «adhérer [aux accords] de réconciliation locale comme d'autres en Syrie l'ont fait». Dans les autres zones insurgées du pays, de tels appels ont servi de prélude aux offensives du régime. Depuis plus de deux semaines, les sites d'information pro-Assad rapportent des envois de renforts vers la province d'Idlib, notamment sur les flancs de la localité Jisr Al-Choughour, à l'ouest.

Des unités d'élite, comme la 4<sup>e</sup> division ou la garde républicaine, convergent vers le Nord-Ouest syrien. Les rangs loyalistes comprendraient aussi des mili-

ces pro-iraniennes, ainsi que d'ex-combattants de l'opposition ayant accepté une «réconciliation» avec le régime.

La Russie renforce, quant à elle, son dispositif en mer, qui complète un contingent d'une trentaine d'avions de combat déployés en permanence sur la base aérienne de Hmeimim, et de plusieurs milliers d'hommes au sol qui assistent et encadrent les forces du régime syrien. Dimanche, deux frégates de la flotte de la mer Noire, l'Amiral-Grigorovitch

### Les deux frégates russes entrées en Méditerranée orientale sont un signal dissuasif envoyé aux Occidentaux

et l'Amiral-Essen, sont entrées en Méditerranée orientale.

Il s'agit d'un message dissuasif adressé aux Occidentaux. Les deux navires sont armés de missiles de croisière Kalibr avec lesquels Moscou avait fait une entrée fracassante dans le conflit syrien en 2015, démontrant sa maîtrise technologique à Washington et aux puissances européennes, soutiens de l'opposition.

**Des tractations russo-turques intensives** Le sort d'Idlib est entre les mains des diplomates russe et turque, qui ont multiplié récemment les contacts de haut niveau. Une attaque de l'armée syrienne sans soutien aérien russe est improbable. A l'inverse, Moscou n'a aucun intérêt à heurter la Turquie, allié de circonstance dont elle ne peut se passer pour imposer un règlement politique au conflit.

Une opération militaire est-elle inéluctable? «Il est difficile pour le régime, même avec le soutien des

Russes, de s'emparer d'Idlib en une seule offensive. Le scénario le plus probable est celui d'une opération limitée», affirme Aron Lund, chercheur spécialiste de la Syrie. Mais même limitée, cette attaque pourrait pousser des dizaines de milliers de civils à fuir vers la frontière turque: un scénario catastrophe pour Ankara. «Cela n'est pas l'option idéale pour les Turcs, mais il est possible qu'ils doivent l'accepter, même s'ils préféreraient le statu quo», estime M. Lund.

La province d'Idlib pourrait aussi servir de monnaie d'échange entre les puissances influentes dans le conflit syrien. «Le sort d'Idlib n'est pas lié à une question de djihadistes, mais à une équation géostratégique plus large», estime Sam Heller, chercheur à International Crisis Group. Une équation dans laquelle 3 millions de civils se trouvent pris au piège. ■

LAURE STEPHAN ET  
MADJID ZERROUKY (A PARIS)

REUTERS

## Turkey says U.S. trade sanctions could destabilize region, lira slide continues

August 27, 2018/ Daren Butler, Behiye Selin Taner (Reuters)

**ISTANBUL - Turkey warned on Monday that U.S. trade sanctions against it could destabilize the Middle East and ultimately bolster terrorism and the refugee crisis, underscoring the regional impact of Ankara's deepening rift with Washington.**

Turkish Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, who is President Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law, used a visit to Paris to both take aim at the United States and highlight Ankara's push for better ties with Europe, given the stand-off with Washington.

The rift with the United States over an American evangelical Christian pastor detained in Turkey on terrorism charges has helped accelerate a crisis in the Turkish lira, which is down about 40 percent this year. U.S. President Donald Trump this month authorized a doubling of duties on aluminum and steel imported from Turkey.

Investors are also worried about a U.S. Treasury investigation into majority state-owned Turkish lender Halkbank (HALKB.IS), which faces a potentially hefty fine for allegations of Iran-sanctions busting. The bank has said all of its transactions were legal.

"These steps taken with political motivation will not only impact the global financial system but also global trade and regional stability," Albayrak told a news conference following a meeting with his French counterpart, Bruno Le Maire.

"With the damage (the measures) will cause to regional stability, they will unfortunately contribute to chaotic problems that feed terrorism and also the refugee crisis."

With the dollar stronger globally, the lira TRY/TOM=D3 weakened as far as 6.2960 from 6.00 on Friday, when a holiday to mark the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha came to an end. It stood at 6.1200 at 1529 GMT.

"The exchange rate sensitivity created by the tension between us and the United States continues," said Seda Yalcinkaya Ozer, an analyst at brokerage Integral.

### DIVERGING INTERESTS

Turkey and the United States are also at odds over diverging interests in Syria and U.S. objections to Ankara's ambition to buy Russian defense systems.

The United States has expressed concern that NATO member Turkey's planned deployment of the Russian-made S-400 could risk the security of some U.S.-made weapons and other technology used by Turkey, including the F-35 jet.



Turkish Lira and Dollar banknotes are seen in this picture illustration taken August 19, 2018. REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration

A committee from the U.S. Congress visited Turkey on Monday and held meetings with officials regarding the F-35 program, Turkey's foreign ministry said.

In a conference call earlier this month, Albayrak told investors that Turkey would emerge stronger from the crisis, insisting its banks were healthy but that the authorities were ready to provide support to the sector if needed.

Turkey's central bank and banking watchdog have taken steps to underpin the lira in recent weeks, including cutting limits for Turkish banks' swap transactions. On Monday, the Istanbul stock exchange said it had started work on setting up a swap market as part of efforts to make the city an international finance center.

Investors remain concerned about the lira, given Erdogan's opposition to high interest rates and with inflation near 16 percent in July, its highest in more than 14 years.

August inflation data will be released next Monday and the central bank will hold a policy-setting meeting on Sept. 13, having left rates on hold at its last meeting, contrary to expectations.

Erdogan has cast the lira slide as the result of an "economic war" against Turkey, a comment echoed by his spokesman last week when U.S. President Donald Trump ruled out concessions to Ankara in return for Brunson's release.

The main BIST 100 share index .XU100 was up 1.22 percent at Monday's close. The yield on the benchmark 10-year bond TR10YT=RR dipped to 21.95 percent from 21.98 percent a week earlier. ●

# En Iran, le retour des sanctions marginalise Hassan Rohani

Après le retrait américain de l'accord nucléaire, ses alliés prennent leurs distances avec le président iranien

Le président iranien, Hassan Rohani, a été passé sur le gril par le Parlement, durant deux longues heures de questions et réponses sur sa politique économique, mardi 28 août, alors que le pays peine face au retour des sanctions américaines. Une fois seulement dans l'histoire de la République islamique, un président avait ainsi été convoqué devant les parlementaires : l'ultra-conservateur Mahmoud Ahmadinejad avait dû se prêter à l'exercice en fin de mandat, en 2012, au pic de la crise nucléaire et des sanctions internationales contre le pays, et alors qu'il achevait de s'isoler en luttant avec les instances non élues et le Guide suprême, Ali Khamenei.

M. Rohani est apparu lui aussi manifestement seul, mardi. C'était la raison d'être de cette séance aux allures de défouloir : les factions iraniennes ont pris leurs distances avec un président modéré affaibli. Le retrait américain de l'accord international sur le nucléaire de juillet 2015, au mois de mai, a plombé sa politique d'ouverture économique. Une première vague de sanctions américaines, adoptée début août, décourage les investissements d'entreprises occidentales. Dans une dégringolade inquiétante, la monnaie iranienne a perdu 60 % de sa valeur sur l'année.

Face au refus de M. Rohani de remanier son gouvernement, les parlementaires ont eux-mêmes fait sauter deux fusibles en août : ils ont démis les ministres du travail et de l'économie. Selon

l'agence de presse Tasnim, proche des militaires, une motion de censure contre un troisième, en charge de l'industrie et des mines, a déjà recueilli l'assentiment de soixante-dix parlementaires (sur 290). Le directeur de la banque centrale a par ailleurs été renvoyé et un vice-gouverneur de l'institution a été arrêté pour des faits de corruption, alors que la justice poursuivait des changeurs de devises accusés de spéculer sur la crise.

« Vous avez créé une montagne d'espérances » en vantant à l'excès les bénéfices que tirerait le pays de l'accord nucléaire, a accusé mardi Mojtaba Zolnour, député de la ville religieuse de Qom, mais « un seul coup de pied de Trump aura suffi à ce que tout s'effondre, et vous vous retrouvez sans alternative ».

Dans sa défense, M. Rohani a paru chercher à éviter les coups. « On ne devrait pas dire que nous faisons face à une crise. Il n'y a pas de crise. Si on dit qu'il y a une crise, cela constituera un problème pour la société puis une menace », affirmait-il, en rappelant que l'Iran commence à peine à subir les effets des pressions américaines. Un deuxième volet de sanctions doit frapper le pétrole et les échanges financiers en novembre : Washington a promis de réduire à zéro les exportations de brut du pays.

## Factions

Pour M. Rohani, la chute de la devise n'est qu'un symptôme : celui d'une perte de confiance des Iraniens, qu'il s'agit de rassurer.

« Les gens n'ont pas peur des Etats-Unis. Ils ont peur de notre désunion », a-t-il poursuivi. Le chômage est à la hausse et M. Rohani s'est privé des moyens d'atténuer les effets des sanctions sur les plus pauvres, en supprimant l'essentiel des aides directes dont avait abusé M. Ahmadinejad, et qui avaient déchaîné l'inflation. Mais pour son successeur, homme du sérail et technocrate, « le plus grave, c'est que bien des gens ne croient plus en l'avenir de la République islamique, et doutent de ses capacités ».

Depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, en 2013, M. Rohani s'était efforcé de rassembler une coalition de pragmatiques de tous bords, et de se ménager le soutien du Guide. Il fait aujourd'hui de l'unité du « système » politique la condition de sa survie. Il est cependant forcé de constater que ses alliés réformateurs s'écartent de lui : certains ont voté la défiance, dimanche, contre son ministre de l'économie. Il accuse ses rivaux d'user des pressions de Washington pour régler leurs comptes avec lui – un classique de la vie politique iranienne.

A demi-mot, il estime que les factions ultraconservatrices ont en réalité incité le président américain, Donald Trump, à se désengager du « deal » nucléaire. M. Rohani et ses partisans jugent qu'ils ont provoqué des manifestations de mécontentement populaire, en décembre 2017, pour l'affaiblir. Celles-ci avaient dégénéré pour gagner plus de 80 villes, et leur répression avait fait au moins 25 morts et des milliers d'arrestations, selon un bilan of-



Hassan Rohani au Parlement iranien, à Téhéran, le 28 août.

ATTA KENARE/AFP

## Le Parlement a fait sauter deux fusibles en démettant les ministres du travail et de l'économie

ficiel. Ces « incidents » ont exposé la fragilité du pays, selon M. Rohani. Ils auraient fini par représenter une « tentation » pour M. Trump, l'incitant à précipiter la crise à coups de sanctions.

Les parlementaires ont voté par quatre fois la défiance à différents volets de la politique économique de M. Rohani, mardi. Ils ne l'ont épargné que sur la question des pressions américaines sur les banques, contre lesquels il n'a que peu de moyens. Ces motions devaient être transmises à la justice, instance dominée par les ultraconservateurs, qui pourrait éventuellement s'en saisir. En juillet, les rivaux de M. Rohani avaient agité la menace d'une destitution du président. C'était durant une série de manifestations contre la crise économique, qui avaient frappé le grand bazar de Téhéran – les alliés de M. Rohani jugent, là aussi, qu'elles ont été suscitées par des factions conservatrices.

Cependant, ce président modéré, respecté à l'étranger, demeure un rempart et un point d'équilibre pour le système, y compris dans son rôle de punching-ball. Le Guide suprême a clairement exprimé, durant l'été, que lui retirer la confiance reviendrait à « jouer le jeu de l'ennemi ». ■

LOUIS IMBERT



# Turkey Made a Bet Against Assad—And Lost

Back in 2011, Erdoğan supported the rebels against the Syrian regime in hopes of gaining influence across the Middle East. Things haven't gone according to plan.

Joost Hiltermann Aug 27, 2018  
<https://www.theatlantic.com>

Before the war in Syria broke out in 2011, a budding personal friendship between Bashar al-Assad, the leader of Syria, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Turkey, augured close economic ties and an open border. That would be only the beginning: Turkey saw Syria as the launching pad for its plans to become the dominant economic force in the Arab world, a region it had largely retreated from after losing its vast Arab provinces with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

But the Syrian uprising forced Turkey to reconsider. Erdoğan severed his ties with Assad and cast his lot with the popular, predominantly Sunni opposition, making the bet that they would overthrow the minority Alawite-based regime. Meanwhile, Turkey gradually found itself on the outs with Washington, a close strategic partner for decades. Following the recent hostile rhetoric from the Trump administration and the imposition of sanctions on Turkey for detaining an American pastor, tensions have grown.

Seven years into the war in Syria, as Turkey struggles to shield itself from the destabilizing spillover of regional turmoil, Erdoğan's bet on the Arab world looks increasingly like a losing one. A Syria at war has become the graveyard for any dreams of the neo-Ottoman grandeur he may have nurtured.

The rump state of the once mighty Ottoman Empire, Turkey has experienced numerous traumas over the past century, including repeated coups to suppress internal challengers. It has also fought a tenacious armed insurgency by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which claims to represent the region's Kurds, many of whom ended up in Turkey when Britain and France divided up the empire's remains at the end of World War I. (Turkey deems the PKK a terrorist organization, as do the United States and the European Union.) The possibility that Kurdish secession could further erode the country has been intolerable for successive Turkish leaders. They have used methods ranging from harsh repression to bombardments to peace negotiations to curb the PKK's ambitions, defeat it on the battlefield, or render it politically irrelevant.

