

INSTITUT  
**KURDE**  
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

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**N°424**

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**JULY 2020**

*The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy  
from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture & City of Paris*

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

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

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**TURKEY:  
TORTURE AND STATE-SPONSORED VIOLENCE STILL ON THE INCREASE,  
ESPECIALLY AGAINST WOMEN**

**W**hile the Turkish president continues his ruthless repression of the “pro-Kurdish” HDP party, and uses all possible means to ensure more and more control over Turkish society, not hesitating to use the pandemic situation of COVID-19 to do so, the non-HDP opposition, the “Alliance of the Nation”, remains ambiguous by maintaining division. Its

members, the CHP (Kemalist, former single party) and IYI (“Good Party”, a split of the far-right MHP party having refused the alliance with the AKP, the Islamist party of the Turkish president) refuse any solidarity with the HDP. By taking up the discourse of Erdoğan according to which this party “must distance itself from the PKK”, thus reinforcing its strategy which aims at delegitimising the HDP, they

contribute to the observed increase of anti-Kurdish racism in the country.

However, the HDP, situating its action in an exclusively political framework, has always refused to call for violence – even though the authorities have not refrained from resorting to it in an increasingly extreme manner. In a lengthy interview given from his cell to the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper

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and published on 21<sup>st</sup> July, HDP former co-president, Selahattin Demirtaş, pointed out the obvious: if the opposition really wants to beat Erdoğan in the next elections, it will have to accept some form of cooperation with the HDP at some point, even if the HDP does not ask for a formal alliance: “In my opinion, it is necessary to reach a consensus on a new constitution, a democratic parliamentary system, freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and an independent and impartial judiciary”, he said (*Ahval*). For Demirtaş, the opposition must stop playing into the hands of power and reconnect with the public to develop its own proposals through various democratic consultations. Asked about the Kurdish movement in Turkey, Demirtaş compared it to the African-American movement in the US after the murder of George Floyd, clearly preferring to anchor the HDP to the left rather than reduce it to a Kurdish movement: “Today, the biggest cause of poverty, unemployment, hunger, misery, death, war and exploitation is the neoliberal capitalist system. The only antidote to capitalism is socialism”, he said (*Ahval*). A few days later, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the court decided to keep Demirtaş and the former co-president of the HDP, Figen Yüksekdağ, in detention.

As for violence, it is primarily used by the State. While the Turkish constitution explicitly prohibits torture, cases and complaints are on the rise. According to the Human Rights Foundation (TİHV)’s count, one person out of 500 has been a victim of torture. One of the latest cases is that of women’s rights defender and former HDP co-mayor of Edremit, Sevil Rojbin Çetin: after breaking her door at 5am, the police released two dogs in her house that bit her legs. Far from having her treated, they then

tortured her for more than three hours, insulting her, threatening her verbally and with a weapon, tearing her clothes and then photographing her half-naked before posting the images on social networks. An investigation has been opened... against her lawyer, for having published photos of her injuries in the press! Lawyer Eren Keskin, vice-president of the Human Rights Association (İHD), told *Al-Monitor* that torture of women “in detention and during arrest” had become “commonplace”. Perpetrators of torture are never punished. On 16<sup>th</sup> July, Rojbin Çetin, still in prison, was charged with “membership of a terrorist organisation”.

While the repression of women has recently intensified and, as *Amnesty International* points out, “during the COVID-19 pandemic, several high-profile cases of murder and rape of women [...] particularly by their spouses or ex-spouses, took place in Turkey” (27 murders and 23 suspicious deaths in June alone), recent statements calling for Turkey’s withdrawal from the “Istanbul Convention” (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women) are cause for concern. While Turkey was the first country to ratify it and it has been in force since 2014, several AKP deputies have criticised it for “disrupting the family structure”, and the party’s vice-president, Numan Kurtulmuş, said that LGBT people were seeking “protection behind this Convention”. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the deputy and spokeswoman of the HDP Women’s Council Ayşe Acar described in a press conference these statements as unacceptable. She recalled several recent cases of rape of Kurdish women by Turkish non-commissioned officers, in particular the attempt against a 13-year-old girl at Şırnak

and the rape of another, 17-year-old, girl in Batman, accusing the AKP-MHP government coalition of waging “a special method of war” (*Kurdistan au Féminin*).

At the same time, Mr Erdoğan continues his drive to bring under control all social structures that pose a risk to his personal power. After journalists, he now turns his attention to lawyers. On 11<sup>th</sup> July, after four days of discussions, the Parliament adopted a highly controversial reform of the bar associations. For the AKP and its far-right ally, the MHP, it is a question, as the Head of State expressed it, of “putting in place a more democratic, more pluralist structure of the bars, with a high level of representativeness”. But when an autocrat talks about democracy, one should be wary... The text authorises the foundation of several bars in each county with more than 5.000 lawyers – *i.e.* Istanbul (48.000), Ankara (18.000) and Izmir (10.000) –, on condition that each of these new bars can gather at least 2.000 members... For lawyers opposed to the reform, under the guise of democracy, the aim is, by following a technique already used with trade unions or other professional organisations, to weaken existing bars by bypassing them to create new ones that can be populated by government supporters. The law also puts an end to the system of proportional representation of bar associations in the Turkish Bar Association (TBB): each bar association will have four delegates, plus one for every 5.000 members (*Le Monde*). With this new system, the smaller bars, located in more rural areas where the AKP has more sway, will see their weight increase, and the three largest, Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, will lose the relative majority they currently enjoy (221 delegates out of 477). 78 of Turkey’s 80 bar associations have

signed a joint declaration opposing the reform and have organised demonstrations before the vote in Parliament. To no avail. The *Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD)* notes that this system, inspired by that of the Islamic Republic of Iran, will split lawyers along political lines, thus allowing “prosecutors and judges to favor defense teams comprising members of pro-government bar associations, punishing lawyers who belong to independent bar associations”. For the *FDD*, this reform “will further erode the rule of law and due process in Turkey”.

Significantly, on the same day, the parliament also passed a law authorising the arming of the *bekci*, the “neighbourhood guards”. This police reinforcement force, which was integrated into the police in 2008 after decades of independent existence, was separated from it again in 2016, in particular to make up for the absence of many police officers sent to Kurdistan. The opposition fears that the government will use these *bekci* as a new militia where to recruit its supporters (*The Independent*).

The government also continued its harassment of all Kurdish political activity. At the beginning of the month, the former HDP co-mayor of Batman, Songül Korkmaz, arrested with several members of her municipal council, was sentenced in Diyarbakir to six years and three months in prison for “membership in an illegal organisation”. In Ankara, a rally to commemorate the Sivas massacre (which killed 37 people in 1993, mainly Alevi Kurds, in the arson of their hotel) was dispersed by the police and three of the participants arrested. Nine members of the HDP Youth Assembly were also arrested. In Erzurum, two members of the DTP, Bermal Birttek and Ergin

Balta, were sentenced to ten years and six months in prison. The following week, several women were imprisoned in Diyarbakir before being charged, for the most part, with “membership” in and “propaganda” for a “terrorist organisation”. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, arrests were also carried out against Betül Yaşar, co-mayor of Diyaradin district (Ağrı) and members of the HDP in Izmir (5 people arrested), Urfa (3 arrests), and Gaziantep (33 arrests) (*WKI*).

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, three people were sentenced to life imprisonment for a 2016 attack on a police vehicle in Istanbul that had killed 12 people, six policemen and six civilians. Four other suspects were released under judicial supervision. The attack was claimed by the “Kurdistan Freedom Falcons” (TAK), a splinter group of the PKK (*AFP*).

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the HDP announced at a press conference the publication of a damning report on the situation, entitled *Anti-Kurdish Hostility during the Pandemic (Salgın döneminde Kürt düşmanlığı*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gy0lB9JKtVWnodXRzupLBTcddAj4vjPI/>).

Covering the period from 11<sup>th</sup> March (date of the official confirmation of the first case of COVID-19 in Turkey) to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, the report looks back at the abusive dismissals and replacements by administrators of thirty co-mayors and also denounces the use of “curfews imposed as part of measures to combat the pandemic” as “pretext for violence by the police and neighbourhood guards”. He cites several cases of citizens “going out to buy bread, take out their rubbish or sitting in their garden [...] insulted, forced to lie on the ground and handcuffed behind their backs or held at gunpoint”. “According to the data we were

able to obtain [...] during these three and a half months, when the epidemic was at its worst, at least 84 people were subjected to torture and ill-treatment”.

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, *Die Welt* journalist Deniz Yücel was sentenced in his absence (he returned to Germany in February 2018 after a year in prison) to two years, nine months and 22 days in prison for “terrorist propaganda” for the PKK. A new indictment was also launched against him for “insulting the Head of state”: he had described Mr. Erdoğan as a “putschist” (*Le Figaro*, *AFP*). On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the same charge was brought against the female Kurdish political prisoner Sebahat Tuncel for having described in a speech the Turkish president as “totally misogynous”. Tuncel, a former co-president of the DBP (Party of Democratic Regions), arrested in October 2016 and sentenced in February 2019 to 15 years in prison for terrorism following other speeches, now faces a further four years in prison. In 2019, 26.115 people were investigated for “insulting the Head of state”, of whom 2.462 were convicted and imprisoned...

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, several marches organised by the HDP with sometimes the ESP (Socialist Party of the Oppressed) were held to commemorate the attack in Suruç, which had left thirty-three people dead and a hundred injured on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015 in this Kurdish town opposite Kobanê. In Ankara, the police used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the rally, which was attended by 300 participants. In Istanbul, seventeen participants were arrested (*WKI*). On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the 800<sup>th</sup> Saturday mothers’ rally in Istanbul Galatasaray Square was attacked by the police. Three relatives of missing persons, including an elderly mother, were arrested (*Kurdistan au Féminin*). In the last week of the month, other members of the HDP were

arrested in Diyarbakir and Şanlıurfa (WKI).

Power definitely has a problem with historical memory. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, a bill submitted by HDP deputy Murat Sansac proposing the creation of a memorial for the 1930 Zilan massacre was rejected. Sansac had submitted on 13<sup>th</sup> July, the anniversary of the massacre, a bill calling for the cancellation of the construction of a dam that would drown the site where nearly 15.000 Kurdish civilians were killed when their villages were burned. The Speaker of Parliament, Mustafa Sentop, rejected the bill because of the inclusion of the words “massacre” and “Kurdish”, saying it contains “rude and offensive remarks”, adding that the bill could be considered if these terms are removed (*Duvar*).

At the end of the month, a former teacher at the Kurdish language department of Mardin Artuklu University, Selim Temo, revealed that by decision of the Higher Education Council (YÖK), students in the Kurdish language departments of Turkish universities are now no longer allowed to submit their dissertations in Kurdish. Also, courses will have to be taught exclusively in Turkish! Apart from

Artuklu, these departments exist in three universities: Dicle (Tigris), in Diyarbakir, Bingöl and Muş. Temo himself was dismissed from his teaching position by an emergency decree in 2017 because he had signed the “Academics for Peace” petition.

The month of July was also marked by the decision, announced on the 10<sup>th</sup> by the Turkish President, to transform the former Basilica of Saint Sophia back into a mosque. This followed the invalidation a few hours earlier by the Council of State, seized upon complaint by a Muslim association close to the AKP, of the 1934 decree which had transformed the Byzantine building into a museum, on the grounds that, as Sainte-Sophie had become a mosque after the capture of Constantinople by Mehmet the Conqueror, in 1453, it “[could] not be used for purposes other than those assigned to it by the Sultan”... This was clearly a symbolic political decision designed to restore his image in a context of political, economic and health crisis. Reactions abroad have generally been negative: UNESCO, and also Washington, the European Union and Greece have “regretted” this decision. For its part, the HDP said: “Saint Sophia is part of the cultural and

historical heritage of mankind. Transforming it into a mosque is a mistake” and accused the Council of State of having served as a “propaganda machine” for the AKP (WKI). In an article entitled “Hagia Sophia is open for prayers, but not to Kurds”, *Al-Monitor* reported that during the first prayers held in the building on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the government had excluded the HDP from the guest list. HDP MP Mahmut Togrul reminded *Al-Monitor* that since 2015, the HDP had been excluded from almost all national gatherings. In fact, HDP members cannot even participate in televised debates on the HDP!

Finally, on the 28<sup>th</sup>, A. Öcalan’s lawyers announced that they had filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights about the isolation imposed on him and three other inmates in the prison island of Imralı. With the rejection of their request for a visit last June by the Constitutional Court, they had exhausted all remedies before the Turkish courts. The last visit they were able to obtain was in May 2019, after a previous one in 2011, and the other three detainees have not yet met their lawyers since their transfer to the island in 2015 (*Ahval*).

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## IRAN:

### EVER HARSHER REPRESSION, KURDS PARTICULARLY TARGETED

**T**ension continues to rise in an Iran where the coronavirus is still wreaking havoc and where a building at the Natanz nuclear site was almost totally destroyed on 2<sup>nd</sup> July by a strong explosion. Under tension, the authorities are repressing their population, and in particular the Kurds, ever more harshly with sentences and executions. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, as Iran restarted its

uranium enrichment activities, three-quarters of the Natanz centrifuge site was destroyed by an explosion that could delay the nuclear programme by two years, according to the *New York Times*. As for the causes, while an Iranian MP spoke of a technical problem, experts are rather hesitating between a bomb and a cyber attack. A second explosion seems to have occurred the next day in a missile base...

Regarding the coronavirus, the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), which regularly publishes its own figures on the epidemic in the country, said it had calculated that the number of deaths in 342 cities in Iran now exceeded 64.800. Concerning the partially or totally Kurdish provinces, the PMOI figures for that date were 1.795 in Western Azerbaijan, 1.320 in Kurdistan

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(Kordestan), 1.655 in Kermanshah, and 2.385 in Lorestan (no figures for Ilam). The Arabic-speaking province of Khuzestan is still seriously affected with 4.950 deaths (NCRI). For comparison, the official number of deaths at that date was 11.260... However, a member of the National Coronavirus Control Centre, Massoud Mardani, told the ISNA agency on the 4<sup>th</sup> that through random tests, it was possible to estimate that "18 million Iranians, or about 20% of the country's population, had contracted the disease"... Official television announced the reinstatement of coronavirus restrictions in public places from the 5<sup>th</sup> on.

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, a day for which PMOI compiled more than 65.200 deaths, the IRNA agency reported that in Ilam province, "from June 21<sup>st</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>, the number of positive cases [had] doubled [...] and [was increasing] exponentially". According to the provincial governor, the province is almost totally in the red (NCRI). The virus was also circulating in prisons, particularly in Urumieh: during the first week of July, more than a hundred inmates were infected, while the government continued to imprison Kurdish activists (WKI).

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, PMOI published a number of 69.800 deaths in 342 cities... On the 29<sup>th</sup>, the country's Assembly of Medical Associations published on its website an open letter to President Rohani, some of whose signatories were politicians and ministers, to warn of a real disaster to come if no radical measures are taken: "There must be a strict ban on mourning celebrations and religious ceremonies ... as well as large gatherings such as entrance exams without meeting the necessary conditions, and very strict controls must be attached to this ban", the text says, among other things. On

the 30<sup>th</sup>, the Deputy Health Minister said that, in Tehran province alone, 710 coronavirus patients had been hospitalized the day before... On the 31<sup>st</sup>, while PMOI gave a new estimate of more than 80.100 deaths, the Health Ministry spokeswoman said that "all regions of the country [were] infected with the coronavirus" (IRNA).

In the province of Kurdistan, clashes took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> in the Hawraman district, near the village of Bolbar, between *pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards) and *bassij* (a paramilitary group of voluntary Islamic auxiliaries) and a "counter-revolutionary group" which, according to the IRNA agency, was not specified, but described as "affiliated with global arrogance", a way of referring to the West. The *Hengaw* human rights organisation reported that a Kurdish opposition group had been involved in the engagement without suffering any casualties, and that two members of the Iranian military group had been killed and two others wounded (*Kurdistan-24*).

The *kolbars*, cross-border Kurdish porters, continue to pay with their lives for their attempts to provide for themselves and their families. During the second week of July, also in the Hawraman region, Iranian border guards shot down several horses or mules used by the *kolbars* to transport their goods. Three porters were also shot dead by Iranian security forces: one near Sardacht, without warning, another in an ambush of a group near Nowdeshah (Kermanshah), and another near Piranshahr. Three others were wounded near Urmia. Turkish security forces also killed a *kolbar* near the Chaldiran district. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Iraqi Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* announced that two brothers had been killed two

months apart, the first on 24<sup>th</sup> May and his surviving younger brother on 9<sup>th</sup> July. In addition, a shepherd was killed by mortar fire from the *Pasdaran* near Piranshahr, the second shepherd to be killed in a fortnight (WKI). Meanwhile, three Kurds were killed by mines from the Iran-Iraq war in the Mehran district (Ilam). On the 27<sup>th</sup>, five other porters were wounded in an ambush near Baneh. In the same town, ten Kurdish activists were sentenced to three months in prison, 25 million rials in fines (around €550) and 25 lashes for protesting against the killing of two *kolbars* by security forces in 2018 (WKI).

More generally, the campaign of repression against Kurdish activists continued. In mid-July, the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) estimated that the regime had executed no less than fifteen Kurdish political prisoners since last March. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, the *Eteelaat* (Intelligence) arrested three people in Mahabad, then another in a village near that city, Goyak Tepe. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, another Kurd was arrested after a raid on his home in Naghadeh. Ali Sakani, lawyer for a political prisoner sentenced to death, was also arrested. A Kurdish environmental defender, Fateh Mohammadi, was also arrested in Javanrud earlier this month, along with five others, including a 16-year-old in Mahabad. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a political prisoner from Piranshahr, Abdulwahid Ara, committed suicide in his cell in Naghadeh after being sentenced to 11 years in prison for "membership of a Kurdish opposition party". He just had been denied provisional release on health grounds.

July 14<sup>th</sup> was a particularly dark day in terms of repression. First, it was announced that two Kurdish political prisoners, Diako Rassulzadeh and Sabir Sheikh

Abdollah, had been executed in Urmia prison. Arrested in 2013, accused of belonging to Komala and of having prepared a bomb attack that struck a military parade in 2010 in Mahabad, they had been tortured for a whole year by the *Etelaat* of the city of Mahabad until they made a confession and were sentenced to death in 2017 for "hostility to God". "These two young men were sentenced to death after a very unfair trial based on confessions obtained under torture and ill-treatment", said *Amnesty International* (*Kurdistan-24*). Their execution came 10 years after the commander of the *Pasdaran* land force, Mohammad Pakpour, said the real perpetrators of the 2010 bombing had been killed.

Then, just a few hours after the announcement of the execution of Abdullah and Rassulzadeh, the spokesman for the judiciary, Gholam Hossein Esmaili, announced that the Supreme Court had upheld the death sentences of three young demonstrators arrested last November, Amirhossein Moradi (26), Saeed Tamjidi (28) and Mohammad Rajabi (26). The announcement triggered an unprecedented flood of *Twitter* messages from Iran and abroad, calling for the execution to be quashed: 1,2 million in just a few hours. *Amnesty International*, in particular, denounced an "unfair trial", as the condemned "said they were tortured by being beaten, electrocuted and hung upside down". Finally, later the same day, it was announced that Zara Mohammadi, tried in

Sanandaj on 17<sup>th</sup> February, had been sentenced to 10 years in prison. Her crime: teaching the Kurdish language to children. After being accused of cooperating with a Kurdish opposition party, she was convicted of "forming a group [...] to disrupt national security". However, *Nojîn*, the cultural and social association which Mohammadi had shared the leadership of for seven years, is perfectly legal since it has an official authorisation from the Interior Ministry. Apart from organising Kurdish language courses in various towns, it has also played an important role in recent months in assisting the people affected by the floods in Lorestan. Her interrogators denied Mohammadi access to her medicines and threatened to attack her family if she did not cooperate. Several other members of *Nojîn* were also arrested (*Hengaw*).

Also in Sanandaj, lawyer and activist Farhad Mohammadi, arrested in November 2017, was sentenced to six years in prison for "crimes against national security" (*WKI*). On the 21<sup>st</sup>, four young Kurds from Baneh, aged 17 to 20, were sentenced to 16 years in prison for burning a poster of the commander of the Al-Quds force, Qassem Soleimani, killed in Baghdad by an American strike. Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Human Rights Association (*KMMK*) reported that in Sardasht three Kurdish men were arrested on charges of "membership of a Kurdish opposition party", and that *Etelaat* had also arrested one person.

Another name to be added to the sinister list of executions is Kamil Qadri Eqdem. Originally from Piranshahr, he was hanged on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> in the central prison of Naghadeh where he was detained, despite a demonstration in his favour in front of the prison. According to *Hengaw*, he was the sixth Kurdish political prisoner executed in a week in the prisons of Kermanshah, Urmia and Naghadeh.

Finally, at the end of the month, many other Kurds, both men and women, were arrested or convicted in various cities in Kurdistan of Iran on charges of "cooperation with" or "membership in" a Kurdish opposition party: a 23-year-old man, Siawesh Rojkhoun, was arrested in Mahabad, a woman previously arrested by *Etelaat* with her daughter in Urmia, Shanaz Sadiqi, was sentenced to 15 years in prison, and in Sardasht, Dara Rashidi was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Protesters for different reasons were also punished: Kurdish activist Foad Enayati was sentenced in Sanandaj to 76 lashes for protesting against the Turkish invasion of Rojava in October 2019, and Khalil Husseini for protesting on social media against executions. In Bokan, Fatima Dawand was sentenced to five years in prison for organising anti-government demonstrations in August 2019...

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, environmental activist Rashid Hassanzada was sentenced to prison in Oshnavieh for "meetings and plans against national security".



## IRAQ: EXPLOSION OF THE COVID, NUMEROUS TURKISH WAR CRIMES IN KURDISTAN

**J**uly began in Iraq with the assassination on the 6<sup>th</sup>, by gunshot and in the street, of Hisham Al-Hashimi, a recognised expert of the jihadist movement and a virulent critic of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias. They had already, like ISIS, threatened him on several occasions, accusing him of being pro-American. Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Qadhimi, who had worked with him when he was still head of the intelligence services, promised a transparent investigation. But this assassination is a challenge to his authority and also a clear warning to him: a fortnight ago, when he ordered the arrest of 14 members of *Kata'ib Hezbollah*, suspected of being responsible for the rocket attacks on Baghdad's Green Zone, Hashimi publicly supported him and received threats from the organisation (*The Guardian*).

At the same time, Iraq also had to deal with the explosion of COVID-19 following the reopening of the border with Iran last May. The epidemic threatens to overwhelm the country's capabilities. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, the Ministry of Health announced 2.415 new cases and 107 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of deaths to 2.050. This was just the beginning of a long series of announcements during which the number of deaths each day exceeded 100 and the number of new cases exceeded 2.000: 110 deaths and 2.184 new cases on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 106 and 2.334 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 118 and again more than 2.000 on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, with 100 new deaths and 2.229 cases, the Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority announced the extension of the closure of the airports, decided on 17<sup>th</sup> March, until 23<sup>rd</sup> July, and it

was decided that anyone entering the country should keep self-confined for fourteen days. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the curfew, originally 24 hours a day, was reduced to the period 21:30-6:00. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, 2.310 new cases and 90 deaths were reported. By that date, the epidemic had caused 92.530 deaths in the country (*Kurdistan-24*). But due to the catastrophic economic situation, a relaxation was necessary... International flights resumed on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with Lebanon and Turkey, for which passengers had to present negative tests before being allowed to board. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced that its airports, Erbil and Suleimaniyah, would remain closed until 1<sup>st</sup> August. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Iraq announced 2.500 new cases and more than 90 deaths. A positive note despite everything: at that date, according to official data, about 77.144 patients, 68.5% of them, had recovered...

Kurdistan has not been spared by the epidemic either. On 4<sup>th</sup> July, KRG announced 9 deaths and 204 new cases, the majority in the provinces of Suleimaniyah (173) and Halabja (93), those with the most relations with Iran, 25 in Erbil and only 3 in Dohuk. Earlier the same day, the governor of Erbil had indicated that the total curfew imposed on the city since the end of June would be reduced to the period 20:00-5:00, with a reduction in the hours of public services, a ban on gatherings and ceremonies and the restriction of restaurants to take-away food. He also urged Erbilians to go out only if necessary and masked. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, KRG announced 11 new deaths and 324 new cases. In Suleimaniyah, the Deputy Director of Health, Herish Salim, told *Kurdistan-24* that more than

400 health workers had been infected, but that due to staff shortages they were returning to work immediately afterwards – including himself. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Health confirmed 495 new cases, the highest daily number recorded since the outbreak, and eleven deaths. Erbil set up a 48-hour quarantine for anyone arriving in the city. 1.287 people were then isolated throughout the Region.

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, the figures somewhat dropped with 294 new infections and still 11 deaths (*Kurdistan-24*), but delays in payment of wages were adding to the difficulties by causing strikes among health workers. According to the doctors' union in Suleimaniyah, there were 20.000 strikers on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and a military doctor in that town told *Le Monde* that the peshmergas had not received their wages for five months. KRG started paying the salaries of... February at the beginning of July, but only partially.

Until the end of the month, Kurdistan experienced the same curve as the rest of the country, with lower figures in relation to its population: on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 254 new cases and 14 deaths in 24 hours, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 258 cases and 7 deaths... On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the Kurdish Institute in Washington calculated that there had been 1.500 new cases and 340 deaths in one week, Kirkuk being the worst hit area with 2.247 cases and 114 deaths, among them that of the city's police spokesman. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, while the figures remained apparently stable with 252 cases and 13 victims, the breakdown by province showed that Erbil was experiencing a relative increase, with 98 cases, just behind Suleimaniyah at 130. The trend

was confirmed on the 28<sup>th</sup> when, out of 302 new cases, 139 came from Erbil, passing for the first time ahead of Suleimaniyah at 124 cases; however, the different timescale of the wave in Suleimaniyah was reflected in the numbers of people still under medical observation: 2.580 in Suleimaniyah against only 899 in Erbil (*Kurdistan-24*). These figures are worrying, because they suggest that a later wave is now threatening Erbil...

On the 31<sup>st</sup>, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed the reopening of the Region's two airports the following day. The Suleimaniyah airport indicated that, although the KRG had not requested it, it would only allow boarding to passengers who could produce a negative test (*Rûdaw*).

In terms of banning ceremonies and closing borders, one incident is worth mentioning: on 10<sup>th</sup> July, nearly 2.000 dervishes of the Qadiriyya Sufi order illegally entered Iraqi Kurdistan through the Iran Başmax border post to attend the funeral of Sheikh Mohammed Kasnazani. The Iranian authorities opened fire on the dervishes, most of them without passports, and wounded five of them, but the others were able to force their way through and board buses to Suleimaniyah, where they attended the funeral (*WKI*).

Can we expect, at last, a real anti-ISIS coordination in the territories disputed between Erbil and Baghdad? On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a delegation from the KRG Peshmerga Ministry met in Baghdad with officials from the Iraqi Defence Ministry to discuss the creation of joint operations centres in Kirkuk, Nineveh and Diyala. According to a ministry source, Baghdad accepted the principle and was expected to send a delegation to Erbil to

finalise the agreement. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Brigadier General Yahia Rasul, spokesman for the Iraqi Joint Operations Command, said to *Rûdaw* that meetings with the Peshmergas were continuing "to fill the security gaps in the disputed areas, which can reach 13 km in some areas". On the 11<sup>th</sup>, in the presence of the Iraqi Prime Minister who had come to supervise the operation, Iraqi security forces and Kurdish anti-terrorist units from Suleimaniyah province launched the fourth phase of the anti-ISIS "Heroes of Iraq" campaign in Diyala province, in cooperation with elements of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* (Popular Mobilisation Units), with Iraqi and coalition air support. The first phase of the operation, launched in mid-May, had targeted the provinces of Anbar, Nineveh and Salahaddine; the second phase, launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, targeted jihadists on the borders of Kirkuk and Salahaddin provinces, and the third phase Salahaddine, Diyala, Samarra and Kirkuk provinces (*Rudaw*). However, in concrete terms, the Peshmergas did not participate in the operation of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Defence arrived in Erbil to continue discussions on joint operations in the disputed territories, in the presence of American military personnel. The federal government and the KRG, which had already agreed to deploy troops between Khurmatu and Kirfi, had mobilised troops in the region the previous week, although the Peshmergas denounced uncoordinated deployments of Iraqi forces near Kurdistan borders. In the last week of the month, a new anti-ISIS operation was launched in the areas between Kirkuk and Diyala provinces.

Another problem facing Kurdistan is the aggravation of Turkish air

strikes and ground incursions since the launch of the anti-PKK operation "Claw-Eagle" on 15<sup>th</sup> June, particularly in the districts of Zakho, Akre and Amedi (Dohuk), and in Sindjar. The situation was already serious enough at the end of June for the US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Robert Destro, to condemn the strikes on Sindjar on 30<sup>th</sup> June, saying: "How can people possibly flourish if they are under the threat of airstrikes?" But Turkey continued its incursions and by the beginning of July had almost doubled its military presence in Kurdistan. By mid-June, it already had 24 military bases there, and by early July it had penetrated an area 40 to 50 kilometres long and 15 kilometres deep and had set up 12 additional bases, in a more discreet replica of its "security zone" in Rojava... The Turkish military does not hesitate to use its drones to strike targets near civilian installations, at the risk of injuring or killing very young children, as shown in a *Voice of America* (VOA) report published on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, showing how shop owners were hit when a vehicle carrying PKK fighters had stopped there. A video published on 7<sup>th</sup> July by the *France-24* programme "Les Observateurs" (*Observers*) shows how another Turkish strike, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, nearly killed very young children playing in a river near a picnic area (<https://observers.france24.com/en/20200701-iraq-kurdish-family-turkish-airstrike-picnic-area-kunamasi>). Turkish diplomacy responded to Iraqi protests by telling VOA that if the Iraqi authorities "had acted decisively to eliminate the PKK from their territories, we would not need to carry out such operations". But some experts in the United States believe that a hidden aim of the Turkish strikes may well be to derail the intra-Kurdish negotiations in Rojava that are

taking place with US mediation.

After new Turkish air strikes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> caused at least five civilian casualties in Deraluk and Shiladze (Dohuk), the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to consider economic retaliatory measures against Ankara. Iraqi-Turkish trade has an annual surplus of sixteen billion dollars in favour of Turkey, whose hundreds of companies are present in Iraq. It also announced that it was going to call for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to condemn the Turkish military intervention (*Rûdaw*).

This in no way influenced the behaviour of Turkey, which on the contrary intensified its operations along the border, with air strikes and artillery fire on Shiladze, Amêdî, Zakho and Bradost (WKI). On the 6<sup>th</sup>, the Turkish Presidency published a map showing 37 Turkish “military points” in Iraqi Kurdistan. A PKK commander, Rizgar Ersi, said Turkey was seeking to establish a 40-km “corridor of occupation” from Shingal (Sindjar) to Qandil as a continuous base for launching attacks on the Kurdish party. The border guards of the province of Dohouk, a force created in 2003 and made up mainly of Kurds, on 1<sup>st</sup> July installed five bases on “strategic” positions in an attempt to act as a buffer and thus reduce civilian casualties (*Rûdaw*).

Former Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, himself a Kurd, warned on Twitter on the 8<sup>th</sup>: “The recent Turkish military incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan in the Zakho region is a very serious geopolitical development. The intensity of the attack is alarming. And the calls by Turkish leaders to reactivate [Turkish] historical claims on Mosul Vilayet are even more worrying” (*Ahval*). New villages are constantly being abandoned by their terrified inhabitants, such as Avla’s (Zakho) on the 10<sup>th</sup> (*Rûdaw*), who added to the list of thousands of civilians displaced by the Turkish strikes.

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Turkish Ministry of Defence announced that a fifth soldier had been killed in Iraqi Kurdistan, without specifying the location. But he was taking part in the ground operation “Claw-Tiger”, which is taking place in the Haftanin region. In cross-claims, while the ministry announced the “neutralisation” of three PKK fighters, the PKK said it had “punished” 16 Turkish soldiers in Haftanin within three days (*Rûdaw*).

At the end of the month, Turkey’s military incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan continued with new air strikes and the deployment of additional troops in the Bradost district (Erbil). On the 26<sup>th</sup>, an air raid killed two civilians near Bamarni (Duhok). For its part, the

Parliament of the Kurdistan Region examined a report submitted by the delegations it had sent on the 5<sup>th</sup> to the recently bombed border areas of Zakho, Amêdî, Erbil, and Suleimaniyah. The Turkish operations caused the death of 50 civilians without any affiliation to the PKK, the evacuation of 504 villages and tens of millions of dollars in material damage, including damage to farms and the death of livestock belonging to the local population (WKI). In a report published a little earlier, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) had assessed that since August 2015, ground operations, artillery strikes or Turkish bombardments had killed or injured more than 180 civilians in the border areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, including 15 killed and 95 injured in the first half of 2020 (*Kurdistan-24*). However, the CPT’s estimate remains lower than the figure of 30 civilian casualties of the latest Turkish attacks on *Rûdaw* mentioned in early July by the head of the Batifa district (Zakho). In the United States, the frightening list of civilian victims of Turkish operations compiled by Columbia University (<https://ahvalnews-com.cdn.amp.project.org/c/s/ahvalnews.com/northern-iraq/turkey-must-face-reckoning-its-crimes-iraqi-kurdistan?amp>) shows unambiguously that Ankara has been massively guilty of war crimes since January.

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## ROJAVA: BLACKMAILING ON HUMANITARIAN AID BY DAMASCUS AND ON WATER BY ANKARA

**W**hile it is already struggling to survive against the Turkey of Erdoğan and the Damascus regime, Rojava must also wage an existential struggle to escape the isolation it is threatened with,

while it lacks everything and remains exposed to the risk of the pandemic as much as to the collateral effects of the American “Caesar” sanctions against Syria.

The draft resolution submitted mid-June to the UN Security

Council by Germany and Belgium proposed the extension for one year of the authorisation of the passage of humanitarian aid to Idlib from two Turkish border crossings, which are therefore outside the control of Damascus. It also proposed the

reopening for six months of the al-Yarubiah crossing point with Iraq, closed since January following pressure from Damascus and its Russian ally. The UN considers al-Yarubiah, controlled by the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria (AANES), as a vital entry point for the medical supplies needed to fight the coronavirus. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Russia put pressure on these two countries to withdraw the reopening of al-Yarubiah from their proposal, in exchange for maintaining the passage to Idlib for one year. After their refusal, the vote ended with a Russian and Chinese veto, even though the proposal had been approved by the other thirteen members of the Council."

Using the argument of "respecting Syrian sovereignty", Russia wants to impose the control of all humanitarian aid by the regime, even though several NGOs have already denounced its political use of access to food and medical supplies during the almost ten years of civil war. The November 2019 agreement with Turkey has put Russia in a position of strength by allowing it for the first time in years to gain a foothold east of the Euphrates. Moscow now wants to take advantage of it to force AANES, which administers the Rojava, to submit to Damascus, hence this real blackmail on humanitarian aid, while Turkey for its part continues a similar blackmail with water. Ilham Ahmed, president of the executive committee of the Syrian Democratic Council (CDS) said on the 4<sup>th</sup> that Ankara was "intentionally" withholding water to cause "a real drought in Syria" (*Rûdaw*). Nearly three million people, mostly women and children, as well as many displaced people,

are thus being held hostage...

The Russian and Chinese vetoes were denounced by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and a consortium of international NGOs, but to no avail. The next day, Russia submitted its own resolution, which planned to allow only one Turkish crossing point to Idlib, Bab al-Hawa, for six months. As it got only four votes in favour, Belgium and Germany submitted a second proposal abandoning any mention of al-Yarubiah and adding to Bab al-Hawa the reopening of the second Turkish crossing point to the Aleppo region, Bab al-Salam. At the end of the day, the discussions led to maintaining only a single access for the whole of Syria, Bab al-Hawa, exactly what Moscow had proposed, for one year. Russian intransigence had paid off.

At the same time, Russia declared its support for the talks between AANES and the regime, and repeated its support for the integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces into the Syrian army as "Division 5". AANES, for its part, announced that it would refuse any participation in the elections to the Syrian parliament ("People's Assembly"), which were held on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and refused any polling station on its territory (*WKI*).

Regarding the pandemic, the alarm bell has begun to ring, since after the first two cases of COVID announced in April, the AANES announced four new cases on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, three women and one man, three in Qamishli and one in Hassaké, bringing the total number of positive cases to six. As the only tests available are the 2.000 or so given by Iraqi Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani, the authorities have to select wisely who to test, making

it difficult to manage the epidemic. On the same day, the official number of cases in the Damascus-controlled areas of Syria was announced at 584, which many observers think is a very underestimated figure. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, AANES ordered the closure of borders except for humanitarian transport, and imposed a fourteen-day isolation order on all arriving people: AANES believes that the new cases could have come from areas controlled by the regime, as one of the newly infected women arrived from Damascus. Many were then stranded at the border. Collective prayers in mosques were also banned, and restaurants were restricted to serving take-away food. The Kurdish Red Crescent reported that 88 people were quarantined. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, while the number of cases in the rest of Syria rose to 738, the authorities in Rojava announced 17 new cases, 11 in Jezira, three in Raqqa and three in Deir Ezzor, for a total of 25... (*Rûdaw*)

Concerning ISIS, phase 2 of Operation "Deterrence of Terrorism", launched on the 17<sup>th</sup> in response to the request of Deir Ezzor tribal leaders who were concerned about the jihadist resurgence in their region, ended on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Strongly supported by the population of the areas concerned, it led to the capture of 31 militants, including a commander, and the confiscation of important military equipment (*Difesa e sicurezza*). Besides, Turkish intelligence agents infiltrated the al-Hol camp to free a Moldovan woman and her four children, an escape confirmed on the 17<sup>th</sup> by the local authorities. The SDF said they did not understand the need for such an operation, as they keep asking the countries of origin of these detainees to

repatriate them, without much success... (VOA) This action also raises the question of whether fighters could be exfiltrated in the same way, and the AANES issued a statement accusing Turkey of supporting ISIS.

Besides, daily life in Rojava is still very much marred by insecurity, whether as a result of war, attacks or accidents. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, an explosion in an Asayish (Security) or SDF ammunition depot in Hassakah is said to have injured 8 people (*Rûdaw*). In Sarê Kaniyê / Ras al-Aïn, the first city taken by the Turks in their last October invasion, bomb attacks followed one another: on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, car bombs exploded in the city, killing and injuring people. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, at least eight people, including six civilians, died and 19 were injured in a motorbike bomb explosion in a vegetable market. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, another motorbike bomb killed two civilians and a combatant, and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, another car bomb again killed six people, mostly combatants, at a checkpoint in the village of Tal Halaf, near Sarê Kaniyê. Fifteen people were injured. In Afrin, an improvised explosive device killed a Kurdish child on the 26<sup>th</sup> and injured four others (*WKI*). These different attacks have not been claimed. While Ankara generally blames the "terrorist organisation PKK/YPG" for the attacks in the Syrian regions it controls, AANES blames it on the internal struggles between Syrian opponents, including those used by Turkey as proxies.

In Manbij, still held by a Military Council affiliated to the SDF, but with a Russian-Syrian military presence, six civilians living in surrounding villages were killed on the 27<sup>th</sup> by artillery fire from

Syrian auxiliaries of the Turkish army, launched from a Turkish base in Sheikh Nasser, north-west of the city. Women and children were among the dead, and six other children were wounded (*Kurdistan-24*). Pro-Turkish mercenaries continue their attacks on villages on the borders of their zone of control as well as their abuses within it. Sometimes civilians are victims of their internal clashes, as in Afrin, where on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, an elderly woman was killed in the infighting between two different jihadist groups (*WKI*).

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, eighteen human rights organisations sounded the alarm about Turkey's war crimes in Afrin in an open letter to European officials, Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Robert Ragnar Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). They accuse Ankara and its Syrian representatives of having "since the beginning of Turkish military operations" committed in the area "war crimes, crimes against humanity, as well as crimes of ethnic cleansing and genocide" (*Rûdaw*).

Since the publication of this text, unfortunately, new violations have taken place. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, an 18-year-old Kurdish boy, Mihemed Mistefa Yusif, was found hanging from a tree in front of his home in Afrin. According to local testimonies, while his family had already been evicted from its previous house by the jihadists, he had refused to go to Libya to fight. Many fighters sent to Libya are recruited by a shady private security company, "Sadat", with close ties to the Turkish president. At the end of the

month, a 50-year-old Kurdish woman from Afrin, who had been kidnapped and tortured for 26 days by pro-Turkish auxiliaries before being released for ransom, gave a frightening testimony. Horrified to discover her 27-year-old daughter and 3-year-old granddaughter in the same prison, she was subjected to electric shocks and drowning simulations, insulted, beaten... She lost 19 kg during this period. She also confirmed that the jihadists practiced rape of their prisoners. She waited to give her testimony until she and her family were safe in the Shehba region, still administered by the AANES (*Kurdistan for women*).

Besides, Turkey continues its rampant colonisation of the Syrian zones it controls: building new military bases, Ankara has generalised the use of its currency there since June, an evolution facilitated by the fact that it pays its local mercenaries in Turkish liras. The post offices (*Posta Telegraf Telefon*, PTT) now open in these regions serve as exchange offices, and have been supplied in small denominations for this purpose. Chambers of commerce closely linked to their Turkish counterparts have also been established. In Afrin, many Kurdish landowners have been stripped of their land, and olive production, the wealth of this mountainous region, is exported to Europe via Turkey. The part of the olive money that does not stay in Turkey is often the cause of the confrontations between the jihadist factions already mentioned (*Le Monde*).

The silence of the international community about Turkish spoliations, abuses and war crimes in the Rojava is becoming increasingly unjustifiable and deafening.

## CULTURE

### *Death of the "Amed Nightingale"*

On the morning of 5 July, the *dengbêj* Seyidxanê Boyaxcî, nicknamed the "Amed Nightingale", died at the age of 87 in his flat in Amed (Diyarbakir). He was suffering from paralysis caused by an infection that had spread throughout his body. Raised by his uncle after the death of both his parents, he had not been able to go to school long. First a shepherd and then a shoe-shine boy, he confided that his songs had enabled him to continue living after the early death of his seven children.

He was for a long time very present at the "House of Dengbej" in the old city of Diyarbakir, until it was evacuated by the Turkish authorities in 2016, when they dismissed the co-mayors and replaced them with an trustee, before reopening in 2017.

Seyidxanê Boyaxcî was buried in the Yeniköy cemetery in the Bağlar district of Diyarbakir.

### *Book Fair in Rojava*

Scheduled to last six days from July 20<sup>th</sup>, the *Qamishli Book Fair* had to close its doors earlier than

planned because of the COVID epidemic, but it is already extraordinary and praiseworthy that such an event could have taken place in such a difficult context. Around 40 publishers and several writers brought about 120.000 books, mostly in Kurdish and Arabic, to the site. "Various books on religion, ethnicity and history as well as dictionaries were brought from many places", said Khabat Ibrahim, who attended the event. About 700 books were presented by Kurdish publishers based in Turkey, transported to Rojava via the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. However, no publisher from this Region participated in the event. Unfortunately, book prices remain very high given the local currency exchange rate and the standard of living of the inhabitants... (*Rûdaw*)

### *Political asylum for exiled Iranian Kurdish writer Behrouz Boochani*

It was learned on 24<sup>th</sup> July that Iranian Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani, known for writing a book about his experience of six years internment in a camp in Papua New Guinea, had finally been granted political asylum in New Zealand.

Like many asylum seekers turned away by Australia, he had been interned in a refugee camp far from Australia, in Manus, Papua New Guinea, which was a lawless zone and a daily hell. He managed to make his situation known by texting a testimony in Kurdish, which was later translated into English and published as a book under the title *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison*, which won him the Victoria Prize for Literature, Australia's richest literary award.

Having been in New Zealand since November, where he arrived thanks to an invitation to testify at a literary festival, he learned that his asylum application had been accepted on his 37<sup>th</sup> birthday. Now a researcher at the University of Canterbury, based in Christchurch, the South Island's largest city, Boochani said in a statement that he will continue to fight for refugees "as long as the Australian government continues to illegally detain people in Port Moresby, Nauru and Australia" (*AFP*).



July 1, 2020  
By Erol Katircioglu

## Associating Turkey's pro-Kurdish HDP with violence is a form of political violence

Secular politics in Turkey follow a very peculiar modus operandi. It has come to be a type of politics that is formed more so by people who espouse values such as laïcité, Westernism and modernity. This political sphere in Turkey contains two main parties.

One of these is the main opposition secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), which forms the left-wing of the opposition Nation Alliance, while the right-wing of the alliance is formed by the centre-right nationalist Good Party. Of course, there are other parties, but I will not include them in the following evaluation due to their diminutive nature.

It is very normal that every identity has within it (beneath its top layer) certain variations. However, the current political system and the competitive pressure formed over our current political parties force identities to consolidate themselves within their own being. Because pressure has a unifying effect, it becomes a necessity that differences within an identity simply coexist. This is the dynamic on which relations have been formed between the Nation Alliance's CHP and Good Party.

Upon examining the formation of the political sphere in Turkey, one sees that it is only possible to break the power of the ruling People's Alliance – formed by the Justice and Development Party and its junior



partner, the Nationalist Movement Party – through the inclusion of the pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). In other words, the strongest formula for a change in Turkey's ruling power lies with the HDP.

I have a difficult time understanding secular critics who are increasingly questioning or seemingly gauging the HDP as they call for the party to distance itself from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). I say this, because this is precisely the type of question or statement that is looking to widen the distance between the HDP and the Nation Alliance.

In other words, the call for the HDP to distance itself from the PKK actually serves the purpose of calling for the party to distance itself from the Nation Alliance. It then becomes necessary to ask if the oft-repeated phrase "The HDP must distance itself from the PKK" does not serve the ruling al-

liance, then who does it benefit?

In truth, secular politics in Turkey has followed a course that opts to remain within parameters drawn by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, even though this is never openly expressed by politicians in the secular sphere. For example: how else can you explain how the CHP accepts the argument put forth by President Erdoğan, for the sake of his own political future, that the HDP is a political extension of the PKK, and the main opposition party distances itself from HDP? And how about the Good Party's dislike for the HDP?

President Erdoğan's designation of the HDP as a party associated with violence is a vehicle he finds most meaningful for his own political future. This allows him to once again seize power through the People's Alliance voters and maintain a grip over Turkey. The ruling alliance's associa-

tion of the HDP with violence is itself a form of political violence.

Creating tension over differences in society is a means of creating an environment of violence. The political violence in Turkey today is the work of Erdoğan's government.

Let me very clear. The HDP is a political party, which conducts democratic politics to protect the rights of all identities who have been wronged, beginning with Kurds. The party does this in a way that renders veering into political violence meaningless.

Turkey's secular political circles must be able to form a statement that is as clear and definitive as the one above. Can they do so? Will they do so? We don't know the answer to these questions.

But we are waiting.



July 1, 2020  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## COVID-19: Iraq announces new increase in cases, crosses 2000 total deaths

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment on Wednesday announced an increase of 2,415 new coronavirus cases, a new high in the past few days. The ministry also announced another 107 fatalities, raising the national total coronavirus-related death tally to more than 2000 since the outbreak began in Iraq.

In its daily statement, the ministry mentioned that 11,378 tests had been conducted in 24 hours, making the total nearly 556,000. It also outlined the total number of infections had reached 51,524 confirmed infections, including 26,267 recoveries, 2,050 deaths, and 23,207 active cases.

Today's figures do not include the most recent developments in the Kurdistan Region, which has its own health ministry and typically announces results later in the day. As such, Kurdistan's



An Iraqi volunteer throws a medical gown into a fire after burying corpses dead due to COVID-19 complication in Iraq's southern province of Najaf. (Photo: Reuters)

figures are usually added to the following day's national tally.

Since late May, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of new coronavirus infections and deaths, even as authorities reintroduced partial curfews in efforts to curb the spread of the virus. Amid the crisis, health officials have repeatedly expressed fears of a collapse of the healthcare system.

On Tuesday, a shipment consisting of 25 tons of preventive medical equipment from the Republic of Azerbaijan arrived at Baghdad airport to be distributed to the health ministry's departments throughout several Iraqi provinces. Iraqi authorities have said that the recent spike in cases and fatalities is partially due to shortages of such equipment, including prevention and sterilization supplies and pulmonary resuscitation devices

The World Health Organization (WHO), in cooperation with Iraq's health ministry, launched a four-week campaign on Monday in Baghdad's high-risk neighborhoods aimed at increasing awareness among its population of hygiene practices that would help to prevent transmission.

The effort includes mobilizing 250 volunteers to deliver "critical" messages to nearly six million people in attempts to help curb soaring infection rates, the WHO headquarters in Iraq tweeted.

On June 10, the organization's representative in Iraq stated that the premature resumption of trade with Iran, by both Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, had been a significant factor in the dramatic spike in new cases of the deadly disease.

**Le Monde**

01 juillet 2020  
Par Nathalie Guibert

## L'escalade se poursuit entre la France et la Turquie

**P**aris a annoncé mercredi qu'il quittait l'opération de surveillance maritime de l'OTAN en Méditerranée pour dénoncer les « trafics » d'armes de l'allié turc en Libye.

La France a annoncé mercredi 1er juillet son retrait temporaire de l'opération de surveillance de l'OTAN en Méditerranée « Sea Guardian », qu'elle appuyait avec un avion de patrouille maritime et une frégate.

Avec cette décision transmise mardi 30 juin par l'ambassadrice française au secrétaire général de l'Alliance à Bruxelles, Paris entend « mettre un coup de projecteur sur l'ambiguïté fondamentale d'une opération antitrafics dans laquelle il y a des trafiquants », en l'occurrence les Turcs, a précisé le ministère des armées.

L'escalade entre les deux alliés

se poursuit, après les déclarations lundi du président français, Emmanuel Macron, évoquant la « responsabilité historique et criminelle » de la Turquie en Libye. En violation de l'embargo sur les armes, Ankara y livre des équipements au gouvernement d'accord national de Faïez Sarraj et achemine des milliers de mercenaires syriens. Face aux critiques, le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, défend

son « soutien à un gouvernement légitime reconnu par la communauté internationale » et reproche à Paris son appui au camp opposé de Khalifa Haftar, approvisionné lui aussi illégalement en armes par la Russie, les Emirats arabes unis et l'Égypte.

Le 10 juin, devant la Libye, la frégate française Courbet, alors placée sous commandement de l'OTAN, avait été



visée par les radars de tir d'une frégate turque, l'Orucreis, qui escortait un cargo soupçonné de transporter des armes vers Tripoli. Le 17 juin, la ministre Florence Parly a porté l'incident sur la table de l'OTAN, recevant le soutien public de huit alliés européens. Le secrétaire général, Jens Stoltenberg, a accepté une « enquête » sur ce que Paris dénonce comme un acte « extrêmement agressif ».

Mais son rapport, classifié, a évité de pointer une faute turque en dépit des éléments de preuve que Paris affirme avoir fournis, notamment des interceptions de guerre électronique. « Il y a eu une hésitation, regrette le ministère français, qui s'explique par une habitude de nonchalance face aux écarts de conduite de la Turquie, dans une structure peu enthousiaste à l'idée de se confronter au problème. »

#### « Violations répétées de l'embargo »

Cette investigation « non concluante » a réjoui l'ambassadeur de Turquie à Paris, Ismail Hakki Musa, auditionné par la commission des affaires étrangères et des forces armées du Sénat mercredi matin. Le diplomate a nié l'intégralité des faits – « Tout cela n'existe pas » – et produit des

documents qui ont laissé les spécialistes plus que sceptiques. « Ses photographies ? C'est comme si nous vous montrions les phares de la voiture pour prouver que nous n'avons pas klaxonné », a-t-on ironisé au ministère.

« L'incident du Courbet est un événement préoccupant, mais le fond de l'affaire ce sont les violations répétées de l'embargo par la Turquie, un historique de falsification et de trafics, avec une répétition incessante », a martelé l'entourage de la ministre des armées. Une série de précédents a été rappelée à l'appui de ces accusations. En janvier, le Single-Eagle a quitté le port de Mersin, en Turquie, vers la Libye, où il a déchargé des équipements militaires. Le Bana, ensuite, a été placé sous séquestre à Gênes par les autorités italiennes, auxquelles son capitaine a avoué avoir transporté des armes. Le 9 février, l'Ana a lui aussi déclaré aller en Tunisie avant de bifurquer pour Misrata, en étant rebaptisé Vav, avec son système d'identification coupé. Renommé le Pray, il s'est de nouveau rendu en Libye mîmars sous fausse identification.

Quant au Cirkin, le cargo en cause dans l'incident du 10 juin, il avait déjà effectué un trajet fin mai vers Misrata, ma-

quillé en Kin. Sur son dernier trajet, protégé par trois frégates turques, il a été interrogé en vain par les marines grecque, italienne et française. L'ambassadeur a dénoncé au Sénat « les pratiques consistant à interroger un navire trois fois dans la journée, du jamais-vu, comme si on doutait des bonnes intentions de la partie turque ». Le plus simple, a rétorqué le président de la commission des affaires étrangères, Christian Cambon, « aurait été d'autoriser une inspection ». Le ministère de la défense tranche : « Compte tenu de son pedigree, il n'est pas étonnant que l'OTAN désigne le Cirkin comme "navire d'intérêt" ».

#### « Pas beaucoup de satisfaction »

Cette escalade risque de se poursuivre. Sur le sujet turc, Paris ne veut plus du compromis otanien que M. Stoltenberg maintient dans une organisation où les décisions se prennent à l'unanimité. La France espère pousser les Européens à un front uni plus clair. L'opération de surveillance maritime « Irini » de l'UE, cousine de « Sea Guardian », ne peut se coordonner en raison du différend gréco-turc. Au-delà, les différends sont aussi profonds que la Méditerranée, depuis l'intervention turque en Syrie

contre les partenaires kurdes de la coalition internationale jusqu'au redécoupage illégal par Ankara des frontières maritimes.

La pression européenne peut-elle payer ? L'OTAN a enfin approuvé, mardi, les « plans de défense graduée » de la Pologne et des Etats baltes. Ankara les bloquait depuis plus d'un an, exigeant que les 29 alliés déclarent les milices syriennes kurdes YPG comme organisation terroriste. « La Turquie a agi de manière constructive », s'est réjoui Linas Linkevicius, chef de la diplomatie lituanienne. « Imaginez l'OTAN sans la Turquie, vous n'aurez plus d'OTAN ! », a lancé l'ambassadeur Ismail Hakki Musa à Paris. « Vous ne saurez pas traiter l'Iran, l'Irak, la Syrie, la Méditerranée au Sud, le Caucase, la Libye, l'Egypte. »

« En toute amitié », a maintes fois répété le diplomate, « Turcs et Français doivent se parler ». Le dialogue reste toutefois celui de sourds. « Le Sénat a offert une excellente tribune pour défendre les positions de la Turquie, mais nous n'avons pas beaucoup de satisfaction à l'issue de cette réunion », a euphémisé le socialiste Jean-Marc Todeschini. En résumant : « Ce n'est jamais la faute de la Turquie. »



July 1, 2020  
By Holy Johnson

## 'Threat of airstrikes' by Turkey stunting Iraq's minority communities: US official

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – Threats of airstrikes by Turkey amid its current military offensive are harming Iraq's already vulnerable ethnic and religious communities, a US official has said.

In a discussion held by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on Iraq's minority groups, the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour condemned recent

Turkish airstrikes on the Yezidi heartland of Shingal, near the Syrian border.

"How can people possibly flourish if they are under the threat of airstrikes?" Robert

Destro said on Tuesday, in response to a question from Rudaw's Roj Eli Zalla on Turkish airstrikes in Sinjar (Shingal).

The airstrikes in the early

hours of June 15 came just days after hundreds of Yazidi families returned to the Shingal area from displacement camps across the Kurdistan Region. While the area was liberated from the Islamic State (ISIS) group in 2015, few members of the community have returned to the area, with basic services yet to be restored and concerns for their security amid the presence of a host of government and non-government military forces.

"Recent airstrikes conducted by Turkey have not only endangered the lives of Yazidis in Sinjar but have also dimmed the prospect of the return of civilians to their areas of origin," read a statement from the Free Yazidi Foundation, calling on various bodies including the UN Security Council, NATO and the Global Coalition against ISIS to take action.

"The question of how you deal with airstrikes is a little bit out of my portfolio...The only thing I think that can be done is engagement with the Turks and other people who have been acting in ways that are not conducive to the health of these communities," Destro added.