The ascendancy of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP), with its conservative base of small-business owners and Muslim Brotherhood-inspired ideology, heralded a decade of rapid economic growth starting

in 2002. A confident Turkey embarked on a policy of "zero problems" in its neighborhood, presenting itself as the region's *düzen kurucu*, or "order setter." The government expected significant economic payoffs, as Turkish companies fanned out across the region and made their mark, especially in the construction sector. Turkish television channels entertained Arab audiences with Turkish soaps, warming them up for visa-free visits to Istanbul and the Mediterranean coast.

But the Arab Spring uprisings put an end to all that. Along with the war in Syria, the turning point was the July 2013 coup in Egypt, which ousted the Brotherhood-led government, Ankara's ally. With the Brotherhood on the retreat throughout the region, Turkey saw its reputation and investments go up in smoke.

In response, Turkey began to focus on its most immediate concern: Syria's civil war, which the Erdoğan government, along with its Western and Gulf allies, helped kindle in a failing effort to defeat the Assad regime. Instead, the war not only undermined Turkey's interests as its rebel allies lost their footing—it opened a vacuum that jihadists and the PKK, Turkey's two most formidable enemies, were keen to exploit. Indeed, for Turkey, the Syrian war has become less about overthrowing Assad—a task that became seemingly impossible once Russia entered the war in 2015—and much more about keeping these two groups at bay. Each threatened Turkey: The Islamic State sought to reestablish the caliphate, while the PKK sought to safeguard Kurdish rights. The latter aim, Turkish leaders feared, could eventually encourage the group to press for statehood, and therefore Turkey's breakup.

While jihadist attacks generated terror, the war against the PKK in the southeast most worried Ankara. After talks with the group broke down three years ago, the costly and corrosive conflict seemed destined to go on forever. The PKK reinvigorated itself through its Syrian affiliate, the People's Protection Units (YPG), which had started recruiting and training new fighters to take on ISIS. Even more worrisome for Turkey: The YPG received military assistance from the United States, which saw it as an effective fighting force against the jihadists. The result was a YPG-protected buffer zone inside Syria along the Turkish border—a situation Erdoğan has been keen to reverse.

Today, Turkey finds itself tangled up in a major contradiction. It remains a key part of the Western alliance, yet feels aggrieved by



A Free Syrian Army fighter holds a Turkish flag earlier this year. Osman Orsal / Reuters

Washington's support for the Kurds, its imposition of sanctions over Turkey's detention of an American pastor, and its refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen, the head of a religiously based political movement whom Ankara accuses of masterminding the attempted coup in July 2016. Angry as it may be, Turkey will not readily forgo its strategic alliance with the West. This assessment emerged from discussions at a forum organized by the Körber Foundation in Berlin in July, in which I participated: Strains in the relationship will doubtless remain, but Washington needs Ankara as a bulwark against Iran, Russia, and jihadists, while Ankara needs Washington as a protector of last resort against Russian and Iranian maneuvering in its neighborhood.

All the same, Turkey is reaching out to Russia to help produce an outcome to the Syrian war that it can live with. This could take the form of a deal between the YPG and Damascus brokered and guaranteed by Moscow and Washington, one that would see the Assad regime reasserting its control over at least part of the border. This arrangement wouldn't be ideal from Erdoğan's perspective, but could be the least bad one—if it can be achieved. Turkey will also need Russia's help in Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria. This is a province whose population of about 1 million has more than doubled thanks to the influx of Syrians displaced from other parts of the country. With Russia's blessing, Turkey has managed to shield Idlib from a regime offensive, which would likely foment a new refugee crisis. Turkey can barely cope with the more than 3.5 million Syrians it has already taken in.

But Russia's objectives in Syria are not Turkey's. Moscow wants Ankara to reconcile with the Assad regime. Turkey's reliance on Russia to protect itself from the PKK and prevent a new surge of refugees, this time from Idlib, may therefore force it into an accommodation with Damascus that it has successfully resisted until now.

With impulsive and mercurial leaders in both Washington and Ankara, no one can say how Turkey will navigate the gathering storm. It may count itself lucky if it emerges with mere scrapes from its lost gambles in Syria and the wider region, and does not find itself shipwrecked, with enemies surrounding it.

♦ ♦ ♦

# Six security personnel killed in bomb, car explosion, southwest of Kirkuk

by Nehal Mostafa Aug 30, 2018  
Kirkuk (IraqiNews.com)

Three tribal mobilization fighters have been wounded in a bomb blast, southwest of Kirkuk, a security source said on Thursday.

Speaking to Baghdad Today website, the source said, "a bomb explosion took place in al-Riyad region in Hawija town, southwest of Kirkuk, targeting a tribal fighters patrol."

Three fighters were injured, the source added.

Earlier today, news reports said two Federal Police personnel were killed, while a third was injured as a booby-trapped vehicle, driven by a suicide attacker, exploded targeting a security checkpoint, southwest of the province.

"A booby-trapped car, driven by a suicide bomber, wearing the uniform of Federal Police, exploded targeting a checkpoint at the entrance of al-Abbassi region in Hawija, leaving two personnel killed and a third wounded," the source told AlSumaria News.

"Security troops cordoned off the explosion scene and prevented approach. The two victims were transferred to forensic medicine department, while the wounded were taken to hospital for treatment," the source, who asked to remain anonymous, added.

A total of 79 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 99 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in July 2018, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).



Baghdad was the worst affected Governorate, with 63 civilian casualties (30 killed, 33 injured), followed by Kirkuk (8 killed, 34 injured) and Nineveh (13 killed and 05 injured). ■

# A look at Turkey's post-coup crackdown

By Associated Press / 30 August 2018  
www.dailymail.co.uk/

**ANKARA, Turkey (AP)** - Turkey blamed military officers loyal to a U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen for a failed military coup attempt on July 15, 2016 and declared a state of emergency five days later to clampdown on a vast network of alleged Gulen supporters in the military and other state institutions. The state of emergency led to mass arrests and purges.

Opponents say President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government used its emergency powers to crackdown on all dissent - not just Gulen's movement. The cleric denies involvement in the coup.

The two-year-old state of emergency expired in July, after Erdogan kept to an electoral campaign promise not to extend it, but new anti-terror laws enacted since then allow authorities to press ahead with mass purges of public employees.

**Here's a look at Turkey's post-coup crackdown:**

**ARRESTS:**

Some 160,000 people were detained for questioning, of which over 77,000 were formally arrested for alleged links to terror organizations, including Gulen's network



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, second right, receives greetings by naval officers on Victory Day at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, Aug. 30, 2018. Turkey celebrates Victory Day on Aug. 30, to mark the Turkish victory against Greek forces at the Battle of Dumlupinar, the crucial battle of the War of Independence in 1922 that led subsequently to the foundation of modern Turkish republic. (Presidential Press Service via AP,

and outlawed Kurdish rebels. Those arrested include military personnel, police, journalists, lawmakers, judges and prosecutors.

According to Justice Ministry figures, close to 35,000 people put on trial for links to Gulen's network have been convicted so far. Around 14,000 others were acquitted.

**PURGES:**

More than 130,000 people have been purged from the public service through emergency government decrees. Those dismissed include tens of thousands of teachers and

close to 6,000 academics. Around 1,300 people were re-instated to jobs by a commission that was set up to review cases but 18,000 other appeals were rejected.

**MILITARY:**

Some 170 generals and around 7,000 other senior military officers were arrested as part of the crackdown. At least 58 generals and 629 senior officers have been convicted to life terms in prison so far in trials against military officers, according to Justice Ministry figures. Eight generals were acquitted.

**MEDIA:**

At least 143 journalists or media workers are currently behind bars, most accused of links to Gulen or Kurdish rebels, according to the Turkish Journalists Syndicate. Using emergency decrees, the government closed down around 200 media organizations, including newspapers, periodicals, radio stations and television channels.

**POLITICIANS:**

Ten legislators from Turkey's pro-Kurdish political party, including former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, are in prison on terror charges for alleged links to Kurdish militants. Enis Berberoglu, a legislator from the main opposition Republican People's Party, is in prison convicted of espionage for giving an opposition newspaper images allegedly showing Turkey's intelligence agency trucking weapons into Syria.

**ACTIVISTS:**

Human rights activist and businessman Osman Kavala is in jail pending trial, accused of seeking to overthrow the government and having alleged links to Gulen. Eleven prominent activists were arrested last year at their hotel on an island off of Istanbul while on training. They were eventually released from jail pending the outcome of their trial for supporting terror groups. Among them was Taner Kilic, Amnesty International's former Turkey chairman, who was released earlier this month. ♦

REUTERS

# Commentary: Russia has a plan for Syria. The U.S. needs one, too.

August 30, 2018 / David A. Andelman / REUTERS

**THE WAR** in Syria seems to be entering its final days, as President Bashar al-Assad's government forces close in on one of the country's last rebel-held provinces. And U.S. President Donald Trump, focused on trade wars across three continents and political wars at home, still doesn't seem to have figured out what role the United States should be playing in the conflict or its aftermath.

Yet the stakes are horrifically high – for the United States and many of its regional allies. Sometime very soon, as the noose tightens and then closes around Idlib, the last rebel-held enclave in Syria, Trump will have to make some critical choices. He will need to decide where the United States casts its lot, and how it forces an end game that constrains the more malevolent outside players – especially Iran and Russia – while supporting forces of democracy before they are finally snuffed out.

Throughout this seven-year war, Assad has played a methodical and deadly game. Especially since the arrival of major Russian military aid nearly three years ago, Assad's forces have moved across the nation, seizing villages, cities and provinces, often slaughtering rebel forces and militants that held each area – making little distinction among any of them. Now he has driven what remains of his opponents into Idlib, a small enclave in northwestern Syria that borders Turkey.

It is there, in Idlib, that Assad's foes are preparing for the war's last gasp. In recent months, a vast number of Syrians have fled to Idlib, which has so far managed to escape control by Assad and his forces. The United Nations estimates that more than three million people are living there, more than twice the pre-war level.

In a possible prelude to a government offensive, government planes have blanketed the area with leaflets proclaiming: "Your cooperation with the Syrian Arab Army will get rid of the armed terrorists among you and will keep you and your families safe." Few believe this claim, as government bombing has been largely indiscriminate throughout the conflict, killing civilians as freely as military. Not even schools or hospitals have been spared.

Throughout the last two years, and especially in recent weeks, however, the American role in the conflict has been limited, while the peril to neighboring countries has been growing exponentially. In 2011, President Barack Obama and some European leaders called for Assad to step down, then largely stood back as his government's forces reclaimed territory and power, with support from Iran and Russia. Over the next seven years, Assad's troops, backed by unrelenting bombing and ground assaults by Russian air power and Iranian elements, pushed both rebels and Islamic State militants into increasingly narrow enclaves while driving millions into exile abroad.

Three years ago, the Obama administration installed 50 American advisers in the country, working largely with Kurdish forces the United States had been



A Syrian Army soldier loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad forces stands next to a military weapon in Idlib, Syria January 21, 2018. SANA/Handout via REUTERS



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during their meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia May 17, 2018. Sputnik/Mikhail Klimentyev/Kremlin via REUTERS

backing while it tried to figure out which rebel elements were real anti-Assad fighters, and which were simply repurposed members of Islamic State. Since then, the 50-person U.S. force has mushroomed to roughly 2,000 troops. In April 2017 Trump authorized military strikes against Syria after a chemical attack, attributed to Assad's regime, killed dozens of people.

The fundamental problem, however, is that the United States still does not seem to have any sense of just what a post-conflict Syria might look like. Trump wants American friends in the region to bear the brunt of Syria's reconstruction – further abdicating any American influence and helping to elevate Russia as the principal outside force.

Case in point: U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo managed to jawbone many of Syria's neighbors into contributing \$300 million to "stabilization" or reconstruction efforts in Syria. Yet on August 17, Trump canceled a \$230 million civilian aid program that could have helped rebuild rebel-held areas that Assad and the Russians had destroyed. At the same time, Britain has cut funding for some aid programs in the shrinking, rebel-held parts of the country.

Disengagement from the United States and its allies only leaves Assad more deeply entrenched in power and more likely to accept Russia as its principal backer. It also helps pave the way for Russia, Turkey and Iran to develop influence in the region in ways that may not be aligned with U.S. interests.

Indeed, on Monday Tehran said it had reached an agreement with Syria to remain in the country, as it has since 2013, despite ongoing efforts by the United States and others seeking to contain Iranian expansion in the region. Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami and his Syrian counterpart signed the agreement, which expanded the multi-billion investment Iran has already in made in Syria, in front of a beaming photograph of Assad.

Turkey, which has backed some rebel groups seeking to overthrow Assad, has since late 2016 been working with Russia and Iran to bring peace to the region. None of the three countries are aligned with Western interests. Each, for its own reason, wants to keep Assad in power and remove any challenge to his autocratic rule, while providing a base for their unchallenged expansion in the region or, in the case of Turkey, for its war against the Kurds.

The stakes are too high to allow such a denouement. A newly empowered Russia planted firmly in Syria – a nation whose borders include Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Israel – is dangerous as it allows the Kremlin a major air and naval facility that dominates the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, at the end of the conflict Islamic State fighters in Syria could scatter and regroup, or metastasize in areas we have only begun to consider – such as Mali, Niger, the Central African Republic or Somalia.

Trump is certainly distracted – no less so in the wake of a conviction and guilty plea within his closest political family. But Syria is one crisis where the president can show real leadership, if he is prepared to work closely with allies and friends in the region and beyond to find a solution to Syria that ends the bloodshed and establishes a firm footing for an eventual return to sanity there. ●

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# Syrie : le sort de la province rebelle d'Idleb entre les mains de Damas, Moscou et Ankara

Texte par Marc DAOU Avec AFP / 30/08/2018  
www.france24.com

**Une offensive de Damas, soutenue par Moscou, semble désormais inévitable dans la province d'Idleb, ultime région du Nord-Ouest qui échappe au contrôle de Bachar al-Assad et où sont massés des jihadistes et des rebelles appuyés par Ankara. Focus.**

## SITUATION GÉOSTRATÉGIQUE DE LA PROVINCE D'IDLEB

Dernier grand fief insurgé de Syrie qui échappe au contrôle de Bachar al-Assad, la province Idleb, située dans le nord-ouest du pays, est hautement stratégique. Elle est en effet frontalière de la Turquie, et voisine de la province côtière de Lattaquié, bastion du régime et fief familial du président syrien. Au cours des dernières années, la population de la province, estimée à 2,5 millions d'habitants, a significativement augmenté. Ce, en raison de l'afflux de rebelles et de civils évacués des bastions repris par le régime (Ghouta, Alep, Deraa...), conformément à des accords conclus avec Damas, et garantis par la Turquie. La région fait partie des "zones de désescalade" mises en place dans le pays à l'issue des négociations de paix d'Astana, parrainées par Moscou, Ankara et Téhéran.

Le sort d'Idleb suscite des inquiétudes au sein de la communauté internationale. Mercredi 29 août, le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Antonio Guterres, a mis en garde contre "les risques croissants d'une catastrophe humanitaire en cas d'opération militaire à grande échelle dans la province".

L'ONU dit craindre jusqu'à 800 000 déplacés en cas d'offensive. Deux millions de personnes sont considérées comme des individus vulnérables ayant besoin d'une assistance humanitaire par le Bureau de coordination des affaires humanitaires de l'ONU (OCHA).

## QUI CONTRÔLE LA PROVINCE D'IDLEB?

La province est contrôlée à 60 % par Hayat Tahrir al-Cham (HTS, formé d'anciens membres du Front al-Nosra, ex-branche d'Al-Qaïda en Syrie). Ce groupe jihadiste est dirigé par Mohammad al-Joulani, qui a exclu toute idée de solution négociée avec Damas.

"Les armes de la révolution et du jihad constituent une ligne rouge [...], elles ne peuvent faire l'objet de marchandages et ne feront jamais l'objet de négociations", a-t-il récemment prévenu dans une vidéo publiée via l'un des comptes du groupe sur la messagerie Télégram.

La province compte par ailleurs une multitude de groupes rebelles dont les principaux sont rassemblés au sein d'une coalition formée début août et baptisée "Front de Libération nationale". Soutenue par Ankara, elle compte notamment dans ses rangs deux importants groupes islamistes Ahrar al-Cham et Nouredine al-Zinki, qui ont croisé le fer à plusieurs reprises avec le HTS, ainsi que quatre autres factions, dont le puissant Jaich al-Ahrar, influent dans la province d'Idleb. "Au total, on compte près de 70 000 combattants, jihadistes et rebelles, dans la région, dont un certain nombre ont été transférés par le régime syrien lui-même", précise Agnès Levallois, consultante spécialiste du Moyen-Orient, à France 24.

En outre, des "cellules dormantes" de l'organisation État islamique (EI) sont également présentes dans la région. Ces derniers mois, les jihadistes



© George Ourfalian, AFP | Un point de passage vers la province d'Idleb contrôlé par les forces syriennes et russes (archives).

de l'EI ont revendiqué plusieurs assassinats et attentats à la bombe commis dans la province.

## OBJECTIF DÉCLARÉ DE DAMAS ET DE MOSCOU

Le président Assad a déclaré en juillet que la reconquête d'Idleb était une priorité pour son pouvoir. "Idleb est désormais notre but, mais ce n'est pas le seul", avait-il lancé. Signe de la détermination de Damas, le 9 août, des positions rebelles et jihadistes ont été bombardées dans la province, et des tracts appelant les habitants à se rendre ont également été largués. Le 15 août, le quotidien pro-régime Al-Watan a annoncé l'envoi de renforts aux abords de la province, les "plus importants depuis le début de la guerre", en 2011.

Le ministre syrien de la Défense a réitéré, le 26 août, la volonté du pouvoir syrien d'en finir avec Idleb, en promettant que la province allait "revenir sous la houlette de la nation et tout le territoire syrien sera débarrassé du terrorisme".

Aux yeux de la Russie, parrain incontournable du régime syrien, la province rebelle est un "abcès purulent" qui doit disparaître, selon son chef de la diplomatie, Sergueï Lavrov. Ce dernier a déclaré, mercredi, espérer que les pays occidentaux n'allaient pas "entraver l'opération antiterroriste" à Idleb.

Les Russes, qui renforcent actuellement leur présence navale en Méditerranée orientale, ont été passablement irrités par les attaques de drones régulièrement envoyés, depuis la province rebelle, contre la base de Hmeimim, la principale base militaire russe dans le pays, située dans la province de Lattaquié (nord-ouest).

## LES RÉSERVES DE LA TURQUIE

Mais à Idleb, le régime syrien et son allié russe ne peuvent passer à l'action sans tenir compte de la Turquie, qui y a installé des postes d'observation et déployé des forces. Les quotidiens progouvernementaux turcs Hürriyet et Sabah ont rapporté, mercredi, que l'armée turque avait consolidé ses positions à Idleb ces derniers jours à l'aide de blocs de béton.

C'est dans ce sens que Turcs et Russes, qui soutiennent des parties adverses dans le conflit, mènent d'intenses négociations afin de sauvegarder leur alliance, en tentant de s'accorder sur la nature de l'offensive.

Lors d'une récente visite en Russie, le chef de la diplomatie turque des Affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, a mis en garde contre une possible "catastrophe" en cas de "solution militaire" à Idleb. Outre une sérieuse ➔

➤ perte d'influence en Syrie, si les rebelles qu'elle soutient étaient ciblés par l'offensive, la Turquie craint aussi un nouvel afflux de réfugiés alors qu'elle accueille déjà plus de 3 millions de Syriens. Malgré ses réserves, Ankara a laissé entendre qu'elle n'était pas opposée à une opération limitée dans la province, c'est-à-dire ciblant uniquement le HTS. Mevlüt Cavusoglu a ainsi concédé à Moscou qu'il était d'accord pour que les "groupes radicaux, les terroristes, soient mis hors d'état de nuire" dans la région.

Moscou de son côté souhaite que les groupes rebelles soutenus par la Turquie, mettent fin à la présence de HTS comme condition pour éviter une offensive majeure. Encore faut-il qu'un éventuel accord russo-turc soit accepté par Damas et son autre principal allié Téhéran, qui ne font pas de distinction entre les rebelles dits modérés soutenus par les Turcs, et les groupes jihadistes.

"Si Moscou peut atteindre ses objectifs à travers des négociations, en convainquant Ankara d'exercer des pressions sur un certain nombre de groupes rebelles pour qu'ils déposent les armes, cela peut intéresser [le Kremlin], explique Jean-Sylvestre Mongrenier, chercheur à l'Institut français de géopolitique (Paris-VIII) et chercheur associé à l'Institut Thomas More. Mais même sans accord avec la Turquie, les Russes, et encore moins les Syriens et leurs alliés iraniens, ne renonceront à une opération à Idlib."

Le sommet tripartite sur la Syrie, organisé le 7 septembre en Iran, qui réunira les chefs de l'État turc, russe et iranien, pourrait retarder le début de l'offensive, afin peut-être que tous les acteurs du conflit y trouvent leur compte. ●

L'EXPRESS.fr 31 août 2018

# Syrie, le dernier acte

Par Christian Makarian, le 31/08/2018  
www.lexpress.fr

**A Idlib, va s'achever la reprise de la Syrie par Bachar el-Assad. Enjeux et dangers concernent toutes les puissances engagées.**

L'ultime bastion de l'insurrection syrienne, autour d'Idlib, dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, est le théâtre d'une des batailles les plus complexes de l'atroce guerre qui a détruit ce pays.

Sur le plan militaire, les troupes gouvernementales, appuyées par les forces terrestres et l'aviation russes, par des contingents iraniens importants, doivent affronter cette fois des opposants très aguerris, parmi lesquels, selon l'estimation de l'envoyé spécial de l'ONU Staffan de Mistura, on compte environ 10 000 terroristes issus des différents mouvements djihadistes - qui ont trouvé refuge dans cette enclave après avoir parfois négocié avec le régime de Damas - mais aussi des rangs de Daech. A la fin de 2016, après leur cuisante défaite à Alep-Est, des bataillons de combattants avaient ainsi marchandé leur départ contre une réinstallation à Idlib ; si bien que le combat avait repris ensuite dans ce réduit entre factions djihadistes rivales.

## LE RISQUE CHIMIQUE

Autant dire que les attaques des assaillants contre les extrémistes retranchés risquent d'être terribles, ce qui fait de nouveau redouter la menace d'un recours à l'arme chimique. Pour prendre les devants, au cas où El-Assad recourrait derechef à ses procédés



Les secours recherchent des victimes dans les décombres d'immeubles ciblés par l'aviation syrienne, à Idlib, le 4 février 2018.

afp.com/OMAR HAJ KADOUR

habituels, la Russie prétend d'ores et déjà que des matériaux chimiques auraient été livrés aux assiégés par les Casques blancs, ces secouristes volontaires syriens formés par les Occidentaux. Cette campagne, qui vise de manière obsessionnelle les Casques blancs, est une façon de prévenir les Occidentaux qu'il serait illégitime de leur part de frapper les forces gouvernementales - comme l'ont fait les Américains, les Français et les Britanniques, le 14 avril dernier - en cas d'emploi de l'arme chimique à Idlib. Ce genre de manœuvres d'intoxication n'a évidemment rien de rassurant. Ces jours-ci, les forces navales russes ont été renforcées en Méditerranée orientale, en sus de la trentaine d'avions de combat basés en Syrie. Du côté américain, l'USS Ross, un destroyer américain armé de missiles Tomahawk, se situe à distance opérationnelle.

Sur le plan humanitaire, une offensive massive, sans s'être assuré au préalable de l'existence de corridors sécurisés pour évacuer

les civils, aboutirait à un carnage dans la population civile. Près de 3 millions d'habitants, au sein desquels on dénombre une bonne moitié de déplacés, sont pris en otages ; une forte proportion d'entre eux ne survit depuis des mois que grâce à l'aide internationale et au soutien de différentes ONG.

## RUSSIE-TURQUIE, UN ENTRELACS D'AMBIGUITÉS

Sur le plan stratégique, enfin, le pire est à craindre en raison de l'intrication de la Turquie et de la Russie dans cette région située le long de la frontière turque. Depuis des années, Ankara soutient les opposants à Bachar el-Assad et les a aidés à se structurer à Idlib, notamment pour qu'ils barrent la route aux Kurdes, qui cherchent à s'arroger le contrôle du Nord syrien. Ce sont ces mêmes groupes que Moscou combat pour soutenir le régime de Damas, tout en ménageant par ailleurs la Turquie, dont elle a besoin comme pseudo-alliée à la table des négociations en vue de la sortie du conflit. Une ambiguïté sans nom, qui se heurte, précisément à Idlib, à des intérêts complètement divergents : laisser les rebelles, fussent-ils de dangereux djihadistes, se faire tailler en pièces est difficilement soutenable du point de vue turc, leur écrasement provoquerait leur exil vers le territoire turc... Tandis que, pour les Russes, il est indispensable de chasser les djihadistes de ce réduit, afin d'imposer la mainmise finale du régime de Damas et de pouvoir, enfin, sortir de la phase militaire pour passer à l'étape suivante. Il reste probable qu'entre les deux faux amis, il reviendra à la Turquie de renoncer à ses objectifs... moyennant quelques concessions.

Idlib est devenu un enjeu entre toutes les puissances embourbées dans le conflit syrien. Ce n'est pas la moindre des victoires de Bachar el-Assad que d'avoir réussi à attirer ses partnaires comme ses adversaires dans une situation inextricable. ◆

# The Myth of Erdogan's Power

Far from a sultan, the Turkish president is hemmed in by the nationalists who back him—and they don't want him to get too close to Russia.

By Halil Karaveli | August 29, 2018,  
<https://foreignpolicy.com>

This month, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan intimated that his country might consider leaving NATO. Meanwhile, on a visit to Moscow last week, Turkey's foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu referred to Russia as a "strategic partner"—a first. This talk is empty. Erdogan may well be angry at Washington, but ultimately, Ankara is going to have to do whatever it takes to restore its ties with the West. Doing so might not be enough to pull the country out of its economic crisis, but Erdogan has few other options if he wants to avoid a potentially worse political meltdown: He depends too deeply on forces in the Turkish state that will have difficulty stomaching a permanent shift away from the United States and toward Russia.

In mid-August, U.S. President Donald Trump said that Turkey has been a "problem for a long time." And that is true. But, at least in part, that's because the United States has also been a problem for Turkey. Washington's current list of grievances against Ankara include its detention of the American pastor Andrew Brunson, its opposition to U.S. attempts to empower the Kurds in Syria, and its deepening relationship with Russia, from which Turkey has agreed to purchase four batteries of S-400 air defense missiles by 2019. Yet from Turkey's perspective, all of these actions seem reasonable.

Consider the case of Brunson, who was arrested in December 2016 after an attempted coup against Erdogan. Brunson was accused of having ties to the religious and political movement led by the U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen that is thought to have been behind the coup. He's also been linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Whatever the validity of those charges, Brunson is a valuable political bargaining chip; Ankara hopes to exchange him for Mehmet Hakan Atilla, a former deputy general manager of the Turkish state-owned Halkbank who has been sentenced to prison in the United States for violating U.S. sanctions on Iran. Turkey may eventually

**Indeed, the MHP has chosen not to enter the government openly, but it wields vast power indirectly, occupying thousands of positions in the bureaucracy.**

return the pastor, but it believes that it would be unwise to do so without getting something in return.

When it comes to the Kurds in Syria, meanwhile, U.S. and Turkish strategic priorities in the Middle East have been drifting for a long time.

Ankara was first rattled by U.S. support for the



*A supporter of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan waves a flag against an electronic billboard during a rally in Ankara on July 18, 2016. (Chris McGrath/Getty Images)*

Kurds in northern Iraq during the 1990s. Today, it fears what will follow the de facto establishment in Syria of an autonomous Kurdish region, Rojava, controlled by affiliates of the PKK, which has been waging an insurgency against Ankara since 1984. The United States, meanwhile, has opted to back the Kurds over Turkish objections, because the Kurdish militia was an ally against the Islamic State and remains a loyal U.S. asset in Syria after the defeat of that group.