Yezidi women gather outside the ancient Temple of Lalish during a ceremony marking the Yazidi New Year. Photo: AFP / Safin Hamed

At least five civilians have been killed across the Kurdistan Region in the aerial Operation Claw-Eagle, launched by Ankara with the stated aim of targeting alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) locations in the Kurdistan Region and in northern Iraqi territories disputed by the governments of the Kurdistan Region and federal Iraq, including Makhmour and Shingal.

Though Claw-Eagle has been the largest scale air offensive on the Kurdistan Region and disputed areas of Iraq for some

time, Shingal has long been subject to individual airstrikes largely suspected to have been conducted by Turkey. A spate of Turkish airstrikes hit the region in 2018, killing prominent PKK leader Zaki Shingali on the anniversary of the Kocho massacre by ISIS.

"If Turkey has concerns about the security of Sinjar, it must discuss them with Iraqi authorities, not terrify a population still recovering from genocide," Yazidi activist Murad Ismael told Al-Monitor on June 15.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a bipartisan government body, has also condemned the targeting of Yazidi settlements by Ankara.

"These actions are particularly threatening to hundreds of traumatized Yazidi families attempting to return to Sinjar and to other civilians in northern Iraq — none of whom deserve to be placed in harm's way by a NATO ally," USCIRF chair Gayle Manchin said in a June 19 statement.

The US State Department has been noticeably quiet with regards to the airstrikes, but US congressmen have individually issued condemnation of Turkey's operations.

"I am extremely disturbed by reports of Turkish military attacks on Kurdish people in Iraq. The Kurds have been a reliable U.S. partner in the fight against ISIS, and any violence against civilians by President Erdogan must be condemned," said Rep. Jim Cooper, Democratic congressman for the state of Tennessee - home to the city of Nashville, where a large Kurdish community lives.



July 02, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Iraq announces 110 deaths, 2,184 new infections in 24 hours

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Thursday, the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment announced it had recorded close to 2,200 new coronavirus cases and over 100 more deaths due to complications related to the disease in the past 24 hours.

In its daily statement, the ministry mentioned that it had conducted 11,762 new tests for

individuals suspected of carrying the virus, out of which 2,184 came back positive.

Since the outbreak of the virus, Iraq has recorded a total of 53,708 infections, including 2,160 deaths, and a total of 27,912 recoveries, leaving 25,796 active cases in treatment centers, according to official data.

Since late May, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of new coronavirus infections and deaths, even as authorities reintroduced partial curfews in efforts to curb the spread of the virus. Amid the crisis, health officials have repeatedly expressed fears of a collapse of the healthcare system.

In efforts to aid Iraq in curbing

the outbreak of the pandemic on Thursday, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently stated it was supplying Iraq with 300 oxygenation devices. The representative of the World Health Organization in Iraq, Adham Ismail stated that "WHO has allocated a shipment of medical aid to Iraq from its warehouses in the Emirates city of Dubai." He added that "the shipment is

300 oxygen devices that will be distributed to government hospitals in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Health." Ismail noted further, "the UAE government has allocated a plane to transport the shipment from the WHO warehouses in Dubai to Baghdad International Airport.

The package comes after the UAE, Kuwait, Azerbaijan, and other regional countries delivered similar assistance to Iraq



Iraqi medical team disinfects medical gloves used for burying corpses dead due to COVID-19 in Iraq's southern province of Najaf. (Photo: Reuters)

in recent days, as the number of coronavirus cases continues to rise with daily infections of nearly 2,000.

LE FIGARO

2 juillet 2020  
Par Isabelle Lasserre

## Erdogan sème la zizanie au sein de l'Otan

**D**ÉCRYPTAGE - Le comportement de la Turquie au sein de l'Alliance divise les alliés qui peinent à faire front uni face aux actions turques.

Élu contre le système, il est resté, dans certains domaines, un président disrupteur, qui n'hésite pas à renverser la table et à faire fi des convenances diplomatiques. L'Alliance atlantique et la Turquie en font régulièrement les frais.

En novembre 2019, sa formule sur la « mort cérébrale » de l'Otan avait déstabilisé de nombreux alliés. À l'époque, Emmanuel Macron regrettait le silence de l'Alliance à propos de l'offensive militaire turque contre les milices kurdes en Syrie, alliées des Occidentaux. C'est aussi pour protester contre le manque de réaction de l'Otan, quand une frégate française a été prise pour cible par un navire turc le 10 juin, qu'il l'a réutilisée, estimant que l'incident était une nouvelle « démonstration » de la « mort cérébrale de l'Otan ». Paris estime que l'Alliance est trop conciliante avec la partie turque, alors qu'elle devrait protester contre sa « stratégie



Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel et Recep Tayyip Erdogan lors de la photo de famille des participants au sommet de l'Otan du 4 décembre 2019, au Grove hotel de Watford, au nord-est de Londres. CHRISTIAN HARTMANN / AFP

de la tension» et sa « responsabilité historique et criminelle » dans le conflit en Libye.

Le sujet du comportement de la Turquie au sein de l'Otan est l'un des principaux tabous de l'Alliance. C'est à peine si son secrétaire général, Jens Stoltenberg, a reconnu un timide « désaccord entre alliés » en parlant de la relation entre Paris et Ankara, qui n'a pourtant jamais été aussi exécrable. Le président français, lui, a choisi de mettre délibérément les pieds dans le plat et de secouer le cocotier. La Syrie, la Libye, l'acquisition du

système de défense S400 à un pays, la Russie, qui a désigné l'Otan comme son ennemi, le contentieux sur les forages gaziers en Méditerranée orientale, le chantage migratoire : la liste est longue des actions turques qui nuisent à l'Otan en général et à certains de ses alliés, dont la France, en particulier. « Le comportement de la Turquie sur le flanc sud de l'Otan est dangereux. Ses actions sont-elles conformes à son appartenance à l'Alliance ? L'incident naval prouve qu'il y a un problème dans l'Alliance qui doit être traité. Nous avons besoin de clarification », ré-

sume-t-on à l'Élysée. La France aimerait que la Turquie se comporte en « allié responsable ». « Tant que nous continuerons, membres de l'Otan, Européens, parties prenantes de ce sujet, à être faibles dans nos propos ou à manquer de clarté, nous laisserons le jeu des puissances non coopératives se faire », prévient Emmanuel Macron.

Si le comportement de la Turquie au sein de l'Alliance pose des questions de fond, aucune solution n'a encore été trouvée parmi les alliés. Les statuts de l'Alliance ne prévoient ni l'exclusion ni la condamnation d'un de ses membres. La Turquie n'a pour l'instant aucun intérêt à quitter une organisation qui lui assure le soutien américain et un pied dans le monde occidental. Et, surtout, les alliés sont divisés. Dans son offensive menée contre la Turquie au sein de l'Alliance, la France peine à fédérer. Lorsqu'elle a dénoncé l'attitude de la Marine turque, elle a obtenu le soutien de huit alliés sur trente seulement, les plus européens. « Les autorités françaises se trouvent relativement isolées dans le procès qu'elles instruisent à la Turquie depuis

plusieurs mois », écrit l'ancien diplomate Michel Duclos dans une note pour l'Institut Montaigne. Leur problème, poursuit-il, « est de trouver le moyen de convaincre leurs partenaires et alliés ».

L'Allemagne, où vivent trois millions de Turcs et qui est le premier partenaire économique de la Turquie, est mal à l'aise avec la méthode française. « Nos rapports avec la Turquie sont aussi compliqués que ceux de la France avec l'Algérie. Nous avons le même but que les Français, mais nous préférons aborder les choses de manière très progressive », explique un haut diplomate allemand. Les États-Unis voient dans la Tur-

quie un grand allié de 80 millions d'habitants, pilier de l'Alliance atlantique, doté d'une position stratégique unique. Ils considèrent que le conflit libyen est un problème européen. Quant aux pays d'Europe orientale, focalisés sur la menace russe, ils ne veulent pas froisser les Américains en élevant le ton contre Ankara. « Beaucoup d'Européens sont agacés par le ton de Macron. Le président français, qui résume la situation libyenne à un problème turc alors que la question est bien plus vaste, serait plus crédible s'il critiquait aussi le général Haftar et son parrain russe », note un diplomate.

Après avoir bousculé l'Otan, la France remue l'UE, avec laquelle la Turquie entretient aussi une relation ambiguë et multiforme. « Si la Turquie ne se comporte pas comme une alliée et menace nos intérêts de sécurité, elle ne peut pas compter sur notre solidarité. Il ne peut pas y avoir un chantage aux migrants et une demande d'aide financière en même temps ! Il n'y a pas d'automatisme dans la relation entre la Turquie et l'UE. C'est donnant-donnant », prévient une source à l'Élysée. À la demande de la France, les ministres de l'Union européenne vont se réunir pour débattre de la Turquie. Paris aimerait une discussion « sans tabou » et « sans naïveté ». La

France voudrait que l'UE utilise les leviers dont elle dispose pour « ne plus subir » les croche-pattes de la Turquie et redevenir « un acteur ».

À défaut d'avoir le soutien de la majorité de ses alliés, en pressant l'Otan d'affronter sans tarder le problème turc, la France a le mérite de mettre sur la table des questions auxquelles il faudra bien répondre un jour : la Turquie a-t-elle toujours vocation à rester dans l'Otan ? Ses actions menacent-elles l'existence de l'Alliance ? Cette dernière est-elle capable de résoudre ce nouveau conflit en se réformant ?



July 2, 2020

## Turkey ups base presence in Kurdistan Region by 50 percent in two weeks: Kurdish intelligence source

**Z**AKHO, Kurdistan Region — In the Zakho sub-districts of Batifa and Darkar, the roar of Turkish aircraft has become a daily occurrence.

Turkey's air campaign (Operation Claw-Eagle), stated to be against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets, has been ongoing since June 15. The campaign has sparked fear among populations across the Zakho, Akre and Amedi districts of Duhok province.

"Bombs and airstrikes aren't stopping," Batifa villager Arif Marouf said. "We are calling on relevant authorities in the

KRG to find a solution for this conflict. We urge the PKK in the mountains not to transfer their conflict to our [populated] areas."

According to intelligence information obtained by Rudaw, from 1983 to mid-June 2020, Turkey established military bases in 24 strategic locations in the areas of Kani Masi, Deralok and Shiladze. In that period, Turkey has taken control of nearly 60 villages in Duhok province, according to the intelligence source.

In this latest major air and ground offensive, Turkey has crossed into an area 40-50 ki-



lometers long and 15 kilometers deep, and into Batifa sub-district.

Up until June 15, there were 24 Turkish military bases on

Kurdistan Region land, the intelligence source told Rudaw. In the just over two weeks since Claw-Eagle was launched, another 12 military bases have been established.



July 02, 2020

## Leaders of Russia, Turkey, Iran Talk About Stabilizing Syria

**M**OSCOW - The leaders of Russia, Turkey and Iran on Wednesday discussed efforts to stabilize Syria in a video call, emphasizing the need to promote a political settlement for the nine-year conflict.

Russia and Iran have staunchly supported Syrian President Bashar Assad throughout the country's war, while Turkey has backed his foes. However, the three countries have pooled their efforts to help end hostilities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed the trilateral cooperation to help reduce violence in the country, but he also emphasized the need to deal with a few pockets of militant resistance.

"We need to think what other steps must be taken to neutralize the terrorist groups that are still active," Putin said at the start of the video call, noting that the situation in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib and the areas east of the Euphrates River remain tense.

The Russian leader extolled Russia-Turkey cooperation to reduce hostilities in Idlib, noting "the situation in the de-escalation zone has stabilized considerably following the introduction of a cease-fire."

In early March, an agreement between Turkey and Russia halted the Syrian govern-



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, attends a video conference with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Moscow, Russia, July 1, 2020.

ment's three-month air and ground campaign into rebel-held Idlib. The cease-fire has largely held.

Putin emphasized the need to help Syria rebuild its economy and encourage the return of refugees, criticizing the U.S. and the EU sanctions against Assad's government as an attempt to "strangle Syria economically."

The Trump administration this month began implementing new sanctions aimed at cutting off revenue for Assad's government. The sanctions, known as the U.S. Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, are the toughest set of measures to be imposed on Syria yet, preventing anyone around the world from doing business with Syrian officials

or state institutions or from participating in the country's reconstruction.

Putin also spoke of the need to promote a political process, saying that "it's necessary to help advance an inclusive dialogue between the Syrians within the framework of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva."

"We propose to support that process, help the participants meet and start a direct dialogue on the development of parameters of Syria's future state order," the Russian leader said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also underlined the need to find a political solution to the conflict. "I hope that during this meeting we

will continue this impetus," he said.

Last month, Geir Pedersen, the United Nations' special envoy for Syria, told the U.N. Security Council that he hopes that talks on drafting the country's new constitution can be held in late August.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani used the call to urge the U.S. to withdraw its troops from Syria to allow Assad's government fully reclaim control of the country's territory.

Some U.S. troops have remained in Syria to protect an expanse of Kurdish-controlled oil fields and facilities from falling into the hands of the Islamic State group.



July 02, 2020  
By Rebaz Majeed & Namu Abdulla

## Turkish Drone Strike Leaves Civilian Casualties

**K**UNA MASI, IRAQ/WASHINGTON - Ceiling and concrete walls are all that is left of a grocery store owned by a young Kurdish couple here in this riverside, tourist village in northern Iraq.

The store was hit last week by a Turkish drone attack, wounding the owners and their two small children.

“At the time of the incident, I immediately lost one of my legs,” said Peyman Talib, the 31-year-old wife, from her hospital bed, with one leg missing from the knee down.

“My other leg is also broken. It requires further surgery,” she told VOA.

Talib’s husband, Keywan Kawa, 30, and their two children, a 7-year-old girl and a 5-year-old boy, were also injured in the attack.

“There are about 20 shrapnel pieces in my body,” Kawa told VOA at the hospital where his wife and children were receiving medical treatment. He wore a medical neck brace.

“I have left my son in the hands of God. There is shrapnel stuck in his head and the doctors here say it too risky for them to take it out,” he said.

### Kurdish rebels

The drone strike appeared to have chased a Toyota truck carrying several fighters allegedly affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which was left badly damaged.

The PKK is an armed group



that has engaged in a three-decade-long insurgency for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. The Kurdish group maintains bases inside the autonomous northern Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Kawa said the truck stopped near his store, a man got off and entered the shop to purchase some goods. Then the Turkish strike hit, killing the man and injuring Kawa and his family.

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), an armed offshoot of the PKK that fights for more political and cultural rights for the Kurds in Iran, said the man was a party member named Rebwar Gholizadeh, better known by his nom de guerre, Ariwan the Revolutionary.

The group also said three additional fighters, who apparently stayed behind in the vehicle, were wounded, but it did not list their injuries.

Both the PKK and PJAK are

designated as terrorist groups by Washington, Ankara and Tehran.

### Iraqi condemnation

A day after the strike, Iraqi President Barham Salih’s office issued a statement, condemning the airstrike and calling on Turkey to stop “its repeated violations of Iraq’s airspace that have resulted in civilian casualties.”

A diplomatic source at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, however, told VOA “these counterterrorism operations are based on our inherent right of self-defense enshrined in the Article 51 of the U.N. Charter.”

Article 51 of the U.N. Charter stipulates that “nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace

and security.”

The Turkish source added that had Iraqi authorities “acted decisively to eliminate PKK from their territories, there would be no need for us to conduct such operations.”

Local officials said other Turkish strikes had killed six civilians in northern Iraq.

Turkey’s Ministry of National Defense, however, said in a statement last week that Turkish airstrikes had targeted “the terrorists” and that “no civilians have or will ever be harmed in its operation.”

It’s rare for Turkey to go after PJAK, despite the group’s close ties to the PKK.

This strike, experts said, indicated close coordination between Turkey and Iran against the Kurdish rebels.

Derailing Kurdish unity talks  
Iran and Turkey fear granting

local autonomy to their restive Kurdish populations may embolden them to push for outright independence, some experts say.

The two countries, however, share a more immediate common objective in their joint operations against Kurdish rebels: derailing Washington-mediated talks to unite Syria's Kurdish factions, said Aykan Erdemir, director of the Turkey Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former member of the Turkish parliament.

Erdemir argues that both countries are trying to achieve that goal "by putting pressure on the Kurdistan Regional Gov-

ernment [KRG], which has close ties with the KNC."

KNC is a Syrian Kurdish party to the negotiations. The other party is the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is a major U.S. partner in the fight against the Islamic State terror group.

Turkey, however, views the SDF as an extension of the PKK.

"Although Ankara and Tehran have sectarian differences and clashing hegemonic ambitions concerning Iraq and the Middle East, time and again they have managed to find win-win arrangements to expand their re-

spective spheres of influence," Erdemir told VOA.

### US position

In addition to airstrikes, Turkey's operation includes ground troops who have crossed the border into Iraq.

The United States called Wednesday for cooperation among Turkey, Iraq and the KRG against the PKK.

"We regret any innocent loss of life and note the concerns expressed by the government of Iraq," a U.S. State Department spokesperson told VOA.

"The United States calls on Turkey and Iraq, including the

KRG, to work together to defeat the PKK," the spokesperson said, adding, "The United States is prepared to facilitate and support a coordinated approach on this issue."

Meanwhile, Kawa, the shop owner, is not certain whether life for him and his family will ever return to normal.

"My wife's leg has been chopped off. Nothing, not even the weight of this Earth in gold, can bring that back," he said.

VOA's State Department correspondent Cindy Saine and VOA's Ezel Sahinkaya contributed to this report from Washington.



July 3, 2020  
By Tom WHEELDON

## Turkey challenges allies and enemies alike in quest for 'larger role on world stage'

**T**urkish foreign policy has recently taken a hawkish turn in the Middle East and North Africa. From a diplomatic row with NATO ally France over a Libyan arms embargo to the deployment of special forces in northern Iraq, Ankara seems newly willing to challenge allies and enemies alike in its pursuit of a larger role on the world stage.

Even by the standards of recent years, June 2020 was a very active month in Turkish foreign policy. It quickly became clear that Turkey's military and technological support for the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya had given it the upper hand in its struggle against rebel commander Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army.

Chaos had reigned in Libya since the overthrow of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Haftar launched a bold offensive on the capital Tripoli in April 2019 with the backing of Russia, Egypt and the UAE. While France officially supports the internationally recognised government in Tripoli, Paris has been accused of supporting Haftar politically, having previously given him military assistance to fight Islamist militants.

Ankara demonstrated its growing confidence in its Libyan strategy on June 20, when it demanded that Haftar's forces pull out of Sirte, a pivotal city linking the east and west of Libya – before lambasting NATO ally France, accusing it of "jeopardising" the Western alliance's

security by supporting Haftar's forces.

### 'Geopolitical competition' with France

Franco-Turkish relations soured further the following week, when French President Emmanuel Macron told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he was playing a "dangerous game" in sending arms, aerial support and allied fighters from Syria to boost the GNA – warning that France "won't tolerate" such actions.

But Turkey's support – with the provision of drones proving particularly effective – eventually shifted the dynamic in the GNA's favour.

"Libya is part of a bunch of inter-

linking stories," said Howard Eissenstat, a Turkey specialist, associate professor at St. Lawrence University and senior non-resident fellow at the Project on Middle Eastern Democracy. "Turkey clearly sees itself as being able to play a larger role on the world stage; it sees its Western allies as not necessarily supporting of that, and has been willing to play hardball to assert what it sees as its national interest."

"From a Turkish standpoint, this represents a role that it has much right to as any other state, and which it has the capacity to play," Eissenstat continued.

Turkey wants to "fortify its position as a regional power and increase its geopolitical footprint

in the Middle East and North Africa region”, added Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, director of the German Marshall Fund’s Ankara bureau. “This in turn leads to geopolitical competition with some countries, as is the case with France.”

Ankara’s relations with its NATO allies hit another low on June 10, when Turkish naval boats conducted radar-targeting – indicating that a missile strike may be incoming – on a French warship trying to approach a Turkish civilian ship suspected of contravening a NATO arms embargo on Libya. According to a French defence official, the Courbet frigate was “lit up” three times by Turkish radar.

France called for NATO allies to discuss Turkey’s “aggressive” role in Libya a few days later. NATO subsequently launched an investigation into the incident.

Animosity between Ankara and Paris intensified on July 1, when France announced that it was suspending its involvement in NATO’s Sea Guardian operation in the Mediterranean enforcing the Libyan arms embargo.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has dismissed France’s claims and demanded an apology from France for “anti-Turkish actions”, alleging that France “has not told the truth to the EU or NATO”.

EU foreign ministers will meet at France’s request to discuss relations with Turkey on July 13. Adding the intrigue of espionage to the diplomatic slanging match, Ankara’s ambassador to France on Thursday confirmed reports that four Turkish nationals had been arrested for spying for the French foreign intelligence agency, the DGSE (Direction générale de la Sécurité extérieure).

#### Unprecedented deployment in Iraq

Turkey’s successful backing of Libya’s GNA may be Ankara’s most surprising geopolitical win recently. But Erdogan’s government also surprised many observers in June with an unprecedented deployment in northern Iraq against Kurdish forces.

Since 1984, Kurdish militant group the PKK – considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey as well as the EU, UK and US – has waged a series of armed rebellions against the Turkish state. Like his Kemalist predecessors and antagonists, Erdogan sees the PKK as an existential threat to Turkey’s territorial integrity.

This motivated the Turkish military’s first-ever deployment of ground forces on Iraqi soil on June 17, attacking PKK targets in the country’s semi-autono-

mous Kurdish region. Accusing the Baghdad government and Kurdish executive of failing to deal with PKK fighters – who allegedly use the area as a base for attacks on Turkey – Ankara sent in commando forces alongside warplanes, attack helicopters and drones after an intense artillery bombardment.

The Turkish military has been emboldened by its improved technological capabilities, Unluhisarcikli suggested: “These campaigns have become more proactive and effective thanks to the new abilities the Turkish army has gained, particularly with the use of armed drones.”

Yet Syria – where Ankara has given support to its allies since the civil war started in 2011 – remains the theatre in which Turkey is best known for striking Kurdish forces. Upon starting its direct military involvement there in 2016, Turkey launched the first in a series of attacks on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – a Kurdish group that allied with Western powers in the fight against the Islamic State group but which Ankara says is tied to the PKK.

Turkey’s latest and most audacious Syrian offensive was a victorious October 2019 campaign that saw its military carve out a 20-mile-deep “safe zone” seized from the SDF along the border – much to the chagrin of

European powers. Turkey said it was creating an area for some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in the country, but critics accused Ankara of ethnic cleansing as tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians fled their homes.

A Damoclean sword over Europe?

Erdogan responded to European indignation by holding a sword of Damocles over the continent’s head. After a chorus of protestations from the old continent decrying the offensive – including Macron’s demand that Ankara “put a stop to it as soon as possible” – the Turkish president said on October 10: “Hey EU, wake up. I say it again: If you try to frame our operation as an invasion, our task is simple – we will open the doors and send 3.6 million migrants to you.”

Analysts noted at the time that Erdogan’s reaction exemplified the lack of leverage the EU has over Turkey.

Macron expressed his exasperation with Erdogan the same day: When a reporter asked him for his views on the Turkish president’s menacing rhetoric, he said he had “nothing more” to add to his previous comments.

LE FIGARO

03 juillet 2020  
Par Nicolas Barotte

## En mer Méditerranée, la France se retire face à la Turquie

**P**our protester contre les violations de l’embargo de livraison d’armes en Libye, Paris a annoncé le retrait « temporaire » des moyens maritimes apportés à

l’opération de l’Otan « Sea Guardian ».

OTAN - Dans son bras de fer avec la Turquie en Méditerranée, la France a perdu une

manche. Désormais, les navires turcs pourront aller et venir presque librement au large de la Libye, sous le regard impuissant de la France. « Il y a six mois qu’il aurait

fallu réagir », soupire un officier, dans un constat d’échec. Pour marquer sa protestation contre le double jeu de la Turquie, accusée de violer l’embargo sur les livraisons



d'armes en Libye, le ministère des Armées a confirmé mercredi les informations de L'Opinion et annoncé le retrait « temporaire » des moyens maritimes apportés à l'opération « Sea Guardian ». Pour Paris, la Turquie livre des armes au Gouvernement d'union nationale de Fayez al-Sarraj, opposé aux troupes du général Haftar, tout en participant à l'opération de l'Otan censée faire respecter l'embargo.

« L'illumination » de la frégate Courbet, le 10 juin par trois navires turcs escortant un cargo suspect, aura été l'incident de trop. D'autant qu'il est demeuré sans réponse. « Nous sommes censés être une alliance. Un allié qui viole consciencieusement les règles que l'Alliance est censée faire respecter et tente de menacer ceux qui l'interrogent, ce n'est pas acceptable », a protesté la ministre des Armées, Florence Parly, jeudi, lors d'une audition devant les parlementaires européens de la sous-commission de la défense.

Il y a plus de deux semaines, Le Courbet, sous commandement de l'Otan, avait tenté d'interpeller le Cirkin. Si le navire turc prétendait transporter des médicaments, le cargo était fortement soupçonné de convoier des armes de Turquie vers le port de Misrata, en Libye. Mais il a refusé d'obtempérer. Une des frégates qui l'escortaient, le Gokova, a alors visé avec ses radars de conduite de tir le bâtiment français.

### Provocations turques

Chacun défend sa version des faits. Au ministère, on assure s'appuyer sur des interceptions électromagnétiques ou des images pour confirmer le ciblage du Courbet par le Gokova. Côté turc, on réfute toutes les accusations de ciblage ou de comportement

agressif. Et on demande des « excuses » à Paris. Le rapport diligenté par l'Otan n'a pas tranché le différend. « Ce rapport est classifié et sera discuté entre alliés dans un futur proche », explique une source officielle de l'Otan. La confusion est totale au sein de l'Alliance : les trois navires qui escortaient le Cirkin étaient en « soutien associé » à « Sea Guardian ». Ils utilisaient des « indicatifs Otan » pour naviguer.

La majorité des membres de l'Otan a préféré se tenir à distance de l'affaire. La France a reçu le soutien de 8 pays sur 30. Mais elle n'a pas eu l'appui des États-Unis. Pourtant l'incident n'est pas isolé, déplore-t-on au ministère des Armées. « Ce n'était pas le premier voyage du Cirkin », indique-t-on, en l'accusant aussi d'avoir maquillé ses indicatifs d'identification. Ce n'est pas non plus le seul navire turc à avoir été suspecté depuis janvier, dit-on, en citant le Single Eagle, le Bana ou le Ana. « Le Bana a été mis sous séquestre dans le port de Gênes et son capitaine a avoué avoir transporté des armes », ajoute-t-on. Au ministère, on dénonce la « nonchalance » de l'Alliance, qui tolère les provocations turques, de l'achat de missiles S400 russes aux tentatives de s'approprier des zones de forage au large de Chypre. « Nous ne pouvons pas laisser la Turquie mener une stratégie de puissance de l'autre côté de la Méditerranée », prévient un haut responsable français.

Mais la France, seule, n'a pas les moyens de faire pression. Le Courbet s'est désengagé de « Sea Guardian » le 14 juin. Paris mettait toujours à disposition de l'opération otanienne l'Aconit, une frégate de la classe Lafayette, et un avion Atlantique 2 de surveillance maritime. Ils étaient eux



Mobilisée dans le cadre de l'opération « Sea Guardian », la frégate Courbet quitte la rade de Toulon, en mai. Au large de la Libye, le 10 juin, le bâtiment français a été la cible d'une « illumination » de la part de navires turcs escortant un cargo suspect. Simon Ghesquiere / Marine Nationale/Andia.fr

aussi chargés de faire respecter l'embargo sur les livraisons d'armes en Libye. S'ils quittent « Sea Guardian », ils resteront en soutien de l'opération européenne « Irini ». « Mais les marges de manœuvres seront étroites », commente un officier de la marine. « Irini » et « Sea Guardian » ne coopèrent pas, en raison du refus de la Turquie. À défaut d'autre chose, la France disposera de capacités de renseignement indépendantes pour surveiller les allées et venues dans la zone.

Le retrait français de « Sea Guardian » désarme une opération fragile. Elle continue cependant de « poursuivre ses trois missions », explique-t-on cependant au sein de l'Alliance : renseignement maritime, contre-terrorisme, renforcement des capacités. La Turquie, l'Espagne, la Grèce, l'Allemagne et l'Italie y participent encore. Un seul navire demeure en mer : la frégate italienne de reconnaissance européenne multi-missions Carabiniere.

Pour tenter de faire réagir ses alliés, la France tape maintenant du poing sur table. « Nous avons formulé quatre demandes », a expliqué Flo-

rence Parly jeudi aux députés européens : « une réaffirmation solennelle du respect de l'embargo ; un rejet catégorique de l'utilisation par la Turquie des indicatifs Otan pour mener ses trafics ; une meilleure coopération entre UE et Otan ; et des mécanismes de déconfliction ».

La position française est toutefois fragilisée par une sorte de double jeu mené aussi par Paris en Libye. La France a apporté un soutien implicite aux forces du général Haftar, soutenues par la Russie. Ses adversaires l'accusent aussi d'être silencieuse sur les violations de l'embargo au profit de celui-ci. Faux, rétorque-t-on au ministère. « Nous sommes contre les violations de l'embargo, d'où qu'elles viennent. La frégate Jean-Bart a empêché un pétrolier des Émirats arabes unis d'accoster à Tobrouk », explique-t-on, en guise d'exemple. « Nous n'avons jamais été pour la présence de la Russie en Libye », insiste-t-on. « Il n'y a pas d'ambiguïté : nous sommes contre l'adjudication de la Libye. » Mais Paris, comme l'Europe, semble avoir perdu tout moyen de contrôle sur une crise à ses portes.

## Cette très intime relation entre Ankara et Doha qui fracture le monde arabo-musulman de la Syrie à la Libye

Arrivé le 11 décembre 2017 sur l'aéroport de Bâle Mulhouse, l'appareil commercial de Qatar Airways n'attend plus qu'une ultime couche de peinture pour être livré en septembre au président turc. Depuis un an et demi, le jumbo-jet à double pont - démarqué, discrétion oblige ! - est entre les mains d'une société de rénovation, sous un hangar de la section Aviation privée de l'aéroport franco-suisse. Un très bel avion à l'intérieur complètement refait, dont la valeur a plus que doublé, à 1 milliard de dollars, selon une source suisse sur place. Du sur-mesure, de la boiserie aux tablettes sur vérin ! Cheikh Tamim al-Thani, qui règle la facture, ne s'est pas moqué de son allié turc : sur la gauche en entrant s'étend l'espace privé d'Erdogan, avec chambre à coucher et salle de bains, un vaste bureau avec écrans TV géants et, en bout de carlingue, une vingtaine de sièges pour les conseillers. Un avion hautement sécurisé. Quelques mois après son arrivée à Bâle, une équipe dûment escortée est allée récupérer à Zurich des leurres antimissiles livrés par la société israélienne Elbit, installés ensuite sous les ailes de l'avion du raïs turc, connu pourtant pour ses positions en flèche contre la politique israélienne vis-à-vis des Palestiniens. Mais comme le reconnaît un militaire français, « dans le domaine de la sécurisation aérienne, Israël est quasiment incontournable et quand il s'agit de se protéger, les grands de ce monde oublient vite les grands principes pour se procurer le nec plus ultra ».

Loin d'avoir isolé le Qatar, la guerre, que lui ont imposée en 2017 ses voisins saoudiens et émiriens, qui l'accusent de soutenir les islamistes et le terrorisme, a consolidé, au contraire, l'alliance entre Doha et Ankara, et renforcé les positions turques dans le Golfe.

Au-delà de la division déjà profonde entre sunnites et chiïtes, ce nouvel axe turco-qatarien, autour de la défense de l'islam politique, dessine une nouvelle fracture dans le monde arabo-musulman, face à l'autre axe contre-révolutionnaire et hostile aux Frères musulmans, sous l'égide de l'Arabie saoudite, des Émirats arabes unis et de l'Égypte.

### Partage du renseignement

Erdogan avait une dette envers le jeune émir du Qatar. Après le coup d'État manqué contre le leader turc à l'été 2016, le riche émirat gazier vint au secours de la livre turque en apportant 3 milliards de dollars à la banque centrale. Un an après, Ankara établit un pont aérien avec Doha, encerclé par ses voisins. En retour, le Qatar investit des milliards dans le tourisme et les secteurs bancaire et manufacturier turcs. Un partenariat renouvelé le 20 mai lorsque la Turquie, faute d'accord avec les pays occidentaux, obtient une nouvelle source de devises étrangères du Qatar, grâce au triplement à 15 milliards de dollars du plafond de l'accord entre les banques centrales des deux pays.

Mais au-delà de cette alliance, justifiée à Ankara par le souci de s'ouvrir au Moyen-Orient



RECEP TAYYIP Erdoğan s'apprête à recevoir un joli cadeau. Un Boeing 747 transformé en Air Force One. Un avion privé que son allié l'émir du Qatar, auquel le président turc a rendu visite jeudi, lui a généreusement offert, symbole du renforcement de ce partenariat qatari-turc, qui bouscule la donne de la Syrie à la Libye.

après le refus européen d'accepter la Turquie, ce partenariat concerne les domaines sensibles de la défense, des renseignements, et du contrôle sur le monde islamique.

« Des officiers turcs du MIT, le service de renseignements extérieurs, sont positionnés au sein des renseignements intérieurs et extérieurs qatariens, et inversement, des Qataris sont intégrés au MIT en Turquie », affirme un agent français, familier du Golfe, qui souligne la nouvelle interopérabilité des renseignements des deux pays. Ce qui n'est pas sans déplaire à certains pays européens, parfois dans le besoin.

Comme la France avait pu profiter de l'aide précieuse du MIT dans la libération de nos otages en Syrie en 2014, l'Italie a récemment bénéficié de l'appui turc et du renseignement qatarien dans la libération de Silvana Romano, détenue en

Somalie par al-Chebab, la milice liée à al-Qaïda. Les renseignements turcs - Ankara dispose d'une base militaire en Somalie - ont noué les contacts avec les ravisseurs, tandis que Doha aurait payé la rançon, selon la presse italienne.

### Action commune en Libye

En Syrie aussi, les grandes oreilles turques et qatariennes coopèrent pour gérer la nébuleuse djihadiste, confinée dans la poche de l'Idlib que Damas et Moscou veulent reconquérir. Ankara a besoin des contacts de son allié qatarien auprès des djihadistes pour réaliser son objectif d'éliminer les plus radicaux d'entre eux - des combattants étrangers liés à al-Qaïda - et donner l'impression que les autres, devenus acceptables, lui obéiraient.

En plus de son soutien politique et opérationnel, Doha investit de plus en plus dans les indus-

tries de défense turques. « Le ministère de la Défense qatarien est l'un des premiers clients des drones Male d'observation Bayraktar TB-2 pouvant être armés, et il finance le développement du prochain modèle de l'entreprise dirigée par Selçuk Bayraktar, le genre d'Erdogan », écrit le magazine Raid dans un hors-série.

Les joint-ventures se sont multipliés, comme BMC, en charge de la production du premier char de combat turc Altay, détenue à 25 % par un homme d'affaires proche d'Erdogan, Ethem Sancak, et à 25,1 % par la famille Öztürk, les 49,9 % restants l'étant par les forces armées qatariennes.

La base turque créée au Qatar dans la foulée de l'embargo saoudo-émirien accueille désormais près de 5 000 militaires, y compris des forces spéciales et des marins. Le port en eaux profondes qatarien permet à la Turquie de mouiller désormais dans les eaux du Golfe. Quant à l'appui turc, il accroît la profondeur stratégique du Qatar, permettant aux deux pays d'intervenir en Afrique de l'Est, notamment.

En Libye, le soutien apporté par Doha et Istanbul au Gouvernement d'union nationale de

Fayez al-Sarraj, reconnu par les Nations unies, est combattu par les Émirats arabes unis, l'Égypte et la France, qui reprochent au tandem turco-qatarien son appui aux islamistes, liés aux Frères musulmans. La France, qui a retiré ses forces spéciales auprès de Saraj et maintenu sa poignée de militaires du Service action de la DGSE, s'est retrouvée au cœur de la crise lorsque Le Courbet, en mission pour faire respecter l'embargo sur les armes à destination de la Libye, a été illuminé - un acte hostile - par un navire turc en Méditerranée au large des côtes libyennes. « Le bateau turc transportait des armes que l'on soupçonne d'avoir été achetées par le Qatar au profit du gouvernement de Sarraj », explique un militaire français.

#### Ramifications en Alsace

Tout en rappelant que le Qatar n'est pas l'unique financier d'Ankara en Libye, mais surtout sa couverture diplomatique, le chercheur Jalel Harchaoui affirme que des cargos qatariens ont déjà décollé de la base aérienne d'al-Udeid près de Doha avant de transiter par la Turquie, peu avant la reprise le 18 mai de la base aérienne d'al-Watiya par le GNA à leurs ennemis de Khalifa Haftar,

soutenus par l'Égypte et les Émirats.

Le partenariat turco-qatarien inquiète également en Allemagne et au ministère de l'Intérieur français, où l'on redoute ses conséquences auprès des minorités musulmanes. En clair que « l'argent qatarien serve à renforcer l'islam conservateur des communautés turques en Europe », souligne un agent du renseignement territorial à Paris.

L'Alsace est dans le viseur. À l'automne dernier, Eyup Sahin, responsable régional de l'organisation islamique Milli Görüs, est allé tirer les sonnettes dans le Golfe pour achever la construction de la grande mosquée Eyyub Sultan à Strasbourg. Le magazine Rue89 Strasbourg avait révélé que Jean-Michel Cros, chargé de mission à la municipalité de Strasbourg, l'accompagnait, ce que ce dernier nous a confirmé. Si le régime du Concordat, en vigueur en Alsace, autorise les financements publics d'établissements religieux, l'initiative était malvenue au moment où l'État français lutte contre le séparatisme islamique et les financements étrangers de l'islam hexagonal. « Eyup Sahin n'est pas revenu les mains vides », souligne-t-on au ministère de l'Intérieur à Paris.

Jamais à court de projets, le responsable Milli Görüs du Grand Est, qui n'a pas répondu à notre sollicitation, prévoit d'ouvrir en septembre la première école privée musulmane hors contrat du Bas-Rhin. Selon nos informations, ses statuts ont été déposés auprès du tribunal d'instance de Mulhouse le 18 février, jour de la venue d'Emmanuel Macron dans la préfecture du Bas-Rhin, où le chef de l'État dénonça le séparatisme islamiste et annonça la fermeture des enseignements de langue et de culture d'origine (Elco), dont le turc. « C'est un pied de nez au président de la République », fulmine un agent du renseignement à Paris.

À la tête d'un pays qui accueille plusieurs millions de réfugiés syriens et de nombreux cadres islamistes pourchassés par l'Égypte notamment, Erdogan compte refaire d'Istanbul le « centre du monde islamique », comme du temps de l'Empire ottoman, concurrençant sans complexe l'Arabie saoudite. « Le Qatar est un junior partner dans ce partenariat, c'est la Turquie qui aspire à jouer un rôle régional de premier plan », estiment Steven A. Cook et Hussein Ibish, chercheurs au Arab States Institute de Washington.

Kurdistan au féminin

3 juillet 2020

## TURQUIE. 90 ans après le massacre de Zilan, les Kurdes toujours menacés d'extermination

**T**URQUIE / BAKÛR – Il y a 90 ans, des milliers de Kurdes étaient massacrés et 44 villages incendiés dans la vallée de Zilan pendant la rébellion d'Ararat.

Le 3 juillet 1930, sur ordre du Premier ministre turc, İsmet

İnönü, et son gouvernement, 44 villages kurdes ont été brûlés et des milliers de civils massacrés (d'autres chassés de leurs terres) dans la vallée de Zilan, dans le district Erciş de Van. 90 ans après ce massacre, les Kurdes font toujours face à une politique d'extermi-

nation des Kurdes menée par la Turquie depuis les années 1920, comme on a pu le voir à Maras, Roboski, Cizre, Silopi, Afrin...

Selon les journaux officiels turcs, plus de 15 000 personnes ont perdu la vie dans le

massacre, qui est connu sous le nom de «Geliye Zilan». Alors que certains des rares témoins de la période étaient cachés, certains ont lutté pour survivre là où ils avaient été exilés de force. Aujourd'hui, l'État turc détruit les traces du massacre de Zilan en construisant un

barrage sur le site Nihala hes-tîya (Vallée des os) abritant les ossements des victimes du massacre de Zilan.

Le massacre de Zilan a eu lieu dans la vallée du Zilan ou Zeylan situé au nord de la ville d'Erciş, dans la province de Van. Le massacre a eu lieu en juillet 1930, avant la troisième opération Ararat du 7 au 14 septembre 1930, qui était une opération militaire contre les rebelles kurdes du mont Ararat.

« Le 13 juillet 1930 le quotidien Cumhuriyet prenait la relève d'İsmet İnönü, Premier ministre de la République de Turquie, et Sukrû Kaya, son ministre de l'intérieur qui avait été l'un des hommes-clefs du génocide arménien de 1915, pour annoncer le « bombardement extrêmement massif du mont Ararat » avant d'ajouter : « les aigles d'acier du Turc règlent leur compte aux insurgés. Le ruisseau de Zilan est entièrement rempli de cadavres ». D'autres journaux, comme le Milliyet, confirmait ces informations avant de relater les propos d'İsmet İnönü : « seule la nation turque a le droit de revendiquer les droits ethniques et raciaux dans ce pays ». Selon diverses estimations, 44 villages furent ainsi entièrement rayés de la carte et 15.000 personnes, dont la plupart de simples villageois, trouvèrent la mort lors de cette « opération de nettoyage » qui parvint ainsi à briser la résistance kurde dont cette région fut le théâtre depuis plusieurs années. » (Institut Kurde de Paris)

Dans cette interview de 2019 réalisé par Barış Balseçer, historien et universitaire kurde, Sedat Ulugana décrivait le massacre de Zilan :

Quelle était la situation politique des Kurdes avant le massacre de Zilan ? Pouvez-vous décrire le processus dans son ensemble ?

« Le massacre de Zilan, avec la proclamation de la Répu-



blique de 1923 à 1930, fait partie du processus d'instauration du régime kémaliste au Kurdistan. La première réaction au régime kémaliste a été montrée à Koçgiri en 1921 et les Kémalistes ont perpétré le premier massacre des Kurdes au Kurdistan au moyen d'un outil hérité des Ottomans : La punition et le transfert de la population (« tedip ve tenkil »). Le processus après Koçgiri était la rébellion du Cheikh Sait en 1925, dont le vrai nom était le Mouvement Azadî (Liberté). Ce processus a entraîné un massacre accompagné des centaines de villages kurdes incendiés, notamment à Palu, Lice et Genç, à Diyarbakır. En fait, c'est la rébellion du Cheikh Sait qui a déclenché la rébellion d'Agri. Zilan est une région montagneuse, où il existe des tribus kurdes patriotes. Ces tribus ne se sont pas intégrées à l'État et ont des problèmes structurels avec l'État. Ces tribus apportent des fournitures aux insurgés d'Agri. Ils fournissent les combattants. En fait, la région du Zilan devient une base pour la poursuite de la rébellion. L'Etat en est conscient. Il y a un rapport des années 1920. Il dit : « Il y a maintenant trois lieux de banditisme au Kurdistan. Le premier est celui du Dersim, le deuxième est Sason et le troisième est celui du Zilan et de l'Agri. » Le gou-

vernement a fiché ces trois lieux. Donc en 1925 ; À 5 ans du massacre de Zilan, à 9 ans du massacre de Sason et 13 ans avant le massacre de Dersim, le rapport indique ces régions. Ce sont des zones que le régime kémaliste ne peut pénétrer. On dit que ces régions insistent sérieusement sur la kurdicité et qu'on doit « s'occuper » de ces régions.

Pour ce faire, l'État se concentre sur Zilan, en particulier pendant le processus de résistance d'Agri. Mais au début, il ne le prend pas trop au sérieux. Ils envoient un petit nombre de soldats à Zilan et pensent pouvoir briser la résistance et envoyer le 15e régiment de gendarmerie mobile. (...) Une fois dans la région de Zilan, le régiment de gendarmerie mobile fait face à une résistance inattendue.

Quel est le rôle de la société Xoybûn dans la résistance kurde ? Quelle est la relation entre la résistance d'Agri et Cheikh Sait avant le massacre de Zilan et le Mouvement Xoybûn ?

Le Mouvement Xoybûn a été fondé en 1927 dans le Rojava actuel. Deux familles en particulier, les Cemilpaşazade et les Bedirxan, sont les plus impliquées. Au Rojava, les deux

familles ont été rejointes par Haco Aga. Les intellectuels kurdes et les cheikhs, échappés à la violence du régime kémaliste, se retrouvent au Rojava après 1920 et forment une organisation appelée Xoybûn.

Au début, İhsan Nuri n'est pas inclus dans Xoybûn. Il prend contact par la suite avec Xoybûn il y est intégré en tant que «général du mont Ararat», puis passe à Ağrı pour le compte de Xoybûn et entame le processus connu. Xoybûn est le Mouvement organisateur de la résistance d'Ağrı. Après la résistance d'Ağrı, il organisa la résistance e Sason de 1934. Afin d'organiser la Résistance de Dersim de 1938, ils envoient un groupe comprenant Muşlu Hilmi. Le groupe est exécuté en route, avant d'atteindre Dersim.

Bien qu'il y ait eu beaucoup de résistance après la proclamation de la République, ils ne réussissent pas. Quels sont les principaux facteurs à l'origine de l'échec de ces résistances ?

Au Kurdistan du Nord, toute la résistance de 1923 à 1938 est liée. C'est donc une tradition, des perles d'un chapelet. La rébellion de Koçgiri de 1921 reste un peu à part, mais elle a

inspiré intellectuellement le mouvement de Sheikh Said.

Seyitxan, Seyitxane Kerr, Alican et Ferzande, membres du Mouvement Sheikh Said de 1925, c'est-à-dire la résistance d'Azadi, ont également combattu sur le mont Ararat. Ce sont les cadres qui organisent la Résistance de Zilan. (...). En fait, les initiateurs de la résistance d'Agri sont les guerriers kurdes qui ont survécu à la rébellion du Cheikh Said. Il y a une telle connexion. Le feu de la résistance allumé au triangle Genç, Lice, Palu a été éteint, mais cette fois, le même feu a été allumé sur le mont Ararat, à Zilan.

L'une des raisons pour lesquelles la résistance du Kurdistan a entraîné la défaite est le problème du leadership. A cette époque, il y avait le problème du leadership, ils n'avaient pas de leadership national. Le processus Tanzimat (« réorganisation » en turc ottoman) est appelé renouveau et modernisation de l'État, mais la raison principale en est la liquidation de la structure politique kurde et le transfert de la capitale kurde à Istanbul. A cette époque, tous les Mirs (chefs notables kurdes) kurdes ont été massacrés, exilés et jetés dans des prisons. Au Kurdistan, après la liquidation des mirs kurdes, un vide d'autorité est créé.

Les Cheikhs remplissent le vide de l'autorité. Ces Cheikhs disent appartenir à la « secte Khalidi ». La secte Khalidi a été fondée par Mevlânâ Khalid-î Shay Shahizor de la ville de Suleymaniyah, dans le Kurdistan du Sud.

A l'instar des Mir, plutôt que d'être constructifs, rassembleurs, les Khalidis ont une mission destructrice et disloquante au Kurdistan. Mevlânâ Khalid a été formé en Inde. Pendant ses études en Inde, ses professeurs menaient une forte opposition au colonialisme britannique.

Avec le temps, l'opposition aux

Britanniques s'est transformée en opposition et en haine des Chrétiens. Lorsque Mawlana Khalid est revenu au Kurdistan, il a en quelque sorte importé au peuple kurde l'opposition aux Chrétiens et la haine antichrétienne. Jusqu'à cette époque, les Kurdes au Kurdistan n'avaient aucun problème avec les Chrétiens ; il y a des Arméniens, des Chaldéens, des Assyriens, des Nestoriens et des Kurdes qui s'appellent eux-mêmes des Kurdes Messiahs, sur lesquels nous ne nous attardons pas beaucoup.

À son retour, Mevlana Khalid forme beaucoup d'étudiants. Le titre du cheikh passait de père en fils à l'époque. L'Ordre du khalidisme emmène l'enfant du villageois kurde le plus pauvre à devenir « Sheikh » et lui dit « Toi aussi, tu peux emmener un élève, l'élever et en faire un cheikh » et l'envoyait dans les endroits les plus reculés du Kurdistan. Par la suite, en s'alliant aux Tibus, ils se sont rendus dans les endroits les plus reculés du Kurdistan.

J'ai trouvé un ancien livre à Erçis. C'est écrit par Mela Musa, un imam Khalidi. La date qu'il a écrite à la fin du livre était 1892 et le lieu est Zozane Elegez (Haut plateau d'Elegez). Sur le plateau, il écrit un livre. Il rend croyantes, sunnites les tribus kurdes qui n'étaient pas très religieuses jusqu'à là. S'il y a un sentiment de nationalisme, ils l'enlèvent. Ils imposent l'oumma (la communauté des Musulmans qui rejette l'origine ethnique du croyant). Si vous êtes un Kurde qui impose l'Oumma, vous vous éloignez de toute façon de la conscience nationale et de l'unité nationale. Les Sheikhs ont cet aspect sur lequel nous n'avons pas encore prêté attention.

Un autre facteur est le niveau d'éducation des Kurdes à cette époque. Ceci est lié à la désintégration du Kurdistan.

Combien de personnes ont été massacrées lors du massacre

de Zilan ? Qu'est-ce qui se passait à Zilan ?

Selon les services de renseignements étrangers, environ 10 000 personnes auraient été tuées lors du massacre de Zilan. Les Français parlent de 5 000, tandis que les Britanniques disent que plus de personnes ont été tuées. Bien entendu, ces États ne disposaient pas d'un réseau de renseignement très formel au Kurdistan du Nord. Ils donnent plutôt de chiffres prédictifs. Mais il y a les chiffres donnés par la partie turque. Par exemple, le journal semi-officiel de l'époque, le Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, parle de plus de 15 000. De même, les journaux Vakit et Aksam de la même période écrivent également ce chiffre. Le journal Cumhuriyet écrit même ceci : « Notre journaliste Sabri Bey, qui est à Erçis, transmet l'information depuis la région. « La vallée de Zilan est remplie de cadavres », dit-il. Le chef de l'état-major général le dit également. Un peloton a tué plus de mille personnes en une journée. 95% des tués sont des civils. Parce que l'état-major général de l'époque parle d'environ 5 000 résistants dans la région de Zilan. Cette information est exagérée. Il n'y a pas autant de résistants. Le nombre de résistants est de mille environs.

C'est un génocide qui a été perpétré à Zilan. Il faut distinguer le massacre d'un génocide. C'est un « massacre » si vous tuez sur des gens et les tuez (...). Mais si, pour une raison politique, vous tuez plus d'une personne en faisant de la discrimination, en regardant sa religion, sa langue, son ethnie, c'est un génocide. (...) Ce qui a été fait à Zilan est un génocide. La deuxième différence entre le massacre et le génocide est que ce dernier est systémique.

Après le massacre, des dizaines de villages ont été incendiés à Zilan. Tous les habitants de ces villages ont été tués. Le nombre de personnes tuées dans ces villages

est supérieur à 15 000.

La deuxième raison d'être un génocide est qu'après l'incendie des villages, les champs de blé ont été incendiés, les puits ont été remplis de terre et tout le matériel a été brûlé. En d'autres termes, l'espace vital a été détruit.

De plus, il est essentiel de ne pas laisser de témoins lors de génocide. Nous pouvons le voir [ne pas laisser de témoins] lors des génocides de Rwanda, arménien et bosniaque. La même chose est faite à Zilan. Les gens ont été massacrés à Zilan en 1930 et cela a continué jusqu'en 1938. Si l'État découvrait qu'il y avait des survivants du massacre, ils les trouvaient et les amenaient et les fusillaient. Il existe également un exemple concret de cela. Après le massacre, 15 personnes se sont réfugiées dans le village de Pertax à Erçiş, qui a été renommé et transformé en village de Dinlence. Ils ont été repérés par l'Etat. On les a pris du village, emmenés dans la vallée d'à côté, les fusillés et enterrés sur place. A ce titre, il y a des dizaines d'exemples de ce genre qui avaient pour but de ne pas laisser de témoins.

J'ai parlé à une témoin nommée Hafize, qui était encore une enfant à cette époque. Elle vivait dans le village de Soskin à Erçis. Je ne sais pas si elle est en vie ou pas. Elle avait dit « Moi, ma sœur, mon petit frère et ma mère ont survécu au massacre. Mon petit frère venait d'être sevré. Nous avons eu une vache. Nous nourrissions mon frère avec le lait de cette vache. Nous avons pris notre vache et sommes partis. Nous avons commencé à vivre dans une petite tente près de la ville. Dès que les soldats ont découvert que nous avions survécu au massacre de Zilan, ils sont venus. D'abord, ils ont coupé les pies de notre vache, notre seul moyen de subsistance. » Celle qui me disait cela était une témoin (d'environ 90 ans) d'un massacre. Ils avaient fait cela pour faire

mourir de faim le petit garçon. Mère Hafize n'avait pas voulu m'ne parler, mais j'ai appris de sa famille que les soldats avaient emmené sa sœur. Ils l'avaient violée et tuée.

Voici une autre raison d'être un génocide. La nécrophilie (violer un cadavre) est essentielle dans la psychologie du génocide. Ce sont des nécrophiles. Nous pouvons le voir dans l'Allemagne nazie. Il y avait un imam nommé Mela Ahmet. Je l'ai interviewé. Alors qu'il travaillait comme imam à Adilcevaz, il avait rencontré un certain Hacı Ömer. Hacı Ömer lui a dit « (...) Je livrais des fournitures aux soldats lors du massacre de Zilan. Des milliers de personnes ont été tuées à l'extérieur de la ville dans un endroit appelé Aşe Monk. Les tours étaient faites de corps inanimés. C'était l'heure du déjeuner. Je l'ai vu de mes propres yeux. Les soldats retrouvaient et violaient de jeunes corps de femmes parmi les corps inanimés. »

Ces informations sont dans mes archives et j'ai fait confirmer ces informations auprès

de plusieurs personnes. Ce que j'ai trouvé le plus dans mes recherches, c'est que d'innombrables femmes ont été violées.

Zilan est un génocide car un programme politique a été mis en place. Près d'un millier de familles ont été déportées à l'Ouest [régions turques à l'ouest du pays]. Beaucoup de ces familles sont maintenant assimilées. Elles ont été exilées dans des villes comme Aydın, Sinop et Samsun. Deux familles déportées ne pouvaient vivre dans la même ville et le même quartier. En d'autres termes, un programme d'assimilation a été mis en place. Près d'un millier de familles sont jetées dans les cachots d'Adana et de Zonguldak et abandonnées à la mort.

A cette époque, il y a un mandat d'Atatürk. Ce mandat rédigé après 1933 ordonne exactement ce qui suit : « Sa Sainteté ordonne dorénavant la capture des bandits vivants. » En d'autres mots, il dit, « Ne les tuez pas, capturez-les vivants ». Ils ont attrapé et enchaîné les villageois qui se

sont réfugiés dans les montagnes et les ont envoyés dans ces cachots.

75% des personnes emmenées à Adana et à Zonguldak sont tuées. Par exemple, sur un millier de personnes envoyées dans la cachot d'Adana, seules 300 personnes peuvent revenir. 30 à 40 d'entre elles sont exécutées. La plupart de ces personnes sont condamnées à des peines de prison; Ils meurent de maladies infectieuses telles que le choléra, la typhoïde. Certains sont tués avec une piqûre toxique. J'ai obtenu le bloc-notes d'un témoin qui a traversé cette période. Il les a personnellement enregistrés. Dans le cahier, il est écrit : « Celui qui recevait la piqûre, ne pouvait pas voir le matin ».

La plupart des personnes envoyées à Zonguldak travaillent dans des mines de charbon. La plupart d'entre eux meurent à cause de mauvaises conditions de vie. La plupart des rapatriés meurent d'un cancer du poumon dû au charbon inhalé.

Une zone de Zilan a été complètement détruite. La région de Zilan a été déclarée « zone interdite » de 1930 à 1950. Tous les villages ont été évacués. Dans la région déclarée zone militaire, les chiens mangeaient les corps de leurs maîtres décédés. Quelqu'un m'a dit : « Les chiens avaient mangé tellement de gens qu'ils avaient une taille énorme. Leur psychologie avait changé. Ils attaquaient les gens en meute. »

Nous avons vu la même chose avec Taybet Ana\*. Ses enfants ont dit : « Nous avons veillé pendant des jours pour que les chiens ne viennent pas manger le corps inanimé de notre mère. » Sur le front des Kurdes, il n'y a rien de changé des années 1930 aux années 2019. »

\*Taybet Inan, une femme kurde de 57 ans, a été abattue à Silopi le 19 décembre 2015 par les forces armées turques qui ont empêché pendant sept jours ses proches de prendre son corps resté dans la rue.



NCRI  
National Council of Resistance of Iran  
Foreign Affairs Committee

July 3, 2020

## Iran: Coronavirus Death Toll in 342 Cities Exceeds 64,800

**D**eputy Governor of West Azerbaijan: Until the beginning of June, the death toll was less than six people a day, but yesterday the death toll in the Province passed 19. Danger is lurking for everyone

Deputy Health Minister: There are no stable epidemic conditions in any of the provinces ... We will face more severe crises in the cold season

Loghman Hospital in Tehran: We are facing a new outbreak of the disease. We do our best. But the results are not so great, and we are witnessing loss of lives.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi hailed the protesting nurses who were attacked with batons and Tasers in Mashhad, as well as the general practitioners, nurses and all medical staff who are striving their best to save the lives of patients. She added:

By plundering and squandering the public wealth and resources on nuclear and missile projects, along with terrorism and warmongering, the clerical regime has destroyed the country's infrastructure. Despite the most skilled and selfless doctors and nurses, it has left our people defenseless in the face of the disease. The only way to end this situation is to overthrow the clerical regime and establish democracy and popular sovereignty.

The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) announced on Friday, July 3, 2020, that the Coronavirus death toll in 342 cities in Iran is more than 64,800. The number of victims in Khuzestan is 4,950, Khorasan Razavi 4,170, Gilan 3,205, Lorestan 2,385, Sistan and Baluchestan 2,080, Alborz 2,030, West Azerbaijan 1,795, Kermanshah 1,655, Fars 1,380, Kurdistan 1,320, Yazd 820, North Khorasan

810, Central Province 660, Zanjan 580, and South Khorasan 190.

According to the state News Network, the spokesperson for the regime's Health Ministry said today that the number of Coronavirus deaths during the past 24 hours was 154, and the number of new infections 2,566, out of whom 1,483, i.e., 58%, had been hospitalized. She also said that 3,123 patients were in ICU, the highest number in recent months. She described the situation of Khuzestan, Khorasan Razavi, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Hormozgan, Bushehr and Ilam provinces as red, and the situation of Tehran, Fars, Hamadan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Alborz provinces as alarming

The regime's Deputy Health Minister was quoted by the state news agency, Tasnim, today as saying, "There is no stable epidemic situation in any province of the country... If we fail to control the virus in this period, we shall face more serious crises during cold winters."

Minoo Mohraz, a member of the National Coronavirus Combat Taskforce (NCCT), told ISNA today, "The hospitals are crowded again, and the wards and beds assigned to Coronavirus patients are occupied... the medical staff has been tired during past months, and the disease has intensified again, causing them extreme exhaustion. The educated and experienced staff cannot be easily replaced either."

Dr. Alavi, the expert in infectious diseases in Loghman Hospital in Tehran, told ISNA news agency today, "We are facing a new outbreak of the disease and an increasing trend of infections... The patients need ICU to the extent that almost every day, we add a new section to the ICU section... We are doing our best for the patients under special care... However, medical efforts prove to have little effect



on these individuals, and we are, unfortunately, seeing more deaths."

In Bushehr, the secretary for the NCCT said: "Given the Coronavirus spread, we are facing a lack of nurses and general fatigue among them. Several of our physicians have contracted the virus and are currently quarantined. The number of incoming patients is higher than those being discharged. If this trend continues for several days, we will certainly have zero hospital capacity soon," reported the ISNA news agency on July 2.

In Kerman, "Almost the entire Province, the country's largest, is under full alert." The head of Sirjan's Faculty of Medical Sciences told the state-run daily, Hamshahri, yesterday, "The increase in work-load and fatigue on the part of colleagues, physicians, and nurses, because of the increased infection spread has led to degrading quality of medical care which has, in turn, contributed to the personnel's infection and loss of system efficiency."

In Fars, the vice-president for Shiraz University's Medical Sciences told ILNA news agency, today, "The capacity of four hospitals devoted to Coronavirus patients is nearing its end, and with the current trend these hospitals would no longer be able to accept COVID-19 patients. We might

possibly be obliged to use Beheshti hospital and other private hospitals for Coronavirus infected patients."

According to state-run news agency Mehr, the deputy governor of Western Azerbaijan Province said, today, "Western Azerbaijan is red. Until a month ago, the number of the dead was below six people per day, but the figure started to mount daily, reaching 19 yesterday. The danger is real and present everywhere."

In Hormozgan, the president of the Medical Sciences University told Fars news agency yesterday, "10 more deaths were added to the Coronavirus fatalities on Thursday... Currently, 531 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized in the Province; 81 are in ICU, with 31 in critical condition."

In Khorasan Razavi, ISNA quoted Kashmar governor as saying today, "Relative to the past two weeks, the number of those hospitalized in Moddares Hospital has risen 14-fold."

While physicians, nurses, emergency personnel, and Ambulance drivers face the risk of being infected, and some have died, they are facing enormous work pressure. But the clerical regime does not pay anything to improve their situation and has delayed paying their overtime pay and salaries. Currently, there are many ready-to-work nurses,

who would provide a boost to an exhausted and worn out treatment system. But the regime refuses to hire them and only signs 89-day contracts with them so that they would be ineligible for insurance and unemployment benefits. Nurses in Mashhad staged a protest gathering against extreme pressures, terrible living conditions, and the non-payment of their wages. But the State Security Force attacked them with batons and Tasers and arrested several of them.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), hailed the protesting nurses who were attacked with batons and Tasers in Mashhad. She also praised all physicians, nurses, and medical personnel who risk their own lives and those of their family members to save the lives of those ill. She said four decades of plundering and squandering the Iranian people's wealth on the unpatriotic nuclear and missile programs, as well as terrorism and warmongering had destroyed the country's infrastructure. Despite the presence of the most skilled and selfless physicians and nurses, the regime has left our people defenseless in combating this virus. The only way to end poverty, corruption, unemployment, and disease is the overthrow of the clerical regime and the establishment of democracy and people's sovereignty.



July 3, 2020  
By Lawk Ghafuri

## Baghdad mulls economic pressure to compel Turkey to end airstrikes on PKK

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – Baghdad is taking a look at its trade with Turkey as it considers using economic pressure to compel Ankara to end its military attacks within Iraq's borders, the foreign ministry spokesperson told Rudaw on Thursday.

“There is a trade balance between Iraq and Turkey in favor of Turkey with a value of more than \$16 billion annually, and there are hundreds of Turkish commercial companies operating in Iraq. We put all of these criteria under urgent evaluation,” said Ahmed al-Sahaf, spokesperson for Iraq's foreign ministry.

Baghdad is also applying diplomatic pressure. “We are still communicating and coordinating with the Turkish side on the need to apply international laws, good-neighborly rules, and diplomatic agreements,” Sahaf said, adding Iraq plans to push for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to condemn Turkey's military intervention.

Turkey launched an air campaign dubbed Operation Claw-Eagle in the Kurdistan Region and disputed territories in northern Iraq on June 15. The stated target is positions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has its headquarters in the mountains of the Kurdistan Region.



Smoke rises from a suspected Turkish airstrike against an alleged PKK position in the Kurdistan Region's mountains. Photo: Rudaw

Two days later, Turkey launched commando-led ground offensive Operation Claw-Tiger into the Haftanin area, close to the shared border.

Turkey has conducted airstrikes and ground operations against the PKK within Iraq's borders for years, accusing the federal Iraqi government and Kurdistan Regional Government of failing to take measures against the group.

Turkish warplanes conducted a fresh round of airstrikes near Deraluk and Shiladze towns in Duhok province on Friday, according to Sami Bar-

wari, head of Deraluk town. The Turkish defense ministry announced on the same day they had “neutralized” a PKK fighter in northern Iraq and will “determinedly” continue its campaign. The Turkish government uses the term “neutralized” to denote death, injury, or capture of its adversaries.

At least five civilians have been killed in the Turkish airstrikes and scores of villages have been emptied along the border.

Last month, Iraq's foreign ministry summoned the Turkish

ambassador to Baghdad, Fatih Yildiz, twice, and handed the diplomat a formal memorandum regarding the military offensive.

With many of the PKK's fighters nestled in the high peaks of the Kurdistan Region's Qandil mountains, estimates for their numbers across Iraq are difficult to make. Iraqi security analyst, Husham al-Hashimi puts the number of PKK fighters in Iraq including the Kurdistan Region at between 8,500 and 10,000, distributed across 81 points and bases.





July 3, 2020

## German Kurds push for Kurdish-language learning, despite limited class offerings

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Kurdish families in Germany continue to pursue their children's Kurdish language education, despite the limited number of schools providing Kurdish classes across the country.

Iman Sadeq, 16, is a Kurd born in Germany. Kurdish classes are not available at her school, so she has been attending classes at a different one for four years to become fluent in her mother tongue.

"My Kurdish was dominated by Arabic so I wanted to improve my Kurdish to speak fluently with people when I return to the Kurdistan Region," she told Rudaw.

The western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia's parliament officially mandated the teaching of mother tongues, including Kurdish, in schools in 2012. Local politicians argued that supporting students to learn their mother tongue helps improve their German language as well. The Kurdish language is currently taught in five states across the country.

Samir Khidir, originally from Duhok province where he taught Kurdish for four years, migrated to Germany in 2011. After learning German, he began teaching Kurdish in five schools throughout the city of Bochum in 2015. Currently, he teaches some 150 students.



A Kurdish language class in the western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Photo: Rudaw TV

"Students from the first to tenth stages of school can attend their mother tongue classes. In the first two years, they are not graded but their attendance is recorded on their final results card. However, their grades are considered for the final results from third to tenth stages," he told Rudaw.

The students are aged between 12-16 years, and are mostly of a similar level in the Kurdish language.

According to unofficial figures gathered from schools and other state institutions, there are 180,000 Kurdish students

in North Rhine-Westphalia, but only 1,200 of them attend Kurdish classes. There are no precise accounts of how many Kurds live in Germany as a whole, but some estimate the figure to be as high as one million.

Schools struggle to find Kurdish teachers, and schools will only create Kurdish classes when they receive requests from 15 different students. The small number of Kurds in some areas compels those who would like their children to learn Kurdish to send their children to schools far away.

Najm Abdullah also lives in North Rhine-Westphalia. He said that they do their best to educate their children in Kurdish in addition to German.

"We encourage them to attend the classes, despite their other classes already being hard and they are busy. We have to make our children learn their mother language. I hope that all Kurds here do the same."

Amira Mohammed, also a German Kurd from the area, says she wants her daughter to learn Kurdish, but struggles because her local school does not have Kurdish classes.



July 4, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Iraq records 106 deaths, and 2,334 cases in 24 hours

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment On Saturday reported it had recorded more than 2,300 new coronavirus infections, 106 deaths, and 1,477 recoveries in 24 hours.

The ministry said in a statement that health workers had conducted 9,516 on suspected virus carriers, with 2,334 came back positive. The total number of tests since the disease first entered the country has risen to 589,377, according to official data.

The statement also noted the total number of coronavirus infections reached 58,354, which includes 31,077 recoveries, and 2,688 deaths. The ministry added that there are also 24,909 active cases.



Municipality workers spray disinfectant along a street in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah. (Photo: AFP)

Since late May, after opening its border with Iran--the original epicenter of the disease in the Middle East--Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths.

Currently, Iraq records the third-highest daily increase in epidemics in the Middle East, after Saudi Arabia and Iran, raising concern with hospitals filled with patients, as health systems lack the capacity to

treat nearly 2,000 coronavirus cases daily.

"The Ministry has contacted a Russian company, which is in the third stage of treatment production operations, and quantities have been reserved for Iraq if the drug proven successful against the coronavirus," said Hassan al-Tamimi, Iraq's health minister said in a Friday statement.

Tamimi added that "the Russian treatment can be manufactured in any country and has achieved 'positive' results in the US, Japan, and Egypt." He noted further that "the Iraqi state company for drug and medical appliances has approved it as part of the treatment against the Corona pandemic."



July 4, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## KRG announces 204 new COVID-19 cases; Erbil imposes partial curfew

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Kurdistan Region's Health Ministry on Saturday announced nine deaths and 204 new coronavirus cases over the past 24 hours. In its 130th statement regarding the coronavirus situation, the ministry said that regional health workers had conducted 1,569 tests for the new dis-

ease, 204 of which came back positive. Of the total, 25 were from Erbil, 176 from Sulaimani, and three from Duhok.

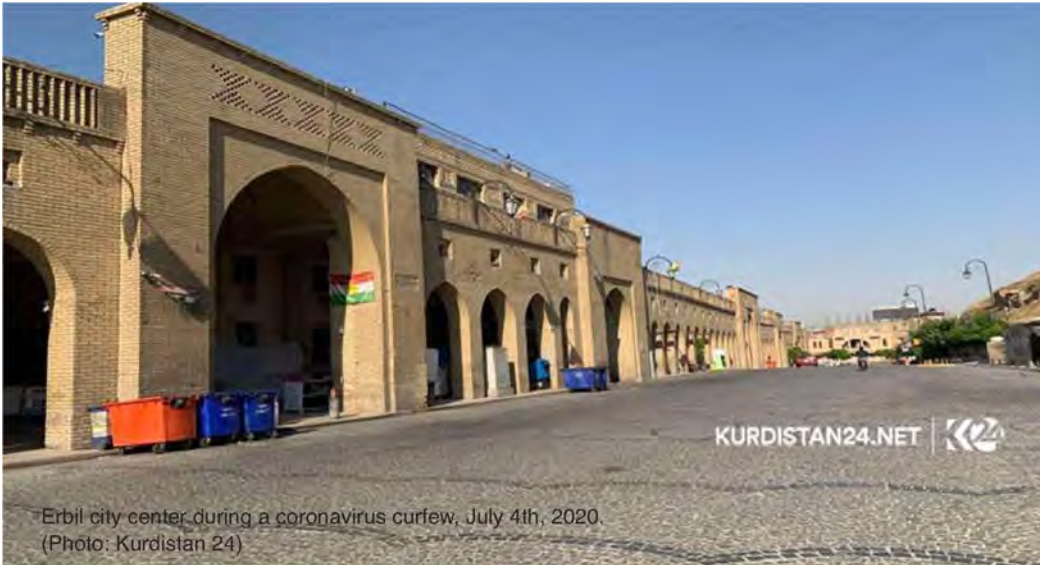
The statement also pointed out that 268 coronavirus patients had recovered over the same period. According to official figures, the Kurdistan Region now has 7,048 infections, of

which 1,597 are in Erbil province, 5,067 in Sulaimani, 186 in Duhok, and 198 in Halabja.

As of Saturday, the region also reportedly has 4,269 active cases, 554 from Erbil, 3,591 from Sulaimani, 31 from Duhok, and 93 from Halabja, the ministry said.

Earlier on Saturday, the governor of Erbil, Firsat Sofi, announced that the provincial government was lifting a curfew that came into effect a week ago, and replacing it with a partial lockdown measure.

During a press conference in the capital, Sofi said, "today, we only had 25 new coronavi-



Erbil city center during a coronavirus curfew, July 4th, 2020.  
(Photo: Kurdistan 24)

rus cases in Erbil." He added that "new cases are declining, and we are certain that if we commit, we will control the epidemic."

"We have taken into consideration the living conditions of the citizens, so we have taken strict measures to avoid the collapse of the city's economy,"

the governor added. "We have decided to end the strict curfew tonight, but we call on everyone to abide by the partial ban."

He explained that the partial lockdown entails a city-wide shutdown on Friday, a reduction in the official working hours of government institutions, and a "curfew from 8 pm to 5 am except for pharmacies and bakeries."

He affirmed that "curfew violators" will face repercussions.

Sofi noted that sports halls and all ceremonies would be prohibited, restaurants would only be allowed to open for delivery.

The governor urged residents to leave their homes only when it is necessary, and when doing so, they must wear masks.



July 4, 2020  
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Baghdad calls for 'immediate end' to Turkish offensive in Kurdistan Region

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — The spokesperson for Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi condemned Ankara for its ongoing military operation across the north of the country in a strongly worded statement released Saturday evening.

"We strongly reject and condemn these actions that harm the close, long-standing relations between the two friendly nations," Ahmed Mulla Talal wrote in a statement published to Telegram, urging for an "immediate" halt to Ankara's offensive.

Turkey began fresh air and ground military operations in the Kurdistan Region and disputed territories in mid-June, with the stated aim of removing suspected Kurd-

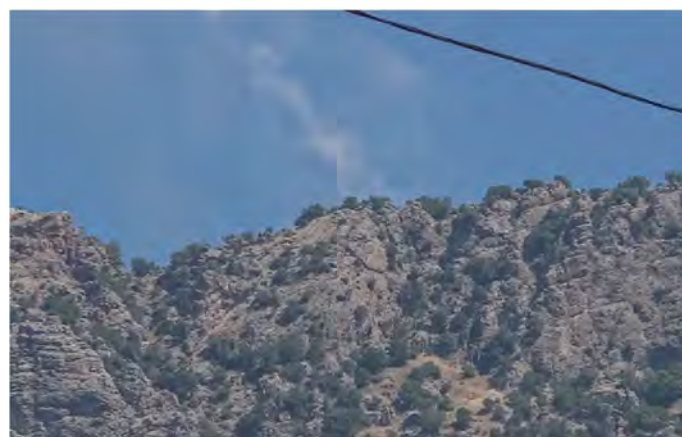


Photo: Rudaw

istan Workers Party (PKK) targets from the area. Five civilians have been confirmed killed by Turkish airstrikes.

Talal described Turkey's offensive as "detrimental" to "regional peace," accusing

Ankara of violating Iraqi sovereignty.

Iraq's foreign ministry previously summoned the Turkish ambassador to Baghdad, but has failed to halt Turkey's offensive.

The spokesperson says Iraq has already sent two letters to Turkey's ambassador to Iraq, and says Baghdad will be forced to resort to "international law" to stop Ankara.

"We hold the Turkish side responsible for the legal and moral responsibility for all the human and material losses that occur," he added.

Turkey's offensive, according to the statement, violates "the stability, territorial integrity and security of the [Iraqi] people."

Scores of villages in the Kurdistan Region border areas have been emptied amid years of Turkish airstrikes.

In a statement released last Friday, the Turkish defense

ministry denied that its military has ever harmed civilians, and said it only targets "terrorists."

UN officials have already voiced concern that Iraq has not raised the issue of Turkish airstrikes with the UN Security Council.

"On the Turkish-Iraqi conflict, we see this with concern. There has not been a demand for this item to be on the agenda of the security council," Christoph Heusgen, German Ambassador to the United Nations told Rudaw. The US State Department last week called for coordi-

nation between Turkey, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to "defeat" the PKK, an armed group fighting for greater rights for Kurds in Turkey.

"The United States calls on Turkey and Iraq, including the KRG, to work together to de-

feat the PKK," a spokesperson told Rudaw late Wednesday.

Iraqi border forces in Zakho have set up bases in "strategic" positions in order to de-escalate clashes between Turkish forces and the PKK.



July 4, 2020

## Draft UN resolution urges reopening of Iraq-Syria border crossing

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – Officials have called for a key border crossing connecting Iraq with Kurdish-administered areas of northern Syria, also known as Rojava, to be reopened for aid amid severe food and medical shortages.

Germany and Belgium submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council in mid-June which would reopen the al-Yarubiyah crossing, connecting Rojava with Rabia in Nineveh province, for six months, as well as extending approval of border crossings between Syria and Turkey for one year.

"A sustained large-scale cross-border response will continue to be necessary to meet the enormous humanitarian needs of the people in northeast Syria. That is clear. That is what we have been saying. This has come up in conversations and in exchanges between the secretary general and members of the council," Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Rudaw.

Since 2014, a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution had allowed UN agencies to operate through key crossings without needing to get permission from Damascus beforehand every time – although the government did have to be notified.

In January, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's ally Russia pressured humanitarian groups to funnel aid deliveries via Damascus. Russia and China shot down a UNSC proposal to continue allowing aid to pass through the al-Yarubiyah crossing, closing a key lifeline into northeast Syria.

The crossing had been used mainly to deliver medical supplies to the northeast. UN officials say the crossing from Iraq is essential to bring in supplies to fight against the novel coronavirus.

"Failure to renew cross-border aid will cause unnecessary suffering and deaths, and COVID-19 could spread like wildfire. Surely Russia can't want that," said Louis Charbonneau, UN director for Human Rights Watch.



A woman wearing a protective mask walks along a street in Qamishli, northeast Syria on March 22, 2020. File photo: Delil Souleiman/AFP

Dujarric also said that the UN cannot dispatch aid from Iraq borders to Syria without the consent of the Security Council and "will act and follow whatever authority they give us."

Christoph Heusgen, German Ambassador to the United Nations says that they will push for the crossing to be reopened.

"The humanitarian needs are such that we need cross-border possibilities to get to the people... half a year ago we had similar discussions and we pushed for the opening. At the time,

we were confronted with vetos by Russia and by China," Heusgen said at a press conference.

The draft resolution is expected to be voted on by the UNSC next week. If passed, the six-month-long humanitarian embargo will come to an end.

"The pandemic presents "a profound challenge to Syria's health system, socioeconomic and humanitarian situations" and "heightens the imperative of using every possible means of reaching people in need," reads the draft resolution.



July 4, 2020  
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Human rights groups decry Turkish 'war crimes' in northern Syria

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – More than a dozen organizations have signed a letter to European human rights officials detailing abuses committed by Turkey and Turkish-backed groups in northern Syria.

"Since the start of Turkish military operations on the areas of Kurdish origin in northern Syria, the region has turned into a hotspot full of all forms of human rights violations," reads the letter addressed to Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Robert Ragnar Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights.

The 18 signatories have unanimously accused Ankara and its Syrian proxies of committing "war crimes, crimes against humanity, as well as crimes of ethnic cleansing and genocide."

Turkey and its Syrian proxies launched a military operation against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria in October 2019, seizing control of a stretch of northern Syria, known to Kurds as Rojava, including Sari Kani (Ras al-Ain) Gire Spi (Tal Abyad). Hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced in the offensive.

The military offensive, dubbed "Operation Peace Spring", followed the March 2018 invasion of Afrin, in Aleppo province, which came under control of Turkish forces and their Syrian militia proxies following two months of intense fighting with



A woman stands along the side of a road on the outskirts of Tel Tamr on October 16, 2019. Photo: Delil Souleiman/AFP

the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Since then, human rights monitors have accused these groups of serious violations against locals.

"The opposition prevented the displaced civilians from returning to their homes, practiced theft, robbery, plunder, armed robbery, confiscated property and crops, burned them, burned forests, abducted civilians, and arbitrarily arrested them. Cemeteries and cultural symbols were destroyed," the letter added.

Violations have been "confirmed by reports of governmental organisations, and non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry for Syria."

According to numerous organi-

zations, Turkish-backed armed groups in northwestern Syria have committed repeated violations against the local population with impunity, including killing, kidnapping, and sexual violence.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a late November report that pro-Turkish militiamen prevented Syrian Kurds from returning to their homes. Instead, they "looted and unlawfully appropriated or occupied their property."

"Executing individuals, pillaging property, and blocking displaced people from returning to their homes is damning evidence of why Turkey's proposed 'safe zones' will not be safe," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at HRW.

Prominent war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights (SOHR) confirmed to Rudaw English that it had signed the petition.

Other signatories include the Kurdish Committee for Human Rights, Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Austria, The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Syria (MAF) and Kurdish Civil Society Organization in Europe.

Turkey blocked the water supply from the Euphrates into Kurdish-held areas in northeast Syria last week, according to local officials.

Ilham Ahmed, president of the Executive Committee of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) said that Ankara "intentionally" withheld the water to induce "a real drought in Syria."



July 4, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Kurdistan Region slashes oil exports by over 100k bpd in June

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) slashed its oil exports by more than 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) in June, in compliance with international production cuts, according to a market researcher. The KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources, however, has denied reducing oil exports.

To bolster recovering oil prices, members of the Saudi Arabia-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies agreed in mid-April to cut production for May and June. On June 6, they extended the cuts for another month.

Iraq is a member of the cartel and the KRG expressed its readiness to comply. In June, Erbil exported 267,000 bpd, down from 368,000 bpd in May, S&P Global Platts reported on Friday.

These export figures have not been confirmed by the KRG. Member of the Kurdistan Region Parliament Hevidar Ahmed told Rudaw by telephone that there have been no reductions in oil exports. Ahmed is deputy head of parliament's finance committee.

The KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources subsequently issued a statement that the reported cut "is far from the truth and the process of exporting oil from the Kurdistan Region is like previous months." Oil production cuts would



A Kurdistan Region police officer stands on watch at an illegal oil refinery being shut down on June 16, 2020. Photo: Bilind T. Abdullah/Rudaw

further damage the Kurdistan Region's oil-dependent economy which is in crisis because of low oil prices, suspension of budget payments from Baghdad, and lockdown measures taken to limit spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The government is unable to pay its civil servant on time and in full and has slashed each ministry's share of the money to pay salaries by 21 percent. February paycheques are just being distributed now. The KRG warned it may reduce payments even further if it fails to collect enough money to pay March salaries.

The KRG has been trying to

reduce its bloated public sector for years. Its long-debated reform law took effect on July 1 and will significantly slash salaries of the highest earners while eliminating double payments and ghost employees. The law is expected to return around \$100 million monthly to the KRG treasury.

Auditing giant Deloitte said in May that the KRG sold crude oil and condensate worth more than \$8.3 billion in 2019, up from 2018's \$7.75 billion.

Iraq angered its OPEC counterparts when it initially failed to meet the agreed reduced quota of 3.592 million bpd in May. Baghdad promised to

compensate for the overproduction by making significant cuts in July, August, and September.

Iraq exported 2.816 million bpd in June, not including the Kurdistan Region. The country also consumed around 580,000 bpd domestically.

Hellenic Shipping News reported on Friday that Iraq will reduce its oil exports from its southern terminals, especially Basra Light flows, to implement the OPEC deal. Basra Lights will export around 1.53 million bpd in July, down from 3.1 million bpd in June.



July 5, 2020

## Iraqi Kurdistan parliament to send delegations to areas bombed by Turkey, Iran

Iraqi Kurdistan's regional parliament will send four separate delegations to areas in northern Iraq that have been recently targeted by the Turkish and Iranian armed forces, the news website Rudaw reported on Sunday.

Turkey's air and land operations "Claw-Eagle" and "Claw-Tiger" were launched in mid-June against the bases of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and affiliated groups in northern Iraq.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) lawmaker Çiya Hemid told Rudaw that the del-

egations were commissioned at the request of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Parliament.

"The commissions will visit the border regions in Zaho, Amedi, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. Another commission, consisting of 11 people, will examine the Duhok, Batifa and Zaho borders as two groups. Another group will examine the developments in Amedi," Hemid said.

The delegations will submit their findings to the regional parliament's presidency as a single report. Hemid said the report will then be discussed in



the regional parliament.

Since June 17, at least six Iraqi civilians have been killed as Turkish air strikes have pounded PKK targets in the region.

Turkey regularly targets PKK in

operations in northern Iraq and on home soil.

The PKK, designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and European Union, has been fighting an insurgency against the Turkish state for four decades.



5 juillet 2020

## Iran : plus de 65.200 décès dus au coronavirus dans 342 villes

Rétablissement des restrictions dans tout le pays à partir du 5 juillet

La télévision officielle : le danger a dépassé la côte d'alerte

Le ministère de la Santé a annoncé 18 provinces dans le rouge ou en état d'alerte Massoud Mardani, du centre national de lutte contre le coronavirus (CNLC) : Jusqu'à présent 18 millions d'Iraniens, soit 20% de la population du

pays, ont contracté le Covid-19

Province de Fars : Le coronavirus se propage rapidement à Larestan, Khaonj et Evaz. Des USI pour le Covid-19 ajoutées en pédiatrie

Avec la hausse des cas positifs, des jours difficiles attendent le Koguilouyeh-Boyer-Ahmad.

La faculté de médecine de

Zandjan : 85% de la province est susceptible de contracter le virus. Si ça continue, la province est grand danger.

L'Organisation des Moudjahidine du peuple d'Iran (OMPI) a annoncé dans l'après-midi de ce 4 juillet que le nombre de décès dus au coronavirus dans 342 villes d'Iran dépasse les 65.200. Le nombre de décès dans les provinces de Téhéran est de 16.650, de Khorassan-Razavi 4230, de

Lorestan 2415, d'Azerbaïdjan oriental 1915, de Hamedan 1460, d'Azerbaïdjan occidental 1825 et de Bouchehr 645.

La porte-parole du ministère de la Santé a déclaré que le nombre de victimes ces dernières 24 heures était de 148, ajoutant que « les provinces du Khouzistan, d'Azerbaïdjan occidentale et orientale, du Kurdistan, de Kermanschah, de Hormozgan, de Bouchehr, de Khorassan-Razavi et d'Illam

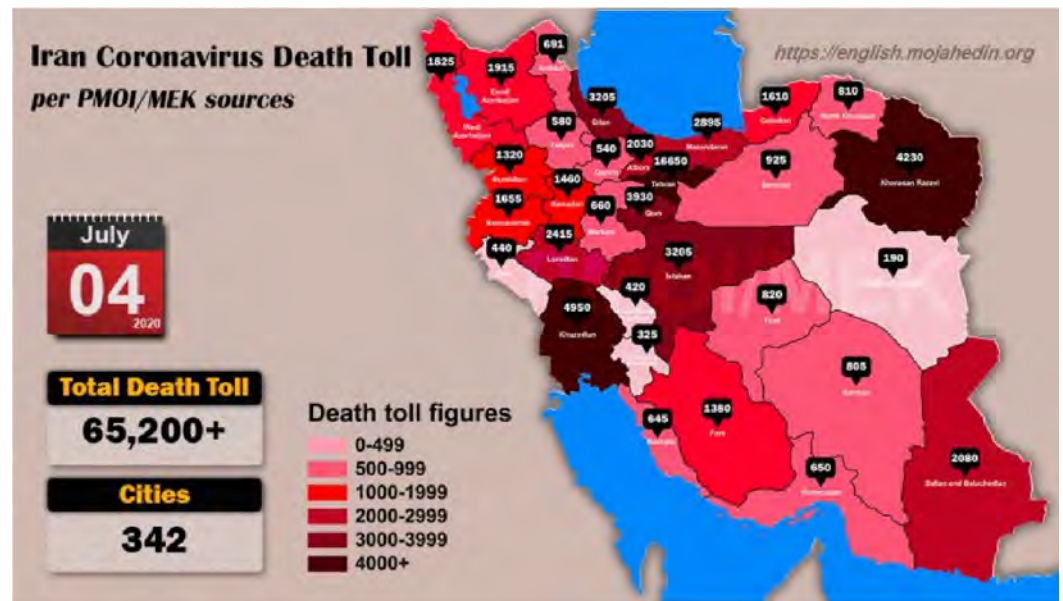
sont dans le rouge. De plus, les provinces de Téhéran, Fars, Ispahan, Mazandaran, Hamedan, Zandjan, Sistan-Baloutchistan, Alborz et Lorestan sont en état d'alerte. » (IRNA, 4 juillet)

Alors que les autorités de diverses provinces déplorent ouvertement le manque sérieux de services médicaux et l'effondrement du système sanitaire, Rohani a déclaré aujourd'hui : « Notre système de santé et d'hygiène a été si actif que nous avons eu à peine besoin de demander l'aide de nos forces armées. Pendant cette période, notre système de santé et d'hygiène a fonctionné et, en même temps, augmente sa capacité dans les hôpitaux et les hospitalisations (...) Pendant cette période de cinq à six mois où nous avons été confrontés à ce virus, 1 500 lits spécialisés ont été ajoutés à notre système de santé. Au fur et à mesure que nous avançons, d'autres lits, respirateurs, unités de soins intensifs et autres moyens tels que les médicaments sont ajoutés, et chaque mois deux lignes de production de médicaments seront ajoutées en moyenne. »

Massoud Mardani, du CNLC évoquant les buts épidémiologiques des tests sérologiques a déclaré que « ce test a été effectué au hasard et nous avons constaté que 18 millions d'Iraniens, soit environ 20% de la population du pays, ont contracté la maladie. » (Agence Isna, 4 juillet)

Le quotidien Hamshahri a écrit hier : « Une étude du ministère de la Santé montre qu'au cours des 10 derniers jours (du 24 juin au 3 juillet), en moyenne 106 personnes ont été infectées par le virus en Iran, et près de six personnes ont été victimes du virus toutes les heures. »

Le président de la faculté des sciences médicales d'Azerbaïdjan occidentale a déclaré



hier : « Au cours des dernières 24 heures, cinq personnes sont mortes du coronavirus à Mahabad. Dans la nuit d'hier, 188 personnes ont été hospitalisées pour des symptômes de syndrome respiratoire aigu dans les hôpitaux de la province, dont 10 sont décédées (...) Si cette tendance se poursuit, la situation va s'aggraver. » (Site Javan, 3 Juillet)

Dans la province d'Illam, l'agence Irna a rapporté aujourd'hui : « Du 21 juin au 1er juillet, le nombre de cas positifs a doublé (...) et augmente de manière exponentielle. Selon le gouverneur de l'Illam, 90% de la population de la province est dans le rouge et 11 villes sont dans le rouge. »

Des témoins rapportent qu'au Khuzistan, dans la seule journée du 3 juillet, dix malades du Covid-19 dans le quartier Padadchahr d'Ahwaz et 15 autres du quartier Zeitoun sont décédés. L'hôpital Razi d'Ahwaz déborde de malades de l'épidémie et ne peut plus admettre de nouveaux patients. Le président de la faculté des sciences médicales d'Ahwaz a déclaré : « les villes dans le rouge de la province sont passées de 9 à 12. » (Agence Tasnim 4 juillet)

A Qom, des témoins rapportent que le 3 juillet, 5 malades du coronavirus sont décédés dans l'avenue Sadough

Dans la province de Fars, le président de la faculté des sciences médicales de Larestan a déclaré : « l'épidémie dans les villes de Larestan, Khonj et Evaz se propage à grande vitesse. Les lits de l'hôpital de Larestan sont pleins et dans les villes de Khonj et Evaz et Biram aussi les hôpitaux sont pleins (...) A Larestan, on a dû ajouter en pédiatrie des lits pour les malades du coronavirus. » (Agence Iran 3 juillet)

Dans la province de Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-Ahmad, le vice-président de la faculté des sciences médicales de Yasoudj a dit : « Avec l'augmentation des cas positifs et des hospitalisations, surtout à Gatchsaran, des jours difficiles nous attendent en juillet et en août. » (Agence Irna 4 juillet)

Le gouverneur de Kermanschah a reconnu que « 12 villes dans le rouge » sont matière à préoccupation. (Agence Isna, 3 juillet)

Le vice-président de la faculté des sciences médicales de Zandjan a déclaré : « 85% de

la population de cette province sont susceptible de contracter le virus (...) les hospitalisations connaissent une augmentation notable et si ça continue la province est en danger. » (Agence Irna, 4 juillet)

Le vice-gouverneur du Kurdistan a « dit que vu la situation dans le rouge des villes de Sanandaj, Qorveh, Dehgolan, Marivan et Bijar (...) les restrictions ont été mises en place dans l'ensemble de la province du Kurdistan. » (Agence Mehr, 4 juillet)

Le quotidien Hamdeli a écrit aujourd'hui que « alors que chaque jour le nombre de cas positifs au Covid-19 augmente et que le nombre de décès par rapport aux premiers jours n'a pas baissé (...) le gouvernement ne peut rien faire d'autre que donner quelques conseils à la population, comme le port obligatoire du masque, ou donner les pouvoirs aux gouverneurs de chaque province. » (4 juillet)

Il y a quelques heures, la télévision officielle a annoncé le retour des restrictions dues au coronavirus dans les lieux publics à partir du 5 juillet et a indiqué dans un reportage à ce propos que « le danger a dépassé la côte d'alerte ».





5 juillet 2020

## Le “Rossignol d’Amed” s’est éteint

**S**eyidxanê Boyaxcî, surnommé le “Rossignol d’Amed”, est décédé ce dimanche matin à l’âge de 87 ans, dans son appartement d’Amed (Diyrabakir). Le Dengbêj kurde a succombé à une paralysie causée par une infection qui s’était propagée dans tout le corps. Il devrait être inhumé au cimetière de Yenikôy, dans le district de Bağlar.

Seyidxanê Boyaxcî (Seyitxan, le cireur), dont le nom civil était Seydo Şimşek, est né en 1933 dans le village de Lexerî, dans le district d’Ergani. Sa mère étant décédé alors qu’il n’avait que deux ans, et son père deux ans plus tard, il a été élevé par un oncle. Il a passé son enfance comme berger au lieu d’aller à l’école. À l’âge de 15 ans, il a déménagé dans le centre-ville d’Amed et commencé à gagner sa vie en



Photo de Seyidxanê Boyaxcî dans la Maison des Dengbêj

tant que cireur de chaussures dans le quartier antique de Sur. Parallèlement à cette activité qu’il a pratiquée pendant 25 ans, il a travaillé pendant un temps pour le service de nettoyage de la ville.

Seyidxanê Boyaxcî est mort sans descendance. Ses sept enfants sont décédés peu de temps après leur naissance suite à différentes maladies. Dans une interview, il confie :

“D’autres auraient été brisés par cette souffrance. J’ai eu la chance de trouver du réconfort dans mes chansons. Parce que la culture Dengbêj n’est rien d’autre qu’un grand amour.”

Pendant de nombreuses années, il a été une figure incontournable de la maison des Dengbêj, à Sur, chantant chaque jour la joie et la souffrance des Kurdes et transmettant, à travers ses chants, l’histoire kurde aux jeunes générations. Le centre culturel a été évacué par les autorités turques en 2016, lorsque les co-maires de la métropole d’Amed ont été destitués et remplacés par un administrateur d’Etat. Le bâtiment avait précédemment été endommagé lors du siège de la ville par l’armée turque. Il a rouvert ses portes en 2017.



July 6, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Kurdistan Region records 11 deaths, 324 new cases

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Monday, the Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Health announced 11 more deaths and 324 new coronavirus infections over the past 24 hours.

The daily statement of the

Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said that over the previous day, 14 individuals had been added to those quarantined, making for a total of 925 individuals in such isolation in 21 different locations.

In addition, it stated that 2,798 coronavirus tests had been carried out in the same period.

The statement also noted the recoveries from the disease, with 97 of them in the past 24 hours. Of that total, 84 were in Erbil province, nine in Duhok

and four in Halabja. Deaths from the virus over the past 24 hours included six in Erbil province and five in Sulaimani.

The health ministry’s statement explained that the total number of people infected with the coronavirus, since it first ap-

peared in the region had reached 7,639. There have been 5,466 infections in Sulaimani province and 1,765 in Erbil. Halabja recorded 205 cases, while Duhok had 203.

The ministry also noted that there have been a total of 2,789 cases of recovery. In Sulaimani, there were 1,366; 1,149 were in Erbil; 164 in Duhok; and 110 in Halabja. A total of 4,587 active cases remain under medical treatment.

The Deputy Director-General of the Sulaimani health directorate, Herish Salim, described the difficult circumstances that health workers in the province face.

"More than 400 health staff have been infected with the virus," he told Kurdistan 24. "But to avoid a shortage of personnel, we are coming back to work immediately after our initial recovery, myself included."

Salim explained that the rate of infection among health staff is increasing "especially for those in constant contact with the patients, and especially with those in critical condition who need three health personnel to monitor them."

He also said the health administration is considering different options to address the issue of the staffing shortage that the coronavirus is creating.



Security forces stop vehicles at a checkpoint in the Kurdistan Region's city of Sulaimani. (Photo: AFP)

In Sulaimani province, authorities decided on Friday that a shutdown of government institutions--excluding the security, health, and service

sectors--will remain in effect until July 10, due to the high number of new infections in the province.



July 6, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## Erbil security arrest 4 suspected drug dealers, confiscate 80 bricks of narcotics

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Erbil Anti-Drug Directorate on Monday announced the arrest of a four-person team of drug dealers along with 80 bricks of narcotics in the Kurdistan Region capital.

"The security forces of the Kurdistan Region's capital arrested a group of four individuals who were dealing narcotics in the city of Erbil and planning to smuggle 80 bricks of drugs abroad," the directorate said in a statement.

The statement alleged further that the group was intending to turn the Kurdistan Region into a landbridge from where it could smuggle close to 40 kilograms of banned substances abroad, without indicating where to.

A statement from the directorate in 2019 mentioned that the most commonly trafficked drug security forces intercept is heroin. The rest include methamphetamine, "crystal," opium, hashish, and tablets of tramadol, an addictive pain medication.



The confiscated bricks of narcotics, July 6, 2020. (Photo: Erbil Security 'Asayish')

The arrest reportedly took place when the four persons were conducting a transaction involving the narcotics.

The directorate also claimed that one of the four individuals is an Iranian national.

The sale and consumption of any narcotics or controlled medications are strictly forbidden in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.

Kurdish and Iraqi authorities often intercept shipments of drugs passing through Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, mainly in the provinces of Basra, Diyala, Erbil, and Sulaimani. Most of it is smuggled into the country through its porous border with Iran, on its way to Turkey, Syria, and ultimately Europe and North America.



July 6, 2020  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## Turkey using water as weapon against administration in northeast Syria

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Turkey has reduced the flow of water from the Euphrates River into northeast Syria, while its proxies have cut the flow of water from the Allouk water station, depriving hundreds of thousands of people of access to clean water. In addition, the reduced water flow has caused electricity shortages in a region dependent on electricity generated by the Tabqa dam.

The Allouk water station is located near the border town of Serekaniye, over which Turkey and its proxy militias took control in October 2019, during the so-called “Peace Spring Operation.”

“Turkey’s manipulation of the water flow into North and East Syria is twofold,” Thomas McClure, a Syria-based researcher at the Rojava Information Center, told Kurdistan 24.

“On the one hand it regularly cuts the flow from the Allouk station, depriving hundreds of thousands of access to clean drinking water. On the other hand, Turkey has been severely reducing the flow from the Euphrates River, compared to the equivalent months in previous years,” he said.

“The Euphrates is crucial for local farmers to irrigate their crops and keep land viable, as the region struggles for food autonomy in the face of a worsening financial crisis. Major hydroelectric dams on the river also provide clean energy to most of the northeast, but even in the best of times, the region faces frequent

blackouts.” McClure continued.

“With the flow so low, electricity delivery has been cut still further, and authorities at the dam warn that power may be cut out altogether. This leaves locals reliant on expensive, polluting generators that run on crude diesel to meet the gap,” he explained.



The Tabqa dam provides most of the electricity to the northeast (Photo: Kurdistan 24).

In the Kurdish town of Amude, even electricity generators in the neighborhoods of Salim Seyed School and Heyva Sor (Red Crescent) have not been working for the past 15 days, while electricity from the city is available only for a very limited time. Therefore, locals have asked the Autonomous Administration of the North and East of Syria (AANES) to increase the electricity supply.

“How long will this continue? Is this how we should live?,” Bashiira Ali, a woman from Amude complained to Kurdistan 24. “Last night we did not know where to go in the heat and dust. They [family members] went to the electricity generator, and he [the generator owner] said that he would not

turn on the electricity, no matter how long we insisted. Why?”

“It is a terrible situation. There is no cold water, and we are in the streets until noon,” Fatima Hassan, another woman in Amude explained. “There are children, elderly, and patients. It is impossible to continue like this. A solution must be found.”

backed groups control the main source of drinking water in Hasakah province. They have regularly cut the water flows from the Allouk water station to Hasakah province, demanding more electricity from the Mabrouka power plant, which is controlled by the local Kurdish-led administration, in exchange for that water that they control.

Last Friday, Sozdar Ahmed, co-chair of the Water Directorate of the Autonomous Administration, explained to Kurdistan 24 that although the pumping station is still working, “it supplies only 30% of its water capacity. Sometimes there are power shortages, and then there is no water at all.”

Indeed, the pro-regime Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported that on Sunday the water was cut completely by the Turkish-backed groups.

According to a recent analysis from The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, written by Syria expert Fabrice Balanche, Turkey is deliberately using water as a weapon against the AANES “reducing the flow of the Euphrates and tapping into groundwater around the border, thereby reducing the amounts available downstream.”

“Voluntary cuts are increasing, despite Russian mediation, and it is very difficult to find new sources of water for Hasaka’s large population, which has swelled to 450,000, after new refugees arrived from Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain,” Balanche explained.

Ahin Swed, co-chair of the energy board of Jazira canton, told Kurdistan 24 that since mid-March of this year, Turkey has been reducing the supply of water from the Euphrates, negatively affecting power generation.

“We had to make new adjustments,” Swed explained. “The last instruction is that now we are only able to generate 12 hours of 80 megawatt electricity per day for the Jazira Region from 8 PM to 8 AM.”

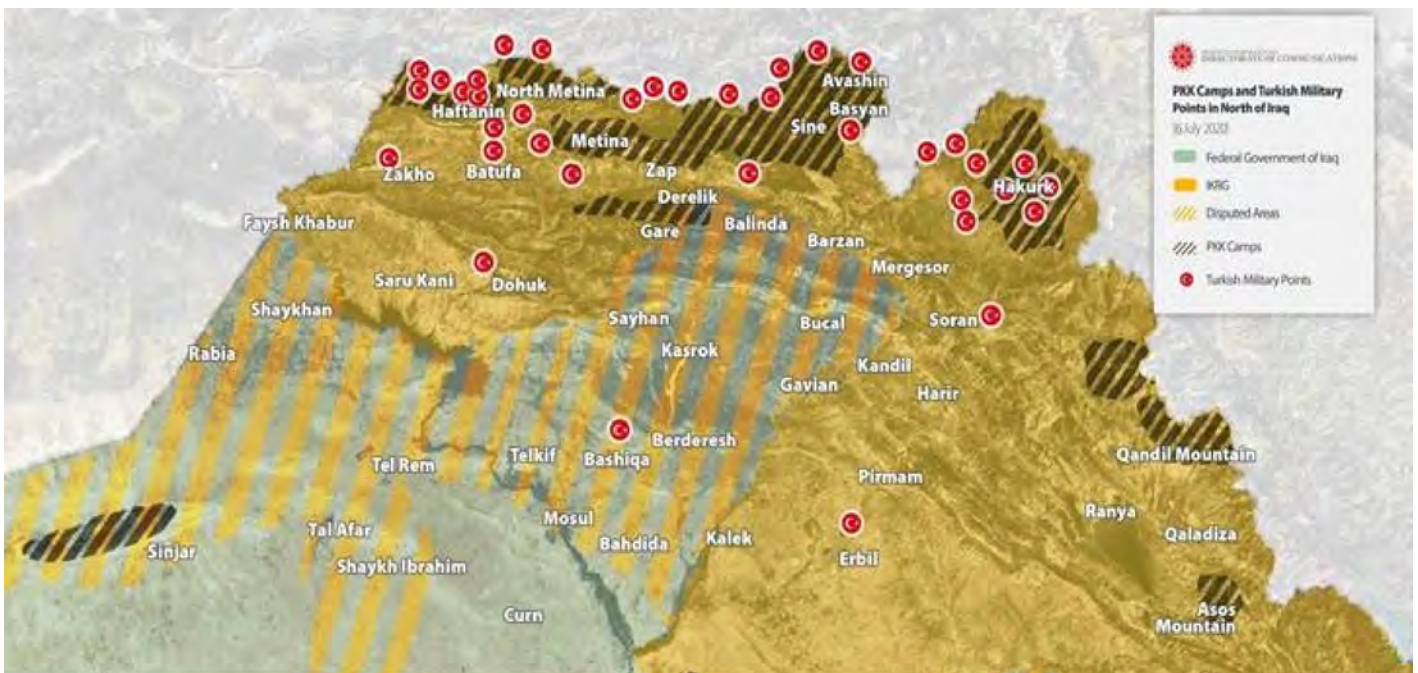
“According to the last schedule, the first four hours are for the areas in the countryside, and the remaining eight hours for the city centers,” he said.

In addition, armed, Turkish-



July 6, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Ankara has built nearly 40 ‘military points’ in Kurdistan Region: Turkish presidency



The pictured map was released by the Turkish presidency's Directorate of Communications on July 6, 2020. Photo: Turkish Presidency

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Turkish forces have almost 40 “military points” in the Kurdistan Region, including four in Erbil, Duhok, Soran and Zakho cities, according to a map published Monday by the Turkish presidency.

The Turkish presidency's Directorate of Communications issued a map late Monday saying it has established 37 “military points” in border areas of the Kurdistan Region and inside the cities of Erbil, Duhok, Zakho and Soran.

Turkey began air and ground military operations in the Kurdistan Region in mid-June with the stated aim of removing

suspected Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets from the area. So far, five civilians have been killed by Turkish airstrikes.

The PKK is an armed group struggling for Kurdish political and cultural rights in Turkey.

The map shows a Turkish military presence in multiple locations, spreading across the Iraq-Turkey and Iraq-Iran border areas in the Kurdistan Region. The Turkish army also has a base in Bashiqa, in the disputed province of Nineveh, despite multiple calls from Baghdad to withdraw from the area.

Ankara's presence in the Kurd-

istan Region has grown significantly in recent decades, particularly since the 1990s.

Rizgar Ersi, a commander of the PKK, told the group's media this week that Turkey is trying to establish “an occupation corridor” in the Kurdistan Region.

“It is trying to occupy a strip of land that is about 30 to 40 kilometres wide. If it succeeds in this, the attack will continue on a line from Qandil to Shingal and an occupation corridor will be built,” he said.

Iraqi border forces in Zakho have set up five bases in “strategic” positions in order to de-escalate clashes between

Turkish forces and the PKK, as well as prevent civilian losses, a commander said on Thursday.

Hamada Dizayee, Commander of the Iraqi 1st Border Guard unit told Rudaw's Hiwa Jamal on Monday that Turkey has asked Iraqi border forces to cooperate with them amid Ankara's ongoing operation in the border areas, located in the Kurdistan Region

“Turkey has asked to build cooperation with us in order to secure the areas on the Iraqi-Turkish border,” Dizayee said. “We already have cooperation with the Iranian border forces to secure the areas on Iraqi-Iranian borders, and we meet every six months.”



July 6, 2020  
By Lawk Ghafuri

## Iraqi border forces to cooperate with Turkey to 'secure' border areas

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region - Iraqi border forces and their Turkish counterparts will cooperate to "secure" border areas between the two countries, an army commander has told Rudaw.

Hamada Dizayee, Commander of the Iraqi 1st Border Guard unit told Rudaw's Hiwa Jamal on Monday that Turkey has asked Iraqi border forces to cooperate with them amid Ankara's ongoing operation in the border areas, located in the Kurdistan Region

"Turkey has asked to build cooperation with us in order to secure the areas on the Iraqi-Turkish border," Dizayee said. "We already have cooperation with the Iranian border forces to secure the areas on Iraqi-Iranian borders, and we meet every six months." Turkey began fresh air and

ground military operations in the Kurdistan Region in mid-June, with the stated aim of removing suspected Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets from the area.

Dubbed Operation Claw-Eagle, Ankara launched a set of airstrikes across the Kurdistan Region and Nineveh province on June 15, followed by a ground operation, or Operation-Claw Tiger, on June 17.

Five civilians have been killed since the operations began.

Turkey and the PKK have been fighting each other for decades, resulting in the deaths of over 40,000 people on both sides of the conflict, including civilians. The PKK is an armed group fighting for increased rights for Kurds in Turkey. "Earlier, there were no military points at the border," said Di-

zayee, adding that now the Iraqi border forces are stationed in three military bases in areas on the Iraqi-Turkish border in the Kurdistan Region.

However an army commander claimed last week that Iraqi border forces have stationed troops at five "strategic" positions in Zakho district.

Turkey has conducted airstrikes and ground operations against the PKK within Iraq's borders for years, accusing the federal Iraqi government and Kurdistan Regional Government of failing to take measures against the group.

Kurds make up the majority of members of the Iraqi border forces units stationed in Dohuk province, with some Arab and Turkmen members. The force was established in 2003 and has been based in Duhok prov-

ince since, according to Dizayee.

"Our only job is to monitor the borders and prevent smuggling across the border," he said.

Zebari told Rudaw on Monday that the main task of their forces is to protect the border with Turkey, in order to prevent the presence of "smugglers" between Iraq and Turkey.

"So far we have not had any issues with the PKK and the PKK has not prevented us from carrying out our duties," Zebari added.

Iraqi security analyst Husham al-Hashimi puts the number of PKK fighters in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, at between 8,500 and 10,000, distributed across 81 points and bases.



July 6, 2020

## Iraqi expert on Islamic State shot dead in Baghdad

**H**isham al-Hashimi had said he feared Iran-backed militia groups were targeting him.

A leading Iraqi expert on Islamic State and other militant groups has been shot dead in

Baghdad after receiving threats from Iran-backed militias, security officials have said.

Gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire on Hisham al-Hashimi, 47, on Monday outside his home in the Zeyouneh area of Baghdad, a family member

said, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons. The family member heard five shots fired. Al-Hashimi was later pronounced dead at a hospital.

Al-Hashimi was a respected

security analyst who appeared regularly on Iraqi television and whose expertise was sought out by government officials, journalists and researchers.

Weeks before his death, Al-Hashimi had told confidantes he

feared Iran-backed militia groups were targeting him. Friends had advised him to flee to the northern city of Irbil, in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

He rose to prominence as an expert on the inner workings of Isis and even advised the US-led coalition during its years-long battle with the extremist group.

After Iraq declared victory over Isis in December 2017, he increasingly turned his attention to the Iran-backed militias that helped to defeat Isis and now wield considerable power in the country. He was an outspoken critic of some of these groups, which have thousands of heavily armed fighters.

News of his killing spread quickly, with fellow researchers, journalists and others taking to social media to express their condolences.

The head of the United Nations assistance mission for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, expressed shocked at the assassination and said the UN strongly denounces the cow-

ardly act. In a tweet, she called on the Iraqi government to quickly find the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

The British ambassador to Iraq, Stephen Hickey, said he was "devastated and deeply saddened by the news of al-Hashimi's death. Iraq has lost one of its very best – a thoughtful and brave man".

Iraqi researcher Fanar Haddad said al-Hashimi was "a strikingly bright mind and a true gentleman", calling his death "a major loss and an unforgivable crime".

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Asked what al-Hashimi's death might signify to critical analysts, he said: "Critical voices are liable to be silenced if and when deemed necessary."

Political analyst Ihsan al-Shammari, a colleague of al-Hashimi, said those who killed him wanted to silence the voices that disagree with their opinion and blamed the shooting on the proliferation of armed groups in the country.

Many saw his death as a wor-



Hisham al-Hashimi's expertise as a security analyst was sought by government, journalists and academics. Photograph: AFPTV/AFP / Getty Images

rying sign as the government struggles to rein in the militias.

The Iran-backed groups have been blamed for a spate of recent rocket attacks targeting US interests. Authorities launched a raid last week in which they detained 14 members of the powerful Kataib Hezbollah group in Baghdad but all except one were released just days later, in what was widely seen as a capitulation by the government.

The prime minister of Iraq, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, said Iraqi security forces would spare no effort

in pursuing his killers.

"We will work with all our efforts to confine arms to the state, so that no force will rise above the rule of law," the statement said.

In some of his final tweets before he was killed, al-Hashimi lamented the country's bitter divisions and the corruption plaguing its political system.

"The rights, blood and dignity of Iraqis have been lost, and their money gone into the pockets of corrupt politicians," he tweeted on Sunday.



July 7, 2020

## Turkey's military incursion into northern Syria lacked legitimacy, Germany says

The German government said on Monday that Turkey's offensive into northeast Syria last year, targeting Syrian Kurdish forces, lacked legitimacy under international law, Der Tagesspiegel reported.

Turkey started so-called "Operation Peace Spring" on Oct.

9 to clear Kurdish-led forces it views as terrorists from areas south of its border, saying that the operation was of vital importance to its national security and was its right under international law.

"The federal government has announced that it cannot identify any reasons that would le-



gitimise the operation under international law," Maria Flachsbarth, Parliamentary State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ,) said, in a response to questions from left-wing Die Linke lawmaker Helin Evrim Sommer.

"The fact that the federal government has, for the first time,

officially announced that it does not recognise any reasons which legitimise Turkey's attacks against the democratic self-administration in North-East Syria under international law is to be welcomed," Tagesspiegel cited Sommer as saying.