Despite the two countries' diverging interests, as late as 2012, then-U.S. President Barack Obama still named Erdogan as one of his most trusted friends among the world leaders, and there's no reason to doubt that Erdogan hoped to enjoy a privileged relationship with future U.S. presidents as well. Like other right-wing Turkish leaders before him, Erdogan often deferred to American power. For instance, he knew that Turkey could only achieve its ambitions in Syria—including helping the Muslim Brotherhood come to power—through cooperation with the United States, which is why the two countries at first worked together to try to oust Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

The third sore spot in the relationship between Ankara and Washington—Turkey's recent turn to Russia—can thus be understood as act of desperation. The United States' pro-Kurdish policies in Syria are felt as such an existential threat to Turkey that the country sees no alternative but to seek the cooperation of Russia and Iran (and their protege, the Syrian regime) to thwart Kurdish ambitions. To understand how awkward this alliance is, remember that in 2015, Turkey actually shot down a Russian aircraft that crossed into Turkish airspace while presumably on a mission to target rebel forces. More fundamentally, though, aligning with Russia simply goes against the grain of the Turkish state.

Key figures among Ankara's elite, on whom Erdogan depends to exercise power, represent a political tradition that is deeply hostile to Moscow. These right-wing Turkish nationalists see Russia as the archenemy of the Ottoman Empire and the enslaver of the Turkic peoples. Historically, they have been firmly pro-American. They would have

remained so had it not been for the United States' support for the Kurds. Their ranks include Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which for several years has been allied with Erdogan's Justice and Development Party.

Bahçeli's support has been crucial for Erdogan. For one, the president would have lost his re-election campaign in June had Bahçeli not instructed his supporters to vote for Erdogan. But just as crucial is the fact that the MHP supporters are deeply entrenched in the Turkish state. Indeed, the MHP has chosen not to enter the government openly, but it wields vast power indirectly, occupying thousands of positions in the bureaucracy.

With the Gulenists having been purged from the bureaucracy after the failed coup two years ago, the MHP and its sympathizers are now on top. And Erdogan is not a new sultan lording over these people; he is in fact beholden to Bahçeli and MHP loyalists.

Consider, for example, the appointment of Hulusi Akar, a former chief of the general staff, who is known to be a Turkish nationalist in the MHP mold. Nationalist circles buzzed with talk that it was at Bahçeli's request that Erdogan named Akar as minister of defense after the June elections. Akar does not trust the United States, nor does he like Russia. In his first statement as

**When it comes to the Kurds in Syria, meanwhile, U.S. and Turkish strategic priorities in the Middle East have been drifting for a long time.**

defense minister, he stressed the importance of mobilizing "national resources" to ensure the independence and security of Turkey.

This isn't the first time MHP has wielded power behind the scenes in its self-appointed mission to protect the Turkish state. During the 1970s, MHP cadres were mobilized to crush the democratic left that was then on the rise. With the support of the bureaucracy and military, MHP militants laid siege on the social democratic government, killed thousands of leftists, and paved the way for a right-wing military coup in 1980.

Now, the MHP has assumed the mission of restoring the authority of the state and of consolidating power in order to ensure that factions within it—be they Gulenists or some other as yet unknown formation—will not usurp power in the future. To that end, it was Bahçeli who, in the wake of the failed coup in 2016, called for the introduction of the presidential system that is now in place. His motive was not to cater to Erdogan's personal hunger for power. Rather, from the vantage point of the MHP, the presidential system has the benefit of limiting the space in which factions can thrive and grow, because power is so concentrated. ●

# Erdogan s'enferme

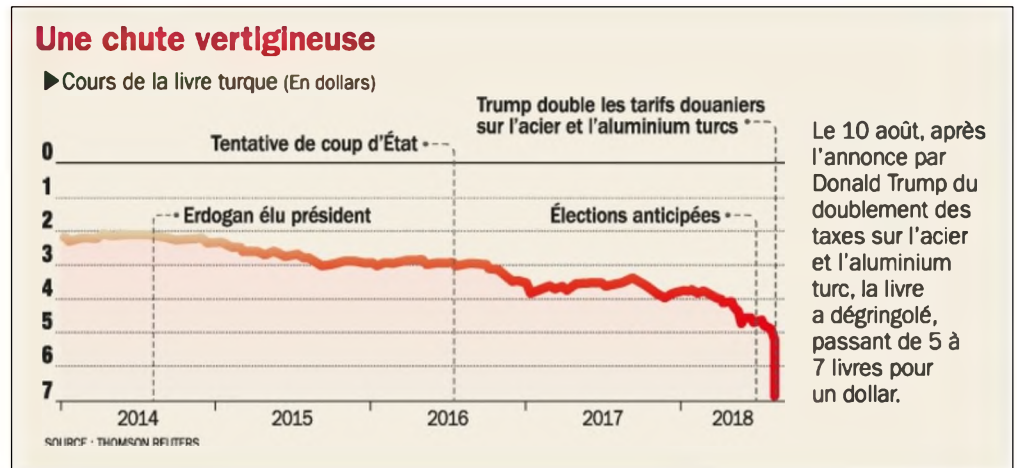
*La passe d'armes estivale entre Ankara et Washington cache une crise turque beaucoup plus profonde. De quoi rappeler celle de 2001.*

L'effondrement de la monnaie turque, au beau milieu de l'été, a réveillé les pires craintes. En quelques jours, le taux de change est passé de 5 à 7 livres pour un dollar. La seule consigne donnée par Recep Tayyip Erdogan a été de « résister » à ce qu'il considère comme un « complot » des milieux financiers, et d'appeler ses concitoyens à vendre leurs bijoux de famille et à changer leurs économies en devises étrangères. « La Turquie fait face à une guerre économique », a-t-il dénoncé, accusant Washington, son allié, de « vouloir le mettre à genoux ». Donald Trump n'a rien fait pour calmer les inquiétudes turques, au contraire. D'un tweet lapidaire, il a décrété, le 10 août, le doublement des taxes douanières sur l'acier et l'aluminium turc, précisant : « Nos relations avec la Turquie ne sont pas bonnes en ce moment. » Mais le bras de fer qui se joue avec Ankara cache une crise plus profonde. La Turquie détient une vingtaine de ressortissants américains, dont le pasteur Andrew Brunson, accusé d'être lié à des organisations terroristes. Elle réclame en échange l'extradition de Fethullah Gülen, prédicateur exilé aux États-Unis, qu'elle accuse d'avoir orchestré la tentative de coup d'État de 2016.

L'incertitude qui plane sur l'économie la plus exposée de tous les pays émergents ne date pas de cette passe d'arme entre présidents. En mars, alors que le dollar atteignait quatre livres, les milieux économiques étaient déjà en état d'alerte. Car l'inflation a explosé : elle est revenue à un niveau (16%) jamais atteint depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP (parti de la Justice et du Développement) en 2002. L'endettement s'est creusé, les investisseurs se sont faits plus prudents et le pouvoir d'achat a fondu. « Beaucoup d'entreprises ont souscrit des crédits en dollars, note l'économiste Emre Deliveli. Elles ont de plus en plus de mal à rembourser, ce qui devient problématique pour les banques. »

## Têtes pensantes écartées

De fortes turbulences étaient à craindre. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles le président Erdo-



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abdulhamit Gül et Berat Albayrak, le 2 août. Le président avec les deux hommes forts d'un gouvernement en crise : le ministre de la Justice, leader de l'AKP, et celui des Finances, son gendre.

gan a décidé, en avril dernier, d'avancer de dix-huit mois la date des élections. Il a ainsi pu être réélu le 24 juin. Cette crise turque est avant tout le résultat des choix du « Reis ». Les têtes pensantes de sa politique économique depuis quinze ans, Ali Babacan et Mehmet Simsek, ont été écartées du pouvoir. Aux Finances, le président Erdogan a nommé en juillet son propre gendre, Berat Albayrak, provoquant aussitôt une réaction négative des marchés. « La solution serait une forte hausse des taux d'intérêt, autour de 5%. La Banque centrale sait qu'elle devrait le faire mais le président y est très opposé », poursuit

Emre Deliveli. Erdogan intervient régulièrement sur la politique monétaire de la Banque centrale. Pour ce musulman conservateur, « les taux d'intérêt sont le père et la mère de tous les maux ».

## Bulle Immobilière

La Turquie montre aussi les limites de sa politique de croissance, fondée sur la consommation et sur l'industrie de la construction. Le pouvoir a initié une politique de grands travaux, financée à crédit. Un nouvel aéroport, le plus grand du monde, et un canal de plus 40 kilomètres à l'ouest d'Istanbul, sont en projet. La rentabilité de tels

chantiers fait débat et les soupçons de corruption et d'affairisme qui entourent les marchés publics affaiblissent encore la crédibilité d'Ankara. Sans compter qu'une bulle spéculative menace l'immobilier : environ 500 000 logements restent vides.

Quelles sont les solutions qui s'offrent à Erdogan pour redresser la barre ? La Chine serait prête à lui venir en aide. Le Qatar a annoncé un investissement d'un montant de 15 milliards de dollars. Insuffisant à long terme. Dans l'immédiat, la Turquie semble miser sur un réchauffement de ses relations avec l'Union européenne, qui reste, de loin, son principal partenaire commercial. Un appel au FMI pourrait finir par devenir nécessaire. Ce ne serait alors pas le moindre des paradoxes pour le président turc, qui était arrivé au pouvoir alors qu'Ankara venait de contracter le plus gros emprunt de l'histoire de l'institution financière, ce qui avait permis au pays et à son dirigeant de se stabiliser, puis de solder les dettes.

Guillaume Perrier (à Istanbul)

# Le malade turc inquiète l'Europe

## L'UE observe de près l'impact de la crise avec Washington et ses répercussions sur la question des migrants.

Anne Rovan / 31 août 2018  
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/>

**E**UROPE - La Turquie n'en finit pas d'inquiéter Bruxelles. La livre a perdu 40 % de sa valeur depuis le début de l'année. Fin juillet, le taux d'inflation s'envolait à près de 16 % en rythme annuel. La guerre commerciale entre Washington et Ankara lancée début août par Donald Trump n'a fait qu'aggraver une situation déjà très préoccupante, à nouveau sanctionnée mardi soir par Moody's.

Ce n'est pas encore la panique sur les marchés financiers ni à la Commission, où les propos se veulent rassurants à ce stade. « Nous analysons, nous regardons. Et nous estimons qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de conséquences sur l'Europe », confie un responsable. Mais la Turquie, qui s'obstine toujours à ne pas relever ses taux d'intérêt, va bel et bien droit dans le mur. « Le feu est là. Il brûle et devient très chaud », s'alarme Guntram Wolff directeur du think-tank bruxellois Bruegel.

Alors que le nouveau et contesté ministre des Finances Berat Albayrak, également gendre de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, vante à l'envi la solidité des banques turques, Paris et Berlin redoutent les conséquences d'un décrochage turc sur les intérêts européens. « C'est un vrai sujet d'inquiétude, confie un responsable français. Nous sommes face à un pouvoir qui n'écoute rien ou presque, n'a rien fait pour redresser son économie et qui est totalement paranoïaque depuis le coup d'État de 2016 ». Même tonalité à Berlin, au ministère allemand des Finances : « La Turquie est dans une situation économique difficile. Beaucoup de choses se combinent et les difficultés ne relèvent pas seulement des sanctions américaines. »

Dans ce contexte, Paris et Berlin multiplient les gestes diplomatiques à l'attention du pouvoir turc qui, en retour, les accueille bien volontiers. Berat Albayrak a été reçu par son homologue français, Bruno Le Maire, lundi à Paris. Il rencontrera le 21 septembre le ministre allemand des Finances avant le rendez-vous programmé le 28 septembre entre Angela Merkel et Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Berlin. Berat Albayrak pourrait également se rendre à Londres la semaine prochaine.

Le ton d'Ankara vis-à-vis de l'Europe s'est également considérablement adouci. « Tactiquement, la Turquie, en crise avec Washington, se tourne vers l'Europe. Ankara



Les drapeaux turc et européen flottent devant une mosquée à Istanbul, en 2006, rappelant la demande d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE. OSMAN ORSAL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

plaide l'aspect stratégique d'une crise éventuelle et joue sur l'outrage provoqué par Trump en Europe », analyse Marc Pierini, ex-ambassadeur de l'Union à Ankara. D'où quelques - timides - signaux d'ouverture adressés aux Vingt-Sept ces dernières semaines. Avec notamment la libération récente de deux soldats grecs soupçonnés d'espionnage et du responsable d'Amnesty International en Turquie. D'où aussi ces piqures de rappel concernant le rôle central de la Turquie dans la lutte contre le terrorisme et l'accueil des réfugiés syriens.

Car, au-delà des problèmes économiques et financiers, ce sont surtout sur les enjeux migratoires et sur la lutte contre le terrorisme que se concentrent les inquiétudes européennes. « Le risque, c'est aussi cela », insiste un dirigeant français. La Turquie accueille actuellement quelque 3 millions de réfugiés Syriens. « Imaginons qu'elle décide d'ouvrir ses frontières ! », interroge un proche d'un commissaire européen. « Nous sommes embêtés », ajoute-t-il un brin pudique.

À neuf mois des élections européennes et alors que les populismes ne cessent de gagner du terrain sur le Vieux Continent, un changement de pied d'Ankara aurait évidemment des conséquences politiques redoutables au sein de l'Union. Pas question donc de froisser le pouvoir turc. Un porte-parole de la Commission résume la situation ainsi : « D'un côté, la position de la Commission sur les droits de l'homme reste la même. De l'autre, nous devons parler de nos intérêts communs et des préoccupations que l'on partage dans la lutte contre le terrorisme et la question migratoire. » L'objectif est donc pour l'heure d'inciter Ankara - toujours officiellement candidat à l'adhésion - à mettre

enfin en œuvre les réformes économiques et à progresser en matière de droits de l'homme. Deux priorités rappelées à l'issue du sommet du 26 juin.

Autant dire qu'aucun plan de sauvetage d'envergure n'est en discussion à Bruxelles. Alors que des rumeurs faisaient état de réflexions sur le sujet, ni Paris ni Berlin n'y songent. Paris s'y oppose même catégoriquement. « Hors de question ! », tranche-t-on côté français. En Allemagne, où vivent quelque 5 millions de personnes d'origine turque, le ton est un peu moins catégorique mais le fond reste le même. « Nous avons intérêt à une Turquie économiquement stable et prospère. Les autres questions ne sont pas à l'ordre du jour », dit-on au ministre des Finances lorsque la question d'un soutien financier à la Turquie est posée.