"This is a diplomatically packaged but resounding slap in the face for the regime of [President] Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan," she said.

Turkey's operation early last year provoked international outrage as Ankara targeted Kurdish-led groups that had fought in the front lines against the Islamic State (ISIS), with the operation labelled as an invasion by many Western politicians and the press.

Turkey says Kurdish militants

in Syria are linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is recognised as a terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union. The PKK has fought a four-decade war against the Turkish security forces for political autonomy for Kurds in Turkey at the cost of almost 40,000 lives, most of them Kurdish.



July 7, 2020

## Trillion Energy Announces Derecik Zagros Basin Oil Property Evaluation

**V**ANCOUVER, British Columbia and ANKARA, Turkey, July 07, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Trillion Energy International Inc. ("Trillion" or the "Company") (CSE: TCF) (OTC: TCFE) (Frankfurt: 3P2N) is pleased to report that the evaluation of the Zagros Basin Derecik Exploration Licenses in the Hakkari area of Turkey is complete and yielded promising results.

Trillion has 100% interest of 42,833 hectares of the Derecik Licenses which covers the extension of the oil rich Iraq Zagros Basin into Turkey – proximate to several world class oil fields located in Northern Iraq. Trillion's Derecik Exploration Licenses oil fields are located in proximity to the following proven oil fields:

45 kilometers south the Bijell Field, with 1 well producing 3,576 with an estimated 100 MM bbls recoverable (Gulf Keystone Petroleum Ltd)

65 kilometers away the Atrush Field with Q4 2019 produced average of 41,700 bopd

and best estimate resource of 2 billion bbls oil

75 kilometers away the Swara Tika field with 21,000 bopd production and 2P of 368 MM bbls 36-39 API

60 kilometers away the Swara Tika East with one well producing 5,600 bopd and 2C resources of 157 MM bbls oil of 36-39 API.

As the Derecik Licenses are located just where Turkey extends into the Iraq Zagros basin, we have determined the stratigraphy on the Derecik License is identical to the what is found in several Iraq producing fields. We have conducted surface mapping, seismic interpretation and geological evaluation of same. The same reservoir rocks source rock that oil is produced from in Iraq is also found on the Derecik Licenses. The oil prone sources rocks that occur in Iraq are present on the Derecik Licenses.

The nearest well on the Turkey side of the border for the Zagros Basin is 85 kilometers

away from the Derecik Licenses and never reached the target reservoir, leaving the region significantly unexplored.

Oil seeps and bitumen found on the Derecik Licenses have been analyzed and indicate that there is a petroleum system in the Derecik region which bears resemblances to the oil field found in Northern Iraq.

The result of the photo-geological study, geochemical analysis of the oil seeps and bituminous samples, offset well information in Iraq and seismic data shot and interpretation within the Derecik Licenses has identified 7 leads, with 2 of those 7 leads drill ready. All leads area result of Cretaceous and Miocene compression which is the dominant play in Northern Iraq.

The two drill ready structures are:

Balkayalar-1 with TD 2560 meters which is an anticline 4 way closure containing Juras-

sic and Triassic reservoirs, and Derecik-1 with TD 3,493 meters which is an anticline 4 way closure containing Cretaceous, Jurassic and Triassic reservoirs.

The two locations are expected to contain analogous reservoirs as found in the Shaikan Field located 90 km south of the locations. Shaikan produced average 32,883 bopd in 2019 and have 2p of 578 million bbls oil.

In Turkey the fiscal terms are far superior to what is found in Iraq. In Turkey has a 12.5% royalty and a 20% corporate tax whereas in Northern Iraq it is substantially more expensive and has greater security and other risks.

The Company estimates that drilling a well on the Derecik license will cost about \$10 million while an equivalent well in Northern Iraq would cost about \$60 million.

Trillion is evaluating the next steps to capture the value of

this highly prospective license, which it expects will involve drilling one of the two prospects, at dates to be determined.

Arthur Halleran, CEO commented, "Successful exploration efforts on the Derecik play have the potential to yield a significant conventional oil discovery accessible for low production costs, competitive in today's oil environment. We are excited about our evaluation of the property's drilling prospects, given its proximity to super major fields and our data analysis conducted to date."

#### About the Company

Trillion Energy is an oil and gas producing company with multiple assets throughout Turkey and Bulgaria. The Company is 49% owner of the SASB natural gas field, one of the Black Sea's first and largest natural gas development projects; a 19.6% (except three wells with 9.8%) interest in the Cendere oil field; a 100% interest in 42,833 hectares oil exploration block covering the northern ex-

tension of the prolific Iraq/Zagros Basin; and in Bulgaria, the Vranino 1-11 block, a prospective unconventional natural gas property.

For further information, please see our website: [www.trillionenergy.com](http://www.trillionenergy.com) or email us: [info@trillionenergy.com](mailto:info@trillionenergy.com)

The Company's NI 51-101 and other reports relating to its reserves as at December 31, 2019 are filed on [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov), [www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com), [www.thecse.com](http://www.thecse.com), as well as the Company's website.

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Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements and other information about this news release and the Company reserves

This release contains forward-looking statements, which are based on current expectations, estimates, and projections

about the Company's business and prospects, as well as management's beliefs, and certain assumptions made by management. Words such as "anticipates," "expects," "intends," "plans," "believes," "seeks," "estimates," "may," "should," "will" and variations of these words are intended to identify forward-looking statements. Such statements speak only as of the date hereof and are subject to change. The Company undertakes no obligation to publicly revise or update any forward-looking statements for any reason. These statements include, but are not limited to, statements about the Company's prospectus listing on the Canadian Securities Exchange, the potential impact on the market for its securities, expansion and business strategies, anticipated growth opportunities, and the amount of fundraising necessary to achieve the foregoing. Such statements are not guarantees of future performance and are subject to certain risks, uncertainties, and assumptions that are difficult to predict. Accordingly, actual results could differ materially and adversely from

those expressed in any forward-looking statements as a result of various factors. These factors include unforeseen securities regulatory challenges, COVID, oil and gas price fluctuations, operational and geological risks, the ability of the Company to raise necessary funds for development; the outcome of commercial negotiations; changes in technical or operating conditions; the cost of extracting gas and oil may be too costly so that it is uneconomic and not profitable to do so and other factors discussed from time to time in the Company's Securities and Exchange Commission filings, including the most recently filed Annual Report on Form 10-K and subsequent reports on Forms 10-Q, 8-K. For a full summary of our oil and gas reserves information, please refer to our Forms F-1,2,3 51-101 filed on [www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com), and or request a copy of our reserves report effective December 31, 2019. The Company currently has no proven reserves on its Derecik exploration license, and there is no guarantee that any such reserves will be found.

LE FIGARO

7 juillet 2020  
Par Minoui Delphine

## Les opposants à Bachar el-Assad saluent la loi César

La loi César doit son nom à un ex-photographe de l'armée syrienne qui fit sortir clandestinement du pays plus de 50.000 clichés documentant les sévices du régime.

OMAR ALSHOGRE parle avec la conviction de ceux qui n'ont plus rien à perdre. À 25 ans, les souvenirs d'adolescence du jeune rescapé des geôles de Bachar el-Assad sont un catalogue d'horreur : chocs électriques, coups de câbles,

sévices sexuels, privation de nourriture, ou encore cette sinistre tâche qui consistait à ramasser (parfois en plusieurs morceaux) les corps de ses codétenus décédés sous la torture (y compris son propre cousin, Bachir), pour les emporter dans la « chambre d'isolement » et marquer leur front d'un simple numéro.

À sa libération, en juin 2015, au bout de trois ans d'incarcération, Omar ne pesait plus que

34 kg. Son corps était brisé. Sa tête, dévastée. Mais il n'a jamais pu oublier tous ces numéros. Ni les autres, ceux des dizaines de milliers de prisonniers qui croupissent encore dans le couloir de la mort tandis qu'à travers le pays, le régime syrien réimpose son contrôle sur les derniers bastions rebelles en brûlant les ultimes bourgeons de la révolution de 2011 avec l'aide de ses alliés russes et iraniens.

« La loi César, c'est la garantie de ne pas les oublier. C'est tout -faire pour que cesse l'aide militaire et économique à un régime qui continue à bombarder, affamer et torturer sa population », martèle le jeune militant anti-Assad, aujourd'hui membre actif de la Syrian Emergency Task Force (SETF), en évoquant les nouvelles sanctions américaines entrées en vigueur le 17 juin, cinq ans après sa sortie de prison.



Promulguée fin 2019 par Donald Trump, la loi César doit son nom à un ex-photographe de l'armée syrienne qui, au péril de sa vie, fit sortir clandestinement du pays plus de 50 000 clichés documentant les sévices commis dans les prisons du régime. Son témoignage et celui d'Omar comme ceux d'autres survivants sont autant de preuves qui ont permis la rédaction de ce texte visant à accroître la pression économique sur le régime pour favoriser une résolution politique du conflit depuis longtemps recherchée.

« Alors que Bachar el-Assad et ses soutiens russes et iraniens pensent avoir gagné la bataille militaire, le message est clair : il ne peut y avoir d'avenir en Syrie sans justice, ni transition politique », avance Mouaz Moustafa, directeur de SETF, et l'un des fers de lance de l'élaboration de la loi.

Le « Caesar Act », qui s'ajoute à une myriade d'autres sanctions américaines votées contre la Syrie par le passé, vise inévitablement le bourreau en chef, Bachar el-Assad, mais aussi de nombreuses personnalités de son clan, y compris sa sœur, Bouchra, qui vit en exil, ou encore son épouse, Asma el-Assad, dont le nom apparaît avec une mention spé-

ciale dans la liste des 35 nouveaux sanctionnés par les Américains. La loi prévoit toute une série de mesures de rétorsion à l'égard des « responsables ou complices des violations des droits humains en Syrie » en gelant leurs avoirs et en leur interdisant de voyager.

Grande nouveauté, elle cible aussi les banques et les entreprises, de toutes nationalités, spécialisées dans l'énergie et la construction. « L'idée consiste à isoler Damas en décourageant les étrangers de commercer avec le régime ou d'investir dans la reconstruction des ex-villes rebelles, dont la population a été chassée et expropriée après avoir été violemment bombardée. Quiconque envisage de faire du business avec Assad doit en connaître le prix », poursuit Mouaz Moustafa. Un message fort, qui s'adresse, entre autres, aux Émirats arabes unis, tentés par une normalisation de leurs relations avec Assad, et dont le fameux projet dit Marota City ambitionne de transformer les quartiers dévastés de la banlieue de Damas en petit Dubaï. En parallèle, tient à préciser l'activiste syrien, « la loi César prévoit des dérogations qui excluent l'action humanitaire de ses champs d'application ».

« Assad continue à tuer son peuple »

La levée des sanctions s'appuie sur différentes conditions : l'arrêt des bombardements aériens sur des « cibles civiles », l'accès à l'humanitaire dans les zones non gouvernementales, la libération des prisonniers politiques, la condamnation des auteurs de crimes de guerre et le retour des déplacés. Sans oublier le retour aux négociations politiques entre le régime et l'opposition. « L'objectif est de faire respecter la résolution 2254 du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, dont une première étape consiste à la rédaction d'une nouvelle Constitution. Or, le régime bloque depuis des mois le travail du comité chargé de rédiger ce texte », rappelle Charles Thépaut, chercheur au Washington Institute for Near East Policy, aux sceptiques qui ne voudraient voir dans le « Cesar Act » que le reflet d'une politique américaine unilatérale et versatile à l'heure où Trump a décidé de sanctionner des magistrats du Tribunal pénal international, en réponse à une enquête pour crimes de guerre en Afghanistan.

Mais certains s'inquiètent, aussi, des retombées négatives de ces sanctions sur la population dans un pays où la devise

locale a perdu plus de 50 % de sa valeur entre mai et juin 2020. « Elles risquent de ne faire qu'aggraver l'économie déjà ruinée de la Syrie. Le régime sera alors tenté d'utiliser le peu d'argent qu'il lui reste pour consolider son propre clan, et non pour la population. Au final, ce sont les civils qui vont souffrir encore plus », relève une diplomate européenne qui suit de près la question syrienne.

La loi, se désole également Mohammad K., un entrepreneur syrien réfugié en Turquie, « pourrait indirectement bloquer des gens normaux comme moi qui envisagent de réinvestir dans leur pays ou de rouvrir leur magasin ou leur usine ». D'autres, encore, craignent que cette tentative d'isolement de Damas n'arrive trop tard, alors que le conflit, qui dure depuis plus de neuf ans, a déjà causé la mort de plus de 380 000 personnes et déraciné plus de la moitié des Syriens (déplacés ou exilés). Un argument que refuse d'entendre Omar Alshogre. « Non, il est encore temps d'agir face à un régime qui pense pouvoir n'en faire qu'à sa tête en toute impunité. À l'heure où nous parlons, Assad continue à tuer son peuple. Nous ne pouvons rester silencieux ! », dit le jeune miraculé syrien.

LE FIGARO

7 juillet 2020

Par Jean-François Colosimo

## « Ne laissons pas Erdogan transformer la basilique Sainte-Sophie en mosquée ! »

L'historien et théologien\* rappelle le destin tumultueux de cette basilique du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui se retrouve à nouveau au cœur d'un conflit civilisationnel entre l'Orient et l'Occident.

Pendant la crise sanitaire, la crise géopolitique continue.

Pire, elle s'accélère. Le K.-O. viral de la communauté internationale profite aux autocrates qui parient sur l'inertie planétaire. Parmi eux, le président Erdogan peut légitimement prétendre au titre de champion de l'escalade. Jamais à court d'hostilités, il vient de marquer un point en Libye contre l'Amé-

rique, la Russie et la France réunies. Le voilà momentanément sacré propriétaire des migrants, patron des Frères musulmans et porte-drapeau du réveil ottoman en Méditerranée. Poursuivant son rêve de restaurer le califat, il sait cependant que la domination idéologique se gagne à coups

de batailles symboliques.

D'où le projet concomitant à son aventurisme militaire de reconverter, au cœur d'Istanbul, la basilique-musée de Sainte-Sophie en mosquée. L'affaire ne se réduit pas, comme on l'écrit un peu partout, à une simple manœuvre turco-turque

visant à écorner le camp laïc, flatter l'électorat fondamentaliste ou divertir les couches populaires obsédées par le krach économique. En apparence anecdotique, elle constitue en fait un axe essentiel de sa stratégie offensive. Dans l'esprit de ce spécialiste du chantage diplomatique, il y va bel et bien d'une déclaration belliciste. Avec, pour résultat qu'il escompte, un Munich civilisationnel.

Seule l'histoire permet d'éclairer la prise en otage de ce monument religieux qui, à travers les siècles, aura servi de motif politique aux conflits récurrents entre l'Occident et l'Orient. Ce sont sa sécularisation en 1934 par Atatürk et son inscription en 1985 au patrimoine de l'Unesco qui l'ont restitué à sa vocation première : témoigner de l'universalité. C'est ce message qu'Erdogan entend aujourd'hui dynamiter.

Retour au temps long, donc. En 324, l'empereur Constantin, après s'être converti au christianisme et avoir édicté la liberté de culte, transporte la capitale des Césars à Byzance, sur les rives du Bosphore. Pour honorer la « Nouvelle Rome », il fait édifier en 330, sur le modèle du Panthéon, une basilique dédiée à la nativité du Christ et la nomme Hagia Sophia, le « temple de la Sagesse divine ». Un siècle plus tard, en 415, Théodose fait reconstruire le bâtiment afin qu'il scelle, à l'image du code juridique et théologique qu'il a architecturé, l'alliance de l'État et de l'Église au cœur de la cité désormais reine, Constantinople.

Un siècle à nouveau s'écoule et Justinien, qui se considère tout autant un docteur de la foi et de la loi que son prédécesseur, entreprend l'érection du plus grand lieu de culte « qui ait jamais existé ». Audacieux, grandiose, l'édifice qui est consacré en 562 doit être le centre de l'univers, le pivot de « l'œcumène », le point focal

de l'humanité rassemblée sous la symphonie des pouvoirs temporel et spirituel. Mais Justinien échoue à reprendre l'Occident aux Barbares et Sainte-Sophie va, dès lors, devenir l'enjeu disputé des reconstructions impériales qui enflammeront les ères médiévale et moderne.

Lorsque, au Xe siècle, Vladimir, prince de la Rus', envoie des émissaires pour enquêter sur la « vraie » religion, ceux qui reviennent de Constantinople lui rapportent qu'à peine entrés dans la basilique, ils ont été « transportés de la Terre au Ciel ». Sous l'effet des missions byzantines, l'Est slave embrasse majoritairement l'orthodoxie et, dès 1037, une cathédrale Sainte-Sophie voit le jour à Kiev. Deux Europe antagoniques se profilent, dont le divorce est consommé en 1204 quand les Latins de la IVe croisade, ignorant l'interdit du pape Innocent III, mettent à sac la cité impériale et profanent son sanctuaire afin de punir le « schisme grec ». L'Empire durablement affaibli s'éteint définitivement le 29 mai 1453 lorsque les Ottomans s'emparent de Constantinople. La première visite de Mehmed II est pour l'autel basilical, devant lequel il rend grâce à Allah pour la prise de la « Ville des villes ». Sur son ordre, Sainte-Sophie échappe à la destruction et garde même son nom, à peine turquisé, Ayasofya. Mehmed, qui s'arroge le titre de Kayser-i Rum, « César des Romains », prescrit que les lieux de culte musulmans du nouvel empire devront copier le modèle de la « Grande Église ». L'architecte Sinan, enfant volé à la noblesse chrétienne comme la plupart des janissaires, confèrera à cette directive sa forme classique dont témoigne la Mosquée bleue, bâtie tout à côté de son inégalable prototype.

L'Europe de l'Ouest s'est émue mais n'a pas bougé, dévorée qu'elle est également par les contestations en héritage de la

romanité. La mobilisation qu'a prêchée le pape Pie II est restée lettre morte : « Nous laissons les Turcs libres d'agir à leur guise », se lamente (déjà !) le pontife. C'est pour combler la perte de Sainte-Sophie dans l'imaginaire chrétien qu'il entreprend la rénovation de la basilique constantinienne du Vatican d'où finira par sortir Saint-Pierre de Rome,

À l'Est, la Russie ne se veut pas moins la légataire de Byzance et, multipliant les Sainte-Sophie à Novgorod, Vologda, face au Kremlin, elle érige Moscou en « troisième Rome ». À partir du XVIIIe siècle, de la Crimée au Caucase, l'Empire tsariste entre en rivalité frontale avec l'Empire ottoman, avec pour but avoué la reconquête de Constantinople et la réouverture de la basilique aux célébrations liturgiques. Une ambition que seule suspend la révolution bolchévique de 1917, peu de temps avant que l'adversaire ne soit lui-même balayé par une autre révolution, jacobine celle-là.

En faisant « cadeau de Sainte-Sophie à l'humanité », en la désaffectant de tout usage cultuel, Mustafa Kemal croit museler les oppositions intérieures et extérieures à la modernisation indispensable aux Turcs afin qu'ils renouent avec la puissance. Il suffira de la chute du communisme pour qu'elles se déchaînent à nouveau. Et plus religieusement encore.

Si Erdogan perpétue la fabrique nationaliste de son devancier, en confirmant le négationnisme constitutionnel sur le génocide des Arméniens et des Assyriens, la déportation des Grecs, la persécution des Kurdes et des Alévis, il la double d'une entreprise de révision culturelle qui transforme les vestiges d'Éphèse ou de Cappadoce en des attestations de la « grande civilisation anatolienne ». Mais falsifier l'histoire ne suffit pas. Après l'épuration ethnique, la purge



Jean-François Colosimo

confessionnelle : les églises muséifiées, pourtant cernées à l'infini de mosquées aussi neuves que vides, doivent être « rendues » au culte coranique. Tel est le cas en 2011 de Sainte-Sophie de Nicée (Izmir) où a été formulé le Credo, en 2013 de Sainte-Sophie de Trébizonde (Trabzon) aux influences géorgiennes. Tel doit être le cas de Sainte-Sophie de Constantinople (Istanbul).

Approuvée par le Parlement en 2012 et relayée devant les tribunaux des confréries dévotes en guise de vernis démocratique, la reconversion du monument est aujourd'hui entre les mains du Conseil d'État de la République turque. Mais Erdogan a déjà réussi son mauvais tour : embarrasser Washington, moquer Bruxelles, humilier Athènes, défier Moscou. Et répandre son discours de l'inimitié. Nous ne pouvons pas laisser les savants, les intellectuels, les artistes turcs, qui interjettent appel sur appel, se battre seuls pour que subsiste une habitation commune de l'histoire. Ni abandonner cette cause à Vladimir Poutine. Le président Macron a su se montrer ferme sur la Libye. Lui qui répugne au déboulonnage du passé doit savoir que Sainte-Sophie mérite aussi la parole de la France.

## Ankara renforce son influence dans les territoires syriens sous son contrôle

L'utilisation de la livre turque s'est généralisée depuis le mois de juin dans les territoires syriens sous contrôle d'Ankara.

Exit la livre syrienne. Dans les régions du nord-ouest de la Syrie, conquises par l'armée turque et ses supplétifs syriens entre août 2016 et octobre 2019, l'utilisation de la livre turque (TL) s'est généralisée depuis le mois de juin. Ce changement a été présenté comme une réaction à l'effondrement de la livre syrienne. Il s'agit plutôt de l'aboutissement d'un lent processus. Pour de nombreux Syriens, opposants ou prorégime, cette évolution est explicite : la Turquie entend consolider sa présence dans les territoires qu'elle contrôle. Et certains s'inquiètent d'une « partition » monétaire progressive de leur pays.

Depuis la ville de Tall Abyad jusqu'à l'enclave d'Afrin à majorité kurde, en passant par Al-Bab et les villes frontalières de Djarabulus et Azaz, les militaires turcs, les mercenaires syriens et les fonctionnaires locaux reçoivent leur salaire en livre turque. La monnaie turque circule également à Idlib, région sous contrôle de l'opposition, dominée par le groupe djihadiste Hayat Tahrir Al-Cham (HTC), et où l'armée turque est présente : c'est dans cette devise qu'était déjà rémunéré, par exemple, le personnel des hôpitaux. Désormais, même des produits de base, comme le pain, se paient en livre turque.

En juin, des petites coupures ont été envoyées chez les changeurs et les bureaux de

poste (Posta Telegraf Telefon, PTT). Cela n'aurait pas été possible sans l'aval d'Ankara. Les PTT, ouverts dans le Nord-Ouest syrien – mais pas dans la région d'Idlib – font office de banques. C'est par leur entremise que, notamment, les associations syriennes installées en Turquie, transfèrent l'argent destiné aux employés ou aux projets à Idlib, zone placée sous perfusion de l'aide humanitaire.

« Logique d'intégration économique »

La généralisation de l'emploi de la livre turque a été perçue comme une mesure de stabilisation face au crash de la devise syrienne, bien que la valeur de la LT soit fluctuante. « Cela permet une unité dans les échanges dans le Nord-Ouest. Mais pour faire face à l'inflation des prix, il faudrait un contrôle des commerces, qui n'existe pas », note un natif de la région d'Idlib, actif dans l'aide humanitaire et exilé en Turquie à cause de ses critiques du groupe HTC. L'inflation est aussi difficile à contenir car des produits, comme les denrées agricoles, continuent de venir des zones de la Syrie sous contrôle gouvernemental, où les prix flambent.

Pour asseoir son influence sur le Nord-Ouest, la Turquie a mis l'accent sur la reconstruction. Des routes, écoles, ou réseaux de distribution d'eau et d'électricité ont été partiellement restaurés. Les postes-frontières voient passer toutes sortes de marchandises, des biens de consommation aux matériaux de construction. « On est en présence d'une logique d'inté-



Un homme tend des livres turques à un vendeur pour payer sa marchandise, à Idlib (Syrie), le 20 juin. Ghaith Alsayed / AP

gration économique qui vise à faire de ces territoires, administrés par la Turquie et ses alliés syriens, un marché destiné à l'exportation de produits turcs. Le but est de bâtir un cadre favorable aux échanges commerciaux. La circulation de la livre turque est ainsi facilitée », explique Yohanan Benhaim, chercheur, cofondateur de Noria Research et associé à l'Istanbul Policy Center.

Les régions turques de Gaziantep et du Hatay, voisines de la Syrie, participent activement au développement des échanges commerciaux. Des chambres de commerce locales ont été créées, étroitement liées aux chambres de commerce turques. Des zones industrielles ont vu le jour à Azaz et à Al-Bab. On assiste à la mise en place d'une sphère d'influence intégrée à la Turquie. Le fait que les gouverneurs des régions de Gaziantep et du Hatay soient chargés de superviser les zones syriennes sous contrôle

turc en est l'illustration flagrante. L'éducation n'a pas été laissée de côté. En octobre 2019, l'université de Gaziantep a créé trois facultés, l'une à Afrin (sciences de l'éducation), et deux autres à Azaz (sciences islamiques) et à Al-Bab (économie et gestion).

### Insécurité renforcée

Cette logique a ses limites. Les investissements ne sont pas garantis par les principaux acteurs en Syrie, tels que la Russie. Les alliés d'Ankara au sein du processus d'Astana, soit Moscou et Téhéran, ne manquent jamais une occasion de rappeler que la présence turque est tolérée pour le moment mais, qu'à terme, ces régions devront retourner dans le giron de Damas. Les signataires des accords d'Astana ayant reconnu le principe de l'intégrité territoriale de la Syrie, aucune revendication politique ne peut être reconnue comme légitime.

La Turquie s'est adaptée à cette éventualité. Le système de gouvernance qu'elle a mis en place « se caractérise par des investissements dans les infrastructures de base : électricité, routes, postes frontalières. Sauf exception, les investissements dans l'industrie sont limités. Le but recher-

ché est de bâtir un cadre susceptible de permettre à ces régions de devenir un marché ainsi qu'un espace destiné à accueillir des réfugiés venus d'autres régions de Syrie ou renvoyés depuis la Turquie », souligne Yohanan Benhaim.

Ce mode de gestion créé de

l'instabilité comme à Afrin, la région agricole à majorité kurde du nord-ouest de la Syrie, où de nombreux propriétaires kurdes ont été dépouillés de leurs terres. Depuis que la zone a été conquise par l'armée turque en 2018, la production est exportée vers l'Europe via la Turquie. Ce qui

constitue un revenu non négligeable pour les Turcs et leurs affidés, les milices syriennes, mais contribue à renforcer l'insécurité. La manne financière tirée de ces exportations est souvent à l'origine d'affrontements entre les différents groupes armés.



July 7, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Kurdistan breaks daily record with nearly 500 new cases

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced nearly 500 new cases of coronavirus in the past 24 hours, the highest daily toll recorded since the outbreak.

The health ministry's statement pointed out that it had conducted 2,334 tests during the last 24 hours with 495 coming back positive and that it had confirmed eight new deaths.

The statement also mentioned that with 72 individuals quarantined in the last 24 hours, a total of 896 individuals are now quarantined across the region in 20 different locations. The ministry also reported that 79 patients had recovered from the virus in the same period.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in the Kurdistan Region, the virus has infected 8,431 individuals, of whom 2,688 have recovered, and 271 have died. Those remaining under medical care number at 4,995: 699 of them in Erbil province,

4,140 in Sulaimani, 60 in Duhok, and 96 in Halabja. On Saturday, Erbil Governor Firsat Sofi announced that the provincial government was lifting the strict curfew that came into effect a week ago and replacing it with a different partial lockdown measure.

Earlier on Tuesday, Erbil's main provincial coronavirus taskforce said in a statement that it had closed 274 stores or other small businesses within the boundaries of the province's ten districts because their ownership or staff had displayed a lack of commitment to health instructions to prevent the spread of coronavirus during the past seven days.

The statement also called on consumers, merchants, and staff in all businesses that have been allowed to reopen to serve the public "with the utmost sense of responsibility to protect people's lives and health security of the province," urging them to comply with health instructions and wear masks in order to not be



A hospital in the Kurdistan Region's province of Sulaimani is seen after being converted to a COVID-19 dedicated facility. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

subjected to closure and other legal procedures.

The Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate released a statement earlier in the week reporting that 85 media workers across the region had so far contracted the disease.

Also on Tuesday, federal health officials in Baghdad announced more than 2,000 new daily infections and the death of 118 patients across the country.

Today's figures for Iraq do not include the most recent de-

velopments in the Kurdistan Region, which has its own health ministry and typically announces results later in the day. As such, Kurdistan's figures are usually added to the following day's national tally.

The coronavirus has infected more than 11.7 million people worldwide and killed over 540,000 according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities and underreporting.



July 7, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Iraq announces 2,426 new infections, 118 deaths in a single day

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment announced on Tuesday that health officials had confirmed more than 2,000 new infections of the coronavirus and the death of 118 patients across the country within the previous 24 hours.

The ministry's daily statement on the current health crisis noted that it had conducted 11,813 coronavirus tests in a single day, 2,426 of which came back positive.

According to the statement, since the spread of the virus to Iraq in late February, 64,701

people have been infected, 36,252 have recovered, and a total of 2,685 individuals have died from its complications.

On Monday, Iraqi officials threatened criminal prosecution of citizens not following health restrictions enacted to curb the spread of the virus and extended nationwide partial shutdowns to continue until at least July 20.

Since late May, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of new coronavirus infections and deaths, even as authorities reintroduced partial curfews in efforts to curb the

spread of the virus. Amid the crisis, health officials have repeatedly expressed fears of a collapse of the already fragile healthcare system.

Ahmed Talal, the spokesperson for Prime Minister Mustafa al-Khadimi, announced the approval by the Council of Ministers of a law to guarantee draft pensions for the families of deceased health care workers who had contracted the highly-contagious disease.

"The project was referred to the Council of Representatives (parliament) for approval," added Talal in a press confer-

ence following the cabinet meeting.

Talal also stated that "the cabinet also authorized the Minister of Finance to sign an agreement with a German bank to receive 15 million euros to expand health projects and build 5 hospitals to combat the coronavirus."

The coronavirus has infected more than 11.7 million people worldwide and killed over 540,000 according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities and underreporting.



July 7, 2020  
By Kate Denereaz

## 'Yazidi women are strong': Iraq's female landmine clearance teams

**I**sis planted mines across Sinjar and displaced the Yazidi community. Now a group of women are clearing the way for the return of their people.

Behind Hana Khider is a large grey wall map, with the minefields her team have been clearing marked in green. "This is the place where Yazidis lived together," she says. "It's where I lived in my childhood; I have so many memories here, it's very important to me."

The place is Sinjar, or Shingal as Yazidis know it, on Iraq's north-western border with

Syria. Khider, 28, is speaking via video call from her office in the region.

"This job is so important to me because I feel like I'm doing something good for my family, my community and the people who were displaced from Sinjar. By removing the mines, I'm helping them to maybe one day come back."

In August 2014, Isis invaded and occupied this region. The group murdered about 5,000 Yazidis, kidnapped and enslaved 6,000 women and children and displaced a

community that had been living in towns and villages nestled around Sinjar mountain, sacred to Yazidis, for centuries. "Before we had a normal life. Everything was good, people were living their life happily. But after the genocide in 2014, everything changed. We're no longer secure," Khider says.

By the time Isis was pushed out of Sinjar in 2017, it had planted hundreds of thousands of landmines and other explosive devices in homes, buildings and fields. The group manufactured them on an in-

dustrial scale, but also used household items including pots, pans and even video game controllers – whatever it could get its hands on – to build improvised devices.

"People are killed or injured on a daily basis south of the mountain," Khider explains. An important part of her work is educating the community and children in particular, who are at greatest risk. In one area, a man told her an explosion had killed his 15-year-old nephew as he was out in the fields looking after a herd. His other

nephew sustained life-altering injuries.

A new film, *Into the Fire*, follows Khider and her team of Yazidi women at Mines Advisory Group (MAG), an international charity which removes unexploded bombs in former war zones across the world, as they clear Sinjar.

The high level of mine contamination is one reason why, three years on from Sinjar's liberation from Isis, only about a quarter of the population have returned.

Almost 300,000 Yazidi people still live in tented camps and makeshift shelters in the nearby Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Conditions are poor and the community has inadequate access to services, including treatment for high rates of mental illness. Over 2,000 women and children are still missing.

Those who have gone back are living mainly north of the mountain that divides Sinjar, according to Portia Stratton, Iraq country director for MAG.

« MAG has extraordinary teams of female de-miners who totally challenge stereotypical perceptions of 'woman's work' »

Orlando von Einsiedel, director

"The north of the mountain, although badly affected, was less contaminated than the south, as Isis held it for a much shorter period. Also with populations moving back more to the north, we have historically had more information about the contamination in those areas.

"In the south, especially, a lot of work remains to be done," she says.

The charity cleared Khider's village in 2016, enabling her and her family to move back, although not to their old house. It had sustained too much damage for that.

A high proportion of homes ac-

ross the district have been similarly affected, with many completely destroyed. Shrines, schools and public buildings lie in ruins.

"There's also a lack of services, like medical care and education, especially in the villages," Khider says. Two of her children are in school, but they have to walk miles everyday through war damage to attend. "What I want more than anything is for them to be safe and free."

Despite the dangers of her work, Khider never gets scared. "I have confidence in myself and I know that I'm doing the right thing."

Part of the problem is that Sinjar falls within Iraq's "disputed territories", areas claimed by both the Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan regional government.

Political tussling has fuelled conflict, fragmented authority and left Yazidis and other minorities, including Assyrians, Turkmen and Shabaks, in Sinjar and the nearby Nineveh Plains, particularly vulnerable.

There is "a lack of functioning government", according to Abid Shamdeen, the executive director of Nadia's Initiative, a charity working in Sinjar set up by Nobel peace prize laureate Nadia Murad.

A lack of official law enforcement in the region also "engenders both chaos and fear", he says.

A multitude of militias with competing affiliations operate in the area, preventing former residents from returning and hindering reconstruction. This insecurity was highlighted in mid-June by the latest in a series of Turkish air strikes on Sinjar Mountain targeting Kurdish militants, but hitting areas in close proximity to civilians.

"When will @IraqiGovt & the international community apply some courage & political will to



Hana Khider says that clearing mines makes her feel that she is doing something good for her family and community who were displaced from Sinjar. Photograph: Sean Sutton/MAG

resolving security challenges in Sinjar?" tweeted Murad in response.

Despite this precariousness, Khider is committed to the home that she loves. She has now started a new garden.

« They're doing something good for their community and family, and they can depend on themselves, financially and in other ways »  
Hana Khider

"I've planted simple things, some flowers, vegetables like cucumbers, tomatoes, aubergines," she says. "I feel like they all have a soul and spirit. I feel happy just watching them."

It is this attitude that attracted Orlando von Einsiedel, the Oscar-winning director of *The White Helmets*, to Khider's story.

"*Into the Fire* doesn't focus on the darkness of Isis and its actions. I wanted it instead to focus on the incredible resilience and fortitude of those who survived their atrocities and who are rebuilding their lives and their communities."

He also hopes that the film will bring greater awareness of the role women play in rebuilding their communities after conflict. "Across the world, MAG has extraordinary teams of female deminers – many of them mothers – who totally chal-

lenge stereotypical perceptions of what is 'woman's work'." Khider thinks this work is one way the women on her team, some of whom are former Isis captives and all of whom lost family and friends in 2014, can recover.

"They're doing this job that previously maybe only men were doing, and it gives them confidence in themselves. They're doing something good for their community and their family, and they can also depend on themselves, financially and in other ways."

Khider still works with all the women, but has since been promoted to lead a larger team that includes men. Since 2016 she and her colleagues have cleared more than 27,000 mines from areas liberated from Isis.

When she first saw *Into the Fire*, she says: "I felt sad seeing the reality that we are living in now and all the things that happened to my community and Yazidi people. But I also felt happy to see the good things that my team and I are doing.

"I hope the film shows people around the world that we Yazidi women are strong, we don't give up and that we are able to stand up again and live our life, even after everything that we have been through."



July 8, 2020  
By David Phillips

## Turkey must face a reckoning for its crimes in Iraqi Kurdistan

**T**urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is pursuing a neo-Ottoman agenda to expand Turkey's borders, attacking Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurds in northern Syria under the guise of fighting terrorism. Turkey's actions are also intended to undermine U.S.-mediated reconciliation talks between Kurdish factions. Erdoğan opposes Kurdish unity and has vowed to strangle Kurdish peace and progress lest they challenge Turkey's hegemonic interests.

The United States should strongly condemn Turkey's aggression, including the recent incursion by Turkish forces into Iraqi Kurdistan. Erdoğan should be held responsible for violating Iraqi sovereignty, as well as war crimes by Turkey and its jihadist proxies. It is, however unlikely that U.S. President Donald Trump will criticize one of his favourite dictators.

The Kurds must document Turkey's war crimes, making the case for accountability to a future U.S. administration. Columbia University's research team has collected data on incursions by Turkey in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2020. The following is a partial account of Turkey's crimes:

•January 7: A Turkish air strike kills two people in the Gara region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

•February 29: Six people are killed during air strikes in the Metina and Gara regions.

•March 9: Halide Tari, a leader of the women's branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), killed in Qandil.

•March 13: War planes strike

the Bradost region of Sidekan, bombing Khalifa and Geli Reş villages.

•March 26: The Turkish Defence Ministry reports killing eight PKK members in the Haftanin region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

•April 15: Galya Bekir, a top leader of the PKK, assassinated by Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MİT).

•April 17: A Turkish drone strike against the Makhmour refugee camp east of Mosul kills two female refugees.

•May 4: War planes bomb Sinine village in the Bradost region, destroying the road leading to the village.

•May 26: A cross-border action by the TSK in Duhok province wounds a 13-year-old girl.

•May 27: Turkish war planes target a vehicle, killing five people in Mawat town, north of Suleimani province.

•May 30: Turkish airstrikes kill 60-year-old Jalal Nuradin and his 32-year-old son Ahmed, and wounding one person in the village of Hetuta on the outskirts of Amedi district.

•June 7: Turkish bombardments cause huge fires in mountainous areas in northern parts of the Kurdistan Region, near the villages of Siran and Meragarsh in Erbil's Soran district.

•June 15: Turkish war planes attack several locations in the Shingal district, and other locations close to the Makhmour refugee camp, which is hosting Kurdish refugees from Turkey.

Eighteen Turkish planes targeted Shingal, Makhmour, Gwer, and Erbil, reaching the Sharqat district nearly 200 km from the Turkish border.

•June 19: Four civilians killed in a Turkish airstrike on Sheladize district in Duhok province.

•June 21: Turkish air strikes in Duhok province land 1 km away from Christian community of Bersv and three Yazidi camps, causing extensive property damage.

•June 25: Air strikes in the Bradost sub-district in northern Erbil province hit communities near Mount Zararan, causing widespread fires.

•June 25: Air strikes target Sidakan areas in Erbil's Soran district and Kuna-Massi, a picnic area in Sharbazher district in Sulaimani province, killing and wounding family members on holiday.

Turkey justifies its aggression as counter-terrorism against the PKK. On May 25, Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar boasted that 1,458 PKK militants had been killed in cross-border operations since the beginning of 2020.

In reality, civilians bear the brunt of Turkey's aggression. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and at least 115 border villages have been evacuated.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has condemned Turkey's attacks. Its chair Gayle Manchin has called on Turkey "to immediately cease its brutal air strikes in Sinjar, Iraq and to withdraw any

ground troops - who represent a dangerous escalation of violence in an already-fragile area."

Rep. Eliot Engel, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, concurred on Twitter: "I strongly condemn the Turkish air strikes & ground operations near Kurdish and Yazidi civilian areas...This type of reckless endangerment of civilian lives is unacceptable, especially for a NATO ally."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo responded by parroting Turkish propaganda, calling on Turkey, Iraq and the Kurds to work together in the fight against terrorism.

The Iraqi government ignored Pompeo, protesting Turkey's violations of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Former Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd, warned in a Twitter post:

"The recent Turkish military incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan in the Zakho region is a very serious geopolitical development. The intensity of the attack is alarming. Calls by Turkish leaders to revive historical claims of Mosul province are even far more disturbing."

Kurds are not the only victims. Many Christian villages in Zakho and Yazidis in Sinjar fled Turkey's attacks. Women and children have been Turkey's primary victims in Makhmour.

Turkey should face a reckoning for its crimes. Fighting so-called terrorism does not entitle Turkey to slaughter civilians.

## Complaints of torture on rise in Turkey's Kurdish southeast

**T**he Turkish government no longer sees the need to conceal torture, especially of Kurdish women in the southeast of the country.

Picture this: A woman is home alone in Diyarbakir province in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast. At 5 a.m., 100 policemen from counterterrorism and special forces units storm the apartment, instructing the neighbors to stay inside and not communicate with anyone. Then they sledgehammer the door and unleash two police dogs to attack Sevil Rojbin Cetin. But that is only the beginning.

Cetin is an activist in women's movements and a former Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) mayor, elected in 2014 and replaced by a government appointee in 2016.

Cetin was interrogated for 3½ hours in her apartment while her legs were bleeding from multiple dog bites. The apartment was turned upside down, while she was blindfolded and beaten.

She was stripped half naked with her hands tied, while photos were taken of her. The physical and sexual torture was coupled with verbal abuses; a gun was held to her head. "At one point she was taken to the balcony and the officer told her, 'If your apartment was on the 5th floor, you would have jumped by now and we would not have to deal with you,'" said Meral Danis Bestas, a pro-Kurdish HDP lawmaker.

Cetin's Attorney Gulistan Ates, who took photos of her injuries after the ordeal and shared them with the press, was called

to the police station and an investigation has been launched against him.

The 2019 US State Department human rights report emphasized that violations affect Turkey's Kurdish citizens disproportionately. Kurdish women or women who refuse to be model citizens in the eyes of the Turkish state are increasingly becoming targets of arbitrary arrests, strip searches, sexual violence in detention, insults and threats of rape.

Remziye Tosun, HDP lawmaker who has been targeted for wearing white scarves in the parliament, told Al-Monitor, "During the siege of Sur [in 2016], I stayed at home with my young children. Then they [security forces] took us outside; I had my two daughters with me — one was 18 months and the other nine years old. The security forces were determined to send my children to social services despite my pleas to call my family. But they sent my 9-year-old to an orphanage; my nursing child was allowed to stay in prison with me."

Tosun said that since 2015 state forces have increased gradually the intensity of torture and abuse of women. "We have gone back in time — back to the days of Esat Oktay Yildiran. That is the mentality of the AKP [Justice and Development Party] right now; torture has come back with a vengeance." (Yildiran was a military officer who was notorious for his gruesome torture techniques at the Diyarbakir prison in the 1980s.)

Tosun's house in Sur was demolished, and she was imprisoned for 15 months with her



Turkish anti-riot police officers try to detain a woman demonstrating during a protest against the replacement of Kurdish mayors with state officials in three cities, in Besiktas district in Istanbul, Turkey, Aug. 24, 2019 Photo by OZAN KOSE/AFP via Getty Images.

youngest child. Despite all that has happened, she keeps her kind and compassionate spirit. "The thing that hurt the most was not the physical hardship but the humiliation. One day we were cleaning the newly built prison in Elazig, but we had little access to cleaning products. We saw a group of female guards staring at us, so one of the inmates asked why the guards laughed nervously among themselves. One replied, 'Look they speak, they are human.' This I cannot forget, but I understand."

Tosun said that she has forgiven those guards, adding, "The prejudice against the Kurds, the sayings about the Kurds having tails and not being civilized is still happening because of the official education system. And that mindset helps justify cruel treatment and discrimination."

The Kurds in Turkey are perceived as pseudo-citizens, and therefore as potential terrorists. The Kurds are accepted to some degree, and as long as they assimilate diligently they are viewed as prospective Turks.

Ayşe Acar Basaran, HDP lawmaker and spokeswoman for the HDP's Women's Council, told Al Monitor, "Since July 2015, we have had over 16,000 members of our party detained by the security forces. About 4,000 are in prison."

Basaran noted that all women's organizations have been shut down since the July 15, 2016, coup attempt. Violence against women has spiked even further as men are given a blank check and women are left more vulnerable in their homes and on the streets. "When the government ended the peace process and intensified its aggressive security policies women became the biggest victims. Now they are arresting members of the two remaining women's associations — Rosa Women's Association and TJA-Free Women's Movement. The charges against the members include attending International Women's Day on March 8, promoting peace, searching for missing women and seeking justice for female victims of domestic violence. Women —



particularly those in the Kurdish women's movement — pose a direct challenge to the AKP's wish to monopolize power, because they are so organized," she added.

Eren Keskin, vice-president of Turkey's Human Rights Association and a prominent attorney, told Al-Monitor that torture of women both "in detention and while being taken into detention is becoming routine. Torture is clearly defined as illegal in both the Turkish Constitution and several international treaties that Turkey has signed."

In the 1980s, torture was hidden and frequently denied by government officials. Today,

senior bureaucrats welcome and even encourage it. For example, Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly said in April, "I told [the security forces] when you catch them [terrorists] tear them apart." Soyly also said that photos of the bodies would be made public. Some of those commenting on these images on social media suggest further gruesome acts on the alleged terrorists. In what seems to have become the normalization of torture and violence, the display of the mutilated body parts of Kurdish women have become an event to celebrate.

Sebnem Korur Fincanci, president of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, announced that

according to the foundation's records one in every 500 people in Turkey has been tortured.

HDP lawmakers are now asking who is responsible for torturing Cetin for 3½ hours, and who gave the order for this torture. The images of the torture did not cause an uproar among social media users. So far, no police investigation has been launched about any torture claims. The problem of impunity of government officials in Turkey has reached levels never seen before. Instead, we can expect more investigations for human rights lawyers, HDP lawmakers and journalists who dare to report cases of torture or abuse.

There are several loopholes in the law to protect torturers. Although torture is to receive severe punishment, the prosecution can easily turn the case into "an act of brutality," which would not even cost the officer his job. These acts are becoming routine because they are condoned by the government and justified under the argument of "combatting terrorism" — with little to no room left to ask how torturing these women helps combat terror.

Turkey is regressing fast to the days when police officers marched chanting, "Damn human rights" — starting in 1992 at a funeral of four officers.



July 8, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: Kurdistan announces 294 new infections, 11 deaths in 24 hours

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) — The Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced on Wednesday nearly 300 new coronavirus infections during the previous 24 hours, along with 11 deaths and 140 recoveries.

Health officials' daily coronavirus statement mentioned that the ministry conducted 2,247 new tests for the highly-contagious disease, of which 294 came back positive. Some 515 individuals have been quarantined in the past 24 hours, making a total of 1,287 individuals now under the restriction in 23 different locations across the region.

On Tuesday, the ministry confirmed 495 new cases, the highest daily toll recorded since the outbreak.

Since the outbreak of the virus in Kurdistan Region 8,428 people have been infected, 3,008 of which have recovered and 282 of which have died. 5,138 remain under medical care; 651 of them in Erbil province, 4,292 in Sulaimani, 84 in Duhok, and 111 in Halabja.

"The situation is heading toward danger because of the continued high rate of new infections of coronavirus," ministry spokesman Mohammed Qadir told Kurdistan 24.

"The problem is that most of the infected who aren't showing any symptoms of the virus are wandering within the community and transmitting the disease to other people without feeling it," Qadir added, explaining that this crucial element means that health officials "cannot control the virus or know the source and location of the epidemic."

At the same time, Erbil Governor Firsat Sofi said in a press conference that the "governorate will enter a dangerous phase of the outbreak and will lose the capacity to provide medical care if new infections continue to rise," as he urged the public to adhere

to the preventive measures enacted by the government. "Erbil is heading toward an undesirable and bad condition, even though we imposed a 6-day curfew on the province. The results were promising but, unfortunately, due to the lack of commitment to preventive measures and continued intermingling, this has led to the loss of those efforts."

The coronavirus has infected more than 11.9 million people worldwide and killed over 545,000 according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities and underreporting.



July 8, 2020  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## Russia again blocks vital aid to millions in northern Syria

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Russia on Tuesday pressured Germany and Belgium to remove the demand to reopen the al-Yarubiyah border crossing in a draft resolution which endangers millions of civilians in northeast Syria in exchange for keeping two border crossings open to a different area for 12 months.

However, Russia and China also blocked this UN Security Council draft resolution blocking aid to thousands in the northwest, even with the added threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The German and Belgian draft resolution proposed in mid-June suggested reopening the al-Yarubiyah crossing from Iraq to northeast Syria for six months and extend approval of cross-border aid of two border crossings from Turkey to the Idlib province without the involvement of the Syrian government.

“Now, we understood that the reopening of Yarubiyah was a red line for one member state (Russia), although this was broadly supported. In our search for consensus we had thus put forward a text with the two crossings in the north west for a duration of 12 months,” co-sponsors of the draft resolution Germany and Belgium said in a joint statement on Tuesday. “We regret that this was not acceptable for all Security Council members.”

US Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft said in another statement that the “resolution was already a bitter compromise, having stripped renewed authorization for a crucial third crossing point into northeast Syria.”

In December, Russia and China both vetoed a Security Council resolution that would keep the al-Yarubiyah border crossing open, which connects areas in Syria governed by the local Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) eastward to Iraq. As a result, this crossing was closed on Jan. 10.

Read More: Russia, China veto UN vote, limiting humanitarian aid to Syria

Russia wants Damascus to control all UN-aid coming into Syria and remove all cross-border assistance outside of the control of Damascus.

Human rights groups and other observers have said that this is highly problematic given that Damascus has routinely weaponized access to food and other humanitarian aid to civilian populations throughout the nearly 10-year ongoing Syrian civil war.

“Our position on the cross-border mechanism is well known. We voiced it back in 2014, and since then it has remained unchanged. The mechanism was conceived as an emergency temporary measure,” Russia’s

UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzenia argued.

Furthermore, the Russian Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said in a statement that there was no need to reopen the al-Yarubiyah crossing since the World Health Organization (WHO) delivered 85 tons of medical aid to northeast Syria through Damascus on July 4. “However, this operation, as well as many other land and air humanitarian convoys that had arrived in Syria prove the opposite,” the Russians said.

Renas Sino, co-founder of the non-profit organization TEVN International told Kurdistan 24 that although the al-Yarubiyah border crossing was closed, there was a shared view of Iran, Russia, and Turkey reported during their last meeting in Astana on July 1 that to close it will undermine the local self-administration.

“Russia wants to push the self-administration to work with the regime more and for the regime to be the main central point for humanitarian aid in northeastern Syria and they can control all the international aid mechanisms from the EU and the UN.”

He added that Turkey and also Iran indeed want this border crossing to be closed to further undermine the local administration.

Therefore, Sino said the international community must do

more to send international aid to northeastern Syria, now is suffering from widespread medical shortages in the health sector and an ever-worsening economic situation.

“Now, we have many crises in the northeast; there is a food shortage due to the lack of bread and there is also a lack of electricity and water. The international community should do more to send aid and can airlift food aid to the northeast of Syria. The international community should be stronger because Russia and China will always veto their resolutions.”

As a result of the Russian and Chinese obstruction, member states supporting the border opening will have to work in the coming days with Russia, the United States, and China to find a consensus before the resolution is set to expire on July 10.

Russia has already proposed an alternative draft solution to keep the Bab al-Hawa crossing open as an alternate for another six months while the US have called for a reversal of the veto.

Since there seems to be no hope that al-Yarubiyah will be reopened in the foreseeable future, civilian populations of northern Syria, yet again, will see real-world effects of the lack of political consensus that remains entirely beyond their control.

## Dialogue de sourds entre l'Union européenne et la Turquie

**J**osep Borrell, en visite à Ankara, et les dirigeants turcs ont divergé au sujet de la situation en Méditerranée orientale et en Libye.

Le chef de la diplomatie européenne, Josep Borrell, était venu à Ankara, lundi 6 juillet, pour, selon ses mots, « prendre la température » de la Turquie en amont d'une réunion des ministres des affaires étrangères des Vingt-Sept au cours de laquelle pourraient être adoptées, lundi 13 juillet, de nouvelles sanctions contre le pays du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Et les sourcils du haut représentant ont dû roussir au fil de ses rencontres dans la fournaise du plateau anatolien. Si le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, s'est montré très courtois lors d'une conférence de presse commune, il ne lui a, en effet, épargné aucune récrimination.

Sur la question migratoire, d'abord, le ministre a, une fois encore, accusé le bloc européen de ne pas respecter ses promesses. « Tout attendre de la Turquie pendant que l'Union européenne [UE] ne s'acquitte pas de ses obligations ne résout pas le problème mais l'aggrave. C'est pourquoi il faut mettre en œuvre les assurances données à la Turquie », a affirmé M. Cavusoglu. « La modernisation de l'accord d'union douanière est importante. La libéralisation des visas est une promesse de l'UE. Que ça vous plaise ou non, vous devez l'appliquer. »

Sur ce dossier, la Turquie dis-

pose d'un levier puissant vis-à-vis des Européens : celui des 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens présents sur son territoire, auxquels s'ajoutent des centaines de milliers de migrants d'origines diverses, en route vers l'Europe. Ankara a déjà actionné le levier en février, en encourageant des dizaines de milliers de migrants à tenter de franchir la frontière avec la Grèce.

Le chef de la diplomatie turque a aussi déploré l'éviction de la Turquie des listes européennes des pays dits « sûrs » au regard de la pandémie de Covid-19, qui risque de torpiller la saison touristique dans son pays.

### « Sérieux problèmes »

Toutefois, c'est sur la question du partage des richesses en hydrocarbures de la Méditerranée orientale – Ankara y a lancé des forages dans des espaces considérés par l'UE comme relevant de la zone économique maritime exclusive de Chypre – et sur le différend entre la Turquie et la France sur la question libyenne que le chef de la diplomatie turque s'est montré le plus véhément.

« Certains pays de l'UE soutiennent [le maréchal Khalifa] Haftar, un putschiste sans légitimité. La France, très clairement. Elle le soutient, lui fournit des armes. Comme elle perd du terrain, elle devient plus agressive et reporte son agresseur sur la Turquie », a commenté le ministre, dont le pays soutient avec détermination la faction adverse, le gou-



Le chef de la diplomatie européenne, Josep Borrell, et le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, le 6 juillet à Ankara. Cem Ozdel / AP

vernement d'accord national (GAN) de Faiez Sarraj.

M. Cavusoglu est également revenu sur l'affaire de la frégate française Courbet, qui, en juin, a été empêchée par des navires de guerre turcs de contrôler un cargo soupçonné de faire de la contrebande d'armes pour le compte de la Turquie, à destination de la Libye. Paris avait accusé la marine turque d'avoir, par trois fois, menacé d'ouvrir le feu sur le Courbet. « La France doit présenter des excuses claires et nettes à la Turquie. Elle doit aussi s'excuser auprès de l'UE et de l'OTAN pour les avoir induits en erreur », a martelé le ministre.

Sur les forages en Méditerranée orientale, il a affirmé que la Turquie était « prête au dialogue et à la coopération », mais qu'« un partage des revenus doit être mis en place » entre la République de Chypre, membre de l'UE et seule entité reconnue internationalement, et la République turque de Chypre du Nord, autoproclamée et reconnue par la seule

Turquie. « Il n'est pas question ici d'un accord bilatéral. Il peut s'agir d'un mécanisme de l'UE », a-t-il précisé.

Evocant d'éventuelles nouvelles sanctions contre son pays – pour lesquelles a plaidé le ministre français des affaires étrangères, Jean-Yves Le Drian –, il a affirmé que son pays entendait montrer « toute la bonne volonté nécessaire » mais serait, le cas échéant, « obligé de riposter ».

En réponse, M. Borrell a prôné, avec flegme, le dialogue. A Bruxelles, son entourage avait eu soin de préciser, avant son voyage, que la Turquie restait « un candidat à l'adhésion à l'UE et un allié au sein de l'OTAN ». Lundi, le haut représentant a indiqué : « La situation actuelle est loin d'être idéale. Il y a de sérieux problèmes et nous devons nous en occuper immédiatement. » Il poursuivait : « La Méditerranée orientale est une zone-clé pour l'UE. Et, pour pouvoir progresser, il faut restaurer la confiance. Il ne peut pas y avoir d'approche unilatérale. »

## Peu de progrès

Plus tard, lors d'un débriefing avec la presse étrangère, l'ancien ministre espagnol a admis la profondeur du fossé séparant actuellement les Vingt-Sept de la Turquie. « Il est apparu clairement, pour les deux parties, qu'il y avait de forts désaccords, en particulier sur la question des forages, sur la situation en Méditerranée orientale, et des inquiétudes profondes de la part de la Grèce et de Chypre, que l'UE comprend et soutient. » Il

a aussi appelé à une relance des négociations de paix à Chypre en octobre, « quand les élections auront donné un nouveau leadership à la communauté chypriote turque ».

S'il estimait, avant ses entrevues, qu'il s'agissait de tracer des « propositions de solutions » et de trouver « une nouvelle approche » pour les divers contentieux entre Ankara et Bruxelles, il sera apparemment reparti sans avoir beaucoup progressé. En mars déjà il s'était rendu à Ankara, avec le

président du Conseil européen, Charles Michel, pour affronter les récriminations de M. Erdogan. En réponse aux critiques sur l'initiative turque visant à encourager les migrants à se rendre en Grèce, le président avait déploré l'absence de soutien des Vingt-Sept à son offensive en Syrie et réclamé une libéralisation des visas pour ses concitoyens. Une mesure toujours impossible à envisager, selon Bruxelles, pour des raisons juridiques et pratiques.

Une semaine plus tard, le pré-

sident turc effectuait une visite éclair à Bruxelles pour exiger la levée de barrières commerciales et exiger une refonte de l'accord migratoire signé en mars 2016. A ces questions non résolues se sont ajoutées celles de la Libye et des tensions de plus en vives qui règnent, au sein de l'OTAN, entre la Turquie et une partie du camp européen. « La question, aujourd'hui, c'est : combien de temps tout cela pourra-t-il encore tenir ? », s'interrogeait, lundi soir, un diplomate européen.

# Le Monde

08 juillet 2020  
Par Héléne Sallon

## L'assassinat d'un expert du djihadisme à Bagdad ravive le spectre des meurtres politiques

**E**xpert reconnu de la mouvance djihadiste, et critique virulent des milices chiites pro-iraniennes, Hicham Al-Hachémi a été tué par balles, lundi, devant son domicile à Bagdad.

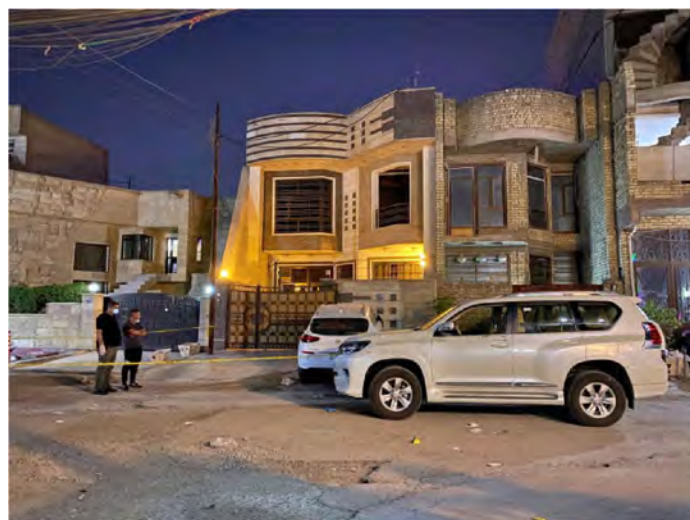
Dans son dernier Tweet, Hicham Al-Hachémi dénonçait, une fois encore, inlassablement, la responsabilité des partis confessionnels et religieux dans les divisions de la société irakienne.

Une heure plus tard, lundi 6 juillet au soir, un flot de messages émus et consternés a submergé le réseau social à l'annonce de sa mort. L'expert du djihadisme, et père de famille de 47 ans, a été abattu par balles par des hommes armés devant son domicile à Bagdad. L'attaque n'a pas été revendiquée, mais beaucoup y voient la main des milices

chiites pro-iraniennes, qui l'avaient menacé pour ses prises de position. Tous redoutent une vague d'assassinats politiques destinée à faire taire leurs détracteurs.

Le premier ministre, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, a dit « promettre aux auteurs de les retrouver ». « Nous ne permettrons pas le retour des assassinats sur la scène irakienne (...) et nous allons déployer tous les efforts possibles pour placer les armes sous l'autorité de l'Etat, pour qu'aucune force ne s'érige contre l'Etat de droit », a-t-il assuré dans un communiqué.

Membre du groupe d'experts Iraq Advisory Council, Hicham Al-Hachémi évoluait dans le cercle proche du nouveau chef du gouvernement – aussi chef du renseignement depuis 2016 – ainsi que du président Ba-



Sur les lieux de l'assassinat d'Hicham Al-Hachémi à Bagdad, le 7 juillet. HADI MIZBAN / AP

rham Saleh. Ce dernier a dénoncé un « crime abject qui cible tout Irakien et son droit à une vie libre et digne ». De nombreuses chancelleries, des Nations unies à l'Union euro-

péenne et à l'Iran, ont aussi adressé leurs condoléances.

### Menacé de mort

Natif de Bagdad et fin connais-

seur des groupes djihadistes – d'Al-Qaïda à l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) –, Hicham Al-Hachémi s'est imposé comme un spécialiste incontournable de cette mouvance pendant la guerre contre l'EI (2014-2017). Il était consulté par tous les médias internationaux pour son expertise, qu'il partageait avec générosité et simplicité.

Chercheur passionné et bourreau de travail, il écrivait pour de nombreux centres de recherche comme Chatham House, à Londres, et le Center for Global Policy, à Washington, et il intervenait dans des médiations de réconciliation entre communautés déchirées par la guerre en Irak. A la fin de la bataille contre l'EI, il avait étendu son champ d'analyse à la politique irakienne et aux activités des factions armées

chiites pro-Iran, dont il dénonçait la mainmise sur l'Etat.

Ces critiques lui avaient valu, en septembre 2019, d'être menacé de mort, avec treize autres personnalités irakiennes, par des groupes en ligne pro-Iran, les accusant d'être des « collaborateurs », des « traîtres à la patrie », « pro-Israël » et « pro-Américains ».

Déjà la cible de menaces de l'EI, Hicham Al-Hachémi n'avait pas voulu renforcer sa sécurité ni taire ses critiques, en dépit de menaces réitérées.

#### Un sombre présage

En octobre 2019, il avait épousé entièrement les revendications du mouvement de contestation contre le pouvoir.

A la télévision et sur les réseaux sociaux, il dénonçait la professionnalisation du système politique, la corruption et la mainmise de l'Iran sur Bagdad. Il n'hésitait pas à pointer le rôle des milices chiites iraniennes et des autorités dans la répression des manifestations, qui ont fait au moins 600 morts.

« Ils n'ont pas pu supporter tes critiques, ta brillante analyse, ton courage à révéler leurs écueils », a tweeté l'analyste Farhad Alaaldin, président de l'Iraq Advisory Council. Pour beaucoup, la mort d'Hicham Al-Hachémi est un sombre présage, un douloureux rappel de la vague d'assassinats politiques qui avait secoué le pays durant la guerre civile (2006-2009), tant du fait des milices que des djihadistes. Sa mort

intervient après une série d'assassinats de militants et de journalistes liés aux manifestations d'octobre 2019, que les observateurs imputent aux milices chiites pro-iraniennes.

Elle survient surtout en plein bras de fer entre le premier ministre et les milices pro-Téhéran. Déterminé à imposer l'autorité de l'Etat aux factions armées qui multiplient les attaques contre des intérêts américains, M. Kadhimi se heurte pour l'heure à un mur. Pour éviter une confrontation ouverte, le chef du gouvernement a dû concéder la libération de membres des Brigades du Hezbollah, quelques jours après leur arrestation le 26 juin par le contre-terrorisme, au motif qu'ils préparaient une nouvelle attaque.



8 juillet 2020

## Fillette kurde tuée par balle en 2018 : un policier belge sera jugé pour homicide involontaire

Deux autres suspects, des Kurdes d'Irak, seront également jugés aux côtés du policier dans le cadre de cette course-poursuite en 2018.

Un policier belge dont le tir avait mortellement blessé une fillette kurde de deux ans, en 2018 lors d'une course-poursuite en Belgique, comparaitra devant un tribunal correctionnel pour homicide involontaire, a tranché mercredi la justice belge.

La décision, prise à l'issue d'une audience à huis clos par

la chambre du conseil du tribunal de Mons (sud), a été confirmée par l'avocate des parents de la fillette, Selma Benkhelifa. Celle-ci réclamait un procès pour homicide volontaire devant une cour d'assises, mais ses arguments n'ont pas été retenus.

Le drame remonte à la nuit du 16 au 17 mai 2018, sur une autoroute de Wallonie, au sud de Bruxelles. Une camionnette transportant une trentaine de migrants pris en charge à Grande-Synthe (nord de la France) avait tenté d'échapper à vive allure à une voiture de

police qui voulait l'intercepter.

Face au refus d'obtempérer, l'un des policiers avait sorti son



Les parents de Mawda Shawri, la fillette kurde tuée dans une course-poursuite en Belgique. AFP/THIERRY ROGE

arme par la fenêtre et visé, selon ses explications, « le pneu avant gauche » en doublant. Mais un brusque coup de volant de son collègue avait dévié son tir vers l'habitacle de la camionnette, où Mawda, installée avec ses parents derrière le chauffeur, avait été touchée d'une balle dans la tête. Elle était décédée dans l'ambulance la transportant à l'hôpital.

#### Un procès fin 2020

Dans ce dossier, le policier auteur du tir, que son avocat Laurent Kennes dit « anéanti » par le drame, a été laissé libre. Mais deux autres suspects, des Kurdes d'Irak, sont en détention provisoire en Belgique : le chauffeur de la camionnette et le passeur soupçonné d'avoir fait monter à bord les migrants.

Les deux hommes, inculpés notamment pour « entrave méchante à la circulation avec la

circonstance aggravante du décès », seront jugés au côté du policier belge par le tribunal correctionnel de Mons. Le procès pourrait se tenir fin 2020.

Mercredi, Selma Benkhelifa a regretté « une qualification qui ne correspond pas à la réalité des faits » concernant le policier. « En tirant vers la camionnette, il a délibérément mis en danger ses occupants, cela relevait de l'homicide volontaire », a affirmé l'avocate, une ver-

sion jusqu'à présent contestée par les juges.

Votre adresse mail est collectée par Le Parisien pour vous permettre de recevoir nos actualités et offres commerciales. En savoir plus

Mawda a été enterrée à Bruxelles en juillet 2018. Ses parents bénéficient depuis février 2019 d'un droit de séjour en Belgique pour des raisons humanitaires.



08 juillet 2020

## Des députés européens demandent une action immédiate contre les attaques de la Turquie

**4**6 membres du Parlement européen de différents partis et groupes politiques ont envoyé une lettre ouverte au chef de la diplomatie européenne, Josep Borrell, appelant l'UE à « des mesures concrètes, telles que des sanctions économiques et ciblées, pour aider à mettre fin à la répression et aux attaques illégales de la Turquie ».

#### « Monsieur Borrell,

Nous écrivons pour attirer votre attention sur la répression de l'opposition politique démocratique en Turquie, en particulier la détention de députés et de maires du Parti Démocratique des Peuples (HDP) et les bombardements de l'invasion turque dans le nord de l'Irak et le nord de la Syrie, en particulier dans les régions habitées par les Kurdes.

Au cours des cinq dernières années, l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir du président Erdoğan, a bâti un système politique extrêmement autoritaire avec l'aide

de ses alliés ultranationalistes et dans des conditions d'état d'urgence. Dans le cadre de ce processus, plus de 90 000 personnes ont été arrêtées pour des accusations de « terrorisme », notamment des présidents de partis, des députés, des maires kurdes élus, des milliers de membres du HDP, des journalistes, des universitaires, des avocats, des représentants de la société civile, des militants des droits de l'Homme et d'autres encore. Le gouvernement a généralement qualifié quiconque qui critique ses politiques, en particulier sa politique envers les kurdes, de terroriste ou de traître et d'ennemi de l'État. Le « système présidentiel de type turc » a totalement sapé le principe de la séparation des pouvoirs et d'un système judiciaire indépendant.

Les attaques illégales du gouvernement turc ne visent pas simplement la démocratie parlementaire. Elles ont aussi illégalement destitué les co-



maires du HDP dans les provinces kurdes et les ont remplacés par des « gouverneurs-administrateurs » nommés. Depuis les élections locales du 31 mars 2019, le gouvernement a illégalement saisi 46 municipalités sur les 65 dirigées par le HDP. La Commission européenne pour la démocratie par le droit (Commission de Venise) a rendu son avis n° 979/2019 le 18 juin 2020 et indiqué que cela est incompatible avec les principes fondamentaux de la démocratie, l'état de droit et la prévisibilité de la loi.

Nous voudrions également ex-

primer nos vives préoccupations concernant les frappes aériennes choquantes continues de l'armée turque dans les régions de Sinjar et du camp de Makhmour ainsi que dans d'autres régions du Kurdistan du Sud (région kurde d'Iraq), qui ont commencé le 14 juin, et une attaque de drones à Kobanê (région kurde de Syrie) le 23 juin 2020. Dans les deux attaques, de nombreux civils ont perdu la vie ou ont été grièvement blessés.

Depuis le 17 juin 2020, l'armée turque a commencé à transférer des forces terrestres dans

la région du Kurdistan irakien, soutenues par des drones et des hélicoptères qui ont touché plus de 150 cibles. Cette action militaire turque déstabilise la région, exacerbe les souffrances humaines et fournit un terrain fertile à la résurgence de groupes terroristes, ce qui compromettra particulièrement les progrès accomplis contre l'Etat islamique. En outre, la poursuite des frappes aériennes pourrait entraîner le

déplacement de plus de personnes et les forcer à être demandeurs d'asile dans différentes parties des pays voisins ou en Europe.

La Turquie est membre de l'OTAN, membre du Conseil de l'Europe et pays candidat à l'adhésion à l'UE. La Commission ne doit pas tolérer ces actions inacceptables contre toutes les normes démocratiques du droit national et inter-

national. Nous vous demandons de prendre des mesures contre le régime autocratique d'Erdogan.

L'UE est également confrontée à un comportement belliqueux de la Turquie en Méditerranée, allant jusqu'au risque d'affrontement avec des navires européens appartenant à la marine française.

Nous ne pouvons rester pas-

sifs face à tant d'agressivité, y compris envers l'UE elle-même.

Nous demandons à la Commission de prendre des mesures immédiates et concrètes, telles que des sanctions économiques et ciblées, pour aider à mettre fin à cette répression et à ces attaques illégales, ainsi qu'aux attaques contre le droit international. »



July 9, 2020  
By Zülfikar Doğan

## Turkey's Kurdish majority provinces sidelined in pandemic aid programmes

**T**urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, along with his son-in-law and Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, maintain the stimulus package announced in March to support the economy and cushion the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic is among the best in the world.

On March 18, Turkey unveiled a relief package, dubbed the Economic Stability Shield, worth 100 billion Turkish liras (\$15.4 billion), which included debt payment delays and tax cuts across various sectors to limit the economic fallout from coronavirus.

These measures entailed certain regulations, including sanctions and penalties, that also forced private banks to increase lending. Ankara attempted to prop up the economy by postponing payments to the Social Security Institution (SGK), and extending the time frame for facing legal recourse for outstanding loan debt to banks.



In truth, Turkey was caught off guard by the pandemic, because the country's budget had already been wiped out. As such, it was unable to provide money to anyone with the exception of 1,000 liras (\$145) cash aid to 2 million families in need. Despite the fact that some 5.5 million workers in Turkey left unemployed by the pandemic were given a three-month allowance well below minimum wage, the Unemployment In-

surance Fund coffers were quickly depleted.

There was an expectation that Erdoğan would extend the three-month allowance, but the government opted for only one month, despite freshly granted authority to the Turkish president for a such a move in an omnibus bill approved in April.

While it is apparent that Turkish citizens have not gotten

the help they needed from their government, the situation is even worse for residents of the country's traditionally neglected and underdeveloped Kurdish majority east and southeastern regions, where a large majority of workers and employers have failed to receive any stipends, tax exemptions or postponement on outstanding debt.

Earlier this month, Erdoğan

said that through his government's aid programme, a total of 24 billion lira had found its way into the pockets of Turkey's population and that the state was supporting the dynamism of Turkey's entrepreneurs and businesses.

A new field study conducted by the Diyarbakir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DTSO) shows that the region certainly is not receiving much of that support.

The survey conducted with 107 businesses between May 11 and May 22 revealed that 78.2 percent of businesses in the region had been negatively

affected by the pandemic. The poll found that many businesses either decreased their production capacity by half or shut down entirely, the latter a route taken by 53.7 percent of those surveyed.

Only 7.3 percent of businesses were able to continue production with no changes and 69 percent of them have been unable to pay rent for their facilities for months, the DTSO survey said.

The poll also found that a majority of workplaces around Diyarbakir failed to receive support for short-term employment allowance, debt postponement and special

loans from banks, with most applications being either not receiving a response or being denied.

The survey showed that, of the 2,696 of a total of 5,604 workers employed in 107 workplaces who applied for short-term employment allowance, only 13,37 received the three-month payment.

Most employers, 75.9 percent, were denied aid due to their inability to fulfil the requirement of having paid 450 days of premiums for their employees, the study said.

Turkey's Kurdish-majority provinces have the highest unemployment rate at up to 30.9 percent, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute.

"This situation has worsened Diyarbakir's unemployment problem. A total of 60.9 percent of workplaces were unable to pay their rent, bills, taxes, social insurance premiums, salaries, bank loans and debt," the DTSO found in its study.

"The region that already had difficulty in attaining finances prior to the pandemic, has been faced with even greater financial problems," it said.



09 juillet 2020  
Par Mamie Eyan

## "Hasankeyf attend ses visiteurs avec son nouveau visage"

**H**asankeyf attend ses visiteurs avec son nouveau visage" annonce le régime turc sur ses médias au garde-à-vous.

Vraiment ?

Hasankeyf, vestige de 12 000 ans, berceau de la civilisation, avait-t-elle vraiment besoin d'un "nouveau visage" ?

Je vous le demande...

Vous avez fait de l'héritage de l'humanité, un vulgaire barrage cimenté flanqué d'une zone pavillonnaire.

Je vous le demande.

Pensez vous vraiment, que des "touristes" seront "attirés" par votre laideur bétonnée ? Comme l'atroce vidéo de simulation de votre campagne de communication "pré-construction du barrage Ilisu", le suggérait déjà, les vacanciers pratiqueront-ils là, des sports nautiques ?



C'est vous qui, voiles gonflées par le vent d'une insatiable ambition, surfez à toute allure sur le profit, et là, à Hasankeyf, naviguez à cinq milles au-dessus de l'Histoire.

Vous séchez, vous noyez, vous bétonnez, vous détruisez toutes les beautés à préserver. Vous anéantissez tout ce que vous touchez de vos mains corrompues, en usant de votre invention "appels d'offres privilégiés" ouverts seuls aux entreprises qui vous

sont alliées, en abusant du système public-privé, en vendant, en cédant, en faisant cadeau, en pillant ce qui appartient au peuple.

Vous envoyez vos entreprises, vos machines, aussi bien dans la zone urbaine que rurale, au nom d'une soit disant "réhabilitation" ; un massacre, que vous présentez comme une "amélioration". Et lorsque les habitants locaux, qui veulent protéger leurs trésors ancestraux, vous tien-

nent tête, vous envoyez vos forces de "sécurité", qui sécurisent vos desseins.

Parce que pour vous, la civilisation et le progrès se dessinent avec du ciment et des billets...

Après avoir tiré profit, vous laissez aux populations, rivières tarées, terres stériles, forêts pelées, montagnes bétonnées.

Adieu...

Je vous le demande.

De quel droit vous autorisez-vous à laisser aux générations futures, une nature dévastée et une mémoire mise en ruine?

Et vous exposez toute cette disgrâce que vous enfantez, tel un trophée.

Je vous le demande.

Croyez-vous vraiment, que ce tableau de pillage n'est pas vi-



sible ? Croyez vous qu'ici personne ne s'apercevra que vous avez volontairement saccagé un pan de l'histoire kurde sur ces territoires ? Croyez-vous que tout le monde est aveuglé par votre populisme de bourgeois parvenu, bigot et totalitaire ?

Croyez-vous que les yayla que vous avez anéantis, les forêts dévastées, les lacs saccagés, les vestiges réhabilités, sont devenus "beaux" ? Vos projets mégalomanes et démesurés, les centrales nucléaires et hydroélectriques, les murs que vous bâtissez avec inimitié, sont-ils utiles ? Vraiment ?

Je vous le demande. Est-ce avec une sorte de toute puissance de l'enfance, que vous ressassez la bienfaisance de vos projets, juste pour vous convaincre vous-mêmes ? Etes-vous vraiment convaincus ? Ou faites-vous juste semblant...



cés ailleurs... Le dernier fut la mosquée El-Rizk, sous les larmes des habitantEs outragés. 16 déc. 2019 – Mezopotamya Ajansi

A vrai dire, vous êtes bien dans l'air de temps.

Lorsqu'on regarde avec un

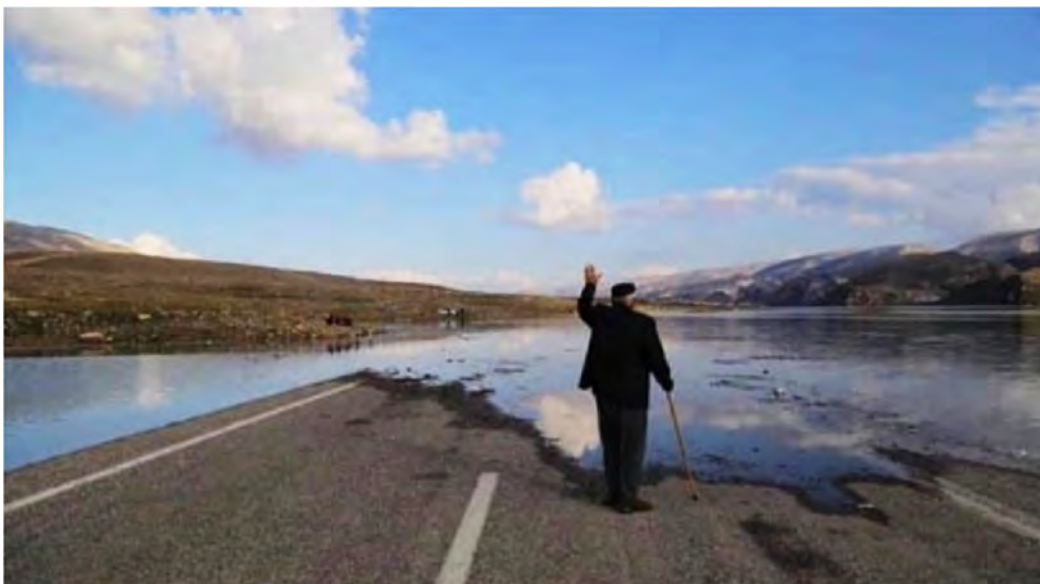
tuel, vous sucez comme tout prédateur qui se respecte, la sève de la Terre et de ses vivants. Votre réussite est indéniable. Vous pouvez continuer à brandir vos trophées en collant dessus, comme d'habitude, un drapeau turc cache sexe.

Hasankeyf, disparu à jamais, c'est comme mourir...

A mon âge, et par besoin de se rassurer, on a tendance à regarder vers "ce qui était mieux avant". Je ne suis pas dans cette conservation là. Pour moi justement, le passé est un héritage qui encourage à mieux faire. La culture des peuples n'est pas l'archaïsme qui fige dans la simple tradition indépassable, mais un bagage pour voyager plus loin et s'émerveiller des nouvelles découvertes. C'est une transmission à la jeunesse, pour qu'elle façonne avec, un nouveau monde. Et là, voir noyée et bétonnée une perle de famille, par des affairistes politiques qui se piquent de vouloir retourner à des valeurs ottomanes, tout en exprimant la pire des caricatures, donne la nausée.

C'est à la fois l'expression d'un nationalisme génocidaire des autres cultures, et trivialement, l'expression d'une médiocre pensée de l'avenir, d'un "progrès" coulé dans le béton destructeur et le pseudo clinquant d'une civilisation de pacotille, à l'ère du capitalisme à la sauce turque.

Un dernier regard sur Hasankeyf, une "lamentation", de la belle voix de la chanteuse kurde Aynur Doğan.



Tout ce que vos mains touchent est dénué ensuite de beauté. Vous volez non seulement la poésie des lieux, mais vous confisquez la mémoire, le sacré des peuples. Tout ce que vos mains "restaurent" devient de ridicules caricatures bétonnées de l'original.

Quelques vestiges sont dépla-

angle plus large, vous êtes dans les "meilleurs" des destructeurs voyous de la planète, qui représentent hélas une horde qui s'active sur tous les continents. Vous répétez sans cesse être un "grand pays", un "grand leader" du monde. Oui, en effet, bien enracinés dans le système ac-

Je me le demande.

S'il vous arrive de vous questionner parfois, face aux miroirs, sur votre trace qui sera inscrite dans la mémoire de l'humanité ? Comment se souviendra-t-on de vous ?

Voir ce "nouveau visage" de



July 9, 2020  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## Pompeo slams Russia, China for blocking humanitarian aid to northern Syria

**W**ASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) – Addressing journalists on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo strongly criticized Russia and China for their vetoes at the UN Security Council on Tuesday, which effectively block the delivery of UN humanitarian aid to northern Syria—the northeast, where there was one border crossing, as well as the northwest, which has been supplied by two crossings.

“Just yesterday,” Pompeo said, “Russia and China once again vetoed action at the UN Security Council that would have maintained humanitarian access to desperate Syrian communities.”

“Over the last several months,” he continued, “Russia and the People’s Republic of China have repeatedly abused their veto powers in the council to support the Assad regime strategy of starving its own people.”

A consortium of international NGO’s, including the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, and CARE International, similarly denounced the Russian and Chinese vetoes.

“There is no justification for Tuesday’s UN Security Council veto on the renewal of cross-border aid into Syria,” they said in a joint statement issued on Wednesday.

The statement noted that the border crossings into northwest Syria were a “vital lifeline”

for 2.8 million people, “the majority of whom are women and children,” and called on the Security Council to renew the aid program, before its scheduled expiration on July 10.

In 2014, the Security Council approved a UN program to deliver humanitarian aid to those areas of Syria not under the regime’s control. Four border crossings were authorized: two in the northwest on Syria’s border with Turkey; a third in the northeast, the Al-Yarubiyah border crossing with Iraq; and a fourth in the south, on the Jordanian border.

The program was renewed annually, until last January, when Russia insisted on a more limited, six-month renewal. Additionally, Russia insisted on closing the Jordanian border crossing, as well as the Al-Yarubiyah border crossing which had been used to deliver aid to areas in northeast Syria under the control of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES.)

“For the past six months, people in northeast Syria have been feeling the effects of what the denial of cross-border aid can do,” the international relief agencies said. “This must not be allowed to continue—or to happen in northwest Syria.”

It was hoped that when the aid program was renewed, the Al-Yarubiyah crossing would be re-opened. Indeed, in June, Belgium and Germany submitted a draft Security Council resolution calling for the continued delivery of aid



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, DC on July 8, 2020. (Photo: AFP/Tom Brenner)

through the two Turkish crossings for another year and the renewal of aid deliveries through Al-Yarubiyah for another six months.

But on Tuesday, Russia, backed by China, vetoed the proposed draft—which was approved by all 13 of the other members of the Security Council.

On Wednesday, Russia submitted its own draft resolution, authorizing the use of only one Turkish border crossing – Bab al-Hawa, which provides access to the Idlib region – and only for another six months. However, that resolution failed as well, garnering support only from China, Vietnam, and South Africa.

So late on Wednesday, Germany and Belgium submitted another draft resolution, providing for a six-month extension of the aid program, as AFP reported. That draft provides for maintaining the second Turkish border crossing, Bab al-Salam,

which leads to the Aleppo region. Al-Yarubiyah was not mentioned in the AFP report.

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political wing of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the partner of the international coalition in the fight against the so-called Islamic State in Syria, had been worried about the prospect of Russia blocking any attempt to re-open the crossing into northeast Syria.

“More than four million people in the northeast of Syria, including IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from other cities, refugees, are all under threat of hunger and suffering” if the border crossing remains closed, Sinan Mohamed, the SDC representative in Washington, recently told Kurdistan 24.

The Security Council is expected to vote on the new German-Belgium draft on Friday, when the humanitarian aid program expires.



July 9, 2020  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## Turkish-backed groups, ISIS cells target women working with SDF

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Khadija Abbas al-Abbas, a member of the Internal Security Forces of North and East Syria, also known as Asayish, was buried on Wednesday in the town of Abu Khashab in Deir al-Zor after she was killed in an ambush by the so-called Islamic State.

The Syriac Press agency reported that she was killed on Monday “after gunmen on motorcycles, suspected to be members of the Islamic State, opened fire on an Asayish vehicle on the road to Abu Khashab in western Deir al-Zor.”

The Islamic State later claimed responsibility for the attack via its semi-official Amaq news agency.

According to independent researcher Caki, this is the first instance where the Islamic State has confirmed the killing of a female Asayish member.

Caki added that the Islamic State had also killed female Asayish members in Manbij at the beginning of the year. The terror group also targeted women houses that were set up in Raqqa and Deir al-Zor to promote female rights.

Lina Abdulwahid, a female member from the Future party, survived an assassination attempt by the Islamic State last November in the Suwar area of Deir al-Zor.

“Women in the region hold an important role for the future,” Caki stated. “Not only is this seen as a threat [by] ISIS who



Asayish member Khadija Abbas al-Abbas was buried on July 8, 2020. (Photo: Asayish)

have threatened women who work with the [autonomous] administration but also that of Turkey and their mercenaries.”

The Turkish-backed Ahrar al-Sharqiya group summarily executed female politician Hevrin Khalaf in mid-October 2019 as part of Ankara’s cross-border offensive. A Turkish drone also killed three Kurdish women activists on June 23 in Kobani.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Women’s Protection Units (YPJ), and the Asayish have recruited many Arab women in the more conservative areas of northeastern Syria after regions such as Manbij, Raqqa, and Deir al-Zor were liberated from the Islamic State.

Amy Austin Holmes, a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center and Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, told *Kurdistan 24*

that she interviewed Arab women in Syria “about their experiences and why they joined the YPJ/SDF”—many of whom did so to escape the Islamic State’s oppressive rule.

“Many people have a hard time understanding what it was like to live under ISIS [rule],” Holmes added.

“Not just the horrific brutality—but also the pure suffocation many women especially felt at being prisoners in their own homes. So when the YPJ/SDF liberated their cities, they signed up.”

However, the SDF’s egalitarian system could also result in resentment among Arab tribes. A Pentagon Inspector General (IG) report covering the second quarter of 2019 (April. 1 to June 30, 2019) suggested that “ISIS could exploit other cultu-

ral differences, such as the differing gender roles between the ‘egalitarian SDF’ and ‘traditional Arab society’ to gain support.”

It could also be for this purpose that the Islamic State and Turkish-backed groups have targeted females who support the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and SDF-linked institutions.

As such, the AANES has been more careful in implementing gender equality laws in Arab majority areas.

Instead, local women’s councils have been set up in Arab majority areas to educate the local populations and lay the groundwork for more gender equality. However, sleeper cell attacks by both the Islamic State and Turkish-backed groups pose an ongoing risk.



9 juillet 2020

## Iran : plus de 68.100 décès dus au coronavirus dans 342 villes

**A** Chiraz, ces 7 derniers jours au moins 350 personnes sont mortes du coronavirus

Le ministère de la Santé du régime : 221 décès en 24h, une augmentation sans précédent

Le ministre de la Santé : Nous recevons des rapports de sécurité. Il est grave que les gens soient prêts à éclater de colère en raison de la pauvreté. Le président et les forces de sécurité doivent penser aux moyens de subsistance (des gens) pour éviter une éruption de colère.

Le ministre de la Santé : Je ne suis pas venu devant les caméras depuis longtemps parce que je suis en colère et que j'ai le cœur brisé. Un ministre de la Santé ne devrait s'intéresser qu'aux questions de santé. Pourtant, j'ai dû donner la priorité aux revenus et aux moyens de subsistance des gens, j'ai dû dire au personnel de rédiger des protocoles sur la manière de lever les restrictions.

Le ministre de la Santé : Je pourrais avoir à dire des choses qui dépassent la tolérance de certains.

Le CHU de Birjand : les chiffres véritables sont probablement dix fois supérieurs aux chiffres officiels

Le coronavirus à Téhéran est une bombe à retardement qui va bientôt exploser.

Le directeur de l'hôpital Khomeiny : le nombre de patients gravement malades qui doi-

vent être admis en soins intensifs a augmenté par rapport aux patients hospitalisés et dépasse les 40%.

L'Organisation des Moudjahidine du peuple d'Iran (OMPI / MEK) a annoncé dans l'après-midi du 10 juillet 2016, que le nombre de décès dus au coronavirus dans 342 villes d'Iran dépasse le 68.100. Le nombre de morts dans les provinces de Khouzistan est de 5165, de Khorassan-Razavi 5060, de Mazandaran 3030, d'Azerbaïdjan occidental 1935, de Golestan 1710, de Hamedan 1600, de Fars 1475, du Kurdistan 1365 et de Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari 450. Les médecins de Chiraz disent qu'au moins 350 malades sont décédés du coronavirus dans la province de Fars la semaine dernière.

La porte-parole du ministère de la Santé, dans ses chiffres tronqués, a annoncé que le nombre de victimes ces dernières 24 heures a atteint le nombre sans précédent de 221 personnes. Elle a porté le nombre de patients en USI à 3324, ce qui est aussi sans précédent depuis le début de l'épidémie. (Agence IRNA, 9 juillet).

Rohani, avec sa cruauté cléricale, a reproché aux gens la vague de victimes pour « n'avoir pas pris au sérieux les restrictions et les règlements, en particulier lors de rassemblements conviviaux et de diverses cérémonies, comme les mariages et les deuils ». Mais les divagations de Rohani ne peuvent éclipser la vérité, car le nombre croissant de victimes a intensifié la peur d'une

insurrection et la guerre des loups au sein du régime (Agence IRNA, 9 juillet).

Saïd Namaki, le ministre de la Santé du régime a déclaré : « Nous n'avons reçu que moins de 30% du milliard de dollars alloué par Khamenei (...) Pourquoi devrais-je, en tant que ministre de la Santé, baisser le ton face à une haute autorité ? En raison de l'utilisation de certains propos non professionnels (...) Je ne suis pas venu devant les caméras depuis longtemps parce que je suis en colère et que j'ai le cœur brisé (...) Au lieu de nous dire « ne vous inquiétez pas, laissez-nous nous occuper de l'économie et occupez-vous de la maladie », le ministre de la Santé, qui ne devrait s'occuper que des questions de santé, a dû accorder plus d'attention à l'économie qu'à la santé publique. Il a dû dire au personnel de rédiger des protocoles sur la façon de déconfiner, au lieu de dire comment verrouiller et imposer des limites. Nous avons lu les rapports de sécurité. Il est grave que les gens soient prêts à éclater de colère en raison de la pauvreté. Le président et les forces de sécurité doivent penser aux moyens de subsistance (des gens) pour éviter une éruption de colère. » Il a menacé : « J'ai un journal de Coronavirus, et il sera publié si ma vie le permet », et « si les efforts de mes chers collègues sont sapés de quelque façon que ce soit, je serai obligé de dire des choses qui pourraient bien aller au-delà de la tolérance de certains... »

Le directeur du service des maladies infectieuses du CHU de Birjand a déclaré : « Les chiffres véritables sont probablement 10 fois plus élevées que les chiffres officiels. Si le nombre de patients contaminés est de 2.600, le nombre réel pourrait être de 20.000, parmi lesquels sans doute 400 décédés. » (Site Javan 8 juillet)

A Téhéran, Alireza Zali, chef du centre national de lutte contre le coronavirus a déclaré : « Jusqu'à présent, 4 400 membres du personnel médical et de santé des CHU à Téhéran ont contracté le virus. Les aides financières distribuées ont été sérieusement réduites en raison des difficultés de paiement des subventions et des revenus personnels (...) Il y a une colère sourde due au non-paiement des aides financières (...) En raison d'une erreur stratégique, Téhéran n'a jamais été déclarée rouge (...) Le travail à Téhéran doit être suspendu pendant une semaine entière... Si cela ne suffit pas, nous devons imposer un confinement à Téhéran. » (TV Chabakeh-Khabar, 8 juillet)

Le site Khabar-e-Fori a écrit le 9 juillet : « le coronavirus à Téhéran est une bombe à retardement qui va bientôt exploser (...) La situation se dégrade de jour en jour à Téhéran (...) Le chef du complexe hospitalier Khomeiny a déclaré : "Le plus inquiétant est que le nombre de patients gravement malades qui doivent être admis en soins intensifs a augmenté par rapport aux patients hospitalisés et dépasse les 40%. De

plus, le nombre de patients sous respirateurs a augmenté. » »

Dans la province de Khorasan-Razavi, un conseiller municipal de Machad a déclaré : « La deuxième vague de l'épidémie a battu tous les records (...) L'augmentation des décès à Machad a sonné l'alarme. » (Agence IRNA, 9 juillet). « La situation en Khorassan-Razavi et à Machad est toujours rouge et rien ne semble être fait face à cette situation (...) Selon l'annonce officielle du centre provincial du coronavirus, 17 villes sont dans le rouge. »

(Agence Tasnim, 10 juillet). Dans la province de Qom, le président de la faculté des sciences médicales a déclaré : « Tous les hôpitaux et le personnel de santé de la province de Qom sont en état d'alerte (...) En plus de l'hôpital Kamkar, nous avons préparé l'hôpital Forghani pour y admettre à nouveau des malades du coronavirus. » (Site Javan, 8 juillet).

Dans la province d'Azerbaïdjan occidentale, le président de la faculté des sciences médicales a déclaré : « Actuellement, les hôpitaux Taleghani et Khomeiny d'Oroumieh sont pleins

et un troisième hôpital est entré dans le circuit de traitement du coronavirus. Dans d'autres villes de la province, les lits d'hôpitaux sont au complet et la poursuite de ce processus est préoccupante. » (Agence Mehr, 8 octobre).

Dans la province de Golestan, le président de la faculté des sciences médicales a déclaré : « Le nombre de villes en rouge dans la province est passé à 12 et seules deux villes, Aliabad-Katoul et Maraveh-Tappeh, sont en jaune (...) À un moment, le nombre d'hospitalisations avait atteint les 150,

mais ce chiffre dépasse aujourd'hui les 700. » (Agence Mehr, 9 juillet).

Dans la province de Mazandaran, le président de la faculté des sciences médicales a déclaré : « Les villes d'Amol, Babol, Behshahr, Ramsar, Mahmoudabad, Savadkouh et Nochahr sont dans le rouge (...) L'épidémie avance rapidement et si nous ne maîtrisons pas cette situation, nous serons obligés d'aller vers le confinement, de revenir aux restrictions et de fermer de nombreux centres. » (Agence ISNA, 9 juillet).



July 9, 2020  
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Hundreds of Sufis breach Kurdistan Region-Iran border en route to leader's funeral

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region - Hundreds of Sufi dervishes from Iran breached security at a Kurdistan Region border crossing on Thursday, determined to attend the funeral of an order leader, according to a border security chief.

Security forces at the Bashmakh border crossing, close to the city of Penjwin, were unable to hold back the crowd of dervishes from the Qadiriyya religious order en route to Sulaimani for the funeral of Sheikh Mohammad al-Kasnazani.

"[Hundreds of] dervish followers who wanted to attend the funeral of Sheikh Mohammad al-Kasnazani stormed a security checkpoint at the border gate with swords, knives and daggers," Major Gen. Mariwan Sheikh Kamal, in charge of the crossing told Rudaw.

"They should have been prevented from crossing on the Iranian side and not permitted to enter Kurdistan Region land," he added.



Members of the Qadiriyya order of Sufism from Iran cross the Bashmakh crossing into the Kurdistan Region on July 9, 2020. Photo: Rudaw

Mukhtar Haji Ali, head of Bashmakh border crossing's media department, told Rudaw that Iranian forces injured six of the dervishes. One of the injured was treated in the Kurdistan Region, then returned to Iran, Ali added.

Ali also told Rudaw that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) deputy prime minister Qubad Talabani ordered the border crossing's closure to all traffic for 24 hours in response to the incident.

Kasnazani, 82, died of natural causes in the United States last week. He had been living in Jordan, but regularly traveled to the Kurdistan Region. A family member told Rudaw that his body will be repatriated to

Sulaimani on Friday.

Footage submitted to Rudaw by Jwamer Hussein, a local on the scene, purportedly shows a large number of dervishes accompanied by daf drum percussion crossing the border. Border chief Kamal said the dervishes crossed the border in flagrance of travel regulations, holding "no travel documents" and making their journey at a time when the KRG has imposed cross-border travel restrictions on non-

commercial traffic because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The dervishes spoken to by Rudaw seemed unphased by any health or other repercussions they may face. One dervish told Rudaw that they are willing to stay in the province for three days; another claimed "we are not afraid of anything - neither the coronavirus, nor our Iranian enemies."

Mohammed Qadir, spokesperson for the KRG's health ministry, told Rudaw that the arrival

of a large number of dervishes without medical and administrative checks could cause a "catastrophe" for Sulaimani in the coming months.

"They have to be tested for coronavirus and prevent them from conducting gatherings, if not there will be a catastrophe in Sulaimani after two weeks because a number of the dervishes are suspected to have contracted coronavirus."

Iran continues to be a regional epicenter for the outbreak. Iraq's first recorded cases of

the virus were people who had returned from trips to Iran.

"They should have been prevented from crossing on the Iranian side and not permitted to enter Kurdistan Region land," Kamal said.

Sheikh Saman Marif Barzinji, one of Kasnazani's sons, told Rudaw that "we cannot stop people from coming to attend the funeral" - but said that in view of the pandemic, "no formal wakes" would be organised for his late father.



July 9, 2020

## New Iraqi border force bases stopping PKK-Turkey clash spill into populated areas: commander

New Iraqi border force bases on the Kurdistan Region-Turkey border are in part successfully preventing the spillover of a currently heightened Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)-Turkey conflict into towns and villages, a commander said on Thursday.

Speaking to Rudaw's Dildar Harki, Iraqi Border Guards Force One commander Dler Farzanda said that the establishment of three new bases in Zakho's Darkar and Batifa sub-district has made locals "very happy", by preventing PKK-Turkey clashes from spilling into populated areas from the more isolated mountains.

Turkey's military began air and ground operations in the Kurdistan Region in mid-June, with the stated aim of targeting PKK positions in the area. Five civilians have been killed by Turkish airstrikes since the aerial operation began. Residents of

Duhok province villages have left for the safety of nearby towns and cities in fear of airstrikes and clashes.

Iraq's border forces mobilized to set up bases in five "strategic" positions in Zakho, a commander told press last Thursday, in an effort to de-escalate PKK-Turkey clashes in the region. Farzanda told Rudaw English on Wednesday that all personnel at these positions are Kurds.

The KRG's interior ministry deployed Zeravani Peshmerga to Duhok's Mount Matin on Tuesday amid intensified Turkish bombing against suspected PKK positions in the region, Peshmerga chief of staff Jamal Iminiki told Rudaw.

Farzanda says they have informed Turkey of their new positions so that their troops are not mistaken for the PKK in the region by Ankara.



Iraqi Border Guards Force One commander Dler Farzanda speaks to Dildar Harki on July 9, 2020. Photo: Rudaw TV

He said that neither the PKK nor Turkey have yet approached their positions, but warned retaliation if they were to do so.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Rudaw: Where are your border guards stationed?

Dler Farzanda: As the Iraqi Border Guards Force One, our troops were already stationed at 60 different positions across the Duhok province border lines, stretching from the [Iraq-Syria-Kurdistan Region] triangle border area of Fishkhabur to Gali Balinda [near Shiladze, at the border with Turkey]. Following [Turkey's] operation, we

have deployed and stationed troops in three new locations, in Darkar and Batifa sub-districts [in Zakho district] due to developments in the region since July 1.

Have the troop deployments reduced Turkey's bombardment, or stopped their activity in the region?

Border Force One's troop deployments have been influential, and have made locals in the area very happy. They have helped prevent conflict between Turkey's army and PKK fighters from spilling deeper into populated areas.

To how many kilometers in depth has Turkey entered Kurdistan Region land so far?

I would say in Zakho, they have entered 10 to 15 kilometers deep into the sub-districts of Darkar and Batifa. They are also 15 kilometers deep into Kurdistan, via the ranges of Mount Khanter.

Why are you not deploying more troops to the border areas?

We as Border Force One started the first phase of troop stationing based on what our capabilities were. We found it important to station our troops in the aforementioned areas, to bring them under our control.

At this stage, we are monitoring developments in the area. If needed, and if ordered to do so by our superiors, we will relocate some of the forces to control more areas.

Have your superiors informed Turkey of your troop deployments, so that you are not mistakenly targeted by their warplanes?

Yes we informed the Turkish interior ministry of our movements at the very beginning. We informed them of our destinations. No problem has yet been created for us by the Turkish side.

A Peshmerga Zeravani force has been stationed on Mount Matin, in Amedi. Are you communicating amongst yourselves?

The first line of Iraq's borders fall under the jurisdiction of Iraq's border forces. The second line, designed to support the first, is associated with the federal defense ministry, to support them with anything they need.

The Kurdistan Region has its Peshmerga ministry - part of the Iraqi security forces, according to the constitution. Therefore, it is to be expected that the Peshmerga forces will be on the second line. Whenever we need each other, good coordination will be made. Whenever we need support, we will definitely ask for it from the Peshmerga forces.

There are reports that an Iraqi border force guard has been wounded in a landmine explosion. Are those reports correct?

Unfortunately, a border guard on duty was wounded after triggering a landmine dating to Saddam Hussein's regime, at the Siyarabana observation post near Batifa sub-district. He was rushed to hospital. His health is stable. We wish him a speedy recovery.

What order are you given to respond, in case Turkish forces approach you?

It has not yet happened. If it does, we will react and execute any orders given to respond by our superiors.

What about PKK fighters? What orders do you have to respond to them if they approach?

The PKK has not approached our points yet either. They have not attacked our bases. If they do, we will repel them. And our response will be strong. We do not wish for that to happen. As border guards, we are entitled to go wherever need be, if we are told to.



July 9, 2020

## Syria to Face First Severe Bread Shortages Since Start of War

**S**yrria could face the worst bread shortages since the outbreak of its decadelong civil war, a U.N. official said.

"There is already some evidence of people cutting out meals," said Mike Robson, U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization representative for Syria.

"If the currency continues under pressure, imports will be difficult to obtain, and the months leading up to the 2021 wheat harvest may see



FILE - Syrians line up to buy bread at a shop in the town of Binnish in the country's northwestern Idlib province, June 9, 2020.

real shortages," Robson said. The prospect of a severe

shortage comes as Syria's wheat harvesting began in late May, and the wheat production last year amounted to less than half of prewar figures.

The possible shortages will harm Syria's already beleaguered population, where nearly 8 million people — out of a population of 19 million — are without reliable access to food, and 500,000 children are chronically malnourished, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported in March.

President Bashar al-Assad's

government attempted to ration bread in April through its smart card system, which allows people to purchase government-rationed, subsidized goods at authorized retailers every month. However, the distribution of bread through the system is available only in the capital, Damascus, and Rif-Dimashq, a governorate in southwestern Syria.

The bread shortages add to the mounting problems Assad faces, topping the civil war, coronavirus pandemic and most wide-ranging sanctions the U.S. recently implemented.

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which went into effect on June 17, is

aimed at companies working with the Assad government, particularly those in the construction, energy and engineering sectors. The Caesar Act also targets the Assad regime's authoritarian allies in Russia and Iran.

Despite its objectives, the sanctions are hurting U.S.

Kurdish allies in Syria, who also control the country's main wheat regions.

"We had always been self-sufficient," Abdullah, a confectionary trader from Damascus, said in a text to Reuters. "Why we have reached this point where even a loaf will soon become a dream, I really don't know."



July 10, 2020

## German intelligence report points to Turkey's covert espionage efforts

**T**urkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) has selected Germany as one of the countries to focus its activities in, according an annual report from the German intelligence service BfV.

MİT focuses its efforts particularly on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), designated a terrorist organisation by both Turkey and the European Union, and the Gülen movement, which only Turkey recognises as such, Deutsche Welle said on Thursday, citing the 2019 report.

The findings show that the Turkish intelligence agency also concentrates on individuals and NGOs in Germany who oppose Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) government.

MİT has undergone a transformation, and was granted extensive authority as the "central element of the Turkish security architecture," the report said. BfV said that MİT sought to

gather intelligence via publicly available sources and covert methods, both domestically and abroad, to influence Turkish and German politics, economy, and technology-related companies.

Dual German-Turkish citizens working as German diplomats have occasionally been turned away at the Turkish border or faced detention due to MİT scrutiny, BfV also found.

Absent from the report was Religious Affairs Turkish-Islamic Union (DİTİB), an organisation associated with Turkey's top state religious institution, Diyanet, which is active in Europe, despite having a microscope on it in past years over its contribution to covert espionage operations.

The pro-AKP Union of International Democrats (UID) was also listed. The UID has chapters in 13 regions in Berlin and West Germany as an AKP lobbying organisation. The UID makes ef-

forts to appear "moderate", and not directly tied to Turkey, according to the report, however Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has met the group during his visits to Germany.

Germany's 1.4-million-strong Turkish community is significant for both countries, it said, citing some 600,000 Turks who voted remotely on Turkey's general and presidential elections in 2018.

The German intelligence service also cited the Grey Wolves – a paramilitary youth organisation under AKP's silent coalition partner the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) as right-wing extremists that "aim for radical change in Turkey to the political order via frequent use of violence and terrorism."

The report pointed to several Kurdish and umbrella organisations as affiliated with the PKK, which is outlawed in Germany. It said the PKK used different names to di-

vert the bans against the organisation, adding that the European Kurdish Democratic Societies Congress (NAV-DEM) had taken a backseat while Confederation of Kurdistan Communities in Germany (KON-MED) stepped onto the stage.

PKK activities in Germany had drawn fewer participants in 2019, while donations to the organisation increased, BfV said. PKK gathered 16 million euros in Germany in 2019, and over 25 million euros across Europe.

An upward trend was seen in recruitment efforts for various armed Kurdish forces, especially after Turkey's military incursions into Syria – where Kurdish groups have fought the Islamic State militant group for several years – took over part of the territory they controlled.

German official records show that at least 280 people left Germany to join the PKK, in Turkey, northern



Iraq and northeast Syria. At least 23 of these people were killed abroad, while authorities have information on 135 people returning.

Four German citizens lost their lives in battle, "proving that persons from Germany really do receive military training and are utilised in combat," the report said. The German television channel ZDF released a do-

documentary last month that presented new evidence about espionage in Germany carried out against opponents and critics of the AKP government and Erdoğan.

The documentary, entitled "How Erdoğan's critics are exposed to espionage in Germany", revealed evidence that the espionage is

still being done by DİTİB in Germany on behalf of Turkey's MİT.

According to the documentary, the Turkish intelligence agency relies heavily on Turkish mosques operating under DİTİB's umbrella. DİTİB is Germany's largest Islamic organisation, and it operates more than 900 mosques located in Ger-

many's 16 states.

In its documentary, the German channel interviewed Turkish citizens who fled to Germany after the failed coup attempt against Erdoğan in 2016. Exiled Turks living in Germany said that they have been subjected to direct threats from imams of DİTİB mosques due to their criticism of Erdoğan and his government.

AL-MONITOR 

Customer Highlight

July 10, 2020  
By Jared Szuba

## Intel: US CENTCOM commander meets with head of Syria's Kurdish forces

**T**he head of Syria's Kurdish-led militias says he met today with the top commander of US forces in the Middle East, Gen. Frank McKenzie, in northeast Syria.

Mazlum Kobane, who leads the US-supported Syrian Democratic Forces in the fight against the Islamic State (IS), announced the meeting with the CENTCOM commander via Twitter.

A spokesperson for US Central Command declined to confirm or deny McKenzie's visit, citing security concerns. Kobane, who also goes by the name Mazlum Abdi, said the two discussed their shared fight against IS and "achieving peace" in the region.

McKenzie met earlier this week with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and Iraq's chief of defense in Baghdad to discuss the future of the US military presence in Iraq.

Why it matters: Today marks McKenzie's second reported visit to northeast Syria's autonomous region since assuming command of CENTCOM last year, and comes as the United States consolidates its military footprint in neighboring Iraq as Baghdad's security forces show greater ability to manage the IS insurgency.

News of the meeting is also likely to rile NATO ally Turkey. Officials in Ankara have objected for years to US support for the local Kurdish-led fighters.

US State and Defense Department officials failed last year to dissuade their Turkish counterparts from launching a military incursion into northeast Syria to push Mazlum's People's Protection Units (YPG) away from Turkey's southeastern border. The incursion displaced more than 100,000 people and led to allegations that Turkey-backed Syrian fighters committed war crimes.

Turkey says the YPG, which forms the backbone of the Syrian Kurdish-led alliance, is a branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which Ankara, Washington, and their western allies consider a terrorist organization. News of McKenzie's trip came as a reassurance amid continued fears in northeast Syria that Turkey may eventually expand its military presence in the area.

What's Next: Some 600 US troops remain in Syria's northeast, though how long they will remain is not clear. Pentagon officials have reported the SDF is increasingly able to combat IS on its own, but there is no political agreement in place to preserve the autonomous region. Both the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the Turkish government say they will not tolerate the Kurdish-led autonomous region's existence.

American officials have pushed for reconciliation bet-

ween the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the political arm of the YPG, and rival Kurdish National Council. US officials apparently see a political agreement as a way to dilute the PYD's dominance in northeast Syria in hope of alleviating Turkish pressure. Though tensions between Ankara and northeast Syria appear to have gone down since last year's incursion, Turkey expanded a military operation against the PKK in northern Iraq last month.

Furthermore, Russia has been attempting to expand its footprint in northeast Syria, and may be seeking ways to pressure the SDF to make concessions.

US Marines recently thanked local Syrians for preventing Russian soldiers from establishing a position inside the American zone of operations. If the Russians can set up a base near Derik, they can pressure US supply lines and movement in the area.

## ‘How are they terrorists?’: UK treatment of Kurdish YPG volunteers under fire after legal case dropped

**G**overnment that brought in laws used against the men claimed it would ‘never’ be deployed against people supporting Kurds.

“One minute my son was being given an iPad and weapons by the government, then he’s being classed as a terrorist,” says Paul Newey. “It’s completely surreal.”

The 49-year-old engineer’s son, Daniel Newey, is among dozens of British volunteers who joined the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria.

They were backed by the UK and other members of the US-led international coalition to fight Isis after its 2014 insurgency.

The YPG was praised by ministers for driving the terrorist group out of northern Syria last year, but the victory was swiftly followed by a Turkish invasion.

Turkey regards the YPG as a terrorist group and although the UK does not, several volunteers have faced terror charges for fighting or training with it.

Daniel Newey remains in Syria, but his father and brother were charged with terror offences in December.

Paul Newey was accused of funding terrorism by sending £150 to his son, while his 19-year-old son Sam was accused of assisting his brother.

They were due to go on trial in October alongside Daniel Burke, a former paratrooper

who originally fought against Isis with YPG between late 2017 and June 2018.

No action was taken at the time, but he was prosecuted for “preparing acts of terrorism” after allegedly attempting to return to support the YPG against an invasion by Turkish-led forces last year.

Last week, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) announced it would offer no evidence against the three men. It said there was no longer a “reasonable prospect of conviction”, but no further explanation has been given.

Paul Newey said the case has put his family’s life “in limbo”, and affected their jobs and personal lives.

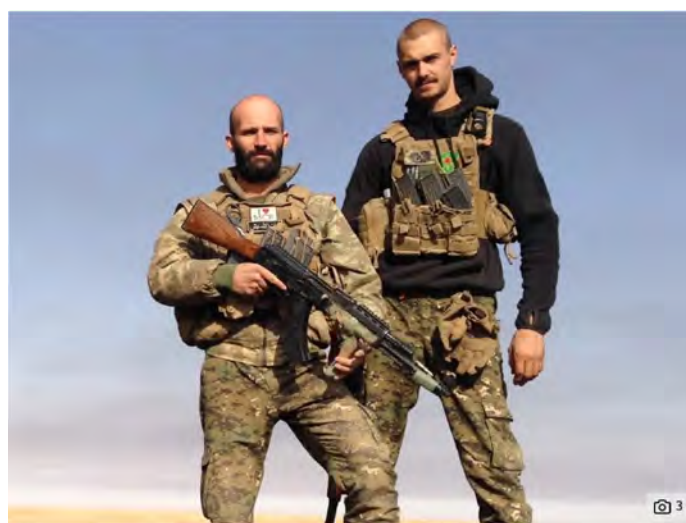
He told The Independent that he and his son had been stopped by armed police in September and had “guns pointed at our heads”.