À supposer que l'Union européenne dispose effectivement des outils et mécanismes permettant une aide d'envergure à un pays non-membre, une telle démarche serait de toute façon très difficile à défendre auprès des opinions publiques européennes. Sans compter que la Turquie n'aurait formulé aucune demande allant en ce sens. « De son entretien téléphonique avec Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Emmanuel Macron a retiré la conviction que le président turc souhaitait gérer seul sa relation avec Washington pour pouvoir blâmer les États-Unis », confie un diplomate français. Vu de Bruxelles comme de Berlin, la seule issue serait pour la Turquie de se résoudre à se tourner vers le FMI. « À terme, nous n'aurons pas d'autre solution », prévient un diplomate français. Un scénario humiliant dont Ankara ne veut pas entendre parler. Un scénario que Donald Trump, au contraire, aimerait voir se concrétiser. ■



# La crise avec Washington frappe les Turcs au porte-monnaie

**Alimentée par les tensions avec les États-Unis, la livre poursuit sa chute et pèse sur le niveau de vie des Turcs.**

Anne Andlauer / 31 août 2018  
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/>

**TURQUIE ELLE ÉTAIT** attendue en début de semaine dernière, juste avant la fête de l'Aïd-el-Kébir. Elle viendra peut-être cette semaine, peut-être la suivante ou un peu après. Qu'elle arrive tôt ou tard, par un tweet de Donald Trump ou un communiqué de la Maison-Blanche, l'annonce d'une nouvelle salve de sanctions américaines est perçue comme quasi certaine du côté d'Ankara. Il y a fort à parier que la riposte est déjà prête. L'affaire dure depuis plus d'un mois. Furieux que le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan refuse de faire libérer un pasteur américain jugé par un tribunal d'Izmir pour « terrorisme » et « espionnage », son homologue Donald Trump multiplie les ultimatums suivis de représailles contre son allié de l'Otan. Mi-août, Washington a doublé les droits de douane sur l'acier et l'aluminium venant de Turquie. Ankara a riposté en relevant ses taxes sur une vingtaine de produits importés des États-Unis, dont le tabac et l'alcool.

Quoi qu'il en coûte à l'économie turque - la livre est en chute libre face au dollar - Erdogan a juré de ne pas céder. À coups de menaces et d'invectives, il promet à ses citoyens de gagner ce qu'il appelle « la guerre économique ». Les sanctions de Washington pourraient même « alimenter le terrorisme et la crise des réfugiés », a prévenu - sans développer - le ministre des Finances et genre du président, Berat Albayrak, à Paris le 27 août. Mais avant de mettre en péril rien de moins que la « stabilité régionale » et le « système financier mondial », comme l'a également avancé le ministre des Finances, la crise diplomatique entre Ankara et Washington nuit au pouvoir d'achat des Turcs, qui assistent, impuissants, à la chute de leur monnaie et à la détérioration de leur économie. « Je comprends la logique politique (des contre-représailles), mais ce n'est pas en ajoutant des taxes sur les produits américains qu'on fera baisser le coût de la vie en Turquie », fait remarquer Hasan Karaman, un barbier d'Istanbul, en maniant avec art un rasoir coupe-chou.

Dans son petit salon, la querelle alimente toutes les conversations. « Bien sûr qu'il faut riposter, c'est le seul langage que ce gros dur de Trump comprenne ! » s'emporte Idris, un client, épici-



er de son état. « Tu ne comprends pas... Cette histoire va nous coûter cher, nous importons énormément des États-Unis [12 milliards de dollars en 2017, au 4e rang des importateurs, NDLR], tempère le barbier. Les États-Unis sont une superpuissance, ce n'est pas dans notre intérêt de nous obstiner de cette façon. Je suis favorable à un compromis. »

Le coiffeur turc raconte que la chute de la livre face au dollar et à l'euro (plus de 40 % depuis janvier) a déjà des répercussions sur sa vie personnelle et professionnelle. Il avait prévu un voyage en Espagne à l'automne, il y a renoncé. Il ne commandera pas non plus la tondeuse à cheveux de marque allemande dans laquelle il voulait investir. « L'an dernier, il m'aurait fallu économiser une semaine pour amortir les 200 euros de cette tondeuse. Désormais, il me faudrait presque un mois, se plaint Hasan. Chaque Turc, à son niveau, souffre des malheurs de la livre. »

Le barbier a une théorie sur la façon de relever la tête : « Face aux attaques de l'Amérique, les pays européens devraient se montrer solidaires de la Turquie, soutient-il. Il n'y a que notre union qui puisse pousser Trump à cesser ses guerres commerciales. » Erdogan partage-t-il cette théorie ? Il semble prompt ces temps-ci à montrer un meilleur visage aux partenaires européens, enchaînant les appels téléphoniques aux leaders du continent. En quinze jours, la justice turque a par ailleurs libéré deux soldats grecs et le président local d'Amnesty International, puis autorisé un journaliste allemand jugé pour « terrorisme » à quitter le pays, après des mois de blocage dans ces trois dossiers très suivis du côté de l'UE.

« Il faut vite que les choses se calment », espère Ömer Yildiz, un fleuriste dont la boutique voisine avec le salon du barbier. Ömer importe presque toutes ses fleurs des Pays-Bas. « J'ai

une livraison par semaine. Et chaque semaine, la facture augmente de quelques dizaines de livres, donc je dois augmenter mes prix, explique-t-il. Mes clients qui ont les moyens continuent d'acheter des fleurs. Pour les autres, c'est un plaisir dont ils se passent. » Il n'y a pas que les orchidées. L'indice des prix à la consommation a grimpé de 16 % en juillet, un record depuis 2003. Chez tous les commerçants, les étiquettes gonflent d'une semaine à l'autre. « Téléphone, essence, médicaments, produits d'entretien... Tout ce qui arrive de l'étranger est en train de devenir hors de prix. Même les couches pour bébé sont importées et de plus en plus chères. Nous avons dû restreindre nos dépenses », soupire Mehmet Aydin.

Ce père de famille, qui travaille dans un magasin de téléphonie mobile, dit en vouloir au gouvernement et à tous ses prédécesseurs d'avoir « rendu la Turquie dépendante de l'étranger. Cela fait longtemps que nous aurions dû développer notre industrie ». Les appels au boycott de produits « made in USA », qui flattent un sentiment anti-américain tenace dans la société turque, n'impressionnent pas non plus Mehmet. « Qu'est-ce que ça va changer ? demande-t-il. Ce qu'on n'importe plus des États-Unis, on l'importera de Corée, de Chine, de Russie... »

Chez le barbier Hasan, la discussion s'anime. Ali, son employé, est inquiet à l'idée que le prix de ses cigarettes américaines flambe pour de bon. Mais il prend la nouvelle avec philosophie. « Cette année, mon paquet est déjà passé de 11 à 13 livres [un peu moins de deux euros]. Ça pourrait être l'occasion d'arrêter de fumer », envisage ce Turc payé au salaire minimum (1 600 livres). Cette idée ne déplairait pas au chef de l'État : Erdogan pratique depuis des années une politique de hausse des taxes pour détourner ses citoyens du tabac et de l'alcool. ■

# Kurds tie northern Syria stability to continued US military presence

SDF says US troops staying in Syria will help push for a political solution to the civil war

Sirwan Kajjo August 31, 2018  
<https://thedefensepost.com>

**QAMISHLI, Syria – The Kurdish majority area in northeastern Syria is living in an anxious confusion nowadays.**

The population doesn't know exactly what awaits them as Syria's seven-year civil war appears to be winding down, with the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad retaking territory from rebel groups, and Islamic State's so-called caliphate near total collapse.

The only hope people seemingly have at this point is the presence of American troops in the region. Since the international campaign against ISIS in Syria started in late 2014, the U.S. has deployed thousands of troops to advise the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in its fight against the militants.

On August 28, Defense Secretary James Mattis said about 2,000 U.S. and additional Coalition forces remain in Syria, working to enable the SDF in clearing remaining ISIS fighters from the Middle Euphrates River Valley "and then stabilizing those areas that have been cleared of ISIS."

Kurds have been instrumental in removing ISIS from most areas it once held, and Kurdish-led forces now control more than a quarter of Syria's territory, making them the second-largest entity in the war-ravaged country after the Syrian regime.

For the first time in decades the once-marginalized Syrian Kurds have been in charge of their region and their increasing power has allowed them to carve out a semi-autonomous region in Syria.

## IMPORTANCE OF US TROOPS STAYING IN SYRIA

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) – whose armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG) is the dominant group in the SDF – began to administer the Kurdish region in July 2012 after Syrian regime troops withdrew to focus on fighting anti-government rebels elsewhere in the country.

In January 2014, the PYD and affiliated parties declared a self-rule system in the area of northern Syria Kurds call Rojava ('Western Kurdistan' in Kurdish). The PYD-led administration which includes Arab and Christian Syrian parties announced the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria in March 2016. The DFNS includes areas captured from ISIS that are not part of Rojava.

But despite territory gained as the SDF advanced on ISIS in Raqqa and other majority-Arab areas, Syrian Kurds still feel that their fate is largely dependent on whether the U.S. stays in Syria for the long term.

"The importance of having U.S. troops stay in Syria is that it will help push for a political solution in the country," said SDF spokesperson Kino Gabriel.



A U.S. Soldier stands guard during a security patrol outside Manbij, Syria, June 24, 2018. The patrols are done in coordination with Turkish military forces along the demarcation line outside Manbij to achieve safety and stability in the region. Image: US Army/Staff Sgt. Timothy R. Koster



The Statue of the Free Woman at the entrance of Amude, 20 miles west of Qamishli, Syria. August 1, 2018. Image: Ivan Hasib/The Defense Post.

"This is exactly what we have been demanding since the beginning of the Syrian conflict."

While the Trump administration has repeatedly said that the U.S. mission in Syria would be over once ISIS has been eliminated, U.S. officials have recently changed their tone with regard to the American presence.

## US RELATIONS WITH SYRIA 'THROUGH AN ISRAELI PRISM'

In late August, National Security Adviser John Bolton said Iran-backed forces must leave Syria as a prerequisite for any peace deal in the country. This was seen by many observers as a hint that U.S. forces would possibly stay longer.

"The Defense Department and State Department have long seen staying in Syria for the 'Long Haul' as necessary for leverage against Assad, helping the Kurds and rolling back Iran," said Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

"President Trump has been the squeaky wheel. He surprised everyone by saying that he wanted to bring the troops home soon. This caused his national security community to do damage control and try to convince him to prolong the operation," Landis told The Defense Post.

Since the eruption of Syria's civil war in 2011, Iran – a staunch ally of Syrian regime – has become increasingly involved in the war-torn country where Iranian forces have built major military bases – something that has been concerning Israel, Syria's neighbor to the southwest.

"The U.S. has traditionally seen its relations with Syria through an Israeli prism. Not uniquely Israel, but to a large extent," Landis said. "The United States hopes to weaken the Assad regime so long as it is inimical to Israel. It can do this by denying it oil, water and agriculture, much of which lies in the north of the country."

In a recent trip to northern Syria, veteran U.S. diplomat William Roebuck reiterated his country's commitment to defeat ISIS and curb Iran's increasing influence in Syria.

"We are prepared to stay here, as the president has made clear, to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. We remain focused on ensuring the withdrawal of Iranian forces and their proxies as well," Roebuck said at a press conference in the town of Shaddadi, in southern Hasaka. Shaddadi was freed from ISIS in February 2016.

The U.S. maintains around a dozen military bases of varying size in SDF-held northern and eastern Syria, some with runways capable of taking large transport aircraft.

Gabriel of the SDF told The Defense Post that "the U.S.-led Coalition's commitment to eliminate ISIS militarily, but also socially and culturally is in line with our vision of a new Syria."

The role of U.S. military presence in a post-ISIS northern Syria was

→ evident in the town of Manbij – an ISIS stronghold that was freed by the SDF in August 2016 – where the U.S.-backed Manbij Military Council (MMC) and Turkey-backed rebels came head to head. But a roadmap agreement for Manbij between the U.S. and Turkey in June helped avoid a conflict that could have a major impact on the stability of northern Syria.

As part of the agreement, U.S. and Turkish forces have been conducting coordinated patrols in the vicinity of Manbij while the city is still under the control of the MMC.

#### 'ETHNIC SENSITIVITIES' BETWEEN KURDS AND ARABS

Other Kurdish groups that are opposed to the PYD have expressed concerns about a sudden American departure from their region, albeit for different reasons.

"The U.S. relied on Kurdish forces to push out ISIS from most areas in eastern Syria, including non-Kurdish areas such as Raqqa and Deir Ezzor," said Ibrahim Biro, a senior official with the Kurdish National Council in Syria (ENKS), which has the backing of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq.

"This has created a lot of ethnic sensitivities in between Kurds and Arabs. So if the Americans decide to leave, the Kurds will have enemies to face. But if they stay for a longer time, it would be in the best interest of every side that the U.S. push for a more pluralistic and democratic system of governance in north-east Syria, including areas in the eastern Euphrates," Biro told The Defense Post.

Local observers believe that while the ISIS's physical threat to Syria is near gone, it is too early to talk about a complete elimination of the group and its ideology.

"One the one hand, the U.S. administration has come to believe that the idea of eliminating ISIS completely is far from achieving now, because it rightfully fears that ISIS could reemerge in a different form," Sadredeen Kinno, a Kurdish researcher who closely follows Islamist groups, told The Defense Post.

"On the other hand, it has become clear that SDF alone can't confront ISIS. It always needs a powerful backer as such the U.S. and thus the U.S. feels that it needs to stay in Syria longer," he added.

Local residents in the Kurdish heartland believe that having Americans on the ground could be a stabilizing factor for any future settlement in Syria.

"The U.S. presence gives a sense of security to us here," said Nushin Ahmed,



A poster of Abdullah Ocalan, the founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Qamishli, Syria, July 22, 2018. Image: Ivan Hasib/The Defense Post

a political activist in Qamishli. "It is a deterrence against terror, it also gives a leverage to the Kurds when it comes to negotiations with Assad."