Then when he was arrested on 11 December, he was questioned for three days by counter-terror police and someone he believed represented the security services.

Police searched Paul Newey’s home, seized all his electronic devices and questioned a friend who had employed his son.

“It was completely surreal, I’m just a normal chap,” he said. “I hadn’t paid much interest to politics previously because I just thought they were fighting Isis.”

Paul Newey was freed on bail



Daniel Burke (left) with Ollie Hall, a British YPG volunteer who was killed in action in 2017 ( Facebook )

but ordered to sign in at a police station twice a week leading up to a trial originally scheduled for June. But it was delayed until October and he was left in “limbo” until the CPS sent a letter announcing that the case was being dropped, on 29 June.

Now, Mr Newey and his family want to know why the case was brought in the first place, after every other terror prosecution linked to the YPG had failed.

“It just doesn’t add up,” he said. “They’ve been so unsuccessful with all the other prosecution, why haven’t they just given up? Nobody [in the YPG] is going to be a danger to the British public, they’re fighting for a cause they believe in to protect people. How are they terrorists?”

Mr Burke’s legal team said he believed the CPS’s decision to drop the prosecution was di-

rectly linked to his application for the prosecution to disclose “information relating to diplomatic pressure placed on the UK government by Turkey to treat the Kurdish YPG as ‘terrorists’”.

A statement said threats about future trade links, and the “unwillingness of the authorities to risk the embarrassment” of revealing communications, may have played a part in the CPS’s decision.

Several former YPG fighters have suggested that political pressure from Turkey could be driving similar prosecutions.

There has been a string of failed or abandoned terror prosecutions of people who fought with the YPG, amid persistent questions over how supporting a group that was backed by the British government against Isis could be terrorism.

Eight British volunteers – seven

men and one woman – were killed in action and the UK government has repeatedly praised the YPG's "important contribution to counter-Daesh efforts".

It is not classed as a terrorist organisation in the UK, although the linked Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is.

In previous cases, prosecutors have highlighted the YPG's left-wing ideals, push for female equality and projects including a "communal lettuce garden" in evidence.

The link between that kind of activity and terror laws relies on the definition of terrorism in British law as violence or threats advancing "a political, religious or ideological cause".

Numerous MPs opposed the definition when it was proposed, and Kurds were specifically mentioned 13 times in a 1999 House of Commons debate over the new Terrorism Act.

After an MP asked whether supporting Kurdish groups who were then fighting Saddam Hussein's forces in Iraq would be "capable of constituting ter-

rorism", the government denied the possibility.

Jack Straw, then Labour's home secretary, called the idea "hypothetical" and "fantastic", adding: "I simply do not accept the proposition. The idea that in this country the police would investigate such an alleged offence in respect of Iraq, that the Crown Prosecution Service would bring a charge and that the director of public prosecutions would give his consent cannot exist outside [the questioner's] fevered imagination."

Mr Straw claimed the new terror laws would be "subject to a significant series of checks and balances", adding: "Such circumstances therefore do not arise, and I do not believe that they ever will."

But at least six people who fought with or supported the Kurdish YPG have now been charged with terror offences.

One former volunteer, Aidan James, was jailed in November for attending a training camp operated by the PKK in Iraq but was acquitted by a jury for the same offence at a YPG camp.

The CPS initially charged him with preparing acts of terrorism by travelling to Syria to join the YPG but a judge found that he had "no case to answer".

Mr Justice Edis noted the Kurdish group was "supporting the policy of the UK and other allies by fighting Isis" and was backed by RAF airstrikes.

The judge told the Old Bailey last year that fighting alongside the YPG "was not terrorism at all" under current laws.

Another former soldier, James Matthews, saw terror charges against him for attending a YPG camp dropped in July 2018 after a two-year investigation.

Joshua Walker, a student who joined the YPG in 2016, was arrested on his return to Gatwick airport 18 months later. He was not prosecuted for his activities in Syria but instead charged with a terror offence for possessing a copy of The Anarchist Cookbook.

A jury acquitted him after hearing Mr Walker downloaded the document, which contains bomb-making instructions, for a role-playing society at the Uni-

versity of Aberystwyth.

Another former YPG volunteer, who did not want to be named, told The Independent he had left the UK after being "harassed" by security services despite being released with no further action following a police investigation.

Several other British people who joined the group have been arrested and questioned by counterterror police, with some having their passports and phones seized, but faced no further action.

The CPS declined to comment on the allegations made over diplomatic pressure from Turkey.

A spokesperson said: "The CPS's function is not to decide whether a person is guilty but to make fair and independent decisions.

"These are made on a case by case basis in line with our legal test. Cases are then kept under continuous review.

"As part of that responsibility, we have concluded our legal test for a prosecution is no longer met."



July 10, 2020  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## COVID-19: Iraq announces record 2,848 infections, over 70 deaths in single day

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Friday, the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment announced that health officials had again confirmed over 2,000 new COVID-19 infections and the death of over 70 people across the country within the previous 24 hours.

The ministry's daily statement noted that it had conducted 12,054 coronavirus tests in a

single day, 2,848 of which returned positive.

According to the statement, since the spread of the virus to Iraq began in late February, 72,460 people have been infected, 41,380 have recovered, and a total of 2,960 individuals have died from the disease.

On Thursday, the Technical Deputy of the Ministry of

Health and Environment, Dr. Jassim al-Falahi, told the Iraqi News Agency that his ministry plans to increase its bed capacity so that it can receive all COVID-19 patients.

A total of 20 hospitals will start operating soon," al-Falahi said.

On Thursday, Iraqi Health authorities decided to allow Iraqi citizens to travel abroad and to receive Iraqis stranded abroad,

reversing its previous decisions on banning commercial flights.

Iraq first closed its airports to commercial flights on March 17. Originally, the ban was to last a week, but it has successively been extended, as the coronavirus crisis has persisted and even grown much worse.

The ban was last extended on

July 1 and is scheduled to last until July 15. It may well be re-extended then, and it is unclear what the latest decision to allow Iraqi citizens to return portends for commercial flights more broadly.

Iraqi citizens who return from abroad must self-quarantine for two weeks at home, the decree stated. Iraqis stranded abroad will be allowed to enter Iraq after undergoing COVID-19 tests, but even if the tests prove negative, they must self-quarantine for 14 days. That is the incubation period for the virus. The 14-day quarantine helps insure that people who have been exposed to the disease and might yet come down with it do not infect others.

Previously, Iraqi officials threatened criminal prosecution of citizens not following health restrictions and they extended the nationwide partial shutdown until at least July 20.

Read More: COVID-19: Iraq records 1,724 new cases; authorities extend measures

Since late May, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of new coronavirus infections and deaths, even as



Workers in hazmat suits pray over a body before a burial at a cemetery for COVID-19 victims outside the Iraqi city of Najaf, June 10, 2020. (Photo: AFP/Ali Najafi)

authorities reintroduced partial curfews in an effort to curb the spread of the virus. Health officials have repeatedly expressed fears of a collapse of the already fragile healthcare system.

Warning from International Rescue Committee: 600% increase through June  
On Thursday, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) issued a dramatic statement, announcing that the number of Iraq's COVID-19 cases had risen by 600 percent over the

month of June.

Stressing the danger, the IRC warned that "efforts must be redoubled" to slow down the spread of the highly contagious disease.

The IRC report highlighted an alarming statistic: the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Iraq on June 1 was only 6,868. However, a month later, on July 1, the figure had jumped to 53,708.

Iraq's health ministry had previously announced that the

country's hospital capacity was becoming overwhelmed, and it was planning to convert universities and school buildings into makeshift COVID-19 hospitals.

Since late May, after opening its border with Iran, the original epicenter of the disease in the Middle East, Iraq has been recording increasingly higher numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths. So far, there is no sign of that changing, as the crisis continues.

**Le Monde**

10 juillet 2020

Par Jean-François Chapelle

## La Turquie veut mettre au pas ses avocats

**L**e Parlement examine une proposition de réforme des barreaux, derniers lieux de résistance au sein du système judiciaire.

Les avocats turcs n'ont jamais eu leur langue dans leur poche. Dans un système judiciaire largement soumis aux pressions de l'exécutif, ce sont eux qui, depuis des décennies, sont en première ligne sur le front de la défense des libertés individuelles, que ce soit dans

les salles d'audience ou à travers les prises de positions de leurs puissants barreaux. Mais, depuis trois semaines, c'est dans la rue et dans les salles des pas perdus que les juristes font résonner leurs diatribes contre une réforme qui pourrait affaiblir leur corporation.

« La défense ne se tait pas, elle ne se taira pas. » Derrière ce cri de ralliement, des milliers d'avocats, robe au vent et, sur le nez, un masque anticorona-

virus barré du mot *Bölme* (« Ne nous divise pas »), ont tout tenté pour infléchir la volonté du gouvernement : marche sur Ankara bloquée par la police, sit-in devant le Parlement, happenings dans les palais de justice.

Sans succès. Le Parlement a entamé, mercredi 8 juillet au soir, l'examen en session plénière d'une proposition de loi sur la réorganisation des barreaux déposée par des élus du

Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, le parti gouvernemental, islam-conservateur) et de son allié d'extrême droite, le Parti de l'action nationaliste (MHP), qui devrait sans surprise être adoptée grâce aux voix des deux formations.

La principale innovation de la réforme tient dans la possibilité qu'elle offre de fonder plusieurs barreaux concurrents dans chaque département



Des avocats manifestent contre la proposition de réforme des barreaux, devant le tribunal principal d'Ankara, le 3 juillet. ADEM ALTAN / AFP



Rassemblement d'avocats devant le palais de justice d'Istanbul, le 30 juin. MURAD SEZER / REUTERS

comptant plus de 5 000 avocats – soit Istanbul (48 000), Ankara (18 000) et Izmir (10 000) –, à condition que chacun de ces nouveaux barreaux puisse réunir au moins 2 000 adhérents.

#### « Centres d'affrontements politiques »

Le chef de l'Etat, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a justifié la mesure par la nécessité de « mettre en place une structure des barreaux plus démocratique, plus pluraliste, avec un haut niveau de représentativité ». Le vice-président du groupe parlementaire AKP, Cahit Ozkan, s'est

montré plus explicite lorsque, à l'occasion de la présentation du texte en conférence de presse, il a évoqué le projet d'en finir avec les « centres d'affrontements politiques et idéologiques » que sont devenus, selon lui, les grands barreaux, et qu'il a mis en cause le manque supposé de représentativité de leurs dirigeants, petitement élus par leurs pairs, dans un contexte d'abstention massive.

Autant d'arguments qui font bondir Me Türkan Kurtulmaz Oztürk, présidente de l'association des juristes de Kartal, siège du plus grand palais de

justice de Turquie, sur la rive asiatique d'Istanbul. « S'ils sont aussi amoureux de la démocratie qu'ils le prétendent, qu'ils commencent par supprimer le seuil électoral de 10 % pour l'entrée au Parlement, qui a permis à l'AKP, lors de son accession au pouvoir, en 2002, de remporter 67 % des sièges au Parlement avec à peine 34 % des voix, rétorque-t-elle. Mais non, ça, ils ne le font pas. Les barreaux sont l'une des institutions les plus démocratiques de Turquie, et c'est là qu'ils choisissent de faire leur réforme. »

« Nous défendons des bar-

reaux puissants »

La jeune femme, rencontrée à la tête d'un cortège d'avocats protestataires, rappelle que, durant la dernière décennie, la plupart des contre-pouvoirs – médias, universités – ont été muselés en Turquie à coups de procès, d'évictions, de mises à l'index. « Le barreau est l'une des seules institutions qui conserve encore un certain pouvoir. Leur véritable objectif aujourd'hui est de nous affaiblir, de nous marginaliser et de nous remplacer, poursuit-elle. Nous, nous défendons des barreaux puissants, indépendants et démocratiques. »

Le Monde

10 Juillet 2020  
Par Hélène Sallon

## L'Irak dépassé par le Covid-19

Le système de santé est au bord de l'effondrement. Le taux de pauvreté dans le pays est, passé de 22 % à 34 % pendant la pandémie

Doté d'un système de santé proche de la rupture, ravagé par les guerres, la corruption et le manque d'investissement, l'Irak risque de perdre la bataille contre le Covid-19. La «

crise de l'oxygène » qu'a connue Nassiriya, dans le sud de l'Irak, à la fin du mois de juin, a sidéré le pays. Des pénuries d'oxygène ont semé le chaos à l'hôpital Al-Husseïn. Des rixes ont éclaté entre familles de patients pour l'achat de bouteilles de ce précieux corps gazeux. Des soignants ont été attaqués par des proches de victimes décédées. « Le problème a été résolu

après la livraison d'oxygène par les unités antiterroristes, indique le docteur Ali Al-Bayati, membre de la Haute Commission irakienne pour les droits de l'homme (IHCHR). Mais, ce n'est ni leur rôle ni une solution pérenne à une crise bien plus profonde, qui est le résultat de la corruption, de l'absence de centralisation et de la mauvaise gestion. »

Tandis que des pénuries similaires frappent plusieurs villes du sud du pays, le premier ministre, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, a lui-même dénoncé un système « corrompu ». « On n'a pas de système de santé, a-t-il reconnu. Il est en panne, et les besoins les plus basiques ne sont pas honorés, car ceux qui occupent les postes dans certaines institutions sont incompétents. »

Relativement maîtrisée au début du printemps, la pandémie s'est accélérée fin mai. Selon l'International Rescue Committee (IRC), le pays pétrolier de 39 millions d'habitants a enregistré une augmentation de 600 % des cas de contamination en juin. L'augmentation des capacités de dépistage – quadruplées depuis mai – n'explique pas à elle seule cette hausse. Le 6 juillet, l'Irak enregistrait 2 567 morts et plus de 62 275 contaminations dans ses 18 provinces, surtout à Bagdad. Des médecins ont aussi constaté une hausse du nombre de morts à domicile, qui n'ont pas toutes été répertoriées comme étant liées au Covid-19 – du fait de la présence de comorbidités ou de la stigmatisation sociale de la maladie –, indique l'organisation Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) dans un rapport, le 25 juin.

#### Détresse des soignants

« La situation dans de nombreux hôpitaux irakiens s'est rapidement détériorée. Les vagues de nouveaux cas ont éprouvé leur capacité à faire face à cette pression extraordinaire et ont submergé leur personnel, déjà insuffisant et surmené », poursuit l'EPIC. L'Irak ne dispose que de 1,4 lit d'hôpital pour 1 000 habitants et de 500 respirateurs, et seulement 1,8 % de son budget est consacré à la santé. Le pays est confronté à une crise économique sans précédent du fait de la chute des cours du pétrole et de la pandémie. Sa réponse sanitaire dépend de l'aide de pays tiers et d'organisations internationales. Certaines provinces n'ont toujours pas de centres de dépistage, entraînant de longs délais pour obtenir les résultats.

La frustration et le stress rongent le personnel soignant, l'épuisement et la maladie le guettent. « On craque, confie Badr, un médecin de Bagdad. On est surmenés, isolés de nos familles. Beaucoup de mes confrères ont des symp-



A une vingtaine de kilomètres de Najaf, en Irak, un homme pleure ses morts dans un cimetière improvisé pour recevoir les victimes du Covid-19, le 10 juin 2020. ALI NAJAFI/AFP

tômes mais doivent continuer à travailler. » Selon l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, 8,5 % des cas actifs sont des soignants. Au moins 13 médecins sont morts, selon les autorités irakiennes. De nombreux soignants doivent encore se payer leur matériel de protection sur leur maigre paie du fait de pénuries. Les menaces de grève se multiplient face aux attaques répétées des familles de patients. Or, l'Irak n'a que 0,7 docteur pour 1 000 habitants.

Dans les provinces kurdes, les retards de salaire accentuent cette détresse. « Tout le personnel soignant du ministère de la santé est en grève, d'abord intermittente, puis totale, depuis plus de cinquante jours, car il n'est pas payé. Au ministère des peshmergas [combattants kurdes], nous n'avons pas reçu nos salaires depuis cinq mois, mais nous faisons notre devoir », indique le docteur Osama Amin, de l'hôpital militaire de Shosh à Souleimaniyé. Près de 20 000 soignants ont rejoint le mouvement de grève, selon le syndicat de médecins de Souleimaniyé. Le gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan a commencé à payer les salaires de février il y a quelques jours,

amputés de coupes.

#### « Un complot de l'Occident »

« Le ministère de la santé s'est effondré, à tout point de vue », poursuit le docteur Amin. Avec deux millions d'habitants, la province de Souleimaniyé n'a que 150 lits et 50 ventilateurs. L'hôpital où il travaille est plein, comme tous les hôpitaux publics. « Cette flambée est survenue après la levée du couvre-feu, fin mai. La plupart des gens n'ont pas suivi les mesures de prévention. Beaucoup disaient que la pandémie a été créée de toutes pièces par le gouvernement pour empêcher les manifestations, jusqu'à cette nouvelle flambée... », continue le docteur.

Les croque-morts, impréparés, ont refusé de prendre en charge les victimes

La même méfiance s'observe dans le reste du pays. « Les gens ne font pas confiance aux autorités à cause du dysfonctionnement des services publics, de la corruption et des conflits politiques. Il y a aussi le manque d'éducation de certains, et la croyance chez d'autres que le virus est un complot de l'Occident », abonde Ali Al-Bayati, dont l'or-

ganisation mène des campagnes de sensibilisation. La stratégie choisie par les autorités, au début de la pandémie, d'isoler toute personne symptomatique, sous escorte policière au besoin, a effrayé les gens. « Certains ne signalent pas leurs symptômes et restent chez eux au risque de contaminer leur famille », observe M. Bayati. La peur et la stigmatisation sociale de la maladie ont été telles que les croque-morts, impréparés, ont refusé de prendre en charge les victimes du Covid-19, laissant cette tâche aux unités de la Mobilisation populaire, une formation paramilitaire.

Mais c'est surtout la crise économique, et la nécessité de subvenir à leurs besoins, qui a poussé des millions d'Irakiens à ne pas respecter le confinement. Selon le ministère des affaires sociales, 11,6 millions de personnes sont éligibles à une aide d'urgence, et le taux de pauvreté est passé de 22 % à 34 % pendant la pandémie. Ceux qui vivent dans les quartiers informels – trois millions de personnes – et dans des camps de déplacés – 1,5 million de personnes – sont les plus exposés au risque de la maladie, faute d'infrastructures sanitaires.

July 10, 2020  
By EDITH M. LEDERER

## UN official: 700 people died in Syrian camps for IS families

**U**NITED NATIONS - The U.N. counterterrorism chief says his office received information that 700 people died recently in two camps in northeast Syria where about 70,000 mainly women and children connected to Islamic State fighters are detained in "very dire conditions."

Vladimir Voronkov told a news conference Thursday that the people, including children, died of "lack of medicine, lack of food" at the al-Hol and Roj camps, which are overseen by Kurdish-led forces allied with the United States who spearheaded the fight against the extremist Islamic State group.

He said the deaths in the camps created "feelings of anger."

Voronkov did not clarify when the 700 reportedly died or what the source of the information was. The Kurdish Red Crescent said in January that 511 people died in the largest camp, al-Hol, in 2019. The overcrowded camps have a high child mortality rate. So far, there has been no known outbreak of coronavirus in the camps. A U.N. team visited the largest one earlier this month.

Voronkov urged the international community to tackle "the huge problem" of what to do with these people, saying keeping them in camps "is very dangerous." He warned that "they could create very explosive materials that could be very helpful for terrorists to

restart their activities" in Syria and Iraq.

The Islamic State group, which once controlled large swathes of Iraq and Syria, lost its last Syrian strongholds in early 2019. But despite the loss of its self-styled caliphate, U.N. experts said earlier this year that the extremist group is mounting increasingly bold attacks in Syria and Iraq and is planning for the breakout of its fighters in detention facilities.

In addition to the al-Hol and Roj camps, the Kurdish fighters are guarding thousands of IS fighters and boys in prisons.

After IS militants lost control of the oil-rich northeast, Turkey invaded areas along its borders last October and now controls slivers of land in the very complex region. There are tensions between the Turkish-allied fighters and Kurdish groups, which Ankara considers terrorists. In addition, hundreds of U.S. troops remain in northeast Syria.

The International Crisis Group reported on April 7 that there are 66,000 women and children in al-Hol and 4,000 in Roj, most of them relatives of IS extremists, "but some former affiliates of the group themselves." The Brussels-based think tank said that the majority are either Syrians or Iraqis, with the numbers roughly split, and around 13,500 are from other countries.



FILE - In this April 19, 2020 photo file photo, shows a large refugee camp on the Syrian side of the border with Turkey, near the town of Atma, in Idlib province, Syria. Over the last two days, members of the UN Security Council have been haggling over cross-border aid delivery to Syria, with Russia, a major ally of the Syria government, working to reduce the delivery of U.N. humanitarian aid to Syria's last rebel-held northwest down from two crossings to just one. A final vote is expected Friday, July 10, 2020 as western countries push on a new resolution to keep the two crossings open for six months, instead of a year. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed, File)

The group said humanitarian workers described the detention sites "as ridden with tuberculosis and perilously overcrowded, with one speaking of 'dramatic mortality rates'."

Voronkov said "no country would like to have these people back, with this very negative and very dangerous terrorist background."

But he said there are about 9,000 children and the first priority should be to save those under 6 years old, "because in this period of time children are absolutely not in the position to be indoctrinated."

Voronkov said the U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism, which he heads, is pushing the issue very strongly with countries

whose citizens are detained. Only a small number are repatriating their citizens, including Central Asian countries, the United States and Russia, he said.

Women are "a more difficult story," Voronkov said.

There are "victims of terrorism" who didn't understand what they were doing when they accompanied the men in their families to Syria and Iraq, he said, "but there are a lot of radicalized women among detained people in camps."

Voronkov said he believes the way forward is to prosecute the women and then rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society, but he conceded that it's "a very challenging issue."



July 10, 2020  
By Lawk Ghafari

## Moscow supports Kurd-Damascus dialogue: Russian foreign ministry spox

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Moscow supports dialogue between the Kurds and Syrian government, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said at a press conference in Moscow on Thursday.

“Russia believes that the Syrians should draw their future together,” Zakharova stated.

In response to a question by Rudaw’s correspondent to Moscow, the spokesperson claimed that “the Kurds are an essential part of Syria, and Russia supports the dialogue between Kurds and Damascus.”

Syria’s Kurds have negotiated with Damascus for a number of years in an attempt to reach a common agreement. Negotiations have broken down after failing to reach a resolution that satisfies both sides.

Currently, talks between the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) and Syrian regime in Damascus have stalled, since the Assad regime was unwilling to recognize Kurdish autonomy in the areas they govern at last year’s negotiation. The NES seeks to preserve Kurdish self-governance under a federal system – similar to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Disunity on the Syrian Kurdish front has also hindered the negotiations.

The ruling Democratic Union Party (PYD) that dominates the NES and the Kurdish National Council (ENKS), an umbrella group of several opposition parties, have been at odds for several years, with the former accusing the latter of being unwilling to share power in northeast Syria, an

area known to Kurds as Rojava.

The two sides entered a reconciliation process in October 2019, reaching an initial agreement in June on a set of “preliminary understandings” covering governance, administration and protection.

A senior member of the ENKS said in December they are ready to hold talks with the Syrian government if regime-backer Russia plays the role of guarantor. However, no negotiations have taken place.

Russia intervened on the side of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in 2015, as the regime was facing a complete breakdown and an overthrow by rebels. Since then, Russia has emerged as the main foreign player in the Syrian conflict. “Syria is a country where different ethnic and religious

groups live together in peace, and it should be respected, and we have repeatedly stressed that this coexistence must be preserved and maintained.” Zakharova added.

Syrians first took to the streets in 2011 to protest against Assad, before evolving into a civil war involving multiple countries.

At least 384,000 people have since died, including more than 116,000 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor in March.

The conflict has displaced more than 11 million people internally and abroad.

“The foreign jihadists and forces are the main obstacle in front of the Syrians to rebuild their country, and bring back sovereignty to Syria,” Zakharova added.



July 10, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## New Kobane clock tower symbol of Kurdish resistance against ISIS

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria (Rojava) are building a clock tower in Kobane as a sign of the city’s

resistance against the Islamic State (ISIS). The \$50,000 project will be completed this month, according to the mayor.

“Kobane city deserves to be served in the best way because it did a great thing by defeating ISIS,” Faris Eti, mayor of Kobane, told Rudaw

English on Friday. The clock tower is “a symbol of the resistance of Kobane and we will do everything to complete it, even if we fall into debt.”



In 2014, ISIS militants controlled swathes of Syrian and Iraqi territories. In mid-September that year, ISIS began laying siege to Kobane, taking village after village as they slowly tightened a noose around the city. Thousands of civilians fled across the border to Turkey.

With the help of the US-led Global Coalition against ISIS and Peshmerga forces from the Kurdistan Region, the People's Protection Units (YPG) defeated ISIS militants in the city in January 2015 and the surrounding areas in the following weeks.

This was the first major military defeat of ISIS and Ko-



The Kobane clock tower rings out over the Syrian Kurdish city. Video: Euphrates Region infrastructure committee.

bane made headlines around the world, becoming a symbol of victory over the terror group.

The weeks of battles left some 70 percent of the city destroyed. The local population and authorities have slowly

brought life back to the city, reconstructing houses and roads and restoring basic services.

The 26-metre high clock tower is visible from all corners of the city. Eti said construction should be completed in one or two weeks. All the materials for the tower are locally sourced, though the clock itself has been imported from Germany.

The city has a history of revolution. It was here that the Kurds of northeastern Syria first declared their opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad on July 19, 2012 and the Rojava Revolution was born.



July 10, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Zakho Kurds vacate another village as Turkey deploys more troops: officials

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Residents have abandoned another village in the northern Kurdistan Region late on Friday as Turkey continues its military campaign against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Disher Abdulsattar, mayor of Batifa subdistrict in Zakho, Duhok province, told Rudaw that the village of Avla has been vacated due to a Turkish offensive that began on Thursday.

Turkey began air and ground military operations in the Kur-

distan Region and Iraq's disputed territories in mid-June, with the stated aim of removing suspected PKK targets from the area. Five civilians have been killed during Turkey's offensive. The village of Kashan, also in the Batifa subdistrict, has been abandoned and other villages in the area have been partially emptied.

Turkish forces have been bombarding Avla village since Thursday, dropping 26 bombs, according to Abdulsattar. Five houses were hit. There were no casualties, but the villagers opted to flee their homes.

Turkish forces have fired at locations near the villages in the past, but not inside the populated areas. "This is the first time that Turkey comes this close," said Abdulsattar. Turkish forces are operating on the ground just six kilometres from populated areas and a major road, half of Mount Shaqol is under Turkish control and their drones are monitoring the area, he added.

Zerevan Musa, mayor of the nearby Darkar subdistrict, told Rudaw that he saw Turkish forces rappelling out of a helicopter on Mount Shaqol,

which sits between the two subdistricts.

The Batifa subdistrict with 27 villages borders Turkey. Thirteen of the villages have been affected by recent bombardments. In Darkar, 25 of 63 villages have been subject to Turkish bombs, according to the mayors.

Iraqi border guards set up five bases in both subdistricts on July 1, giving the locals some relief. Peshmerga forces have also deployed some troops to the area.

## Turkey's Erdogan accused to trying to create 'new militia' after parliament votes to arm watchmen

Critics fear the 21,000-strong force will be full of party loyalists and could interfere in private life.

Turkey's parliament has passed a controversial law that would grant auxiliary police the authority to carry weapons and search suspects, in what critics fear could lead to the formation of a pro-government "militia".

Opposition lawmakers are accusing the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of seeking to create a parallel law enforcement branch potentially packed with loyalists.

The force, called bekci, or "watchmen", has been used by Turkey to buttress police forces for decades. But it was disbanded and folded into the police force in 2008 before being resurrected in 2016.

"It has been a part of Turkish cities throughout history," said Onur Erim, head of Dragoman Strategies, a political and defence consulting firm in Istanbul. "They were one of the guys in the neighbourhood. Unlike the police, they would never change locations."

Many critics worry that the building up of the force is part of a broader effort by the government to expand the footprint of law enforcement at a time when police are coming under scrutiny worldwide in the wake of the George Floyd killing in the United States.

Dressed in bomber jackets that say bekci and uniforms that resemble those of law en-

forcement, they are widely mocked as ineffectual. The often tepid young men in baseball caps stroll the streets whilst occasionally asking drivers to turn down the volume on the hip-hop music blasting from their radios.

But some worry the force could play a more volatile role in rural communities that remain hotbeds of resentment between ethnic Turks and Kurds.

Independent critics have described the bekci as a youth jobs programme. It currently numbers at least 21,000 mostly men in the nation of 83 million.

The proposal to arm them was first introduced by Mr Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in January, but was approved late on Wednesday following a chaotic session of parliament in Ankara a day earlier in which lawmakers came to blows.

Under the new law, bekci can carry weapons, ask citizens for identification, conduct body searches, pull over cars, hold suspects and transport them to law enforcement. Critics say giving them law enforcement authorities is unconstitutional, and fear the recruits, who are often given little more than 60 days training, will abuse their power.

"The main opposition to it is that there is a worry that a group of people in government want to create a police state," said Mr Erim. "The second thing is that the bekci



Members of the neighborhood guard force or watchmen are pictured during a ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey ( Reuters )

are given all these rights like the police but are not as well trained."

Video posted in February purported to show watchmen in Istanbul abusing a man declining to allow them to conduct a body search.

"An alternative law enforcement agency is being created," main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) lawmaker Ibrahim Kaboglu was quoted as saying in a local newspaper.

"These authorities could be extended to interference in private life and moral policing," CHP lawmaker Mahir Polat was quoted as saying in the opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper.

"The watchmen could become the new militia force" of the AKP, he said.

There is little hard evidence about how and from which

communities the watchmen are recruited. Turkey is ideologically and ethnically diverse, and friction often arises between leftist-leaning secularists and more traditionally minded conservative Muslims who support the AKP.

Turkey's police, under the authority of pro-Erdogan interior minister Suleyman Soylu, is often accused by opposition of serving the political interests of the AKP.

"The watchmen have the duty to help people," Mr Soylu said in February. "They have preventive and protective duties and authorities."

Mr Soylu claimed last year that the watchmen had contributed to a 26 per cent decline in burglaries.

The AKP and its allies sought to change the law after two courts ruled that the watchmen did not have the authority to stop citizens.



July 11, 2020  
By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Russia, China vetoes threaten to end all UN aid to northern Syria

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Friday, Russia and China, for the second time this week, vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have continued a UN humanitarian aid program in northern Syria.

With the vetoes of the two permanent members of the Security Council, the program has ended, at least temporarily, as of Saturday, and will not be renewed, unless the Council can reach a compromise understanding.

The program, which provides humanitarian aid to areas of Syria that are not under the regime's control, was begun in 2014. It was renewed annually, until last January, when, at Russian insistence, it was renewed for only six months.

At the same time, Russia cut two of the four border crossings that had been used to bring aid into Syria. That included the Al-Yarubiyah crossing, which allowed for the movement of humanitarian supplies from Iraq into northeast Syria.

Al-Yarubiyah is no longer in use, and all UN aid to Syria's northeast must now go through Damascus. But until July 10, two border crossings, both in northwest Syria, were still being used for UN aid: Bab al-Hawa, through which supplies were sent to the Idlib area, and Bab al-Salam, which was used to supply the Aleppo region.

Russia wants to reduce further the approved border crossings, so UN aid will move through only one crossing—Bab al-Hawa—in order to strengthen the authority of the Assad regime within Syria.



A UN truck loaded with humanitarian supplies at the Turkish side of a border crossing, awaiting the green light to cross to the Syrian side, March 2014. (Photo: UN)

Russia also wants to use its approval of the UN humanitarian program as leverage against the US and European Union (EU) sanctions which have been imposed on Syria.

The US and European countries have been unwilling to accept the Russian terms and the result is the termination of the UN's humanitarian aid program in northern Syria, at least for now, although it is expected that council members will continue to work on a compromise draft.

Friday's vote was the third such vote this week. Initially, Germany and Belgium prepared a draft resolution that would have extended the aid program for a year, using three border crossings: the two in northwest Syria, as well as Al-Yarubiyah, whose function they wanted to restore.

However, in response to Russian objections, the German-

Belgium draft dropped mention of the Al-Yarubiyah crossing, even before it was put to a vote on Tuesday. Nonetheless, Russia, backed by China, still vetoed the resolution, although all the other members of the Security Council approved it.

Subsequently, Russia submitted its own resolution, which would have extended the program for only six months and with only one designated border crossing: Bab al-Hawa. On Wednesday, the Council voted on the Russian draft, but rejected it, as only four countries—Russia, China, Iran, and Viet Nam—supported it.

Emma Beals, an independent researcher and editor at "Syria in Context," speaking to Kurdistan 24, warned that the resolution would now expire, cutting off all UN aid to northwest Syria.

"Sadly, within hours the mechanism will expire after no

agreement was reached to extend the NW (Northwest Syria) mandate, though fraught negotiations are ongoing in an effort to secure a 11th hour reprieve," she said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) earlier urged the Security Council to renew the cross-border aid to Syria.

"The cross-border operation out of Turkey is a lifeline for 2.8 million people in north-west Syria," OCHA Regional Spokesperson for the Middle East and North Africa, David Swanson, told Kurdistan 24. "There is currently no alternative that can match the scale and scope of the cross-border operation."

"The cross-border operation from Turkey into the northwest has been responding at record levels to the acute needs of millions of civilians," Swanson continued. "In June alone, some 1,759 trucks provided life-saving assistance to more than 6 million women, children and men, while May recorded the highest number of United Nations humanitarian aid trucks crossing per month since the establishment of the mechanism in 2014, with 1,781 trucks crossing from Turkey."

Beals noted that COVID-19 had appeared in Idlib this week, "making an agreement all the more essential."

"More than four million people depend on cross-border aid, and an end to the mechanism would be devastating to the region, as alternative systems would take months to figure out," she concluded.

## Erdogan réislamise Sainte-Sophie et défie à nouveau l'Europe

**L**e président turc a annoncé l'ouverture de l'ex-basilique aux prières islamiques après qu'un tribunal a autorisé le changement de son actuel statut de musée en mosquée.

EUROPE - On connaît donc le nom de la 3272e mosquée d'Istanbul : la « mosquée Sainte-Sophie ». Examinant la plainte d'une association musulmane, le conseil d'État turc a révoqué vendredi le statut de musée de l'édifice millénaire. Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan peut désormais se prévaloir d'une décision de justice pour accomplir le rêve des islamistes turcs : reconquérir, religieusement et politiquement, ce symbole d'Istanbul.

À partir de 537 et pendant plus de neuf siècles, Sainte-Sophie est restée église, joyau de l'art byzantin. Lorsqu'il conquiert Constantinople en 1453, le sultan Mehmet II en fait aussitôt une mosquée, sans détruire pour autant son héritage chrétien. En 1934, onze ans après la chute de l'Empire ottoman et l'avènement de la République, son premier président, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, « l'offre à l'humanité » en la transformant en musée. Depuis des décennies, les panneaux circulaires clamant les noms d'Allah et de son prophète Mohammed répondent aux mosaïques du Christ et de la Vierge Marie. Près de 4 millions de personnes les ont admirés l'an dernier, un record pour un musée turc.

Reniant sa propre jurisprudence, le Conseil d'État fait valoir que Sainte-Sophie est, depuis la conquête ottomane, la propriété de la Fondation Fatih-Sultan-Mehmet-Han (du nom du sultan Mehmet II), et que les statuts de cette fonda-



Des partisans du président se sont rassemblés autour de Sainte-Sophie, vendredi, après l'annonce de la décision d'ouvrir la voie à la transformation de l'ancienne basilique en mosquée OZAN KOSE/AFP

tion en garantissent l'utilisation comme mosquée, interdisant tout autre usage. En clair, que le fondateur de la République, Atatürk, n'aurait jamais dû en faire un musée.

L'encre sur la décision du Conseil d'État n'était pas encore sèche que le président turc signait un décret confiant à la Diyanet (l'Autorité des affaires religieuses) l'administration de Sainte-Sophie en annonçant sa réouverture aux prières. Le calendrier pourrait être rapide, moyennant quelques aménagements pratiques, pour adapter l'édifice au culte musulman.

Dans la famille politique du chef de l'État, rendre à l'islam la coupole de Sainte-Sophie est un rêve aussi vieux que sa transformation en musée. « Sainte-Sophie est le symbole de la conquête », assène Yunus Genç, qui dirige la

branche stambouliote de l'Association de jeunesse anatolienne, liée au mouvement islamique Milli Görüs, dans lequel a baigné Recep Tayyip Erdogan avant d'en faire scission. « En vertu du droit de la guerre, ce monument - qui était la propriété de l'empereur byzantin - est devenu la propriété de l'empereur ottoman, insiste Yunus Genç. Mehmet II l'a légué en héritage aux musulmans, donc il nous appartient. »

Ce quarantenaire se réjouit, « naturellement », à l'idée d'entendre bientôt l'appel à la prière s'élever des quatre minarets de l'ancienne mosquée ottomane. Mais il reconnaît - et regrette - l'instrumentalisation politique. « À intervalles réguliers ces dernières décennies, les gouvernements ont utilisé Sainte-Sophie et sa possible réouverture au culte pour mobiliser l'électorat, observe-t-il.

Peu importe... L'essentiel, c'est qu'elle soit à nouveau mosquée. »

Depuis dix-huit ans qu'il préside aux destinées de son pays, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a eu tout le loisir de s'intéresser au sort de Sainte-Sophie. Il n'avait même pas besoin, pour en faire une mosquée, d'une décision de justice. Depuis 2018 et l'instauration d'un régime hyperprésidentiel, un décret de sa main suffit. Dès lors, pourquoi ne pas avoir agi plus tôt ? Et pourquoi agir maintenant ?

« Le pouvoir affronte une crise de confiance. On l'a vu l'an dernier, quand il a essuyé de lourdes défaites aux élections municipales, notamment à Istanbul. C'est d'ailleurs avant ce scrutin qu'il a parlé pour la première fois de "mosquée Sainte-Sophie", rappelle Kemal Can, un journaliste poli-

tique qui suit la droite turque depuis des décennies. L'un des objectifs est de faire passer ces difficultés au second plan en recourant à des actions politiques très fortes symboliquement. »

Toutefois, comme le souligne cet observateur, ce n'est pas en déroulant des tapis de prière sur le marbre de Sainte-Sophie que Recep Tayyip Erdogan se garantira la victoire aux prochaines élections, programmées pour l'instant en 2023. Le statut de l'édifice ne déchaîne pas les passions. La plupart des Turcs, s'ils apprécieraient de prier sous l'immense dôme de Sainte-Sophie, ont d'autres

priorités autrement plus pressantes.

#### Un argument électoral

« Tout ça, c'est un show politique. Une mosquée Sainte-Sophie, pourquoi pas, mais ce n'est pas ça qui me donnera du travail », constate Ercan, un ouvrier au chômage. Comme lui, 44 % des Turcs interrogés en juin par l'institut de sondage Metropoll estiment que « l'ouverture de Sainte-Sophie au culte vise à empêcher de parler de la crise économique actuelle ». Près de 12 % y voient un argument de campagne lors d'éventuelles élections anticipées. « Politiquement, il n'a pas grand-chose à y gagner. Cette affaire

est surtout liée aux tensions et rivalités croissantes avec l'Occident », avance le journaliste Kemal Can.

À l'époque où la candidature d'Ankara à l'Union européenne avait encore un avenir, jamais le président turc ne se serait en effet risqué à islamiser Sainte-Sophie. Mais à l'heure où ses actions en Syrie, en Libye ou en Méditerranée orientale se heurtent aux critiques des Occidentaux, à l'heure où ses rêves d'Europe se sont noyés dans le Bosphore, Sainte-Sophie cristallise les ambitions du chef de l'État, autant qu'elle sert d'exutoire à ses rancœurs envers l'Occident. Elle personnifie dans sa pierre

le récit national - islamo-nationaliste - que Recep Tayyip Erdogan écrit pour son pays, enhardi autant que contraint par son alliance avec le Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP). Présentée avec insistance comme « propriété de l'État turc », Sainte-Sophie est brandie comme un symbole de sa souveraineté nationale. En refaire une mosquée, c'est prouver cette propriété. C'est agir en sachant - voire en espérant - une condamnation unanime du monde occidental, notamment celle d'Athènes. C'est donc imposer la Turquie comme un acteur indépendant, que rien ni personne n'effraie. Et ça, c'est un argument de campagne.

**Le Monde**

11 juillet 2020  
Par Par Piotr Smola

## La France contre la Turquie, aux racines de l'affrontement

La récente escalade verbale entre Paris et Ankara au sujet de la Libye n'est que le révélateur de divergences plus larges, préexistantes depuis plusieurs années.

Parfois, les crispations sont des préludes aux crises ouvertes. Au printemps 2018, les épouses de trois diplomates turcs, basés à Strasbourg auprès du Conseil de l'Europe et à Paris, doivent remplir des formulaires pour des titres de séjour français. Or, elles refusent d'être photographiées sans leur voile. L'administration bloque la procédure, au nom de la loi. Commence alors, en coulisses, un invraisemblable imbroglio protocolaire et juridique. Ankara prend des mesures de rétorsion radicales. Elles visent les nouveaux fonctionnaires de l'ambassade et du consulat français en Turquie. Ils sont privés des cartes diplomatiques qui permettent de séjourner dans le pays. Le



Emmanuel Macron et son homologue Recep Tayyip Erdogan lors du sommet de l'OTAN à Bruxelles, en juillet 2018. LUDOVIC MARIN / POOL VIA REUTERS

Quai d'Orsay, qui ne peut opérer le renouvellement prévu des effectifs, bloque à son tour

l'attribution des titres de séjour pour les diplomates turcs et leurs épouses.

Cette crise étouffée a pris fin au bout de quatorze mois, en juin 2019, lors de la visite de

Jean-Yves Le Drian à Ankara. Compromis trouvé : un simple coup de tampon sera donné sur le passeport des épouses concernées, refusant de poser tête nue, à l'instar de la solution adoptée pour les conjointes de diplomates iraniens. Mais cette séquence est riche d'enseignements. Elle révèle le raidissement identitaire de la Turquie, qui se conçoit comme un phare de l'islam politique, comme en témoigne le projet de reclassement de la basilique Sainte-Sophie en mosquée, à Istanbul.

Cette crise illustre aussi l'atmosphère de défiance entre les deux pays, malgré les efforts d'Emmanuel Macron pour nouer une relation de travail avec son homologue Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Le président a découvert les manières turques avec l'arrestation d'un jeune journaliste, Loup Bureau, fin juillet 2017, détenu pendant cinquante-deux jours. Trois ans plus tard, les échanges acrimonieux se multiplient. Face à la Turquie, la France s'avance dorénavant hérissée. Les incriminations retenues contre Ankara sont nombreuses : atteinte à la souveraineté d'Etats membres en Méditerranée, implication massive dans le conflit libyen, chantage aux migrants, achat d'équipements militaires à la Russie, révélations dans la presse turque sur un réseau d'informateurs au profit de la DGSE (services extérieurs français)...

Lundi 13 juillet, les ministres des affaires étrangères de l'Union européenne (UE) doivent se réunir pour évoquer les relations avec la Turquie. Le chef de la diplomatie française, Jean-Yves Le Drian, a évoqué l'hypothèse de nouvelles sanctions, après celles prises en novembre 2019 en réponse aux forages illégaux dans les eaux territoriales de Chypre. « L'objectif n'est pas de punir la Turquie mais d'obtenir de la clarté », indique-t-on à l'Elysée. Les sanctions ont peu de chances de passer dans l'immediat. Pour Berlin, la politique

vis-à-vis d'Ankara ne peut se réduire à ces instruments punitifs. Cette réserve s'explique aussi par la présence d'une forte minorité turque en Allemagne.

### Les tensions remontent à loin

Paris s'égosille, dans une relative solitude. Emmanuel Macron a contribué verbalement à l'escalade, en accusant récemment Ankara de porter une « responsabilité historique et criminelle » dans le conflit en Libye. « Criminelle » : un adjectif jamais employé pour qualifier l'intervention russe en Syrie. Le président français cherche à mettre à l'épreuve la solidarité des alliés de la France et à révéler les contradictions turques. Pour l'heure, avec peu de réussite.

La situation est encore plus paradoxale au sein de l'OTAN, où un bloc de pays pro-américains demeure dans le déni du problème turc. Faute d'un positionnement clair de Washington, l'Alliance est pétrifiée par le défi posé par ce membre ambivalent, réclamant la solidarité dans le dossier syrien face à Damas et Moscou, tout en jouant une partition dissonante ailleurs. Le dernier incident grave en Méditerranée a servi de révélateur.

« En attendant la présidentielle de 2023, Erdogan et son parti l'AKP sont dans une stratégie de maintien au pouvoir à tout prix et de durcissement anti-occidental », Marc Pierini, ex-ambassadeur de l'UE en Turquie

Le 10 juin, la frégate française Courbet, lors d'une mission de l'Alliance, a été visée par les radars de tir d'une frégate turque qui escortait un cargo soupçonné de transporter des armes vers la Libye. L'enquête diligentée n'a pas mis Ankara à l'index, à la colère de Paris. « Le problème n'est pas entre la France et la Turquie, affirme-t-on à l'Elysée, mais dans le fait que le trafiquant et celui qui surveille les trafiquants sont les

mêmes, la Turquie. » Le 1er juillet, la France a donc décidé de se retirer temporairement de l'opération de sécurité maritime « Sea Guardian ». Huit pays sur trente seulement ont soutenu la France à l'OTAN. L'Elysée réclame une grande « clarification », mais son propre soutien politique passé au maréchal Haftar, en Libye, affaiblit sa position.

En réalité, entre les deux pays, les tensions remontent à loin, à l'ère Sarkozy. Elles mêlent questions internationales et considérations intérieures, de part et d'autre. Elu président en 2007, M.Sarkozy avait rejeté l'idée d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE. « C'est à partir du coup d'Etat manqué de 2016 que l'incompatibilité entre la Turquie et l'UE va devenir impossible », résume Marc Pierini, expert au centre de recherche Carnegie et ancien ambassadeur de l'UE en Turquie (2006-2011). »

« La société civile est alors muselée, une autocratie complète s'installe. Lors des élections municipales de 2019, Erdogan et son parti l'AKP perdent leur monopole politique, en étant défaits dans de grandes métropoles comme Istanbul. Depuis, en attendant la présidentielle de 2023, ils sont dans une stratégie de maintien au pouvoir à tout prix et de durcissement anti-occidental. L'envenimement public sert donc Erdogan. »

Début janvier 2018, la politesse est de mise lorsque Emmanuel Macron accueille Recep Tayyip Erdogan à l'Elysée. Nulle effusion, mais une volonté de trouver des convergences. A l'époque, les deux pays se rejoignent dans une opposition à la reconnaissance de Jérusalem comme capitale israélienne par l'administration Trump. M. Macron souligne alors la coopération « exemplaire » avec Ankara dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. Le protocole Cazeneuve, encadrant le retour des djihadistes français de Syrie, fonctionne bien. En outre, le chef de l'Etat

met en avant le projet de défense antimissile porté par le consortium franco-italien Eurosam, auquel la Turquie aspire.

Mais M. Macron prend aussi ses distances avec le processus d'adhésion enlisé. Il n'est plus question que d'un « partenariat » avec l'UE. « On paie vingt ans d'illusions sur ce qu'est le projet politique de l'AKP, souligne une source diplomatique française de haut rang. On a longtemps parlé d'islamisme modéré à la turque, qui permettait de sortir de la domination militaire tout en maintenant sous contrôle la frange islamiste extrémiste. Aujourd'hui, on essaie d'avoir un message de fermeté, mais la position d'accommodement généralisé a renforcé Erdogan, même si elle a modéré un temps ses ardeurs. »

### Entretien explosif

Fin juin 2018, Emmanuel Macron félicite Erdogan pour sa réélection. Mais deux mois plus tard, lors de la conférence des ambassadeurs, le chef de l'Etat insiste à nouveau sur la nécessité de « sortir de l'hypocrisie ». Pendant ce temps, la crise des personnels diplomatiques bat son plein dans la relation bilatérale. « Est-ce que nous pensons (...) que nous pouvons continuer une négociation d'adhésion à l'Union européenne de la Turquie, interroge M. Macron, quand le projet chaque jour réaffirmé du président turc (...) est un projet panislamique régulièrement présenté comme antieuropéen, dont les mesures régulières vont plutôt à l'encontre de nos principes ? Résolument pas. »

En novembre 2019, Emmanuel Macron accorde un entretien explosif à The Economist, dans lequel il juge l'OTAN en état de « mort cérébrale ». Ces mots sévères visent à susciter le débat à l'approche du sommet de Londres. « Fais d'abord examiner ta propre mort cérébrale », rétorque Erdogan à l'adresse de M. Macron. L'ambassadeur de Turquie, Ismail Hakki Musa, est convoqué au

Quai d'Orsay. Il l'avait déjà été quelques semaines plus tôt, en octobre, au lendemain du lancement d'une offensive turque contre la milice kurde des YPG dans le nord de la Syrie, alliée des Occidentaux dans la lutte contre l'organisation Etat islamique (EI) : « Ce fut un tournant pour nous, une attaque grave contre nos intérêts de sécurité », explique une source diplomatique.

En février, avant le déclenchement de la crise du Covid-19, Erdogan menace d'ouvrir les portes de l'Europe aux réfugiés en provenance de Syrie. Un million de personnes ont été jetées sur les routes dans la région d'Idlib en raison de l'offensive du régime de Damas, soutenu par l'aviation russe. En mettant en scène pour les caméras quelques milliers de candidats à l'exode, la Turquie cherche à créer un effet miroir par rapport à la crise migratoire de 2015. Elle met la pression sur l'UE, qui l'utilise comme sous-traitant.

La Turquie est un allié de moins en moins fiable, qui préfère jouer sa propre partition, comme le montre sa relation complexe avec la Russie. L'acquisition de systèmes antimissiles S-400 auprès de Moscou a provoqué l'ire des Etats-Unis. Washington a demandé en vain à Ankara d'y renoncer, pour pouvoir prétendre à l'achat d'avions de chasse F-35. De son côté, Paris a freiné l'avancée de l'étude de définition pour le système de missiles d'Eurosam, malgré les relances de M. Erdogan en personne.

### Coups de semonce et opérations de communication

Mue par une fièvre néo-ottomane, la Turquie a bien assimilé le manuel des années 2020 : la force et le fait accompli donnent un avantage déterminant. Elle nourrit des ambitions inédites dans la ré-

gion, en profitant du vide laissé par les Etats-Unis. Son affirmation militaire va accentuer la détérioration des relations avec la France, dans le dossier libyen. Débutée en avril 2019, l'offensive du maréchal Haftar contre les forces du gouvernement d'accord national (GAN) de Faïez Sarraj, basé à Tripoli et reconnu par les Nations unies, entraîne une implication d'ampleur de la Turquie, via des milliers de mercenaires syriens.

C'est la débandade, côté Haftar. Paris enrage contre l'intervention d'Ankara et appelle au respect du processus politique esquissé à Berlin en janvier. La Turquie renvoie la France à son propre engagement politique partisan, avec les Emirats arabes unis, l'Egypte et le groupe privé russe Wagner, aux côtés de l'Armée nationale libyenne (ANL). « Si nous n'étions pas intervenus, Tripoli serait tombée en janvier ou février, déclare l'ambassadeur turc, Ismail Hakki Musa. On nous accuse de jouer un jeu dangereux, un double jeu. Et vous ? Au moins, nous disons clairement ce que nous faisons. Nous soutiendrons le gouvernement aussi longtemps qu'il le souhaitera. »

La crise du Covid-19 a confirmé la mue de la diplomatie turque, suivant le modèle russe et chinois. Elle alterne les coups de semonce et les opérations de communication. L'ambassadeur, à Paris, explique qu'il a coordonné une vaste mobilisation associative, pour fabriquer environ 100 000 masques en tissu. Fin avril, le diplomate remet 500 blouses sanitaires et 20 000 masques, au nom de son gouvernement, à la sénatrice de l'Orne, Nathalie Goulet, dans un geste immédiatement relayé par les médias proturcs. La même quantité est fournie à la région Grand-Est.

En sens inverse, selon nos in-

formations, Erdogan demande à Emmanuel Macron, au cours d'une vidéoconférence en avril, d'intercéder en faveur de la Turquie auprès de Sanofi. Ankara a en effet commandé 18 tonnes d'hydroxychloroquine – le produit aux vertus supposément miraculeuses contre le Covid-19 – à une usine du groupe située en Hongrie. Mais Sanofi ne pouvait répondre à une commande aussi importante. « Nous avons toujours cru à l'efficacité des mesures préventives, précise l'ambassadeur Ismail Hakki Musa. En Turquie, nous utilisons depuis longtemps le Plaquenil, qui donne de bons résultats quand on n'a pas encore attrapé le Covid. Au départ, Sanofi disait qu'il ne pourrait livrer que quatre tonnes en quatre mois. Ils sont montés finalement jusqu'à 7,3 tonnes. »

### Mélange politique religion

Si les relations se tendent entre les deux pays, ce n'est pas seulement en raison de l'échec flagrant de Haftar sur le terrain libyen. La Turquie est aussi un acteur sur la scène française, dont l'Elysée veut combattre de façon plus résolue les ingérences. Celles-ci s'inscrivent dans une stratégie d'Etat, la constitution d'un réseau international – institutions, associations, mouvances, médias, relais sur les réseaux sociaux – chargé de promouvoir l'agenda nationaliste-religieux d'Ankara auprès de la diaspora. Le maillage traditionnel des associations laïques turques n'est plus qu'un souvenir.

« Ce n'est pas de l'entrisme, car ils ne se cachent pas, relève Didier Leschi, auteur de *Misère(s) de l'islam de France* (Cerf, 2017), ancien chef du bureau central des cultes au ministère de l'intérieur (2004-2008). Les Turcs pratiquent en plus la menace, que ce soit sur les visas de nos diplomates ou bien sur les établissements

scolaires. Sur ce point, ils disent : « Si vous nous empêchez d'ouvrir des écoles en France, on nationalise les vôtres, en Turquie. »

Les cibles habituelles de ce nouveau réseau turc sont claires : tout ce qui est lié à la loi reconnaissant le génocide arménien (2001) ou bien à celle interdisant les signes religieux visibles à l'école (2004). Prosélytisme et surveillance. « L'objectif est un contrôle étroit de toute la population considérée comme diasporique, les émigrés et leurs enfants », résume une source à l'éducation nationale.

A Mulhouse, le 18 février, Emmanuel Macron a annoncé la fin progressive du système des imams détachés, pilier de l'islam consulaire. La moitié des 300 imams envoyés en France par des Etats étrangers, dans le cadre d'accords bilatéraux, sont des fonctionnaires turcs. Le mélange entre politique et religion est complet. En 2017, pour la première fois depuis sa création en 2003, le Conseil français du culte musulman a élu à sa tête pour deux ans un représentant de l'islam turc, Ahmet Ogras, plus connu pour sa proximité avec Erdogan que pour son ardeur pieuse.

Mais c'est surtout dans l'éducation que la vigilance des autorités se renforce. L'enjeu est de mieux contrôler le profil des enseignants envoyés en France, dont les compétences pédagogiques comptent souvent moins que l'appartenance à l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, ou leur engagement religieux. Le mouvement Milli Görüs, la matrice de l'islam politique turque, très implanté en Allemagne et proche des Frères musulmans, joue ainsi sur la confusion entre culturel et culturel. Au pic de la crise sanitaire, il a organisé des soupes populaires à Strasbourg et distribué des masques. Tout en étant surveillé de près de par les services de renseignement.



July 11, 2020  
By Lawk Ghafari

## Iran continues to repress religious and ethnic minorities: US State Department

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – Documented cases of execution, torture, and violently repression of religious and ethnic minorities continue in Iran, according to a report released this week.

The US State Department published its annual International Religious Freedom report on Wednesday, focusing on the status of religious freedom in every country around the world.

Iran's population are majority Shiite Muslims, although it has a sizable Sunni population in its eastern provinces of Baluchistan and Turkmenistan, as well as in the Kurdistan province in the west of the country.

The report's section of Iran focuses on violations committed by the Islamic regime against minorities in the country, including Kurds, Arabs, Yarsanis, Jews, and Christians.

Human rights groups "continued to report the disproportionately large number of executions of Sunni prisoners, particularly Kurds, Baluchis, and Arabs. Human rights groups raised concerns regarding the use of torture, beatings in custody, forced confessions, poor prison conditions, and denials of access to legal counsel," the report said.