In mid-July, a senior DFNS delegation visited Damascus for talks with the Assad regime over the future of Rojava, including security and military matters. The talks have not had any results yet, but Kurdish leaders believe they could pave the way for broader negotiations to end the country's deadly conflict.

Following that visit, Ilham Ahmed, head of the executive commission of the Syrian Democratic Council, the political wing of SDF, told RT Arabic "We strongly believe that any resolution for Syria's crisis should be through intra-Syrian dialogue."

Residents, however, don't want the situation to go back to how it was prior to 2012 and a U.S. presence for them is perhaps one guarantee to preserve the status quo.

"Maybe now that the U.S. is staying for a longer time, we won't have to worry about a possible return of the Assad regime to our region," said a 59-year shopkeeper in Qamishli's main market. "After all these gains, we don't want a murderer to rule us again." ●



August 29, 2018

## US Secretary of State discusses political situation in Iraq with Masoud Barzani

Baxtiyar Goran | / August 29-2018  
<http://www.kurdistan24.net>

**ERBIL (Kurdistan 24);** – The United States Secretary of State on Wednesday spoke with Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) President Masoud Barzani about the political developments in Iraq, a readout from the KDP leader's office read.

According to the readout, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo contacted KDP President Barzani to discuss the political situation and recent developments in Iraq.

During the phone call, Pompeo praised Barzani's "important" role in the Iraqi political process after the May 12 parliamentary elections, the statement said.

Barzani and Pompeo exchanged views

about the recent political developments and the dialogue between parties regarding the formation of the new Iraqi government as well as the mechanism required to form the new government as soon as possible, it added.

The KDP President and US Secretary of State also reiterated the need for continued communication and consultation between the two sides.

On Thursday, the US Department of State published its readout of the call, stating Barzani and Pompeo "stressed that formation of a new Iraqi government...should proceed according to Iraq's constitutional timeline and reflect the will of Iraqi voters."

Pompeo emphasized Washington's desire "to see a strong government that includes all communities and serves all of the Iraqi people,"



United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) and President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Masoud Barzani. (Photo: Archive)

the readout said.

The KDP won the largest share of votes among the Kurdish parties in Iraq's May elections, according to the results issued by Iraq's High Electoral Commission (IHEC), receiving 25 seats in the new parliament.

Unlike Pompeo's Aug. 15 phone call with Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani which was paired with a call to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, Wednesday's conversation was with the KDP President alone without a parallel call with an Iraqi political figure. ♦

# How to save U.S.-Turkey relationship

Nick Danforth

The current crisis between Ankara and Washington over the fate of the imprisoned American pastor Andrew Brunson is the culmination of a long-simmering dispute over the fundamental nature of the relationship between the United States and Turkey. Both sides want the relationship to continue but have irreconcilable expectations about whose terms it should continue on.

Washington, after years of frustration, is seeking to enforce some ground rules for the alliance by showing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he will pay a price for arresting innocent Americans, buying Russian weapons and ignoring the United States' sanctions against Iran.

Ankara is seeking to challenge the "asymmetric" balance of power within the alliance, insisting that Washington can no longer dictate Turkey's economic relations with its neighbors, ignore its strategic concerns over Kurdish fighters in Syria or expose the Turkish government's corruption and human rights abuses.

Both the United States and Turkey assume they are indispensable to the other and ultimately expect to prevail. What happens next will be a test of how much the world — and each country's place in it — has really changed in recent years.

From its origins at the beginning of the Cold War, the relationship between the United States, a global superpower,

and Turkey, a developing country seeking support against the Soviet Union, was never one of equals. Yet

Turkey's alliance with Washington was never as unequal as many in Ankara now think it was. American efforts to prevent or punish Turkey's intervention in Cyprus, for example, generated considerable anger. But Turkey still intervened and the alliance endured.

Today, with the Soviet Union gone and anti-Americanism on the rise in Turkey, similar strategic differences have become more difficult to manage. Not surprisingly, both sides see themselves as the aggrieved ally. After the

**The Trump administration must not choose drastic steps to put further pressure on Turkey or strong-arm allies.**

White House imposed tariffs on Turkey to secure Mr. Brunson's release, the Turkish foreign minister declared that these "threats and provocation" would only "hurt the NATO alliance." The White House subsequently stated that "a real NATO ally wouldn't have arrested Brunson in the first place."

The outcome of this impasse will have little to do with who has the better case. By refusing to back down and release Mr. Brunson, Mr. Erdogan proved willing to court economic catastrophe to assert his vision of Turkish independence.

This willingness reflects not only nationalist bravado but also an as-

sumption about the rapid advent of a more multipolar world. Mr. Erdogan is betting on finding a place in a new, post-American global order. He seems to be gambling that Washington has proved more effective in alienating its allies than he has and that the Ameri-

can-led global order collapses before the Turkish economy does.

After calling for increased cooperation among countries targeted by President Trump's tariffs and renewed Iran sanctions, Ankara has been quick to trumpet the positive responses from Western and non-Western capitals alike.

Rhetorically, at least, European leaders have been sympathetic. President Emmanuel Macron of France recently promised to boost trade ties with Turkey, and Germany's foreign minister declared that Europe must formulate a response to President Trump's economic measures, perhaps by developing its own alternative to the Swift system.

Not surprisingly, Russia quickly took Ankara's side, restating its desire to conduct future transactions in national currencies. More concretely, Ankara secured a \$3.6 billion loan package from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, as well as a pledge from the government of Qatar to invest \$15 billion in Turkey over the coming years.

But there are limits to these alternative sources of support, not to mention new conditions and consequences that come with them. If, for example, the scale of Turkey's crisis becomes too great to patch up with money from China and Qatar, Washington could prevent international financial institutions from stepping in to help. Indeed, a bill before the Senate would make this mandatory.

European leaders, who appear more concerned about the spillover from a destabilizing Turkish crisis, could offer a bailout instead. But they have issues of their own with Mr. Erdogan, as do many of their voters.

To manage the fallout from jailing Mr. Brunson, Mr. Erdogan has already been forced to release, among others, a jailed German journalist and two Greek soldiers.

Courting Russia entails even greater sacrifices. With Moscow's support, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria is preparing to retake the last pieces of Syrian territory held by Turkish-backed rebels, sending a wave of refugees and foreign fighters toward Turkey. Ankara alone has little leverage with which to prevent or mitigate this



Protesters held placards reading "U.S.A. get out of Middle East" in front of the United States embassy in Ankara, Turkey, earlier this month.

dangerous development.

Even if Mr. Brunson is eventually released, the United States and Turkey will continue to confront each other over the terms of their relationship, Ankara will almost certainly discover the high cost of pursuing a more independent or antagonistic policy toward Washington. And Washington will discover the high cost that Ankara is

willing to bear.

The risk is that when this happens, the White House will resort to drastic and destabilizing steps to put further pressure on Turkey, then seek to strong-arm allies into playing along. In doing so, Washington will further alienate the partners it needs to apply effective pressure over the long term. A consistent and measured approach

that keeps the world on Washington's side is more likely to sustain the global conditions in which Ankara eventually recognizes the benefits of a more cooperative relationship with the United States.

**NICK DANFORTH** is a senior policy analyst for Bipartisan Policy Center's national security program.



28 August 2018

# Iraqi Kurds must unite for their rights

## Internal divide among Kurdish parties will hamper their position in negotiations with Baghdad

Mohammad S. Mustafa - 28 August 2018  
[www.middleeasteye.net](http://www.middleeasteye.net)

On 12 May, for the first time, Iraq's parliamentary election was held using an electronic system, but the results were disputed by many political groups, including all but two Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

Those disputing the results cited a systematic rigging of the votes by the parties that control the Independent High Electoral Commission by appointing commissioners.

Non-ruling Kurdish political parties, along with many observers, did not expect the KDP and PUK to perform well in the elections, especially in light of the aftermath of the 2017 independence referendum. Political analyst Ibrahim al-Marashi predicted that the KDP would suffer for its leader's failed push for independence for Iraq's Kurds, while the PUK would be punished for "its tacit role in allowing the oil-rich city of Kirkuk to revert back to Iraqi government control".

### CONTESTED RECOUNT

Surprisingly, in Kirkuk itself, the PUK came in first place. Combined with the new use of electronic voting, this bolstered the opposition narrative of electoral fraud. Iraq's parliament consequently passed a law mandating a nationwide manual recount and calling for an overhaul of the electoral commission's leadership.

The outcome of the recount changed little and it did not convince Kurdish opposition parties, including the Change Movement, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Islamic Group and the Coalition for Democracy and Justice. The four parties opted to file a lawsuit over alleged vote-rigging.

According to the official results, the KDP and

PUK won a combined total of 43 seats, compared with 15 for Kurdish opposition parties. A coalition among all Kurdish parties would make them the largest parliamentary bloc and give them a much stronger position in negotiations to form the cabinet, as well as in future talks with Iraq's federal government over disputes involving the Kurdish region.

### CALLS FOR REFORM

The internal Kurdish rift is rooted in opposition calls for reform, which have led to disunity between the ruling parties (KDP and PUK) and the opposition over how to deal with Baghdad.

In last year's referendum, the Change Movement and the Islamic Group did not sup-

**As the president of the main Kurdish party, [Barzani] can immediately step in and guarantee the demands of the opposition parties through practical measures. The birth of a Kurdish bloc would follow**

port KDP leader Massoud Barzani, amid ongoing disagreements over issues such as the region's presidency act and the 2015 ousting of the parliamentary speaker by the KDP.

Last week, Barzani called upon all Kurdish political parties to unite to create a joint front in Baghdad. But is it feasible for the four opposition parties to turn a blind eye to their many disagreements?

For Kurdish parties to circumvent this ongoing rift, which weakens their broader battle for their rights within Iraq, they need to move forward, especially in the next phase of negotia-



Iraqi Kurds attend a KDP rally in Erbil on 29 April 2017 (AFP)

tions between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad over disputed territory, along with issues concerning the Peshmerga and the regional budget.

### BARZANI'S ROLE

The primary responsibility for moving the region forward lies with Barzani. As the president of the main Kurdish party, he can immediately step in and guarantee the demands of the opposition parties through practical measures. The birth of a Kurdish bloc would follow.

Otherwise, a fragmented Kurdish representation in Baghdad will not be able to fight for the constitutional rights of the country's Kurds. And as the clock ticks closer towards Kurdish regional elections in September, the timing could not be more critical.

Although further delaying additional intra-Kurdish talks will complicate the situation more, as demonstrated when the four opposition parties met in Sulaymaniyah on 27 August and formed a new Kurdish coalition, conversely there are already different Iraqi coalitions in negotiation with the KDP and PUK bloc.

Therefore, two different Kurdish negotiators would not project a strong united voice for the Kurdistan region in its struggle for Kurdish rights in Iraq. Yet informal calls for internal talks from both Kurdish sides may lead to a last-minute Kurdish agreement, which would obviously place them in a better position in their negotiations with Baghdad. ■

- Mohammad Salih Mustafa holds a PhD in ethnopolitical studies from the University of Exeter; his thesis was titled *Religious Nationalism in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*.

# LE NOUVEAU MOYEN-ORIENT

L'incapacité des "printemps arabes" à instaurer la démocratie a fait revenir au pouvoir des régimes ultrarépressifs obsédés par la crainte de nouvelles révoltes, inquiets de la menace iranienne et préoccupés par un retrait américain de la région. Des États fragilisés, des peuples appauvris et des conflits inextinguibles : la nouvelle équation du Moyen-Orient s'apparente à un chaos irréversible.

## DU MAGHREB AU YÉMEN : LE GRAND DÉSORDRE

Dans la revue de géopolitique américaine de référence, Marc Lynch, spécialiste du Moyen-Orient, dresse l'état des lieux d'une zone en plein bouleversement.

—Foreign Affairs New York

**E**n 2011, dans l'ensemble du monde arabe, des millions de citoyens descendent dans la rue. De Tunis jusqu'au Caire, les autocraties chancellent, ébranlées par des soulèvements populaires qui réclament des réformes démocratiques. Pendant un moment, on a pu croire que l'ordre ancien qui prévalait au Moyen-Orient avait vécu et qu'il allait être remplacé par un autre, nouveau et plus juste.

Mais les choses dégénèrent rapidement. Certains États s'effondrent et sombrent dans la guerre civile. D'autres trouvent des moyens de brouiller les cartes pour mieux reprendre le contrôle de leur société. Sept ans plus tard, il semble qu'il ait été gravement prématuré d'espérer en un changement positif de la politique au Moyen-Orient.

En revanche, ces bouleversements ont bel et bien abouti à un nouvel ordre arabe – qui n'est simplement pas celui que les gens attendaient. Si les soulèvements arabes n'ont pas eu pour conséquence le triomphe de nouvelles démocraties, ils ont refaçonné les relations régionales. Les grandes puissances [régionales]

traditionnelles – l'Égypte, l'Irak et la Syrie – sont aujourd'hui des États tout juste fonctionnels. Les pays du Golfe, riches et répressifs – le Qatar, l'Arabie Saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis (EAU) –, prospèrent. La prolifération des États affaiblis ou en déshérence a créé un environnement propice à la compétition et à l'intervention, favorable à de nouveaux acteurs et de nouvelles capacités.

La dynamique du Moyen-Orient n'est plus déterminée par des alliances officielles et des conflits conventionnels entre grands États. Au lieu de cela, le pouvoir [des États] se manifeste par des guerres par procuration. Dans presque tous les États arabes aujourd'hui, la politique étrangère est régie par le redoutable mélange de menaces supposées et d'occasions possibles. La peur d'une reprise des insurrections →

**IL EST DIFFICILE DE PRENDRE LA MESURE DU DÉSÉSPER QUI RÉGNE AUJOURD'HUI AU MOYEN-ORIENT.**

← nationales, de la puissance iranienne et du retrait américain se mêle au désir de tirer parti des États fragilisés et du désarroi de la communauté internationale – une dynamique qui entraîne les acteurs régionaux dans des conflits par procuration destructeurs tout en semant le chaos. Il est illusoire d'imaginer que la région va parvenir à un équilibre fonctionnel : le nouvel ordre est, fondamentalement, une affaire de désordre.