Sunni Muslims in Iran are often restricted from building mosques and places of worship: out of "15,000 Sunni mosques" throughout the country, just nine of them are in

the nation's capital and most populous city, Tehran.

Sunnis are also struggling due to the "underrepresentation" in government positions, even in areas they constitute a majority, such as Kurdistan and Khuzestan provinces, the report says.

"Sunni activists continued to report that throughout the year, and especially during the month of Moharam, the government sent hundreds of Shia missionaries to areas with large Sunni Baluch populations to try to convert the local population," the State Department report reads.

Iran's ethnic minority regions are a familiar paradox of inequalities. Ruled by a clerical Shiite government, faith practice by the country's Baha'i and Sunni Muslim religious minorities is stifled, as are cultural and political activities among the country's Azeri, Kurdish, Arab, and Baluch ethnic minorities. Chronic government under investment is part and parcel of their difficult existence.

Khuzestan is an Arab province in southwest of Iran, which is home to many of the country's oil fields, and also its poorest citizens. While, on the other side of the country is Iran's rural Sistan & Baluchistan region, bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, where its predominantly ethnically Baluchi population live in rural areas neglected by state services.

Numbering over one million,



A worshipper offers Eid al-Fitr prayers marking the end of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, outside a shrine in Tehran, Iran, Sunday, May 24, 2020. Photo: Ebrahim Noroozi / AP

the Yarsani people or Ahl al-Haq, which translates to "People of Truth" practice an ancient religion known mostly to Kurds in urban and rural areas in and around Kermanshah region in western Iran. The faith also has followers in neighboring Iraq and Turkey.

According to the report, Yarsanis face widespread discrimination in Iran, as they are the target of social prejudices and discrimination by the state and Shiite preachers.

"Yarsani children were socially ostracized in school and in shared community facilities. Yarsani men, recognizable by their particular mustaches, continued to face employment discrimination. According to reports, Shia preachers continued to encourage social discrimination against Yarsanis," the report reads.

Meanwhile, around 9,000 Jews are estimated to be living in Iran, and are also subjected to "government restrictions and

discriminations" as a religious minority, the report added.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed that Iran denies religious minorities access to education in a speech on July 18, 2019 at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.

"In the Islamic Republic of Iran, authorities ban religious minorities from possessing religious books and they deny them access to education," Pompeo said. "In May, the Iranian government prohibited religious minorities from working at childcare centers where there are Muslim children, and as we know too well, beatings and imprisonments are common," the US secretary of state said.

The US reimposed sanctions on Iran in November 2018, after Washington withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, in May 2018.





July 11, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Iraqi, Kurdish forces launch joint attacks against ISIS on Iranian border

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Iraqi security forces and Kurdish counter-terrorism units on Saturday launched the fourth stage of an operation against Islamic State (ISIS) militants in areas disputed between Baghdad and Erbil in Diyala province.

Abdul-Ameer Kamil al-Shamiri, deputy commander of Iraqi Joint Operations Command, said in a statement on Saturday that they launched the fourth stage of the “Heroes of Iraq” operation “to pursue remnant terrorists and impose security and stability in Diyala province, as well as clearing and inspecting the border strip with the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

The operation is also aimed at entering the disputed areas between Iraqi forces and Peshmerga forces - areas “exploited by Daesh (ISIS) fighters to exist

and carry out its terrorist operations,” the statement added.

ISIS was declared territorially defeated in Iraq in December 2017. However, remnants of the group continue to operate in the disputed territories, returning to earlier insurgency tactics including ambushes, kidnappings and targeted killings.

Operations to entirely clear their presence from the area have failed, and military bodies worldwide have warned the group is resurging in several locations

The Iraqi army, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, or Hashd al-Shaabi in Arabic), other Iraqi security forces and Kurdish counter-terrorism forces from Sulaimani province are participating in the latest phase, which targets an area of 17,685 square kilometers.

Iraqi and coalition forces will provide air support.

The first phase of the operation was announced in mid-May, with a focus on the provinces of Anbar, Nineveh and Salahaddin. Phase two was announced on June 2, targeting ISIS holdouts on the fringes of Salahaddin and Kirkuk. The third stage covered Saladin, Diyala, Samarra, and Kirkuk provinces.

The state-owned Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported Saturday morning that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi arrived at Hashd al-Shaabi’s military base in Diyala to supervise the new phase of the operation.

INA also reported the “clearance” of 27 villages in the province.

The new phase comes one day after after the third anniversary

of the liberation of Mosul from ISIS.

Brigadier General Yehia Rasool, spokesperson for the Iraq’s Joint Operations Command told Rudaw TV on Thursday that “the Iraqi defense ministry and Peshmerga ministry are continuing their meetings to fill the security gap in the disputed areas, that can reach to 13 km square in some areas.”

Rasool also explained that cooperation between Peshmerga forces and Iraqi security forces is necessary to “exchange information regarding ISIS sleeper cells in the disputed areas.”

However, Peshmerga forces did not take part in Saturday’s operation.



July 11, 2020  
By Lawk Ghafuri

## YPJ riot squads raid al-Hol camp to root out ISIS women

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — Security forces are continuing an inspection campaign in al-Hol camp aimed at preventing further chaos inside the camp being chronically stirred up by women loyal to the Islamic State (ISIS).

Dozens of armed riot police led by the Women’s Protection Units (YPJ) combed through hundreds of crowded tents as camp authorities began a campaign yesterday to register camp residents’ biometric data, reported local media Hawar News Agency (ANHA), which is tied to the People’s Protec-

tion Units (YPG).

The sweep campaign is targeting al-Hol’s “immigrant section” – designated for foreign ISIS families – in efforts to root out secret ISIS cells that have been created by women within the camp and have been spreading chaos for its res-

idents. ANHA reported on Thursday that YPJ anti-terrorist squads and riot control units are overseeing the sweep of the camp.

Al-Hol camp has witnessed multiple attack in recent months, in which women who adhere to the radical ideology

of the jihadist group have rioted in the camp, attacking guards of the camp, or burning down tents of women who they see as violating their strict rules by talking to men, or removing their veils.

Sheikhmous Ahmed, who oversees all displacement camps in Rojava, told Rudaw English late Wednesday that they aim to put an end to the “chaos” created by ISIS women in the camp. “There have been escape attempts, arson, attempted murder, and attacks on camp officials,” Ahmed said.

He also said that some of the camp residents have refused to reveal their real identities, even to international organizations who work in the camp in coordination with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES).

Thousands of women and children of suspected ISIS fighters at al-Hol camp will be officially registered in a bid to boost security and “improve living conditions” in the camp, NES officials said Wednesday.

Zilan Nebo, an official responsible for the registration told ANHA that authorities are fingerprinting and photographing the women, as well as taking



Women and children at al-Hol camp on June 10, 2020. Photo: ANHA

iris scans and DNA tests. “Our aim is to make the international community hear us and realize that their nationals are in our camps so that they help us logistically and in other terms,” she said, adding that the process is expected to be completed within two to three days.

Located in northeast Syria’s Hasaka province, approximately 68,000 people live in al-Hol camp, of whom approximately 43,000 are children and the majority are women.

Most are Iraqis and Syrians, half of whom are believed to have links to the terror group, after they were arrested during the liberation of ISIS territories during the campaign to oust the group from its last holdout in the Syrian town of Baghouz in March 2019.

About 10,000 ISIS-related suspects are foreign nationals, according to data published by Rojava Information Center. NES officials have called on the international community to

repatriate their nationals or help facilitate trials of suspected ISIS members in northeast Syria, known to Kurds as Rojava. However, only a few countries have responded positively.

On a case-by-case basis, Azerbaijan, France, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, and Russia’s Chechnya among others have taken back several children born to ISIS-affiliated parents.

**The  
New York  
Times**

July 11, 2020  
By Carlotta Gall

## Erdogan Talks of Making Hagia Sophia a Mosque Again, to International Dismay

**T**he World Heritage site was once a potent symbol of Christian-Muslim rivalry, and it could become one once more.

ISTANBUL — Since it was built in the sixth century, changing hands from empire to empire, Hagia Sophia has been a Byzantine cathedral, a mosque under the Ottomans

and finally a museum, making it one of the world’s most potent symbols of Christian-Muslim rivalry and of Turkey’s more recent devotion to secularism.

Now President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is making moves to declare it a working mosque once more, fulfilling a dream for himself, his supporters and conservative Muslims far bey-

ond Turkey's shores — but threatening to set off an international furor.

The very idea of changing the monument's status has escalated tensions with Turkey's longtime rival, Greece; upset Christians around the world; and set off a chorus of dismay from political and religious leaders as diverse as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Mr. Erdogan's opponents say he has raised the issue of restoring Hagia Sophia as a mosque every time he has faced a political crisis, using it to stir supporters in his nationalist and conservative religious base.

But given the severity of the challenges Mr. Erdogan faces after 18 years at the helm of Turkish politics, there may be more reason than ever to take the talk seriously. Having lost Istanbul in local elections last year, the president has watched the standing of his party continue to slide in the polls as the Covid-19 pandemic has further undone a vulnerable economy.

On July 2, a Turkish administrative court ruled on whether to restore Hagia Sophia, or Ayasofya, its Turkish name, as a mosque, and revoke an 80-year-old decree that declared it a museum under Turkey's secular state. The ruling will be announced within two weeks, and then Mr. Erdogan is expected to make the final decision.

For more than 25 years since he became mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Erdogan has been working to leave his stamp on his beloved home city. He cleaned up the Golden Horn, built bridges and tunnels across the famous waters and placed new mosques at the most prominent sites.

But it is Hagia Sophia, one of the oldest and architecturally one of the most impressive

cathedrals in the world, that commands pride of place on the historical peninsula.

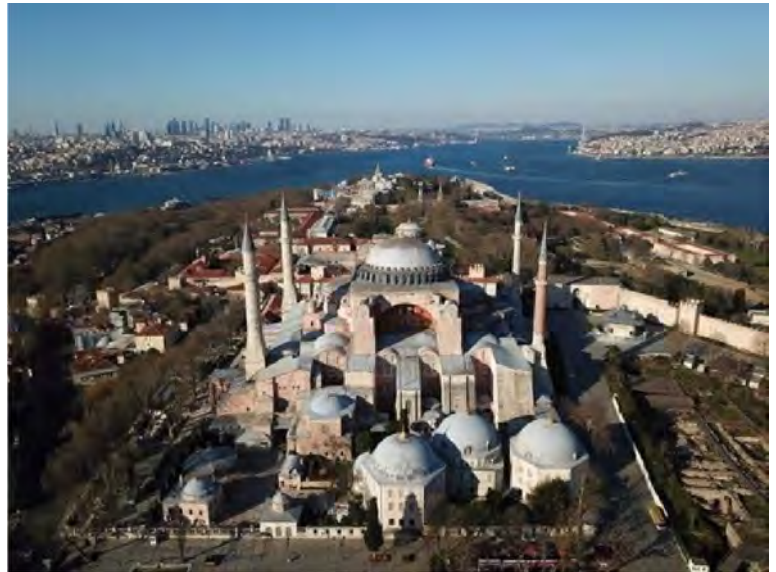
Completed in 537 AD, Hagia Sophia stood for nearly a millennium at the heart of the Christian world, crowning the fabled city of Constantinople. It is unsurpassed for its grandeur and immense dome.

In 1453, Mehmed II conquered Constantinople, and although his troops plundered what they could carry, the building was saved and turned into a mosque. For 500 years it was the venerated center of the Muslim Ottoman Empire.

Turks record with pride that Ottoman rulers doted on the great building, assigning the best architects to embellish it. Minarets were added, and later the great Ottoman architect Sinan built massive buttresses to prevent the walls from buckling under the weight of the dome, which was damaged in earthquakes.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the status of Hagia Sophia changed again. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of the modern secular republic of Turkey, ended the role of religion in the state and closed religious institutions. Byzantine churches, including Hagia Sophia, were made into museums, ending their religious function and opening them up for tourism, conservation and study.

But Mr. Erdogan's supporters speak of the building as the third holiest site in Islam, after the Grand Mosque of Mecca and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and insist that once a mosque



Turkey's president wants to convert Hagia Sophia in Istanbul back into a mosque, which threatens to set off an international furor over one of the world's architectural treasures. Credit...Bulent Kilic/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

it should never be unconsacrated.

Mr. Erdogan, who comes from a conservative Muslim tradition, has overseen a steady chipping away of the secular rules of the Ataturk republic, with a concerted effort to re-

Sophia, as he opened — remotely, because of the coronavirus — a ceremony and sound-and-light show to commemorate the 567th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslim army of Mehmed II the Conqueror.



The cathedral, built in the sixth century by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, stood at the center of Christendom for nearly 1,000 years, until Mehmed II conquered Constantinople and turned Hagia Sophia into a mosque. Credit...Chris Mcgrath/Getty Images

vive the glories of the Ottoman era.

At the end of May, he gave his strongest signal yet on Hagia

For the first time in more than 80 years, an imam seated on a carpeted dais before a copy of the Quran recited the verse known as the Conquest

surah, which celebrates the Treaty of Hudaibiyah between the people of Mecca and Medina.

The recitation upset many. The Foreign Ministry of Greece, which sees itself as the heir to the Byzantine Empire — which was Greek-speaking and Christian — denounced it as unacceptable and a breach of Hagia Sophia's status as a world heritage site under UNESCO.

The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, who is the spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church from his seat in Istanbul, said the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque would disappoint millions of Christians around the world and would divide Muslims and Christians when it had been a place of worship for both.

"We consider it as detrimental," he said in a sermon last week, "for Hagia Sophia, which, due to its dedication to the Wisdom of God is a point of encounter and a source of fascination for the faithful of both religions, to become, in the 21st century, a cause of confrontation and conflict."

He urged the Turks to honor what he described as their obligation to the world. "The Turkish people have the great responsibility and the highest honor to give prominence to the universality of this exquisite monument," he said.

Mr. Pompeo urged Turkey before the court hearing to respect the diverse traditions and faiths of Turkey's history and keep Hagia Sophia as a museum accessible to all.

Many in Turkey see the entire debate as a political ploy by Mr. Erdogan to remain ahead of his many rivals, especially as former members of his Justice and Development Party have broken away to

form their own political parties and threaten to draw away some of his conservative Muslim base.

He has made it a nationalist issue, lashing out at Greece for interfering in his country's affairs and insisting that Turkey was proceeding according to the law.

"Is it you managing Turkey or us?" he said. "Turkey has its own institutions."

His nationalist coalition ally Devlet Bahçeli weighed in with a speech on the same day: "Hagia Sophia is the conquest Mosque of the Muslim Turkish nation. This truth will not change."

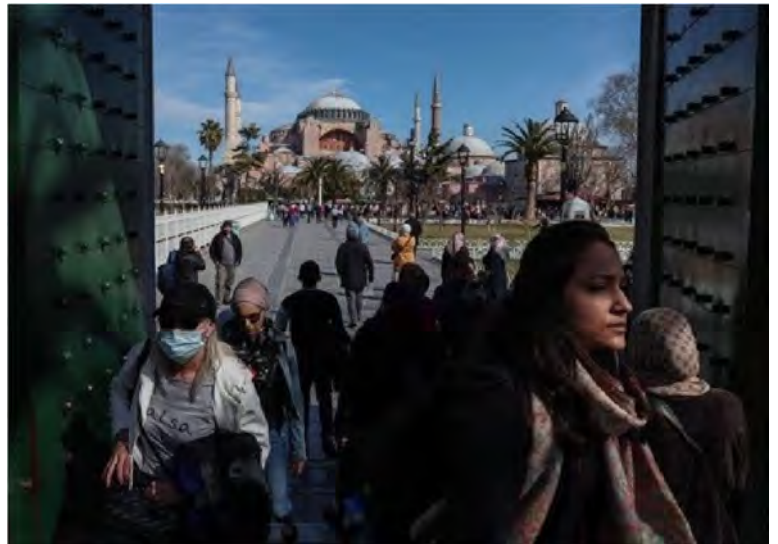
"This shows that there is something catching fire, something burning in the dynamics of this country," Mr. Erdogan added.

Even a former member of Mr. Erdogan's cabinet, Ertugrul Gunay, who served as minister of culture for five years, said Mr. Erdogan was making a fanfare over Hagia Sophia only to show he was still master of Istanbul after his electoral loss.

"The need to be more visible in Istanbul and to claim ownership of certain rituals about history and religion emerged," he said in a television interview.

"There are multitudes of grand mosques spread throughout Istanbul," he added in a text message. "This discussion of Hagia Sophia to be converted to a mosque done by the conservatives of Turkey is an old and unnecessary discussion."

Beyond politics, art historians



Hagia Sophia is the most visited tourist site in Turkey, with 3.7 million visitors last year. Credit...Sedat Suna/EPA, via Shutterstock

and conservationists worry that they will lose access for study and research if the monument becomes a working mosque, and tourist companies and city authorities fear that visitors will be deterred from coming. The monument is the most visited tourist site in Turkey, with 3.7 million visitors last year.

"I am more interested in preserving Hagia Sophia as a cultural treasure," said Zeynep Ahunbay, a conservation architect who has worked on the scientific committee for Hagia Sophia for 25 years. "The best way to preserve and present it is by the museum function."

The greatest worry is what will happen to the incomparable medieval mosaics, among them depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, alongside rare portraits of imperial figures including Emperor Justinian I and Empress Zoe, one of the few women to rule in her own right.

The mosaics were white-washed for the more than five centuries during Ottoman rule

— the depiction of the human form being considered idolatry — and were uncovered and restored only after Hagia Sophia was turned into a museum in the 1930s.

"We don't know what will happen to the mosaics and frescos," said Faruk Pekin, founder of Fest Travel, which specializes in cultural tours and led 80 nighttime tours of Hagia Sophia last year.

One of the delights of touring the building at night, he said, was that the dome seems even larger and the gold mosaics gleam more brilliantly in the dim light. Visitors pay double for the nighttime tour, and most of his customers are Turkish, he said.

If the museum becomes a mosque, the mosaics will have to be covered during Muslim prayers somehow, including seraphs high up at the base of the dome. Tourists and non-Muslims may be restricted to certain areas, he said.

"I still hope it will not happen."



July 11, 2020

By Ezel Sahinkaya , Eyyüp Demir

## Death of Young Kurdish Man Sparks Hate Crime Debate in Turkey

**A**NKARA/WASHINGTON - The death of a young Kurdish man in Turkey's capital Ankara for allegedly listening to Kurdish music has fanned outrage in the country, producing calls for the government to address ethnically-based hate crimes.

Baris Cakan, 20, was fatally stabbed in the Etimesgut neighborhood park of Ankara on May 31. His death soon fueled fury in Turkey after his family first announced he was killed by three nationalist Turks over listening to Kurdish music.

The Cakans later came out saying they were not sure if the killing was over his ethnic identity. Kurdish officials claim the family could have been pressured by authorities into changing their statement.

"There are claims about listening to music but I do not know," Fatih Cakan, the victim's brother, told VOA. He said Cakan was caught in a quarrel with the three men last Sunday shortly after leaving his home at 8:30 p.m. to meet his friend and perform evening prayer.

"There are many different claims and discourses. Everybody says something else. But I do not know because I was not there during the incident," he added.

A day following the incident, Ankara governor's office in a press statement said the three suspects were in custody and its investigations showed the

death was not a hate crime. Noting that "reflecting the incident in a different way is not well-intentioned," the office said Cakan and his friend got into a brawl after Cakan was asked by the three suspects to turn down their music during adhan, the evening call for prayer.

Turkey's interior ministry has accused those calling the death a hate crime as "provocateurs," with Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, in an interview with the daily newspaper Hurriyet last Wednesday, saying that "it is our responsibility to fight against provocations and to inform our citizens correctly, as it is to fight against terrorism, crime, and criminals."

However, some Kurdish officials and activists say they suspect Cakan's family has been subjected to pressure by the government into reversing their previous position.

Huseyin Kacmaz, the Sirnak deputy for the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), told VOA that several of his party members after their contact with the family have confirmed that the young man was killed over playing Kurdish music.

"We believe that after the incident went viral and sparked outrage on social media, the government exerted enormous pressure on the family and relatives," Kacmaz said.



VOA was unable to reach the Turkish Interior Ministry for a comment on these allegations.

The Ankara police department on Saturday announced taking legal action against "unfounded and misleading" social media posts which, it said, were intervening in the investigation into the death.

"Legal proceedings for the crime of public enmity were initiated by the prosecutor's office against thirty-six people who were found to be trying to gain political and ideological interest by exploiting the killing of Baris Cakan," the statement said.

### Issue of hate crimes

This is not the first time that allegations of a possible hate crime stirred controversy.

According to the Ankara-based Human Rights Association, at least 21 people were subjected to minority hate crimes in 2019.

"What we anticipate is that Baris Cakan has fallen victim to a hate murder," the watchdog's chief, Ozturk Turkdogan, told VOA.

"Those who attacked Baris Cakan did not tolerate him and attacked him with hatred because of his feature. This is either his ethnic origins, or the language he speaks of, or his belief, as in the discussion of adhan. For us, this is also a hate murder," Turkdogan said.

Condolence visits by officials to the family, he added, shows the government is intent on rejecting violence based on ethnic origin.

Kurds constitute around 20% of Turkey's population of 83 million. Many Kurdish citizens allegedly have been targeted in public for speaking their native language.

The government, which recognizes Turkish as the state's sole official language, says Kurdish cannot be used in public education but is allowed in private schools and in pub-

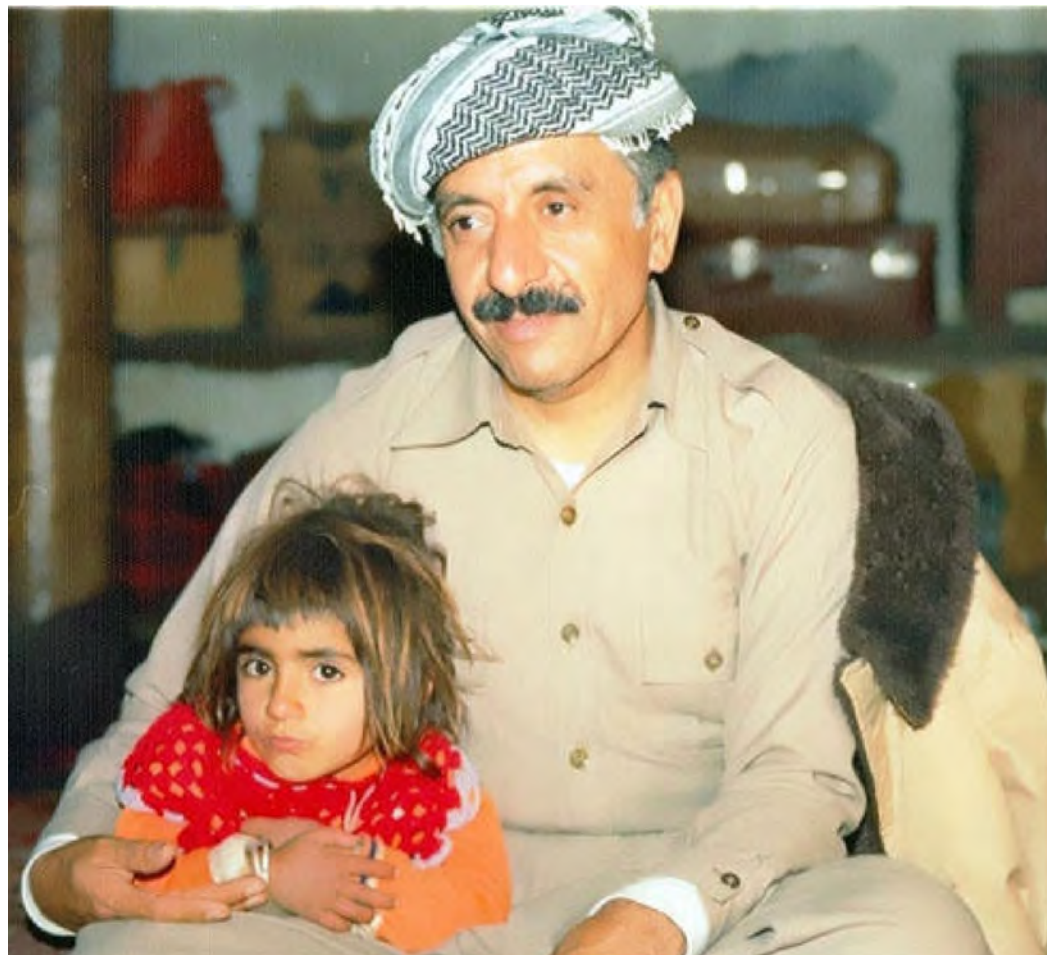
## Hommage au politicien kurde Abdulrahman Qasimlo, assassiné en Autriche en 1989

**L**e 13 juillet 1989, l'éminent politicien kurde, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlo et deux de ses collaborateurs ont été assassinés à Vienne par des « émissaires » iraniens au cours des « pourparlers de paix ». Plus de 30 ans après, ce crime d'État n'a malheureusement pas été sanctionné. Les assassins identifiés, munis de passeports diplomatiques, ont pu librement quitter l'Autriche pour regagner l'Iran où ils ont été promus. La justice autrichienne n'a pas cherché à éliminer ce terrorisme d'État au cœur de l'Europe. Au-delà de cette injustice, qui reste encore très vive dans la mémoire collective kurde, le message politique du Dr. Qasimlo, les idéaux qui ont guidé son combat pour l'émancipation du peuple kurde, pour un Iran démocratique et laïc respectueux de sa diversité politique, culturelle et linguistique gardent toute leur actualité au Kurdistan, en Iran et au Proche-Orient. » (texte via l'Institut kurde de Paris)

### QUI ÉTAIT QASIMLO

Né à Urmia, d'une riche famille féodale, Abdul Rahman Qasimlo [ou Abdulrahman Qasimlo] a fait ses études à Urmia, Téhéran, puis à Parsi, en France. Il est retourné au Kurdistan en 1952 à la fin de ses études.

En 1973, lors du troisième congrès du PDKI, il fut élu au poste de secrétaire général du parti, poste auquel il fut réélu plusieurs fois jusqu'à son assassinat. En 1979, son parti a soutenu la révolution. Khomeiny qualifiait d'opportuniste la participation tardive des Kurdes du PDKI à la révolution iranienne. Des militants appartenant au parti avaient pris le contrôle des camps militaires dans les régions kurdes. Khomeini a demandé à tous les



groupes armés de faire partie d'une organisation révolutionnaire et a demandé aux militants kurdes de rendre leurs armes. Ghassemlo a exigé l'autonomie des Kurdes et a refusé de déposer les armes. La majorité des Kurdes ont boycotté le référendum pour la nouvelle constitution qui a été adopté à une écrasante majorité. Après deux confrontations sanglantes entre les Kurdes et les forces loyales à Khomeiny, la rébellion kurde s'est transformée en guerre. Peu de temps après le début de la rébellion armée kurde, Khomeiny a déclaré une « guerre sainte » contre les Kurdes. Ce fut le début de la confrontation des partis politique kurdes et du nouveau régime, qui aboutit à une défaite militaire et à la répression politique des Kurdes par le gouver-

nement central. Des milliers d'exécutions ont eu lieu au Kurdistan de l'Est (Rojhilat) pendant la rébellion.

En 1988, après la fin de la guerre Iran-Irak, le gouvernement iranien a décidé de rencontrer Qasimlo. Plusieurs réunions se sont tenues à Vienne, fin 1988, début 1989. Une autre réunion a été organisée le 13 juillet, toujours à Vienne.

La délégation de Téhéran était composée des mêmes membres lors des rencontres précédentes : Mohammed Jafar Sahraroudi et Hadji Moustafawi, en plus d'un nouveau membre : Amir Mansur Bozorgian. Les Kurdes avaient également une délégation de trois hommes : Abdul Rahman Ghassemlo, son assistant Ab-

dullah Ghaderi Azar (membre du Comité central du PDKI) et Fadhil Rassoul, qui avait joué le rôle de médiateur.

Le lendemain, 13 juillet 1989, dans la pièce même où la négociation a eu lieu, Ghassemlo, son assistant Ghaderi Azar et Rassoul ont été exécutés. Hadji Moustafawi a réussi à s'échapper. Mohammad Jafar Sahraroudi, légèrement blessé, a été autorisé par l'administration autrichienne à partir. Amir Mansur Bozorgian a été libéré après 24 heures de garde à vue.

Ghassemlo a été enterré au cimetière de Père Lachaise, à Paris. Sa tombe se trouve à la 76ème division, 14ème ligne, face à la 36ème division, 1ère tombe à partir de la 36ème division.



July 12, 2020  
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Yezidis discover burned mass grave in yard of family home

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – A family discovered what they believe is a mass grave containing the bodies of four elderly relatives in the Shingal area this week. The remains had been burned. At least 10 mass graves in the area have been set on fire by unknown arsonists, according to local officials.

The mass grave was discovered in the Gir Ozer subdistrict near Shingal. The four buried in the grave are believed to be three women and one man, aged between 60 and 80 years, according to family members of the deceased.

Family members living in Snuny, north of Mount Shingal were told on Thursday that their family home in Gir Ozer had burned. The family visited the village on Saturday where they say the front yard of the home had been burned. In the yard, they found scarred skeletal remains. It appeared that the bodies had been dug up and then set on fire.

Seeing the carnage in their home, the family believed they finally knew what happened to elderly relatives who were missing since the Islamic State (ISIS) swept into the area.

"The four had opted to stay during the Daesh [ISIS] attack. We asked them to come



Family members discovered charred remains they fear are elderly relatives missing since Islamic State (ISIS) militants took control of northern Iraq in 2014. Photo: Rudaw

with us. When ISIS arrived in this area, we did not manage to get them out of the house," said Ghanim Qasim, a relative of one of the four.

In the summer of 2014, ISIS extremists swept across swathes of Syria and Iraq. In August that year, they attacked the Yezidi homeland of Shingal, committing genocide against the ethno-religious minority. Hundreds of thousands of Yezidis fled from the militants, but not everyone escaped. Thousands were killed or and 6,417 were captured. As of this month, 3,530 Yezidis have been rescued or escaped ISIS clutches, and 2,887 are still missing, according to the Kurdistan Regional Government's office documenting the genocide.

Spent cartridges are seen on the ground where family

members discovered charred remains in the yard of their family home in Gir Ozer. Photo: Rudaw

The grave "contains my uncle and my uncle's wife," Hassan Khidir told Rudaw on Saturday. He was searching for his relatives for six years. "We are collecting them [the remains]. We cannot do anything."

To date, 82 mass graves have been discovered in addition to dozens of individual graves, containing the remains of more than 1,000 Yezidis, according to KRG figures that have been confirmed by the United Nations. Only a handful of sites have been exhumed, with work hindered by ongoing insecurity in the area that is disputed between the governments of Erbil and Baghdad and currently con-

trolled by a patchwork of armed groups.

Local authorities say as many as 10 mass graves have been burned since last year, but they don't know who is responsible.

Jalal Khalo, mayor of Gir Ozer subdistrict, and an official with the armed Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) who control the village, both told Rudaw they do not know who carried out the arson.

Fahad Hamid, mayor of Shingal, told Rudaw on Sunday that they "suspect Daesh [ISIS] supporters to be behind the burning of the mass graves."

"We cannot identify those committing such acts. They are usually doing it during the night, and especially during the summer," Hamid added.

Judge Ayman Mostafa, the investigating judge of the KRG's Commission of Investigation and Gathering Evidence (CIGE) tasked with investigating ISIS crimes, told Rudaw they are aware of the problem, "but we cannot do anything to go and document them because of the coronavirus measures."

Movement between provinces and districts is prohibited under lockdown rules imposed to limit spread of the highly contagious COVID-19.



July 12, 2020  
By Sirwan Kajjo

## Syrian Kurds Alarmed Over UN Security Council Vote on Aid

**W**ASHINGTON - Kurdish officials in northeast Syria are expressing disappointment following a vote by the United Nations Security Council that failed to address “the deteriorating humanitarian situation” in that part of the war-torn country.

The U.N. Security Council on Saturday approved a resolution authorizing an international program that will deliver aid to the rebel-held northwest Syrian province of Idlib through one border crossing.

However, the majority of the council, including the U.S., wanted to reopen another border crossing with Turkey and a third on Syria’s northeast border with Iraq in order to get aid to an estimated 1.3 million Syrians in need of medical supplies.

The Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Turkey and Idlib province will remain open to humanitarian aid for one year. The other two crossings, Bab al-Salama between Turkey and Syria’s Aleppo province, and al-Yaroubia, between northeast Syria and Iraq, will not be reopened.

The Security Council vote Saturday came after previous efforts to reauthorize the opening of Bab al-Hawa and al-Yaroubia failed by vetoes from Russia and China.

### 'Unfolding catastrophe'

Local officials in northeast Syria say blocking aid



FILE - A Syrian Kurdish woman chants slogans during a rally in the countryside of the Hasakah province, Syria, June 27, 2020, to protest deadly Turkish offensives in northeastern areas of the country.

through al-Yaroubia crossing would throw the already-volatile region into further uncertainty.

“With this decision, we are literally left alone to deal with an unfolding catastrophe,” said Luqman Ehmi, spokesman for the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration in North and East of Syria.

“The Security Council failed to address what our region has been experiencing for a long time, and this is a very negative move against us,” he told VOA.

The semiautonomous region is under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a major U.S. partner in the fight against the Islamic State terror group. The partnership was key to liberate much of eastern Syria from IS militants.

Kelly Craft, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., said the U.S. “cannot disguise our disappointment at the loss of the Bab al-Salama and al-Yaroubia border crossings, which

puts millions of Syrian women, children and men at risk.”

“To them, I say we will never back down. We will always have hope for your future and will continue to stand with you,” she said in a tweet after the Saturday vote.

### Monopolizing aid

Russia, a major backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, has insisted that all international aid go through Damascus.

Humanitarian groups and officials, however, say the Syrian government monopolizes aid for political purposes. They add that the decade-long conflict in Syria and the recent outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic have created a major humanitarian crisis in the country, including the northeast.

“The Syrian regime continues to impose high tariffs on anything that enters our region, including medical supplies,” said Kurdish spokesman Ehmi.

Kemal Derbas of the Kurdish Red Crescent, one of the largest humanitarian groups that provides medical care to refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDP) in northeast Syria, says relying on Damascus for receiving international aid has proved futile.

“The Syrian regime doesn’t recognize most of the humanitarian groups that operate in northern Syria,” Derbas told VOA.

“This forces the World Health



FILE - Members of a displaced Kurdish family sit at a public school they use as a temporary shelter, in Hasakah, Syria, Oct. 22, 2019.



Organization (WHO), for example, to redirect its support to regime-held areas. The WHO used to deliver some aid and funding to us through al-Yaroubia border crossing, but after this Security Council voting it is no longer an option," he said.

Some medical aid groups have shut down their opera-

tions because of a lack of funding, Derbas said, noting that about 300,000 IDP and refugees in northeast Syria will have no adequate access to medical services.

#### 'De facto embargo'

Some observers say the recent U.N. decision represents a de facto embargo on those

Syrian regions that don't have access to aid.

"People in SDF-held areas in northeast Syria will be deprived from much needed international aid" at a critical time, said Siruan Hadsch Hossein, a journalist at the local radio station Arta FM.

He told VOA that millions of civilians in northeast Syria, including hundreds of thou-

sands in refugee camps, will immediately suffer the consequences of the U.N. move.

"This voting proves that the international community is not ready to find a resolution for the Syrian conflict," Hossein said. "It is disgraceful that certain members of the Security Council such as Russia use humanitarian aid to score political points."



July 13, 2020  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## COVID-19: Iraq extends flight ban, reports over 2,000 recoveries, infections in single day

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Iraq's Ministry of Health and Environment on Monday reported 2,229 new COVID-19 infections as well as 2,274 recoveries and 100 deaths due to complications related to the disease in the past 24 hours.

In its daily statement, the ministry mentioned that health workers had conducted 15,380 tests across the country in the same period, raising the total to 698,012 since the disease first entered the country. Out of the total examinations, 2,229 returned positive.

According to official data, the total number of infections in Iraq has crossed 79,735, which includes 46,998 recoveries, 3,250 deaths, 29,487 active cases.

#### Flight ban extended

On Monday, Iraq's Civil Aviation Authority announced it had extended a flight ban on com-



A man in protective gear reads a prayer near the coffin of another man who passed away due to the coronavirus, during his burial at the new Wadi Al Salam cemetery, which is dedicated to those who died of COVID-19, on the outskirts of Najaf, Iraq. (Photo: Reuters)

mercial flights until July 22, a precautionary measure to curb the further spread of COVID-19.

The extension came as a federal government's order indicated commercial flights would resume for citizens seeking to return from abroad or travel outside the country.

Authorities state that any person re-entering the country has to self-quarantine for 14 days,

the incubation period for the virus.

The 14-day quarantine helps ensure that people who have been exposed to the disease and might yet come down with it do not infect others.

The federal Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority's decision to suspend all international passenger flights was first made on March 17 and was planned to last for a week as the government

began to take preventive measures to counter the spread of the coronavirus. However, it was extended several times afterward. The latest one is expected to end on May 22.

Iraqi officials previously threatened criminal prosecution of citizens not following health restrictions and they extended the nationwide partial shutdown until at least July 20.

Crisis Cell member Fadhil Fatlawi emphasized that citizens should only be allowed to travel outside Iraq for "necessary cases," stressing that "such a decision must be studied thoroughly and carefully."

"Cases of coronavirus in Iraq have risen after allowing the return of those stranded abroad," Fatlawi claimed. He also warned of "a new disaster" should the government reduce travel restrictions "without applying the correct and strict health and preventive measures."



July 13, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: KRG announces 14 deaths and 254 new infections in a day

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Sunday, the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced 14 deaths due to coronavirus-related complications and 254 new infections over the past 24 hours.

A ministry statement noted that health workers had conducted 2,298 tests over the same period.

The test results of 254 persons came back positive: 85 in Erbil province, 141 in Sulaimani, 10 in Duhok, and 18 in Halabja province, the statement added.

There were also reportedly 84 recoveries.

Since the outbreak of the disease in the Kurdistan Region, 9,555 people have caught the coronavirus, of which 3,378 have recovered, 326 have died, and 5,751 cases remain active, according to official data.

Earlier on Sunday, the Erbil municipality announced the reopening of public parks to visitors, provided that they adhere to preventive measures. These sites were first closed in March when the authorities first

took steps to limit the spread of the disease.

On Sunday, Shamal Abdul Rahman, the director-general of the region's customs, said that "the border crossings in the Kurdistan Region are seeing a revival in trade movements after a slowdown that lasted for more than three months due to the coronavirus."

"The commercial movement in the border crossings had decreased to 30 percent due to measures against the coronavirus," Abdul Rahman added.

He noted that trade had recovered by 20 percent, and border authorities expect a continued rise "in the coming days."

The Kurdistan Region has six main border crossings with Turkey and Iran, all of which were closed for at least two months as part of measures to curb the spread of the virus. The reopening of some crossings in May, however, coincided with a spike in the number of coronavirus cases in the autonomous region days later, especially in Sulaimai province.

**LA CROIX**

13 juillet 2020

## L'UE étudie des options pour sanctionner Ankara

**L'**UE a manifesté son mécontentement lundi face aux agissements de la Turquie et étudie des options pour contraindre Ankara à respecter ses obligations internationales.

Mais son action est limitée par la crainte d'une nouvelle crise des réfugiés, si la Turquie décide de leur ouvrir ses frontières vers l'Europe, fermées depuis l'accord de 2016.

Le chef de la diplomatie européenne a reconnu qu'il n'avait pas été possible de trouver une position commune face à Ankara au cours de la première réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères de l'Union européenne organisée à Bruxelles depuis quatre mois.

«Je présente mes propres conclusions», a précisé Josep Borrell au cours de sa conférence de presse.

«Nos relations avec la Turquie sont mises à mal avec les mesures unilatérales de la Turquie qui vont contre nos intérêts», a-t-il souligné. «Ces mesures doivent cesser», a-t-il averti. M. Borrell s'est rendu à Ankara il y a une semaine et ses entretiens avec le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Mevlüt Cavusoglu ont été difficiles.

Plusieurs ministres ont dit leur préoccupation et leur inquié-

tude face aux décisions prises par le pouvoir turc.

Mais tous ont insisté sur l'importance du partenariat avec la Turquie, également membre de l'Otan.

Un lourd contentieux oppose néanmoins Ankara et ses partenaires de l'UE.

La Turquie soutient militairement le gouvernement d'union

nationale en Libye et est accusée de violer l'embargo des Nations unies sur les livraisons d'armes à ce pays.

#### L'UE étudie des options pour sanctionner Ankara

Ankara mène par ailleurs des forages dans la zone économique maritime de Chypre jugés illégaux et sanctionnés par l'UE.

La Turquie combat en Syrie les forces kurdes, alliées à la coalition internationale contre l'Etat islamique, à laquelle appartiennent plusieurs membres de l'UE.

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan est par ailleurs accusé de violer les droits de l'homme dans son pays et sa décision de transformer en mosquée l'ex-basilique Sainte-Sophie, un haut lieu de l'orthodoxie, est vécue comme une «provocation» en Grèce.

#### - Changer la dynamique -

Josep Borrell l'a invité à «reconsidérer et a annuler la décision» de convertir à nouveau Sainte Sophie en mosquée.

«Nous devons changer la dynamique de confrontation et créer un climat de confiance», a-t-il plaidé.



Le chef de la diplomatie de l'Union européenne, Josep Borrell, lors d'un conseil des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Bruxelles, le 13 juillet 2020 / POOL/AFP

Josep Borrell a annoncé avoir reçu «un large soutien pour préparer des mesures adéquates afin de répondre aux défis posés par la Turquie». Il a indiqué étudier des options qui pourraient être soumises aux ministres lors de leur réunion informelle fin août en Allemagne.

«Il y a une grande unité de vues pour avoir des clarifications de la part d'Ankara, s'agissant du respect de la souveraineté des Etats européens, comme des engagements pris lors de la Conférence sur la Libye à Ber-

lin, en particulier en ce qui concerne le respect de l'embargo sur les armes», a confirmé le chef de la diplomatie française Jean-Yves Le Drian dans un communiqué.

«Nous avons demandé au Haut Représentant, Josep Borrell, de nous faire rapidement des propositions sur les options et leviers possible», a-t-il précisé.

Des sanctions sont considérées pour les violations avérées de l'embargo de l'ONU en Libye, a-t-on précisé de source diplomatique.

La Turquie rejette ces accusations. Le chef de la diplomatie turque a mis en garde Josep Borrell lors de leur entretien. Il a reproché à l'UE de lier la question des migrants et les tensions en Méditerranée orientale et prévenu qu'en l'absence de progrès dans les discussions, «la Turquie continuera de ne pas retenir ceux qui veulent partir» en Europe.

L'UE étudie des options pour sanctionner Ankara

L'annonce au début de l'année par la Turquie de l'ouverture de la frontière avec la Grèce a provoqué l'afflux de dizaines de milliers de migrants.

La menace est prise très au sérieux en Allemagne. La chancelière Angela Merkel ne veut pas d'une nouvelle crise des migrants pendant le semestre de sa présidence de l'UE, a confié à l'AFP un responsable européen. Un nouveau financement de 485 millions d'euros proposé par la Commission européenne vient d'être approuvé par le Parlement européen pour aider les quelque 4 millions de réfugiés syriens installés en Turquie.

## Turquie : les écrits de prison, un genre littéraire à part entière

Le coup d'Etat avorté du 15 juillet 2016, en Turquie, a conduit de nombreux intellectuels, journalistes, écrivains, artistes, derrière les barreaux. Ça n'était pas la première fois, ce dont témoigne une vive tradi-

tion de littérature carcérale.

Comme de nombreux opposants, Burhan Sönmez n'a pas échappé aux geôles du régime. Coucher son expérience sur papier est apparu salutaire. « Il faisait froid dans notre cel-

lule, écrit le romancier turc d'origine kurde dans Maudit soit l'espoir (Gallimard, 2015). Tandis que je racontais l'histoire au Docteur, Kamo le Barbier était allongé sur le béton nu, recroquevillé sur lui-même. Nous n'avions pas de couver-

ture ; et, tels de jeunes chiots, on se réchauffait en se serrant les uns contre les autres. Comme depuis des jours le temps tournait sur lui-même, nous étions incapables de discerner de quel côté s'écoulaient le jour et la nuit. Nous

connaissions la souffrance et nous revivions tous les jours la terreur qui envahissait nos cœurs lorsqu'on nous conduisait à la torture. Dans ce bref intervalle de temps où l'on se préparait à souffrir, l'homme et l'animal, le sage et le fou, l'ange et le démon étaient des semblables. »

Avec plusieurs coups d'Etat militaires et de nombreuses périodes de tensions, l'histoire de la Turquie est émaillée de violences politiques. La réalité de la prison n'a jamais vraiment disparu, mais, avec la vague de répression et la multiplication des procès politiques qui ont suivi la tentative de coup d'Etat du 15 juillet 2016, elle a de nouveau envahi les esprits. Elle occupe une place à part dans la production littéraire et artistique, avec des récits qui tentent tour à tour de l'anticiper, de la saisir et d'en abolir les murs.

#### « J'ai grandi avec des récits de prison »

Le thème de l'univers carcéral a notamment surgi dans les littératures dites « du 12 mars » et « du 12 septembre », en souvenir des coups d'Etat de 1971 et 1980. A l'instar d'auteurs classiques, comme le célèbre poète Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963) ou le romancier Orhan Kemal (1914-1970), l'écrivain Murat Özyasar, 41 ans, fait de la prison le cadre d'une de ses nouvelles. Dans *Itiraf* (« L'aveu », extraite du recueil *Ayna Çarpması*, 2008, non traduit), il choisit de parler d'amour dans ce sinistre environnement de fer et de béton. D'origine kurde, il a grandi dans le sud-est de la Turquie, dans la ville de Diyarbakir, au plus fort des combats entre l'armée turque et le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). « J'ai vécu pendant de longues années dans une rue où se trouvait une prison, explique-t-il au "Monde des livres". Mes amis, ma famille, mes voisins, mes proches... Beaucoup de personnes autour de moi ont déjà été emprisonnées au cours de leur vie.

Je n'ai pas eu besoin de faire de recherches pour écrire. J'ai grandi avec des récits de prison ; c'est une réalité depuis ma plus tendre enfance. »

Dans sa jeunesse, Murat Özyasar n'a fait que quelques jours de garde à vue et a échappé de peu à une peine de douze ans d'emprisonnement. Tous n'ont pas eu cette chance. Il suffit de jeter un œil aux biographies des auteurs turcs les plus lus de l'histoire de la république pour prendre la mesure du phénomène. Au vu de sa banalité, l'incarcération apparaîtrait presque comme le gage d'un certain degré de subversion, venant valider l'engagement politique. De Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948) à Ahmet Altan, en passant par Kemal Tahir (1910-1973)... tous ont eu affaire à l'appareil judiciaire.

Si les hommes constituent la majorité du contingent, les juges n'en ont pas pour autant épargné les femmes. Autrice classique de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, Sevgi Soysal (1936-1973) fait partie de ces plumes que l'expérience de l'enfermement n'a pas dissuadées d'écrire. Elle a continué de produire sous les verrous, avec *Yenisehir* de Bir Ogle Vakti (« Yenisehir à la mi-journée », 1973, non traduit), et a également fait de la cellule l'unité de lieu d'un de ses récits. Dans *Baris adli çocuk* (« Un enfant nommé Paix », 1976, non traduit), elle met en scène, avec ironie et tendresse, l'extrême discipline des organisations politiques révolutionnaires de son époque. « On s'occupe pas d'un enfant de flic ! », lance le personnage de Demet, furieuse, à ses codétenues qui câlinent le fils d'une gardienne.

La nouvelle illustre le continuum qui existe entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur où, même enfermées, les militantes maintiennent leurs idéaux politiques. Une quête qui peut se traduire par l'imposition de contraintes supplémentaires, comme si les restrictions choisies consti-



Une œuvre de Banksy réalisée sur un mur new-yorkais en 2018, dédiée à l'artiste et écrivaine kurde Zehra Dogan, détenue en Turquie de 2016 à 2019. La correspondance qu'elle a tenue durant son séjour en prison a été publiée en France sous le titre « Nous aurons aussi de beaux jours. Ecrits de prison » (Des femmes/Antoinette Fouque, 2019). DENNIS VAN TINE/NURPHOTO/AFP

tuaient l'unique ressort qui leur reste pour se ménager une marge de liberté. Outre la pesante discipline carcérale, les prisonnières s'imposent de nouvelles hiérarchies et de strictes règles de vie commune : ainsi, en une surenchère d'obéissance qui vaut geste de dérision, les militantes du récit se mettent au garde-à-vous dès que le gardien de prison entre dans leur cellule.

#### Vie intérieure et relations humaines pour seules richesses

Cette manière de défier l'autorité pénitentiaire rejoint d'ailleurs des combats bien connus. La Turquie a en effet connu des périodes de mobilisations coordonnées dans différentes prisons, qui font de certains établissements pénitentiaires des lieux symboliques de la résistance politique. La répartition des prisonniers dépend de leur docilité : les militants d'une même organisation qui ont résisté à la torture peuvent purger leur peine ensemble, tandis que celles et ceux qui sont passés aux aveux sont placés dans des cellules à l'écart. L'un des personnages de Murat Özyasar, Selim, condamné à la perpétuité, préfère ainsi faire face à l'opprobre de ses codétenus pour rester dans une cellule d'où il peut apercevoir, par la fenêtre,

la femme dont il est amoureux.

Cet espace marginalisé aurait pu rester flou dans les imaginaires, mais les récits de sortie de prison abondent, et il est aisé de s'en faire une idée précise. L'extrême dénuement qui caractérise l'environnement carcéral turc motive bien souvent le choix narratif de ce lieu. La vie intérieure et les relations humaines deviennent les seules richesses à la disposition de détenus privés d'autres ressources. Dans *72. kogos* (« La 72e cellule », 1954, non traduit), roman d'Orhan Kemal, la somme dérisoire que partage Ahmet Kaptan lui permet d'apporter un confort passager à ses camarades de prison. Une générosité qui illumine quelque temps l'indigence de ces êtres dégradés – vulgaires « vers sur pattes » – qui n'ont que des mégots de cigarette à jouer en guise de dés. Les témoignages comme les fictions décrivent souvent des situations a priori inattendues : rencontres fortuites, amitiés ou solidarités improbables... Contre toute attente, la gardienne, dans la nouvelle de Sevgi Soysal, parachutée contre son gré en prison, manifeste une empathie qui décontenance les détenues, accoutumées à une hostilité de tous les instants.

Dans un régime autoritaire, la

menace qui plane coupe le souffle, inhibe la pensée. La société étouffe, et la distinction entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur de la prison perd progressivement de sa pertinence. Les descriptions de l'enfermement physique ne sont peut-être finalement qu'une expérience extrême de ce qui se vit autrement en dehors des murs. « En Turquie, beaucoup de gens sont derrière les barreaux, mais les plus enfermés, ce sont celles et ceux qui sont à l'extérieur, commente pour Le Monde des livres le journaliste Ahmet Sik, qui a connu la prison à deux reprises. En cellule, au moins, les limites de votre li-

berté sont tracées par les murs. A l'extérieur, la prison est dans les esprits. Il y a des journalistes qui sont en prison même s'ils ne sont pas derrière les barreaux. »

### L'enfermement libérerait de la peur

Suffocation collective. Les murs perdent leur matérialité, l'étau se resserre, l'imaginaire carcéral enchaîne les esprits. Si bien que la privation de liberté accule les êtres au désespoir et révèle des facettes insoupçonnées de leur personnalité. Dans son récent livre, Je ne reverrai plus le monde

(Actes Sud, 2019), « Ahmet Altan ne compte que sur sa mémoire, sa culture et son imagination pour s'affranchir des grilles : « Un prisonnier compte tout, sauf le temps. Le temps, il le découvre. (...) j'ai compris, d'instinct plutôt que de raison, qu'il me fallait me fabriquer un temps nouveau, une horloge inédite. (...) Le tempus absoluto n'a plus de prise sur moi. (...) C'est en prison que j'ai redécouvert les deux temps, l'absolu, d'un seul bloc, et celui fragmenté de l'horloge. »

Galvanisées par l'injustice, les plumes se font d'autant plus déifiantes, insolentes. Certains

écrivains iront même jusqu'à suggérer que l'enfermement libère de la peur. Il n'y a plus rien à perdre. Ainsi les écrits de prison contiennent-ils, en « filigrane, d'innombrables pistes de résistance. « Me jeter en prison était dans vos cordes ; mais aucune de vos cordes ne sera jamais assez puissante pour m'y retenir. Je suis écrivain. Je ne suis ni là où je suis, ni là où je ne suis pas. Enfermez-moi où vous voulez, je parcours encore le monde avec les ailes de l'imagination », conclut Ahmet Altan depuis sa cellule. Au lecteur de creuser ces pistes, au fil des pages.

Le Monde

13 juillet 2020

Par Jean-François Chapelle

## Sainte-Sophie redevient une mosquée

La décision du président turc, attendue depuis des années par les milieux religieux et nationalistes, suit l'invalidation par la justice du décret de 1934 qui avait transformé l'édifice byzantin en musée.

Le 24 novembre 1934, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, le fondateur de la jeune République turque, versait la basilique-mosquée de Sainte-Sophie au pot commun de l'humanité, en décrétant sa transformation en musée. Quatre-vingt-six ans plus tard, vendredi 10 juillet 2020, le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan a rendu le joyau d'Istanbul au culte musulman, pour le plus grand bonheur des franges les plus religieuses de son électorat et de ses alliés d'extrême droite.

Saisi par une association menant depuis une quinzaine d'années un combat pour le retour à l'islam de tous les lieux de culte musulmans déconsa-

crés pendant les premières décennies de la république laïque, le Conseil d'Etat a annoncé vendredi qu'il invalidait le décret signé par Atatürk au motif que Sainte-Sophie, devenue une mosquée après la prise de Constantinople par Mehmet le Conquérant, en 1453, ne pouvait pas être utilisée à d'autres fins que celle qui lui avait été assignée par le sultan.

Dans l'heure suivante, le Journal officiel a publié la décision prise par M. Erdogan de transférer Sainte-Sophie, jusque-là gérée par le ministère de la culture et du tourisme, à la direction des affaires religieuses, et de rouvrir l'édifice à la prière. En soirée, le chef d'Etat islamo-conservateur a défendu avec flamme le retour à l'islam du monument dans une adresse télévisée à la nation.



Des musulmans prient devant Sainte-Sophie, le 10 juillet à Istanbul. OZAN KOSE / AFP

« Aujourd'hui, la Turquie s'est débarrassée d'une honte. Sainte-Sophie vit à nouveau une de ses résurrections, comme elle en a déjà connu plusieurs. La résurrection de Sainte-Sophie est annonciatrice de la libération de la mosquée Al-Aqsa », à Jérusalem, a déclaré le président turc. «

Elle signifie que le peuple turc, les musulmans et toute l'humanité ont de nouvelles choses à dire au monde. »

### « Provocation pour l'héritage culturel mondial »

M. Erdogan a indiqué que la première prière sous la haute

coupole de l'édifice aurait lieu le vendredi 24 juillet. Il a assuré que les touristes pourraient continuer de visiter le site, mais désormais gratuitement.

Le président est en revanche resté muet sur le sort qu'il entendait réserver aux mosaïques de Sainte-Sophie, recouvertes d'un enduit pendant les cinq siècles de son utilisation comme mosquée à l'ère ottomane. A Trabzon, ville de l'est du pays située sur la mer Noire, une autre église du même nom a été rendue en 2013 au culte musulman après l'installation d'un ensemble de paravents et d'écrans dressés afin de cacher les fresques byzantines.

Sur le parvis de Sainte-Sophie, la décision présidentielle a été accueillie avec allégresse par quelques centaines de personnes, qui ont scandé en cœur « Dieu est grand » avant de se recueillir pour la prière du soir. Elle a en revanche été critiquée par plusieurs institutions et capitales, notamment dans le monde orthodoxe, où l'ancienne basilique du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, lieu du couronnement des empereurs byzantins, compte comme un centre spirituel de première importance.

« C'est une provocation envers le monde civilisé, a dénoncé, quelques minutes après l'annonce, la ministre grecque de la culture Lina Mendoni. Le nationalisme dont fait preuve le président Erdogan ramène son pays six siècles en arrière. » Le ministre grec des affaires étrangères, Nikos Dendias, a lui aussi réagi à chaud sur Twitter en désignant cette action du régime turc comme une « provocation pour le patrimoine culturel mondial ».