Il est difficile de prendre la mesure du désespoir qui règne aujourd'hui au Moyen-Orient. La guerre civile syrienne s'est transformée en l'une des pires catastrophes de l'histoire, elle a fait plus de 500 000 morts et déplacé plus de 10 millions de personnes. L'Irak a réalisé des progrès considérables dans la lutte contre Daech [EI], mais le prix à payer est terrible pour les habitants des zones libérées. La guerre civile au Yémen est à l'origine de la pire épidémie de choléra de l'histoire de l'humanité, et 8,4 millions de gens sont au bord de la famine. La défaillance de l'État en Libye est désastreuse.

Même les États qui ont échappé à l'effondrement connaissent des difficultés. L'Égypte subit encore les conséquences de son putsch de 2013 [contre le président islamiste élu Morsi] : la répression, étouffante, empêche tout développement politique, freine le tourisme, favorise le climat insurrectionnel et attise le ressentiment de la population. À Bahreïn, le calme n'est pas revenu après l'écrasement sanglant des manifestations chiites, et le bâillonnement de l'opposition politique reste apparemment la seule solution envisagée. Des États relativement mieux lotis, comme la Jordanie, le Maroc et la

## LA MONDIALISATION A CONFRONTÉ L'ORDRE MOYEN-ORIENTAL TRADITIONNEL À DES DÉFIS FONDAMENTAUX.

← Tunisie, sont aux prises avec d'énormes problèmes politiques, une jeunesse en colère et des voisins instables. Dans presque chaque pays, les difficultés économiques et politiques qui ont causé les soulèvements populaires en 2011 sont plus aiguës aujourd'hui qu'il y a sept ans.

Par ailleurs, l'ensemble de la région n'est plus qu'une vaste poudrière. Le retrait de Washington de l'accord sur le nucléaire avec l'Iran fait de nouveau craindre l'éventualité d'une frappe militaire israélienne ou américaine [contre l'Iran] qui pourrait déclencher une guerre. Le boycott du Qatar, orchestré par l'Arabie Saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis, a divisé le Conseil de coopération du Golfe, jadis la plus efficace des organisations arabes internationales.

**Guerre par procuration.** En Syrie, les frappes aériennes israéliennes, de plus en plus fréquentes, les opérations transfrontalières turques et la robuste présence iranienne confèrent une nouvelle dimension à la guerre civile au moment précis où l'opposition armée au régime d'Assad est en déclin. Au Yémen, le conflit est dans une impasse, et il semble impossible de l'empêcher de déborder de ses frontières, les rebelles tirant des missiles qui visent l'Arabie Saoudite. Pendant ce temps, à cause des violences récurrentes à Gaza et alors que la solution à deux États [israélien et palestinien] paraît définitivement compromise, les Territoires palestiniens risquent une fois de plus d'être au centre des préoccupations internationales.

S'il n'y a rien de nouveau sur l'échiquier géopolitique au Moyen-Orient, la structure et la dynamique actuelles dans la région sont bien différentes de ce qu'elles étaient auparavant. Du temps du président Gamal Abdel Nasser [1956-1970], l'Égypte s'est retrouvée aux prises avec les régimes soutenus par l'Occident et les forces conservatrices saoudiennes dans des conflits allant d'une intervention militaire directe au Yémen à des ingérences dans la politique intérieure en Jordanie, au Liban et en Syrie. Et les Tunisie, sont aux prises avec d'énormes problèmes politiques, une jeunesse en colère et des voisins instables. Dans presque chaque pays, les difficultés économiques et politiques qui ont causé les soulèvements populaires en 2011 sont plus aiguës aujourd'hui qu'il y a sept ans.

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← Téhéran, manifestation anti-américaine, mai 2018. Photo Atta Kenare/AFP

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## LA GUERRE CIVILE AU YÉMEN EST À L'ORIGINE DE LA PIRE ÉPIDÉMIE DE CHOLÉRA DE L'HISTOIRE DE L'HUMANITÉ.

dirigeants de la région coopéraient ou se disputaient au nom du panarabisme – la foi en l'existence d'une seule nation arabe –, de l'anti-colonialisme et de l'hostilité envers Israël.

Avec la mort de Nasser et l'accroissement aussi subit que considérable de la manne pétrolière, les États [du Moyen-Orient] ont privilégié leur propre survie au détriment des causes idéologiques grandioses. Depuis cette période, ils se sont dotés de puissants appareils de sécurité qui ont jugulé toute tentative d'insurrection locale. De plus en plus stables, les pays arabes sont devenus des cibles moins tentantes pour des interventions extérieures. (Le Liban a été la malheureuse exception, et sa guerre civile, qui a duré de 1975 à 1990, a servi d'arène principale aux conflits par procuration.) Même la révolution iranienne de 1979, à l'origine d'une nouvelle forme de mobilisation populaire transfrontalière chez les islamistes, inspirés par le renversement d'un despote soutenu par les États-Unis, n'a pas suffi à relancer cette dynamique de la guerre par procuration. Au lieu de cela, les régimes arabes ont durci la répression contre →

### Portrait



### SOLEIMANI, L'HOMME DE TERRAIN

À 61 ans, le général Qassem Soleimani est le militaire iranien responsable des épineux dossiers du Moyen-Orient. Il dirige la Force Al-Qods (Jérusalem), chargée d'asseoir l'influence de Téhéran dans les pays où les chiites et leurs alliés sont en position de force : Irak, Syrie, Liban, sans oublier le Yémen, où les houthistes continuent à résister à l'invasion saoudienne. Ses victoires en Syrie et en Irak en ont fait un héros. Mais au Moyen-Orient les bénéfiques politiques ne suivent pas toujours le succès des armes. L'Irak ne semble pas prêt à devenir un État satellite de l'Iran. En Syrie, Assad pourrait lâcher son allié si la Russie et Israël garantissent son régime. Et les déboires économiques, aggravés par les sanctions américaines, vont sérieusement limiter l'aide financière qu'apporte Téhéran au Hezbollah libanais, comme au Hamas palestinien. Soleimani a beau menacer les Américains et leurs alliés de riposte à toute attaque contre son pays, ses diatribes ne font plus peur. "C'est un mélange de James Bond, Erwin Rommel et Lady Gaga", résumait non sans ironie le magazine Time.

← leurs opposants islamistes sur leurs territoires.

Mais contrairement à ce qui est communément admis, cette solidité étatique dans le monde arabe n'a pas attendu l'éruption de 2011 pour voler en éclats. Dans les années 1990, la mondialisation a peu à peu confronté l'ordre moyen-oriental traditionnel à des défis fondamentaux. La nouvelle orthodoxie économique internationale a obligé les États à réduire les prestations sociales et les emplois dans le secteur public.

Dans les grands pays arabes, la misère a progressé tandis que les infrastructures tombaient en ruine. Même les pays producteurs de pétrole se sont retrouvés à la merci de forces économiques d'envergure planétaire, touchés eux aussi par la crise financière de 2008 et les fluctuations du prix du brut. Dans le même temps, la télévision par satellite, les smartphones, les réseaux sociaux et d'autres nouvelles technologies ont contribué à saper des régimes qui dépendent du contrôle de l'information et de l'opinion.

Et à partir de 2001, la guerre contre le terrorisme, les démons réveillés par l'occupation américaine de l'Irak et l'effondrement du processus de paix israélo-palestinien ont ébranlé les fondations de la coopération régionale. Aujourd'hui, l'ordre arabe n'a plus d'autre raison d'être que de contenir l'Iran et réprimer le changement démocratique.

**Conflits civils.** Les soulèvements arabes de 2011 ne sont pas venus de nulle part. Ils ont représenté l'aboutissement de changements structurels depuis longtemps en gestation. La colère suscitée dans la population par la stagnation économique et le manque de liberté montait depuis au moins dix ans. L'espace politique de la région s'était retrouvé unifié grâce à la télévision par satellite, Internet et d'autres réseaux transnationaux qui ont permis à la contestation de se répandre rapidement de la Tunisie à l'Égypte, puis dans l'ensemble de la région. Ces révoltes simultanées ont été révélatrices quant à la force des États arabes : certains se sont adaptés aisément, d'autres en ont réchappé de justesse, et le reste s'est écroulé.

L'impact des soulèvements sur la politique intérieure est évident. En revanche, les →

← observateurs ont prêté moins d'attention au déséquilibre des pouvoirs qu'ils ont provoqué dans la région. Des puissances traditionnelles comme l'Égypte et la Syrie se sont retrouvées enlisées dans des conflits civils qui les empêchent d'agir à l'extérieur. Les riches pétromonarchies du Golfe, elles, étaient presque idéalement adaptées aux nouvelles réalités structurelles du Moyen-Orient. Grâce à leur argent, leurs empires financiers et la position clé qu'elles occupent dans de vigoureux réseaux transnationaux comme les Frères musulmans (le Qatar) ou les marchés (les EAU), elles ont pu faire la démonstration de leur influence diplomatique et culturelle.

Malgré leur petite taille, ces pays disposent de forces armées extrêmement bien équipées et entraînées, épaulées par des mercenaires généreusement financés. Ce qui leur a permis de faire montre de leur puissance sur des théâtres d'opérations comme la Libye et le Yémen d'une façon qui n'a jamais été celle des grands États arabes. Mais surtout, ces régimes exercent un contrôle presque total sur leurs populations, si bien qu'il leur est plus aisé de résister aux ingérences extérieures que des pays plus importants, moins riches et moins répressifs.

Dans ce nouvel ordre régional, la puissance en elle-même se manifeste différemment. Le soulèvement a suscité de nouvelles peurs quant à la survie des régimes, même parmi les plus prospères. Dans le même temps, les États en déshérence et les guerres civiles offrent à certains acteurs régionaux de nouvelles possibilités d'accroître leur influence.

La Tunisie et l'Égypte ont montré quels risques couraient les dirigeants [Ben Ali et Moubarak] trop sûrs de pouvoir maîtriser toute contestation

↓ À Saada, les Yéménites creusent des tombes pour les enfants victimes des bombardements aériens menés par la coalition dirigée par l'Arabie Saoudite, août 2018.

Photo Stringer/AFP

## Portrait



### ASSAD, LE SURVIVANT

Arrivé au pouvoir en l'an 2000 dans cette république syrienne devenue héréditaire, Bachar El-Assad, un jeune ophtalmologue formé à Londres, avait soulevé l'espoir d'une libéralisation du régime. Mais le "printemps de Damas" n'a pas duré une saison. Dans un pays gouverné presque depuis son indépendance par la terreur, Bachar ne pouvait que suivre le

chemin tracé par ses prédécesseurs. En 2011, le soulèvement populaire en Syrie a failli faire tomber son régime, à l'instar de l'Égypte et de la Tunisie. Mais, jouant sur toutes les contradictions religieuses et ethniques, et fortement soutenu par Moscou et Téhéran, tout comme par l'extrême droite et la gauche anti-impérialiste occidentales, il a réussi à se présenter au monde comme une garantie contre l'islamisme et à se maintenir aux commandes d'un pays qu'il a largement détruit.

de leur pouvoir. Quand le "printemps arabe" a atteint la Libye, trois États du Golfe – le Qatar, l'Arabie Saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis –, ainsi que la Turquie, ont profité de l'occasion pour intervenir contre le dirigeant libyen Muammar Kadhafi, qu'ils détestaient. Les pays du Golfe ont utilisé leurs empires médiatiques [médias panarabes et chaînes satellitaires] pour attirer

## LES IRANIENS SONT PASSÉS MAÎTRES DANS L'ART D'ÉPAULER LES MILICES LOCALES EN SYRIE.

l'attention sur les atrocités en cours en Libye (tout en fermant les yeux sur des violences qui avaient lieu au même moment à Bahreïn). Et ils ont fait voter une résolution de la Ligue arabe afin de pousser les États-Unis et les Nations unies à soutenir le principe d'une intervention humanitaire. Ils ont également livré d'énormes quantités d'armes et d'argent aux milices locales, qu'ils appuyaient contre le régime.

**Armer les insurgés.** Ces interventions indirectes ont eu des effets négatifs et durables. Le Qatar et les EAU ont tous deux soutenu l'opposition à Kadhafi, mais pas les mêmes forces locales. Après la chute du régime, ces milices ont conservé et leurs armes et leurs mécènes extérieurs, gênant du même coup la consolidation d'un État libyen fonctionnel et accélérant la plongée consécutive du pays dans la guerre civile. Encore aujourd'hui, le soutien militaire apporté par l'Égypte et les Émirats à l'opération Dignité du maréchal Khalifa Haftar, dont les troupes contrôlent une grande partie de l'est de la Libye, ne fait qu'aggraver les combats. →





← Les retombées dévastatrices de l'implication étrangère n'ont pas été immédiatement perceptibles. Dans l'ivresse de la révolution de 2011, les États du Golfe et la Turquie (comme les États-Unis) ont considéré leur intervention en Libye comme une réussite : comprenant l'intérêt qu'il y avait à appuyer les forces locales, ils se sont aperçus qu'ils pouvaient s'assurer du soutien de l'Amérique, de l'Europe et des Nations unies pour agir contre leurs rivaux. Conscients de ces nouvelles possibilités, ils ont vu dans l'insurrection populaire contre le président syrien Bachar El-Assad l'occasion d'arracher la Syrie à l'influence iranienne et de réajuster l'équilibre régional du pouvoir en leur faveur.

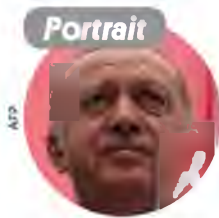
Au début de 2012, quand il s'est avéré qu'ils ne parvenaient pas à reproduire leur succès libyen en obtenant l'approbation du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies en faveur d'une intervention contre Assad [à cause du veto russe], les États du Golfe et la Turquie ont alors décidé d'armer les insurgés. Même si cela ne suffisait pas à faire tomber Assad, c'était un moyen de fragiliser un allié de l'Iran et de porter des coups à l'adversaire directement sur son terrain.

**Souffrances humaines.** Ce soutien extérieur aux rebelles syriens a eu des résultats catastrophiques. Si le régime d'Assad est principalement responsable des atrocités et de la brutalité endémiques du conflit, les appuis étrangers des insurgés ont contribué à intensifier les affrontements en dépit des coûts manifestes. Du fait du bouleversement politique dans la région, le plan était voué à l'échec. Chaque fois que les rebelles progressaient, des acteurs extérieurs concurrents – l'Iran, le Hezbollah et la Russie – intervenaient aux côtés d'Assad. Chaque progression entraînait inévitablement une contre-offensive, qui ne faisait qu'accroître encore les souffrances humaines.

Dans le domaine de la guerre par procuration, certains intervenants se sont révélés plus doués que d'autres. Les forces qui soutiennent Assad se sont concentrées exclusivement sur la défense du régime. Les Iraniens, en particulier, sont passés maîtres dans l'art d'épauler les milices locales [notamment le Hezbollah libanais]. Le Qatar, l'Arabie Saoudite et la Turquie, eux, se considéraient autant comme des rivaux que comme des alliés, et leurs efforts, concurrentiels et non coordonnés, ont systématiquement échoué.

Bien que la Maison-Blanche ait tenté d'obliger les factions syriennes appuyées par les Qataris, les Saoudiens et les Turcs à coopérer, elle n'a pu surmonter les dissensions entre leurs bailleurs de fonds, ni imposer une stratégie cohérente. Ces problèmes ont été accentués par la privatisation de l'afflux d'armes et d'argent destinés aux groupes insurgés pendant la période décisive de la fin de l'année 2012 et du début de 2013, époque où les réseaux salafistes du Golfe ont fourni des fonds importants aux rebelles.

Ce qui a encore aggravé les tensions et fait glisser le centre de gravité de l'insurrection vers le djihadisme. Alors que le conflit se poursuivait, les États du Golfe et la Turquie se sont mis à soutenir des coalitions islamistes de plus en plus radicales, en quête de combattants efficaces. C'est dans cet environnement qu'est né Daech, non en tant qu'agent d'un quelconque



### LES ÉCHECS D'ERDOGAN

Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan est parvenu à assurer sa réélection au mois de juin 2018, mais sa politique étrangère, notamment au Moyen-Orient, est en déroute. Erdogan n'a pas réussi à devenir le champion du monde sunnite. La Turquie est touchée par une crise économique grandissante qui limite

sa marge de manœuvre et la fait dépendre encore un peu plus de ses alliés de circonstance, la Russie et le Qatar. La politique syrienne d'Erdogan est un échec, le pays s'est aliéné les Kurdes de Syrie par sa stratégie de lutte tous azimuts contre le PKK et a du mal à stabiliser les 4000 km<sup>2</sup> de territoire syrien sous son contrôle. Face à un Bachar El-Assad plus que jamais accroché au pouvoir, Erdogan, sous la pression de Moscou, ne pourra que faire quelques concessions au régime, jadis honni, de Damas.

État, mais en tant que force insurgée parfaitement adaptée à ce qu'était devenue la Syrie. →

← Après avoir passé des années à essayer de la fois d'armer, de modérer et d'organiser l'opposition à distance, les États-Unis ont fini par intervenir directement en Syrie pour lutter non contre Assad, mais contre l'EI. Une intervention réussie, dans la mesure où Daech a été détruit en tant qu'entité quasi étatique aussi bien en Irak qu'en Syrie. Dans le même temps, les objectifs et le mandat limités de la campagne ont permis aux Américains d'éviter de se retrouver pris au piège d'un conflit plus général avec Assad et la Russie.

**L'effondrement de Daech.** Mais même cette intervention limitée contre l'EI s'est révélée extrêmement complexe à orchestrer. Ces dernières années ont vu Washington et Moscou s'efforcer de gérer leur compétition en Syrie. Et pendant ce temps, le régime soutenu par l'Iran et la Russie a impitoyablement reconquis le territoire contrôlé par l'insurrection, en déclin malgré ses appuis extérieurs.

Toutefois, même l'effondrement de Daech et les conquêtes significatives du régime d'Assad n'ont pas suffi à mettre fin au conflit. La Syrie, aujourd'hui État en déshérence, exerce un attrait magnétique sur d'autres pays de la région. La campagne contre l'EI ainsi a abouti à une implication accrue de la Turquie. Par ailleurs, Israël multiplie les frappes contre des cibles iraniennes et du Hezbollah dans tout le pays. Si aujourd'hui, tant l'opposition au régime que la campagne contre Daech diminuent d'intensité, la guerre de Syrie est plus internationalisée que jamais.

La Syrie est sans doute le cas le plus extrême, mais dans leur quête d'influence et de prestige, les puissances régionales ont également causé de terribles dégâts humains et politiques dans d'autres pays. Allant même jusqu'à déstabiliser des États qui n'étaient pas en proie à une guerre civile. Le pire exemple étant l'Égypte. En 2013, l'Arabie Saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis ont soutenu le coup d'État du général Abdel Fattah

Al-Sissi, qui a renversé Mohamed Morsi, le président élu démocratiquement, membre des Frères musulmans et soutenu par le Qatar. Mais en dépit des dizaines de milliards de dollars versés par les pays du Golfe, le régime d'une implacable brutalité de Sissi n'a pas réussi à garantir un retour à la normale ou à la stabilité. Même en Tunisie, qui a connu un succès relatif, la compétition entre le Qatar et les EAU est une source d'instabilité. Les énormes injections de devises étrangères et le soutien politique des alliés locaux ont pollué la démocratie naissante du pays.

Cette dynamique régionale turbulente s'explique par des "dilemmes sécuritaires" classiques : quand un État tente de renforcer sa propre sécurité, il déclenche des contre-mesures qui ne font que saper un peu plus sa sécurité. Tous les régimes arabes vivent aujourd'hui dans un grave climat d'insécurité, et ils redoutent de nouvelles explosions de colère populaire.

Malgré tous leurs efforts, jamais les États-Unis ne parviendront à rassurer une région aussi fragilisée sur le plan de la sécurité. Même avec un président américain qui adopte une ligne dure vis-à-vis de l'Iran et que l'autocratie ne dérange manifestement pas, les régimes arabes ne considèrent plus les États-Unis comme un garant fiable de leur survie ou de leurs intérêts en politique étrangère.

Dans ce nouvel environnement, il est logique, même pour des alliés proches de Washington, de chercher à établir des relations avec la Chine, la Russie et l'UE – comme le font désormais l'Égypte, l'Arabie Saoudite, la Turquie, les Émirats arabes unis, voire la Jordanie. Ils s'efforcent là, de façon rationnelle, de se prémunir contre l'imprévisibilité des États-Unis, mais cela pourrait aller beaucoup plus loin, selon la même dynamique liée à ces dilemmes sécuritaires qui ont déjà semé le chaos dans d'autres domaines de la politique régionale.

L'administration Trump peine à affronter cette nouvelle réalité. Les brusques changements de politique de la présidence, les messages incroyablement incohérents qui proviennent de différents secteurs du gouvernement américain sont une source de confusion pour ses alliés comme pour ses ennemis. L'Arabie Saoudite et les Émirats arabes unis apprécient sans doute son intransigeance face à Téhéran et son soutien à la guerre au Yémen, mais les pressions de Washington pour que cesse le blocus du Qatar, ses appels à augmenter la production de pétrole et son intention affichée de se retirer de Syrie sont autant de sources de nouvelles exaspérations.

Quoi qu'il en soit, la politique chaotique de Trump ne devrait pas occulter les réalités structurelles plus profondes, que n'importe quel président américain aurait de toute façon le plus grand mal à gérer. Les États-Unis n'ont plus le pouvoir ni le statut nécessaire pour imposer un ordre régional qui leur conviendrait. Il est fort probable que Washington ne parviendra jamais à rétablir son hégémonie au Moyen-Orient, car la région a fondamentalement changé. Il ne sera pas facile de passer outre aux conflits et aux échecs politiques qui ont suivi les soulèvements arabes. Les dégâts sont trop importants.

— Marc Lynch  
Publié le 17 août

# TÉHÉRAN ET ANKARA RATTRAPÉS PAR LES DEFIS ÉCONOMIQUES

**La crise qui secoue l'Iran et la Turquie montre les limites de l'islam politique dans la gestion des États modernes et poussera ces régimes à réduire leur implication dans les pays voisins.**

—Al-Hayat Dubaï

L'islam politique est une notion extrêmement large. Elle s'applique à différents groupes confessionnels, avec des divergences d'intérêts, d'implantation géographique, de classe sociale et d'interprétation des Textes. Il y a des groupes tels que les Frères musulmans et d'autres tels que Daech. Ils peuvent établir une république islamique, comme en Iran, ou garder des éléments d'une laïcité démocratique représentative, comme en Turquie. Mais tous se trouvent dans un état qui ne peut qu'inquiéter leurs adeptes.

C'est l'économie qui est la raison immédiate des soucis du régime iranien, qui se veut absolument religieux, aussi bien que du régime turc, au caractère religieux plus relatif. Cela est emblématique des difficultés de ces deux régimes à s'accommoder du monde moderne, du fait de la modestie de leurs outils intellectuels et des décisions infligées

d'en haut, par un pouvoir fermé sur lui-même qui ne recueille pas l'avis du peuple sur les affaires qui le concernent.

Il est vrai que la politique de l'administration Trump joue un rôle de détonateur en Iran, et dans une moindre mesure en Turquie. Pour ce qui est de l'Iran, il faut mentionner le retrait américain de l'accord nucléaire ; pour la Turquie, la mise en place de taxes sur l'importation de l'aluminium. Il n'en reste pas moins que les causes internes des soucis, c'est-à-dire la politique économique de ces deux pays, en sont la raison fondamentale.

En Iran, une corruption stratosphérique et des dépenses toujours plus grandes pour des projets militaires au service des ambitions impériales se conjuguent pour étrangler l'économie nationale. On se rappelle que la "révolution verte", en 2009 [soulèvement postélectoral en Iran], le plus grand défi que le régime ait eu à affronter depuis les années 1980, avait commencé en signe de protestation contre le truquage des élections et s'était

terminée par la critique du coût de la politique expansionniste du régime.

En Turquie, dans un premier temps, le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement

**LA TURQUIE NE POURRA PLUS PRÉTENDRE ÊTRE UN MODÈLE, CELUI DE LA "RÉCONCILIATION ENTRE ISLAM ET MODERNITÉ".**

[AKP] pouvait se targuer de succès économiques éblouissants. Mais ensuite il a été pris à rebours par l'endettement croissant, puis encore plus par le bras de fer engagé par Recep Tayyip Erdogan avec la banque centrale et par les théories hasardeuses qu'il a commencé à proférer au sujet des taux d'intérêt, allant jusqu'à appeler ses compatriotes à acheter la livre turque, dont la valeur s'était effondrée, sans oublier la nomination de son propre gendre, Berat Albayrak, à la fonction de ministre des Finances.

Ces développements pourraient signer la chute des deux régimes. Ou pas. Mais ce qui est certain, c'est que cela aura un impact sur leur politique étrangère. Il sera impossible pour un Iran en banqueroute de continuer à financer un réseau d'alliés qui s'étend du Yémen à la bande de Gaza en passant par l'Irak, la Syrie et le Liban. Cela étant, il essaiera probablement de faire porter une partie du fardeau de la crise à l'Irak (et au Liban). Quant à la Turquie, elle ne pourra plus prétendre être un modèle, celui de la "réconciliation entre islam et modernité". Ce modèle a subi trop de chocs, surtout depuis la tentative ratée de coup d'État en été 2016 sous la forme d'atteintes croissantes à la démocratie, à la liberté des médias, à l'indépendance de la justice et au fonctionnement de la société civile.

—Hazem Saghieh  
Publié le 14 août

AFP

## Turquie : une manifestation de mères de disparus réprimée par la police

Istanbul 26 août 2018 (AFP)

**LA POLICE TURQUE a dispersé samedi une manifestation de mères à Istanbul à la mémoire de proches disparus dans les années 1980 et 1990 et interpellé près de 50 participants à ce 700e rassemblement hebdomadaire de protestation.**

La police a eu recours à des canons à eau et à du gaz lacrymogène pour disperser la foule, selon un photographe de l'AFP.

Au moins 47 personnes ont été interpellées par la police et promptement acheminées vers des camionnettes à proximité, ont rapporté les médias locaux.

L'avocat turc Efkân Bolac a annoncé sur Twitter que ces personnes avaient été par la suite relâchées après avoir été interrogées par la police.

Des internautes ont noté sur les réseaux sociaux que l'une des dirigeantes du mouvement, une octogénaire nommée Emine Ocak, qui a été interpellée par la police, avait déjà été photographiée au cours d'une arrestation dans des circonstances similaires en 1997, deux ans après la disparition de son fils après qu'il eut été placé en garde à vue.

Chaque semaine depuis le 27 mai 1995, les "Mères du samedi" (Cumatesi Anneleri en turc) se rassemblent dans le centre-ville d'Istanbul à la mémoire de proches que le gouvernement aurait fait disparaître au cours de l'une des plus tumultueuses périodes de l'histoire de la Turquie.

Ces disparitions sont survenues à l'apogée de la rébellion des partisans du PKK réclamant l'autonomie des Kurdes dans le sud-est, une région majoritairement peuplée par cette minorité. Des dizaines de milliers de personnes sont mortes dans ce conflit qui a débuté en 1984 et se poursuit encore aujourd'hui.

La directrice de l'organisation de défense des droits de l'Homme Human Rights Watch en Turquie, Emma Sinclair-Webb, a déploré un "traitement honteux et cruel de familles réclamant la justice pour des crimes commis par l'Etat".

Selon la police, la manifestation a été promue sur les réseaux sociaux par des



Une manifestante est arrêtée par la police turque lors d'une manifestation à Istanbul le 25 août 2018

comptes liés au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), illégal en Turquie, et aucune autorisation n'a été demandée pour la manifestation, selon la police.

Les manifestations des "Mères du samedi" avaient été systématiquement dispersées par la police de 1999 à 2009 avant d'être tolérées sous haute surveillance. L'intervention policière de ce samedi est la première depuis plusieurs années. ●