### Fortes tensions entre Athènes et Ankara

« La Grèce condamne avec la plus grande fermeté la décision de la Turquie. (...) Non seulement cela va impacter les

relations entre la Grèce et la Turquie mais aussi celles de cette dernière avec l'Union européenne, l'Unesco et toute la communauté mondiale », a pour sa part commenté le premier ministre grec Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

La décision turque survient dans un contexte de fortes tensions entre Athènes et Ankara sur l'exploitation des ressources en hydrocarbures de la Méditerranée orientale et la gestion de la question migratoire, la Turquie ayant encouragé cet hiver des milliers de migrants à traverser la frontière grecque.

Le primat de l'orthodoxie, le patriarche œcuménique de Constantinople Bartholomée I<sup>er</sup>, avait défini le mois dernier le musée de Sainte-Sophie comme un « symbole de la rencontre, de la solidarité et de la compréhension mutuelle entre le christianisme et l'islam ». Le transformer en mosquée « pourrait dresser des millions de chrétiens dans le monde contre l'islam », avait-il prévenu. La police grecque était sur le pont vendredi soir pour protéger les représentations turques en Grèce.

La décision a également été déplorée à Moscou. « Nous constatons que l'inquiétude des millions de chrétiens n'a pas été entendue », a réagi le porte-parole de l'Eglise russe, Vladimir Legoïda. Mercredi, le chef de la diplomatie américaine, Mike Pompeo, avait exhorté la Turquie « à continuer à conserver Sainte-Sophie comme musée, en tant qu'illustration de leur engagement à respecter les traditions culturelles et la riche histoire qui ont façonné la république turque, et à assurer qu'elle demeure ouverte à tous ».

L'Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la



Le président turc Tayyip Erdogan, adresse un message télévisé à la nation, le 10 juillet à Ankara, avec une photo de Sainte-Sophie en arrière-plan. PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE / REUTERS

science et la culture (Unesco), qui compte Sainte-Sophie sur ses listes du Patrimoine mondial de l'humanité, a indiqué dans un communiqué qu'elle « regrette vivement la décision des autorités turques, prise sans dialogue préalable, de modifier le statut » de la basilique-musée.

### L'avènement d'un « Deuxième Conquérant »

Le président turc a cependant prévenu, vendredi soir, que les récriminations n'infléchiraient pas sa détermination, l'usage que la Turquie fait de Sainte-Sophie « relevant de ses droits souverains ». La reconversion de l'édifice en mosquée est un cheval de bataille de l'islam politique turc, dont est issu le chef de l'Etat, depuis plusieurs décennies.

En 1967 déjà, l'Union nationale des étudiants turcs (MTTB), une organisation nationaliste et islamiste dans laquelle M. Erdogan a fait ses classes politiques, avait investi le monument pour y organiser une prière collective. Dans son adresse télévisée, il a aussi cité un de ses auteurs favoris, l'intellectuel conservateur Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, annonçant l'avènement d'un « Deuxième Conquérant » qui

rendrait Sainte-Sophie à l'islam. « Ce jour est arrivé », a-t-il ajouté avec émotion.

« Il ne faut pas réduire cette décision à l'islamisme du parti présidentiel », tempère toutefois le chercheur Jean-François Pérouse, ex-directeur de l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes (IFEA) d'Istanbul. « Il y a aussi une temporalité plus récente à l'œuvre, liée à la grande alliance entre ce parti et l'extrême droite, qui est plus vigilante sur ces questions », commente-t-il.

En perte de vitesse depuis 2015, le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) du président Erdogan a conclu, pour se maintenir au pouvoir, une alliance avec le Parti de l'action nationaliste (MHP), une formation plus laïque que religieuse, qui a conduit Ankara à faire siens les thèmes privilégiés de l'extrême droite : fermeté, voire bellicisme dans la conduite des affaires étrangères et exaltation de l'identité islamo-turque sur la scène nationale. D'où la volonté portée par Erdogan d'une renaissance d'inspiration « néo-ottomane », qu'incarne à merveille la reconversion de Sainte-Sophie.

July 13, 2020

By David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Ronen Bergman

## Long-Planned and Bigger Than Thought: Strike on Iran's Nuclear Program

Some officials say that a joint American-Israeli strategy is evolving — some might argue regressing — to a series of short-of-war clandestine strikes.

As Iran's center for advanced nuclear centrifuges lies in charred ruins after an explosion, apparently engineered by Israel, the long-simmering conflict between the United States and Tehran appears to be escalating into a potentially dangerous phase likely to play out during the American presidential election campaign.

New satellite photographs over the stricken facility at Natanz show far more extensive damage than was clear last week. Two intelligence officials, updated with the damage assessment for the Natanz site recently compiled by the United States and Israel, said it could take the Iranians up to two years to return their nuclear program to the place it was just before the explosion. An authoritative public study estimates it will be a year or more until Iran's centrifuge production capacity recovers.

Another major explosion hit the country early Friday morning, lighting up the sky in a wealthy area of Tehran. It was still unexplained — but appeared to come from the direction of a missile base. If it proves to have been another attack, it will further shake the Iranians by demonstrating, yet again, that even their best-guarded nuclear and missile facilities have been infiltrated.

Although Iran has said little of substance about the explo-



Members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps during a military parade in Tehran last year. Credit...Iranian Presidency, via Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

sions, Western officials anticipate some type of retaliation, perhaps against American or allied forces in Iraq, perhaps a renewal of cyberattacks. In the past, those have been directed against American financial institutions, a major Las Vegas casino and a dam in the New York suburbs or, more recently, the water supply system in Israel, which its government considers "critical infrastructure."

Officials familiar with the explosion at Natanz compared its complexity to the sophisticated Stuxnet cyberattack on Iranian nuclear facilities a decade ago, which had been planned for more than a year. In the case of last week's episode, the primary theory is that an explosive device was planted in the heavily-guarded facility, perhaps near a gas line. But some experts have also floated the possibility that a cyberattack was used to trigger the gas supply.

Some officials said that a joint

American-Israeli strategy was evolving — some might argue regressing — to a series of short-of-war clandestine strikes, aimed at taking out the most prominent generals of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and setting back Iran's nuclear facilities.

The closest the administration has come to describing its strategy of more aggressive pushback came in comments last month from Brian H. Hook, the State Department's special envoy for Iran. "We have seen historically," he concluded, "that timidity and weakness invites more Iranian aggression."

The next move may be a confrontation over four tankers, now making their way to Venezuela, which the United States has vowed will not be allowed to deliver their cargo of Iranian oil in violation of United States sanctions.

The emerging approach is risky, analysts warn, one that

over the long term may largely serve to drive Iran's nuclear program further underground, and thus make it harder to detect.

But in the short term, American and Israeli officials are betting that Iran will limit its retaliation, as it did after an American drone in January killed Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, one of Iran's most important commanders.

While some American officials expressed fears that the killing of General Suleimani would lead Iran to initiate a war against the United States, the C.I.A. director, Gina Haspel, reassured them that the Iranians would settle on limited missile attacks against American targets in Iraq — which so far has turned out to be correct. Iran's limited response could be an incentive for further operations against it.

In addition, some American and Israeli officials, and international security analysts, say that Iran may believe that President Trump will lose the November election and that his presumptive Democratic rival, Joseph R. Biden Jr., will want to resurrect some form of the negotiated settlement that the Obama administration reached with Tehran five years ago next week.

"Today, if you are Iran, why compromise with an administration which may only have a few months left?" asked Karim Sadjadpour, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

But in the short term, he noted, the new offensive has put Iran

under “extreme internal and external pressure,” as its oil exports continue to be squeezed and its efforts to revive the nuclear program, retribution for Mr. Trump’s decision in May 2018 to abandon the 2015 accord, falter amid sabotage.

“Think about it,” he said. “Geographically, Iran is greater in size than Germany, France and the United Kingdom combined. But they have never managed to pursue a clandestine nuclear program without getting caught, or protected their program from sabotage. Are there defectors or traitors inside the system?”

When the Mossad raided a warehouse in Tehran in January 2018, and emerged with tens of thousands of pages of nuclear-weapons planning documents dating back nearly two decades, it clearly had the help of insiders. The killing of General Suleimani, the mastermind of Iran’s actions in Iraq and attacks on Americans — which was also based on intelligence, much of it given by live agents — was perhaps Mr. Trump’s most aggressive military move as president.

The Natanz explosion occurred inside the Iran Centrifuge Assembly Center, where the country was building its most advanced machines, designed to produce far more nuclear fuel, far faster, than the old machines used until Iran dismantled most of its facilities in the 2015 accord.

While research on those machines was permitted under the agreement, they could not be deployed for years — and Iran’s crash effort to mass produce them was an ambitious effort to show that it could respond to Mr. Trump’s rejection of the deal by speeding up.

A study by the Institute for Science and International Security published Wednesday concluded that while the explosion “does not eliminate Iran’s ability to deploy advanced centrifuges,” it was “a major set-



A satellite image of the destruction at Natanz, as seen on July 4. Credit...via Institute for Science and International Security

back” that would cost Iran years of development.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who always leaps at any opportunity to denounce the Iranian government, twice declined on Wednesday to discuss the issue at a news conference.

But it is hardly a secret inside the State Department that Mr. Pompeo, who served as Mr. Trump’s first C.I.A. director, developed a close relationship with Yossi Cohen, the director of the Mossad, Israel’s external spy service. The two men talk often, making it difficult to believe that Mr. Pompeo had no idea about what was coming, if indeed it was an Israeli operation.

Just as the strike was happening, Mr. Cohen’s term was extended for six months by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, interpreted by many as a sign of things to come, since Mr. Cohen is a veteran of Iran operations. He was a key player in the sophisticated series of cyberstrikes known as Olympic Games that took out nearly 1,000 operating centrifuges at Natanz — near the site of last week’s explosion and fire — a decade ago. And as chief of Mossad, he directed the covert seizure of the secret nuclear archive.

In some way it feels a bit like a decade ago, when the George W. Bush administration handed off the cyberoperations to the Obama administration, part of a broad covert effort to cripple Iran’s nuclear program. At the same time, the Israelis were killing Iranian scientists. The idea was not only to slow the program, but also to turn the Iranians against one another, constantly suspecting that there were spies in their midst.

This time, there are several new elements.

Mr. Trump is an unpredictable player, who has often threatened Iran — and just as often pulled back from striking it. And the Iranian leaders who negotiated the 2015 nuclear deal with President Barack Obama are on the ropes in Tehran, assailed for having given away too much, only to discover that Washington was reimposing sanctions.

At the White House, Mr. Trump’s top national security advisers are hardly of one mind over when and how to confront Iran.

Military leaders, including Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper and Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have been wary of a sharp military escalation, warn-

ing it could further destabilize the Middle East when Mr. Trump has said he hopes to reduce the number of American troops in the region.

Pentagon officials nervously cited at least two potential flash points that could drag American forces into a military clash with Iran or Iranian-backed proxies in the Persian Gulf region.

One focuses on those oil tankers. Justice Department and F.B.I. officials announced last week that they had used a counterterrorism statute to obtain a warrant to seize Iranian oil products aboard the four tankers bound for Venezuela in violation of American sanctions. Investigators determined that the fuel cargo aboard the Greek-owned ships were assets of Iran’s Guards Corps, which the Trump administration last year designated as a terrorist organization. General Suleimani was commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Administration officials said this week that the State, Justice and Treasury Departments were seeking to work with the Greek government to halt the shipments, and have the fuel be offloaded. Iran’s mission to the United Nations immediately declared any such seizure would amount to “piracy.”

Two of the ships are believed to be in the Aegean Sea. But the two others are steaming in the Gulf of Oman, off the coast of Iran, and are under close surveillance, an American military official said.

Some American officials worry that if the two tankers comply with the U.S. court order to give up the fuel, Iranian naval forces could challenge the transfer to another ship. It is not entirely clear what United States Navy warships in the area would do if that happened.

Another potential flash point is in Iraq, where Iranian-backed militia are believed to be re-



sponsible for a steadily increasing series of rocket attacks at the American Embassy in Baghdad and on American and coalition forces near Baghdad's international airport.

After General Suleimani's death, Tehran and Washington traded modest strikes in March. But then, tensions appeared to ease — until early June.

"We're seeing a beginning of a spike in unprovoked rocket attacks on Iraqi bases that host U.S. forces in Iraq," Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., the head of the military's Central Command, said last month.

For now, the latest rocket attacks have been more harassing than harmful.

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July 13, 2020

## Fifth Turkish soldier killed in Kurdistan Region Claw-Tiger operation: defense ministry

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — A fifth Turkish soldier has been killed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Turkey's defence ministry announced in a statement late on Sunday night, almost a month since Ankara began air and ground operations against alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) sites in the area.

Though the statement did not provide a location of death, the soldier was part of Turkey's Operation Claw-Tiger ground offensive, taking place in the Haftanin area of the Kurdistan Region.

The soldier was killed on July 12 and died after hospitalisation, the statement read. Three members of the PKK were "neutralised" in the clashes, it added. Ankara uses the term "neutralised" to denote the killing, injury or capture of its enemy forces.



Smoke rises after Turkish bombardment of Zakho district on July 1, 2020. Photo: Rudaw

Turkey launch air offensive Operation Claw-Eagle on June 15, with the stated aim of targeting PKK bases in the Kurdistan Region. It launched commando-led ground offensive Operation Claw-Tiger in Haftanin two days later. At least five civilians in the Kurdistan Region have been killed by Turkish airstrikes so far.

The People's Defence Forces - the PKK military wing known by its Kurdish acronym, HPG - announced Sunday that it had killed 16 Turkish soldiers in Haftanin in the space of three days. On Sunday alone, 13 Turkish soldiers were "punished", as the HPG statement termed their killing.

Turkey has conducted airs-

trikes and ground operations against the PKK within Iraq's borders for years, accusing the governments of federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of failing to take adequate measures against the group.

Both Erbil and Baghdad have repeatedly called on Ankara to halt its attacks and the violation of its sovereignty, and have demanded the PKK withdraw from their territory.

Iraqi security analyst Husham al-Hashimi last month put the number of PKK fighters in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, at between 8,500 and 10,000, distributed across 81 points and bases.

Ankara said last week that its forces have established almost 40 "military points" in the Kurdistan Region - including one each in the cities of Erbil, Duhok, Soran and Zakho. The map was later deleted.

## L'aide humanitaire de l'ONU pour la Syrie contrainte d'arriver par un seul point de passage

**S**ur pression de la Russie, et après plusieurs jours de tractations, le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies a réduit encore l'accès des convois d'aide extérieure vers le territoire syrien.

A l'ONU, la Russie a remporté une victoire pour son allié Bachar Al-Assad samedi 11 juillet, à l'issue d'une semaine de négociations, forçant le Conseil de sécurité à limiter les livraisons d'aide humanitaire dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie, tenu par les rebelles. Pourtant, plusieurs diplomates des Nations unies, différents ONG, et la grande majorité du Conseil lui-même, avaient répété que les deux points de passage à ce jour situés sur la frontière turco-syrienne étaient essentiels pour apporter le soutien dont ont besoin les 4,3 millions de réfugiés – et ce, alors qu'un premier cas de Covid-19 aurait été dépisté dans la région.

Mais pour la deuxième fois de l'année, Moscou n'a absolument pas transigé, et continue à expliquer que l'aide humanitaire doit transiter par Damas, pour « respecter sa souveraineté ». En janvier déjà, sous pression russe, le Conseil avait été contraint de revoir le dispositif onusien à la baisse, passant de quatre points de passage, avec la Turquie, à deux.

### Des mères donnent de l'herbe à leurs enfants

Le Conseil a été briefé sur l'état catastrophique de la situation. « Les mères expliquent qu'elles ne trouvent ni nourriture ni médicaments dans les marchés, et qu'elles dépendent entièrement des

paquets de nourritures distribués à la frontière, a exposé le secrétaire général adjoint des Nations unies chargé des affaires humanitaires (OCHA), Mark Lowcock, lundi 29 juin, lors d'un compte rendu régulier. Certaines cuisinent de l'herbe pour agrémenter les portions de nourriture. Tel est le niveau de désespoir. » Mark Lowcock avait alors émis le souhait que le mécanisme onusien conserve les deux points de passage à la frontière turque, et qu'on réactive également le point de Yaroubiya à la frontière syro-irakienne, pour pouvoir faire face à une éventuelle progression de la pandémie.

Cette semaine, une majorité écrasante du Conseil (13 membres sur 15) a voté deux fois le maintien de ce système de points de passage transfrontaliers, mais la Russie, ainsi que la Chine, ont opposé leur veto à deux textes successifs – les 15e et 16e vetos russes depuis le début du conflit syrien, en 2011. Les points de Bab Al-Hawa (à proximité d'Idlib) et de Bab Al-Salamah (près d'Alep) ont justement dû être fermés quelques heures samedi 11 juillet, faute d'avoir été de nouveau autorisés à temps par les diplomates : les treize membres du Conseil en faveur d'un dispositif maximal ont osé risquer la fermeture du dispositif quelques heures, le temps de tenter une ultime négociation. Le dernier texte, voté par 12 membres du Conseil, réinstalle Bab Al-Hawa, reconduit pour un an.

« **Nous restons engagés auprès des victimes** »



Le point de passage de Bab Al-Hawa, en juillet 2019. AAREF WATAD / AFP

Ironiquement, cette bataille autour de la résolution 2504 intervient onze jours à peine après le vote du texte établissant une trêve humanitaire mondiale de quatre-vingt-dix jours en raison de la pandémie de Covid-19. « Nous avons finalement proposé un compromis pour préserver le mécanisme transfrontalier onusien, a expliqué le ministre allemand des affaires étrangères, Heiko Maas, souvent en contact direct avec Moscou lors de ces négociations. Mais nous

sommes convaincus que plus de points sont nécessaires. Nous restons engagés auprès des victimes de la guerre en Syrie. » Le secrétaire général, Antonio Guterres, a rappelé qu'il fallait assurer un accès à l'aide, selon le droit international humanitaire. « L'ONU et les Etats membres doivent explorer de nouveaux acheminements pour assurer que le plus d'aide possible atteignent ceux qui en ont besoin, au nord-est et au nord-ouest du pays », a déclaré, à l'issue du vote,



Des Syriens manifestent contre la politique russe visant à faire fermer les points de passage permettant d'acheminer l'aide humanitaire, le 10 juillet à Idlib. ABDULAZIZ KETAZ / AFP

Louis Charbonneau, directeur de Human Rights Watch (HRW) pour l'ONU.

« Les négociateurs auraient pu offrir d'autres garanties aux Russes pour tenter un compromis, peut-être via une médiation turque », avance un observateur. Difficile de savoir si l'Allemagne et la Belgique auraient pu contourner la volonté de la Russie et de son veto.

### La volonté de ménager la Russie

D'autant que les corédacteurs

du texte ont essayé au contraire de la ménager : alors qu'ils avaient le projet de demander la réouverture du troisième point de Yaroubiya, ils ont préféré uniquement demander le simple renouvellement des deux points encore en activité la semaine dernière, pour que la Russie ne se sente pas « provoquée ». « L'Allemagne et la Belgique ont essayé de montrer du doigt la Russie le moins directement possible, analyse Richard Gowan, directeur ONU d'International Crisis Group. En janvier, elles l'avaient attaquée

frontalement, et avaient dû capituler. » Les corédacteurs du texte ont dû se défendre sur un autre front également : diplomates russes et chinois ont tenté à plusieurs reprises de faire inscrire dans le texte que les sanctions américaines et européennes empêchaient un bon accès à l'aide humanitaire. Le Conseil ne les a pas laissés faire.

Depuis janvier, 8 486 camions ont traversé la frontière turque pour apporter de l'aide à 4,3 millions de personnes dans le nord-ouest, en grande majorité

des personnes déplacées. A en croire un responsable d'ONG souhaitant rester anonyme, et qui travaille régulièrement avec le régime de Bachar Al-Assad, « pour l'instant, le transit exclusif par Damas ne fonctionne pas du tout. » « Certains chuchotent qu'un "gentleman agreement" [accord informel] a été passé au cas où l'épidémie de Covid-19 s'étendrait en Syrie – ce qui n'est pour l'instant pas le cas, confie l'observateur. Ils pensent pouvoir alors redemander l'ouverture de Bab Al-Salamah en urgence. »



July 15, 2020  
By Gonul Tol, Ayca Alemdaroglu

## Turkey's Generation Z Turns Against Erdogan

The Turkish leader tried to mold a generation of pious followers. Instead, the country's youth could bring about his final defeat.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's online address to students on June 26 was the latest sign that his efforts to shape Turkey's young generation in his image have failed. Thousands of students joining the YouTube livestream disliked the video and used the comments section to criticize Erdogan and tell him that he wouldn't get their vote. They were justifiably frustrated that the government had shifted the date of this year's university entrance exam back and forth several times over the past few months, a result of poor pandemic-related planning. But in the days that followed, the students' frustration turned into general anger at Erdogan. The video has received 422,000 dislikes and the hashtag #OyMoy-Yok—no votes for

you—became a trending topic on Turkish Twitter. Not only did Erdogan's office disable the video's comments, but shortly afterward, Erdogan announced plans for new regulations to control social-media platforms or shut them down entirely.

The students were frustrated at the government's handling of this year's university entrance exam—but in the days that followed, their frustration turned into general anger at Erdogan.

A whole generation of Turkish youth has now grown up under Erdogan—first as prime minister, then as president. With half of the country's population below the age of 32, what young people think has significant political ramifications. No one seems to know this better than Erdogan: Beginning in 2012, he embarked on a project to raise "pious generations." His main tool to accomplish this has been the country's education system, including by pouring

billions of dollars into religious education. He dramatically increased the number of imam hatip secondary schools, which were originally founded by the state as vocational institutions to train young men to become imams and preachers, and extended this system to lower age groups. At regular public schools, he increased the number of hours dedicated to religious education and banned the teaching of evolution from the curriculum.

But religious schools are underperforming and have little appeal among Turkish youth. A recent poll found that religiosity is much lower in the younger generation, with far fewer describing themselves as "religiously conservative" than society as a whole. Growing numbers of young people—even students at imam hatip schools—are rejecting Islam altogether. A 2018 workshop organized by the Ministry of National Education in the tradi-

tionally conservative Anatolian town of Konya found that students in imam hatip schools are questioning or abandoning Islam in growing numbers. Many now consider themselves deists—people who believe in a divine being but don't adhere to the tenets of Islam. Pro-Erdogan media portray deism as just another Western conspiracy, but for young people, disillusionment with religion and the government goes hand in hand. Under Erdogan, his critics say, Islam has been stripped of its moral core and instrumentalized to cover up corruption and legitimize his one-man rule. This pushes young people to search for other sources of moral authority.

Even conservative parents worry that the heavy dose of religious instruction in secondary schools prevents their children from learning enough math, science, and technology to successfully compete in university exams.

Young people's rejection of Erdogan's brand of Islamic conservatism also has to do with the poor quality of education as religion displaces standard subjects.

Growing concern about the quality of education is about more than religion, however. It also has to do with Erdogan's increasing interference in the university system. Following the introduction of the presidential system in 2018, Erdogan now has the sole authority to appoint the heads of all public and private universities. Many of these have been political loyalists with poor academic qualifications.

The quality of education has become one of the top worries among young Turks, many of whom believe that they can only get a good education in a Western country. Even as the share of high school graduates going on to higher education has increased, young people doubt that their degree will land them a decent job. (Youth unemployment hit a record 27 percent last year.) Compounding their worries is the spread of nepotism under Erdogan. A large majority of Turks now believe that it isn't

what you know but who you know that will land you a job. Even those who support Erdogan complain about the lack of merit-based hiring in both the public and private sectors.

Feeding the youth revolt against Erdogan is the worry about increasing authoritarianism and the curtailment of freedoms. According to a 2018 poll, a large majority values freedom of expression, and young Turks are more tolerant toward different ethnic and religious groups and toward homosexuality than a similar age group polled 10 years previously. The number of respondents who said political parties can be banned if necessary has also declined significantly in the past few years. An overwhelming majority of the new generation that has grown up under Erdogan wants to move abroad in search of freedom and opportunity.

If Erdogan has largely failed to mold the new generation to support him, his efforts were not wasted entirely. Since 2015, he has built his electoral strategy on an anti-Kurdish platform, undoing his previous efforts at reconciliation with Turkey's largest ethnic and linguistic minority.

Erdogan has criminalized the Kurdish opposition, thrown the democratically elected members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party in jail, and replaced the party's mayors with Erdogan-appointed trustees. At the same time, he has promoted an increasingly anti-Western Turkish nationalism that seeks to expand Turkish power in the region. Nationalist and anti-Kurdish sentiment has found strong support among both secular and conservative youth, making them less tolerant toward the Kurds' demands for equality. Kurdish youth holds similarly skeptical attitudes vis-à-vis ethnic Turks. Kurds say they avoid talking about politics with their Turkish friends, and the number of intermarriages has declined.

Erdogan's nationalism has also turned to "civilization" rhetoric, particularly since 2012. The country's Muslim roots and imperial Ottoman past are often glorified. These efforts seem to have paid off: Many young people now identify themselves as part of the Middle East, unlike previous generations under more secular, Western-oriented governments. But their hopes

and aspirations tell a different story. They want to get a secular education and live in a modern, free, and democratic country. They prefer living in Europe over the Middle East. More than 70 percent of young people said they would prefer to live in Switzerland than Saudi Arabia, even if it meant making do with a monthly salary of \$5,000 instead of \$10,000.

They have watched him morph from a dynamic leader to an exhausted autocrat struggling to govern.

Turkey's youths have known nothing but Erdogan's leadership. They have watched him morph from a dynamic leader building a more democratic, prosperous, and Western-oriented Turkey to an exhausted autocrat struggling to govern. Changing the date of the university entrance exam, on which so much in a young person's life depends, was just the latest indication that Erdogan was failing them. As they now say "no votes for you," Erdogan has not only failed to raise a generation of supporters, but may have raised the generation that will finally defeat him.



July 15, 2020  
By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Kurdish language teacher sentenced to 10 years in prison in Iran

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Kurdish civil society activist and teacher Zahra Mohammadi was sentenced on Tuesday to 10 years in jail, local Kurdish human rights organization Hengaw reported.

Mohammadi is the director of the Nojin Cultural Association, whose activities include teaching the Kurdish language, literature, and various civil society activities.

According to Hengaw, the

Nojin Cultural Association is active in Iran's Kurdistan province in such areas as the capital city of Sanandaj (Sine) and other towns and villages such as Dewlan, Bane, Saqqez, and Kamyaran.

Iran secret service arrested Mohammadi on May 23, 2019, in her hometown of Sine on accusations she was working with a Kurdish opposition party. She was released on bail on Dec. 2, 2019, after six months in prison.

Mohammadi was also charged with national security offenses “solely in connection with her work empowering marginalized members of Iran’s Kurdish minority,” including through teaching the Kurdish language, Amnesty International said last year.

However, on Tuesday, she received news through her lawyer of her 10-year prison sentence.

“The verdict was imposed by the 1st branch of the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj on charges that Zahra Mohammadi had founded an anti-state group,” a Hengaw report stated.

“Apart from the cultural organization Nojin, in whose organization Zahra Mohammadi was involved seven years ago and in which she is active as a board member,” it added, “there are no other organizations or groups that can be associated with Zahra Mohammadi.”

According to Amnesty International’s annual human rights review published in February, ethnic minorities in Iran, including Kurds, continue to face “entrenched discrimination, curtailing their access to education, employment, and adequate housing.”

The report added that members of minority groups who spoke out against violations of their rights faced arbitrary arrest, torture, unfair trials, and imprisonment. There are over 12 million Kurds who live in Iran and form around 15 to 17 percent of the population.

Although Kurdish culture, such as dress and music, is allowed and Kurdish is used in some broadcasts and publications, the Kurdish minority continues to suffer deep-rooted discrimination.

Moreover, the Persian language is the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education in Iran.



Activist and language teacher Zahra Mohammadi is seen with family members. (Photo: Social Media)

Kurdish is not taught in schools.

“The discrimination policies of the Iranian regime against the Kurdish minority has taken place since their establishment in 1979,” Yousif Ismael, Director of Policy and Media at the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), told Kurdistan 24.

“Whether you are a civilian, environmental, or political activist,

you will face accusations of ‘disruption of the national security’ or ‘membership of an opposition Kurdish party,’” Ismael added. “Sadly, Zahra Mohammadi is the latest victim of the regime.”

Ismael called on the United Nations, the United States, and the international community “to break the silence and pressure Iran to stop the repression against the Kurds.”



July 15, 2020  
By Laurie Mylroie

## Trump, Erdogan discuss bilateral trade, regional conflicts

**W**ASHINGTON DC (Kurdistan 24) – US President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone on Tuesday.

According to a White House statement of their conversation, the two leaders “discussed positive trade issues between the United States and Turkey,” and they “underscored

our belief in the need for a negotiated settlement of regional issues.”

The White House provided no further details, but according to Turkish media, their conversation focused on the situation in Libya, in addition to a “bilateral trade target of \$100 billion.”

### No CAATSA Sanctions?

Nothing was said about CAATSA (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) sanctions, which the US is supposed to impose on Turkey for its purchase of the Russian air defense system, the S-400.

The CAATSA law, passed by Congress in 2017, requires the US to impose sanctions on parties engaged in a “signifi-

cant transaction” with Russia’s “defense or intelligence sectors.”

Although the S-400 began to arrive in Turkey last summer, and Turkish air force personnel have been trained on the missile system, Trump has been averse to imposing sanctions on Turkey and, so far, has not moved on the issue.

Turkey originally said it would activate the S-400 missile system in April. But three months later, that has yet to happen, providing Trump with a way to avoid taking punitive measures against Turkey.

### Regional Conflicts: Syria, Russia, and Strengthening the Regime

The day before his discussion with Trump, Erdogan spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin about what were, at least in part, similar issues.

According to reports of their conversation in the Turkish and Russian media, the two leaders discussed the conflicts in Libya and Syria.

"Regional developments, especially in Syria and Libya were highlighted during their discussion," Turkey's semi-official Daily Sabah reported.

Turkey and Russia back opposing sides in both countries, with Turkey backing Bashar al-Assad's opponents in Syria and the UN-recognized government in Libya. Russia supports the opposite parties.

Syria is far more important to Moscow than Libya, and Russia's official TASS news agency explained "emphasis was placed" on the "importance of stepping up efforts to assist the Syrian settlement, including the Astana format," which Russia has developed as an alternative forum to the UN-sponsored talks on a political settlement in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254, which calls for "free and fair elections" to determine Syria's future.

The implementation of UNSCR 2254 would end the Assad regime. The Astana format, however, would preserve it, and Moscow appears fixed on keeping the regime, a long-time ally, in power.

Just last week, Moscow succeeded in restricting access for UN humanitarian aid to those



US President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan deliver a joint press conference at the White House in Washington, DC, Nov. 13, 2019. (Photo: Archive)

areas of Syria not under regime control to just one border crossing—Bab al-Hawa, which supplies the Idlib area. Originally, the UN aid program used four crossings, including al-Yarubiyah, which provided access from Iraq to northeast Syria, which is under the control of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES.)

However, al-Yarubiyah and another border crossing in the south, from Jordan, were closed, when the aid program was renewed in January. A third crossing, Bab al-Salam, from Turkey, which had supplied the Aleppo area, was closed at Russian insistence earlier this month.

The Russian position, which was backed by China and Iran, is that all aid should go through Damascus, which serves to increase the regime's leverage over those areas.

Neither the Turkish nor US account of the discussion between Trump and Erdogan mentioned Syria, and it may well be that it did not arise in their exchange.

### Regional Conflicts: Libya and avoiding a Turkish-Egyptian confrontation

While Turkey backs the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, Russia backs its challenger in the east, the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army, led by Khalifa Haftar, a senior military officer under Muammar Gadhafi, who helped to overthrow the Libyan dictator in 2011.

In addition to Russia, Haftar is supported by Egypt, France, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE.)

Earlier this year, Turkey began to intervene militarily in Libya in support of the GNA, which was under siege from Haftar's forces. In addition to its own forces, Turkey flew Syrian militia fighters, whom it had recruited and backed in that country's civil war, to Libya to fight on behalf of the GNA.

Last month, the tide turned, as a result of the Turkish intervention. The GNA, Turkey, and its Syrian militias now threaten Libya's eastern oil-rich region. The president of neighboring Egypt, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, responded in late June by warning that the area constituted a "red-line," which, if crossed, could trigger an Egyptian intervention.

On Monday, the Tobruk-based Libyan parliament (there is

another in Tripoli) called on Egypt to intervene to block its rivals' advance.

The deputy speaker of the Egyptian parliament, Soliman Wahdan, responded on Tuesday, hailing the call from the Libyan parliament as "a historic decision aimed at allowing the Egyptian armed forces to stand up to Turkish aggression."

"In the name of all Egyptian MPs," Wahdan continued, "we support the Egyptian armed forces taking all the measures necessary to preserve the national security of Egypt and neighboring Libya from any aggression."

The US does not want to see a conflict between Turkey and Egypt, both of which it considers allies, and it is likely that in his discussion with Erdogan, Trump sought to defuse tensions, while promoting negotiations.

The Libyan conflict also arose in Erdogan's discussion with Putin. According to TASS, the two presidents "agreed to activate political-diplomatic efforts as soon as possible to end the Libyan conflict," in accord with UNSCR 2510.

## L'Iran a exécuté deux autres prisonniers politiques kurdes

**I**RAN / ROJHILAT – En 2018, les Kurdes représentaient 28 % des personnes exécutées en Iran, alors qu'ils ne constituent qu'environ 10 % de la population. L'année 2020 risque d'être pire.

L'Iran a exécuté le 14 juillet les prisonniers politiques kurdes Diako Rasoulzadeh et Saber Cheikh Abdollah, accusés de « guerre contre Dieu », à la prison d'Oroumieh. Les deux hommes avaient été arrêtés en 2013 et après une année sous la torture dans les services du renseignement de la ville de Mahabad, ils avaient été condamnés à mort.

Le Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) a confirmé mardi que Saber Sheikh Abdullah et Diako Rasoulzadeh avaient été exécutés plus tôt dans la matinée.

Reconnus coupables en 2017 de « moharebeh » ou de guerre contre Dieu, Abdullah et Rasoulzadeh ont été accusés

d'appartenance au parti Komala, un groupe d'opposition armé kurde, et d'orchestration d'un attentat à la bombe en 2010 à Mahabad. Les avocats ont fait valoir que les accusations étaient fondées sur des aveux contraints obtenus par la torture.

Les deux prisonniers ont été arrêtés par les forces de sécurité à leur domicile de Mahabad en mars 2014, puis transférés au centre de détention du renseignement à Urmia.

Ils ont été condamnés à mort avec Hossein Osmani, un autre prisonnier politique, en octobre 2017 par la première branche du tribunal révolutionnaire d'Ourmia. Leurs verdicts ont par la suite été approuvés par la Cour suprême pour exécution fin octobre 2017.

Des dizaines de milliers de prisonniers politiques sont emprisonnés en Iran pour diverses accusations, dont la défense de la démocratie et la promo-



tion des droits des femmes ou des travailleurs.

Selon un rapport de juillet 2019 du Rapporteur spécial des Nations Unies sur les droits de l'homme en Iran, des groupes ethniques minoritaires, notamment des Kurdes et des Azéris, sont détenus de manière disproportionnée et plus sévèrement condamnés pour actes de dissidence politique.

À la fin du mois dernier, Amnesty International a appelé Les autorités iraniennes doivent révéler les détails entourant l'exécution secrète du prisonnier iranien kurde He-

dayat Abdollahpour et rendre son corps à sa famille, quelques jours après que des proches ont reçu son certificat de décès officiel.

Depuis la réimposition des sanctions américaines et l'intensification des tensions, les autorités iraniennes ont commencé à resserrer l'étau sur les militants syndicaux, les journalistes, les satiristes, les écologistes, les militants anti-peine de mort et les chercheurs, qui ont été détenus en masse, dont certains condamné lors de parodies de procès. (Rudaw)



15 juillet 2020

## L'Iran suspend 2 pour le bombardement du défilé de 2010 qui a tué 12

**T**éhéran, Iran (AP) – La télévision d'État iranienne rapporte que les autorités ont exécuté deux hommes reconnus coupables d'un attentat à la bombe de

2010 lors d'un défilé militaire dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran qui a tué 12 spectateurs.

La télévision d'Etat a rapporté mardi que les deux personnes,

qui avaient été pendues, étaient membres d'un réseau de bombardement qui avait été démantelé en 2013. Selon certaines informations, certaines familles des victimes ont as-

sisté à l'exécution dans la prison d'Urmia, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran.

En septembre 2010, une explosion lors d'un défilé militaire

dans la ville de Mahabad, près des frontières de l'Iran avec l'Irak et la Turquie, a fait 12 morts et 75 blessés.

Les responsables de l'époque accusaient les séparatistes kurdes de l'attaque, mais il n'était pas clair si les hommes exécutés étaient des Kurdes.

Les forces iraniennes dans la zone frontalière se sont affrontées pendant des années avec les rebelles kurdes de l'aile iranienne du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui a également des combattants basés en Turquie et en Irak.

Le groupe iranien n'a généralement pas ciblé les civils dans

sa campagne pour plus de droits pour la minorité kurde, ce qui laisse entrevoir la possibilité que la bombe ait explosé prématurément.

Les ressentiments kurdes ont augmenté ces dernières années, portés par le contrôle kurde des zones du nord de l'Irak. Dans un incident, la mort

d'une femme de ménage kurde dans un hôtel de la ville de Mahabad, dans le nord-ouest du pays, en mai 2015, a provoqué des troubles chez les Kurdes locaux, des groupes d'opposition alléguant que les forces de sécurité iraniennes y étaient pour quelque part.



July 15, 2020  
By Karwan Faidhi Dri

## Ammunition depot explodes in northeast Syria's Hasaka

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region — An ammunition depot in Syria's Hasaka city exploded late Wednesday, according to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria's (NES) interior minister.

While Kanaan Barakat, interior minister of Rojava, reported no casualties to Rudaw English earlier, local media outlet North Press Agency is currently reporting eight injuries.

A photograph of a child being treated for a head wound, said to be caused by the explosion, was shared later by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-affiliated media outlet Ronahi TV.

The explosion took place in the downtown's Meshrefeh neighborhood, according to the Rojava Information Centre.

Barakat told Rudaw English that it is not clear whether the depot belongs to Kurdish secu-



rity forces (Asayesh) or the SDF as their facilities are in close proximity.



July 15, 2020  
By Fazel Hawramy

## Iran plans to execute three protesters provoke Twitter appeal

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region - Barely a day goes by in Iran without news of an impending execution. But

Tuesday proved exceptional, culminating in a 1.2 million tweet-strong storm that demanded the execution of three

young men be ground to a halt by Iranian authorities.

"NoToExecution" trended

globally for several hours on Tuesday night as hundreds of thousands of people in Iran and across the world posted the



hashtag to raise awareness of the plight of three protesters in imminent danger of execution.

Earlier on Tuesday the Judiciary spokesperson Gholam Hossein Esmaili, while casually announcing the execution of a man charged with spying for the CIA, ended speculation about the fate of three protesters by saying that the Supreme Court has upheld the execution verdict from the Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran.

Amirhossein Moradi, 26, Saeed Tamjidi, 28 and Mohammad Rajabi, 26 were detained during the November protests when hundreds of thousands of Iranians came out across the country, calling on President Hassan Rouhani's government to reverse the overnight increase in the price of petrol from 1,000 toman to 3,000 toman. The decision sent economic shockwaves across the country where the population bears the brunt of rampant corruption, widespread economic mismanagement and increasing crippling sanctions by Washington.

"Iran's @khamenei\_ir must quash the death sentences of protesters—Amirhossein Mo-

radi, Saeed Tamjidi & Mohammad Rajabi—immediately! Their trial was unfair & they said they were subjected to torture through beatings, electric shocks and being hung upside down," Amnesty International tweeted.

Hours earlier, Iranian official news outlets announced the execution of two Kurdish political prisoners Saber Sheikh Abdullah and Diako Rasoulzadeh on charges of involvement in a deadly explosion in 2010. The prisoners rejected the charges and maintained their innocence.

Their execution came ten years after the head of IRGC ground force Mohammad Pakpour had claimed that the people behind the bombing in 2010 had been killed.

Iran is the world's second most prolific executioner after China, with 8,071 executions carried out from 2000 until 2019.

"These three men were our voice. They're silencing them NOW it's our turn to be their voice," one user Kimiya tweeted.

"Iranian lives matter too," said another user, posting hashtags



Amirhossein Moradi, 26, Saeed Tamjidi, 28 and Mohammad Rajabi, 26 are set to be executed in Iran. Photo: Amnesty International

in both Persian and English.

The protests in November started by calling on the government to halt the decision to increase the price hike but ended by calling for regime change causing panic in the corridors of power in Tehran. Tens of thousands of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Basijis, an IRGC-linked paramilitary force, launched a vicious crackdown killing somewhere between 500 to 1,500 people and incarcerated several thousand protesters in detention facilities across the country, subjecting many to torture.

NetBlocks, which monitors in-

ternet usage across the world, reported "significant" disruption to multiple networks in Iran after 5pm.

Oscar-winning Iranian film director and screenwriter Asghar Farhadi joined other artists in calling on the Iranian authorities to stop the executions.

As if the execution of two political prisoners and the imminent execution of three young men was not enough, the day ended with a judiciary announcement that a Kurdish teacher Zahra Mohammadi in the city of Sanadaj had been sentenced to ten years in prison for establishing a cultural organization deemed subversive by the authorities.

## Des archéologues français en Syrie accusés de pillage par la presse turque

**D**ans un contexte de forte dégradation des relations entre la Turquie et la France, la presse turque officielle multiplie ses attaques à l'encontre de Paris. Dernière accusation en date : des archéologues français conduiraient des fouilles dans une

région de l'est syrien sous le contrôle des forces kurdes.

La presse turque, adepte du French bashing depuis plusieurs mois en raison des tensions diplomatiques entre Ankara et Paris, affirme qu'une équipe d'archéologues

français mène secrètement depuis le début de l'année des fouilles en Syrie. L'information est rapportée en premier lieu par l'agence de presse officielle Anadolu, qui précise que ces opérations auraient lieu dans la région de Deir-Ez-Zor dans l'est du pays, et qu'elles

concerneraient les vestiges de l'ancienne cité assyrienne de Dür-Katlimmu.

Les découvertes faites sur ce site antique seraient ensuite rapatriées vers la base militaire américaine située à proximité du champ pétrolier d'al-Omar.

L'occasion pour la presse turque progouvernementale d'accuser la France de pillage : "Le vil plan des colonialistes français", titre ainsi sur son site internet Ahaber. Selon la chaîne télévisée d'information, des fouilles étaient auparavant menées sur le site par une équipe d'archéologues allemands, depuis la fin des années 1970 et jusqu'au début de la guerre en Syrie.

"200 soldats français seraient présents dans la zone"

Les Indiana Jones français ne trouvent pas meilleure presse dans le quotidien islamiste Yeni Akit : "Une équipe secrète vole les vestiges historiques", lit-on ainsi en titre d'un article qui s'indigne que les fouilles aient lieu "dans un territoire sous le

contrôle d'une organisation terroriste". Une allusion aux forces arabo-kurdes des YPG qui bénéficient du soutien de la coalition internationale de lutte contre l'État Islamique mais que la Turquie combat en Syrie depuis plusieurs années. "On estime que 200 soldats français seraient présents dans la zone", assure par ailleurs Yeni Akit.

Berceau de nombreuses civilisations, la Syrie et ses vestiges archéologiques ont souffert ces dernières années du passage de l'État Islamique, qui a détruit un certain nombre de monuments ou pièces jugés "impies" et en a revendu un nombre encore plus important au marché noir. Les milices rebelles islamistes



La "Maison rouge" sur le site de Dūr-Katlimmu en octobre 2009. PHOTO / BERTRAMZ / CREATIVE COMMONS

pro-turques sont également accusées de se livrer à des fouilles illégales et au trafic d'objets historiques, en particu-

lier dans la région d'Afrin, conquise contre les Kurdes par la Turquie et ses alliés en mars 2018



July 16, 2020  
By Khrush Najari

## Iranian gov't militiamen killed as IRGC, Kurdish group clash near western border

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Two Iranian government militiamen were killed late Wednesday during a clash with a Kurdish opposition group in western parts of Iran's Kurdistan province, media outlets affiliated with the country's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) reported Thursday.

The Tasnim agency cited a statement from the IRGC's Hamza Saiyid-al-Shohada command center as saying that the incident occurred in the Bulbar village of Hawraman district in Sarvabad county, located near Iran's western border with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The IRGC claimed further that two officers of the Basij organization—a paramilitary entity operating under the IRGC—, were targeted by "members of a terrorist group affiliated with global arrogance." One of those killed was referred to as a district employee and the other was reported as a civilian.

"Global arrogance" is a blanket term commonly used by Iranian authorities to refer to the US, European states, and Israel.

According to the Fars news agency, another outlet with close ties to the IRGC, two individuals confirmed to be Basij



Peshmerga fighters of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), a Kurdish opposition group. (Photo: Archive)

militiamen were killed and another was wounded in the incident. The military command center also claimed that the militiamen were assisting locals

with the ongoing coronavirus outbreak.

As of Thursday evening, no group had yet claimed respon-

sibility for the attack.

Hengaw, a rights organization that documents such incidents, stated in its report that an unidentified Kurdish opposition group had been involved in the engagement, citing informed security sources. It also specified that two IRGC members were killed, that two others were wounded, and that there had been no casualties on the side of the opposition fighters who fled the scene shortly after.

Following the incident, IRGC commander in Kurdistan pro-

vince Saiyid-Sadiq Hosseini promised “severe revenge” against the perpetrators.

Iran has repeatedly shelled western border areas to target suspected opposition fighters, often resulting in environmental damage. Cross-border operations have also killed dozens of members of Kurdish opposition groups and local civilians.

The latest armed exchange comes a day after Iranian authorities carried out the death sentences of two Kurdish political prisoners who were convicted of involvement in the

bombing of a military parade a decade earlier, in a trial that rights groups have widely described as “unfair.”

Amid Iran’s ongoing high rates of the use of executions, Amnesty International said in a report published on Wednesday, “There has been an alarming escalation in use of the death penalty against protesters, dissidents and members of minority groups in Iran.”

In the first six months of 2020, around 24 percent of all those executed in Iran have been Kurds—defendants who were

convicted on murder, drug trafficking, and political charges—, according to a Hengaw compilation of data on the issue.

Amnesty’s Diana Eltahawy said that the two Kurdish political prisoners executed on Tuesday “are the latest victims of Iran’s deeply flawed criminal justice system, which systematically relies on fabricated evidence including ‘confessions’ obtained under torture and other ill-treatment to secure criminal convictions.”



July 16, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## Iraq to reduce curfew measures, reopen airports on July 23

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Iraqi government’s High National Health and Safety Committee announced on Thursday that it was lifting some of current coronavirus pandemic restrictions across the country, including allowing airports to reopen on July 23.

According to a statement issued by the committee, it decided to reduce curfew hours from a complete 24-hour lockdown to only be in effect from 9:30 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.

“We decided to reopen shopping centers and malls, although citizens must follow all safety and protective measures,” it read.

The committee also decided to lift the curfew completely after the upcoming Eid Al-Adha holiday, which will begin at the end of July.

It also decided to reopen the border-crossings of Mundhriya, Safwan and Al-Shaib for trade.

The announcement comes just three days after Iraq’s Civil Aviation Authority extended a national flight ban until July 22. It was only the latest of several extensions since the initial decision to ban commercial flights in late March, as the government began to take preventive measures to counter the spread of the coronavirus.

The committee called on the Media and Communications Authority to request media institutions to intensify awareness campaigns aimed at convincing the general public to strictly adhere to government anti-coronavirus measures and to get used to the idea of living as safely as possible, in “coexistence” with the pandemic.



Erbil International Airport (EIA). (Photo: Archive)

Earlier on Thursday, Iraq’s Ministry of Health and Environment reported that there were currently 28,000 active cases of the highly-infectious disease, formally known as COVID-19, while it recorded over 2,000 new infections and 90 deaths in the previous 24 hours.

Since late May, Iraq has been

recording increasingly higher numbers of new coronavirus infections and fatalities, even as authorities reintroduced partial curfews in efforts to curb the spread of the virus. Amid the crisis, health officials have repeatedly expressed fears of a collapse of the already fragile healthcare system.



July 16, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## Kurdistan Region announces the rescue of 4 Yezidi women, children

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Thursday, the office of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) dedicated to the rescue of the Yezidi (Ezidi) religious minority captured by the Islamic State starting in 2014 announced the rescue of four previously kidnapped women and children who were found in a displacement camp in Syria.

Hussein Qaedi, head of the Ezidi Rescue Office, said in a statement that “specialized committees are continuously tasked with liberating the kidnapped Ezidis despite the coronavirus crisis and the suspension of movement.”

He further explained that the women and children were being held among tens of thousands of families, many of them overt Islamic State sympathizers, at the sprawling al-Hol Camp, run by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). According to the statement, their return took about three weeks to facilitate.

“The office will continue its efforts in following up the cases until the last kidnapped Ezidi is found and rescued, as promised by Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region,” Qaedi added, echoing previous statements.

He also mentioned that the number of those who had been rescued from Islamic State captivity has so far reached 3,532 individuals, most of them women and children. Some 2,800 individuals remain missing.

The emergence of the Islamic State and its violent assault on Iraq’s Ezidi-majority city of Sinjar (Shingal) in August 2014 led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of members of the community and the killing of thousands. Fighters from the group, which sees Yezidis as infidels, kidnapped 6,284 members of their community,

including 3,467 women and 2,717 men.

Since then, the KRG has used extensive resources to find and rescue them, creating a special committee with a budget allocated for information gathering and to follow up on the various cases.

Prior to the 2014 attack, there were roughly 550,000 Ezidis in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. As the jihadist group took over large swaths of territory in Nineveh Province, 360,000 Ezidis escaped and found refuge elsewhere, according to the Ezidi Rescue Office.

Kurdistan au féminin

16 juillet 2020

## IRAN.

### Une Kurde condamnée à 10 ans de prison pour avoir enseigné la langue kurde aux enfants

**I**RAN / ROJHILAT – L’activiste Zahra Mohammadi, qui donnait des cours de kurde aux enfants kurdes, a été condamnée à 10 ans de prison par un tribunal révolutionnaire de Sanandaj pour « constitution d’un groupe (...) dans le but de perturber la sécurité nationale ».

Le procès de Zahra a eu lieu le 17 février devant un tribunal révolutionnaire de Sanandaj, présidé par le juge Saeedi et

son avocat a été informé le 15 juillet de sa condamnation à 10 ans de prison.

Zahra Mohammadi est la directrice de l’association culturelle et sociale Nozhin, et ses activités comprennent l’enseignement de la langue et de la littérature kurdes et d’autres activités civiles. Elle avait été arrêtée par les forces de sécurité à Sanandaj le 23 juin 2019 et libérée le 2 décembre 2019, sous cautions.

Le 13 novembre 2019, Amnesty International avait demandé la libération immédiate et inconditionnelle de Zahra Mohammadi.

Amnesty avait déclaré que des interrogateurs de sécurité avaient menacé la militante kurde d’arrêter les membres de sa famille si elle ne coopérerait pas avec eux. Il convient de noter qu’elle s’est vu refuser l’accès aux médicaments malgré ses problèmes de santé au

moment de son arrestation.

L’Association socioculturelle Nozhin est une institution civile établie sous licence officielle accordée par le ministère de l’Intérieur. Cette association organise des cours de langue kurde dans différentes villes kurdes au cours des dernières années. Il convient de noter que cette institution a joué un rôle important dans la fourniture de services de secours aux populations sinistrées du

Lorestan au cours des derniers mois.

Zara Mohammadi avait été arrêtée le 25 mai 2019 avec ses deux collègues, Edris Minbari et Rebwar Minbari car elle enseignait bénévolement leur langue maternelle aux enfants kurdes.

Zara Mohammadi Sarawala, une jeune femme de 29 ans, est originaire de Sanandaj

(Sinê), une ville kurde du Rojhilat (Kurdistan de l'Est). Titulaire d'une maîtrise en géopolitique de l'Université de Birjand, Zara a prodigué son enseignement à des centaines d'enfants kurdes de Sanandaj et des villages environnants, malgré les restrictions des autorités iraniennes.

(Via Kurdistan Human Rights Network)



## Kurdistan au féminin

16 juillet 2020

# Viol, une arme de guerre redoutable braquée sur le peuple kurde

**T**URQUIE / BAKUR – Hier, un sergent turc a tenté de violer une fillette de 13 ans dans la ville kurde de Sirnak. Mais des riverains alertés par les cris de la fillette ont pu la « sauver » in-extremis des mains du militaire. Connaissant l'impunité accordée aux forces armées turques pour le massacre, la torture, le viol de femmes, d'enfants kurdes... on peut être sûr que rien de « méchant » n'arrivera à ce militaire en terre kurde colonisée.

Après près d'un siècle du partage du Kurdistan entre 4 Etats colonialistes qui sont la Turquie, Iran, Irak et la Syrie, on a eu droits des milliers d'exemples de viols commis par les militaires -depuis l'époque d'Ataturk lors des massacres de Dersim, Zilan, Koçgiri..., sur les femmes, enfants et hommes kurdes et qui sont restés impunis. D'ailleurs, les déclarations d'hier soir du préfet de Sirnak, minimisant à l'extrême la tentative de viol de la fillette kurde, annonce la

suite logique de cette affaire... En effet, comment attendre d'un Etat qu'il condamne ses soldats violeurs qui ne font que réaliser les vœux de leur pays, à savoir la destruction de la société kurde dans son ensemble par une guerre sans merci où le viol est une arme redoutable de premier choix ? Une telle condamnation viendrait à ce que cet Etat se condamne lui-même. Avouez que cela n'arrivera jamais tant que la Turquie aura la supériorité militaire sur les Kurdes.

Etant donné les visés néo-colonialistes du sultan Erdogan, dirigeant de la Turquie, on risque d'assister encore longtemps aux viols et féminicides des femmes kurdes commis par les soldats turcs et des mercenaires armés au Kurdistan du Nord, mais aussi dans les régions kurdes du Rojava, dans le nord de la Syrie, occupées par la Turquie, avec l'approbation de l'OTAN, de l'ONU qui considère le viol comme un crime de guerre et même de la Russie...

**LE FIGARO**

16 juillet 2020

# Turquie: un journaliste allemand condamné pour «propagande terroriste»

**D**eniz Yücel a en revanche été acquitté des chefs d'accusation d'«incitation à la haine» et de «propagande».

Un tribunal d'Istanbul a condamné jeudi par contu-

mace un journaliste germanoturc à près de trois ans de prison pour «propagande terroriste», à l'issue d'un procès qui a suscité des tensions diplomatiques entre la Turquie et l'Allemagne.

Deniz Yücel, journaliste au quotidien allemand Die Welt, a été reconnu coupable de «propagande terroriste» pour le compte du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et condamné à deux ans, neuf mois et 22 jours de prison,

selon la décision de justice consultée par l'AFP. Le PKK, qui livre une sanglante guérilla sur le sol turc depuis 1984, est qualifié de groupe «terroriste» par Ankara et ses alliés occidentaux.

Yücel a en revanche été acquitté des chefs d'accusation d'«incitation à la haine» et de «propagande» pour le compte du mouvement du prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, bête noire du président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Le tribunal a cependant décidé de porter plainte à son encontre pour «insulte au chef de l'État» et «dénigrement de l'État et des institutions», pour avoir notamment qualifié de «putschiste» M. Erdoğan. Indignation et mobilisation en Allemagne

M. Yücel, âgé de 46 ans, avait été incarcéré en Turquie pendant un an avant d'être libéré et de quitter le territoire turc pour l'Allemagne en février

2018. Son arrestation avait soulevé une vague d'indignation et de mobilisation en Allemagne, et largement contribué à tendre les relations entre Berlin et Ankara.

Des organisations de défense des droits humains s'inquiètent régulièrement de l'érosion de la liberté de la presse en Turquie, en particulier depuis une tentative de putsch en 2016 qui a été suivie d'une répression tous azimuts. De nombreux journalistes travaillant pour la presse locale et internationale ont été



Le journaliste Deniz Yücel à Berlin, le 16 juillet 2020. MARLENE GAWRISCH / AFP

interpellés et condamnés à des peines de prison. La Turquie figure à la 154ème place

au classement mondial de la liberté de presse de l'ONG Reporters sans frontières.

**L'Orient  
LE JOUR**

16 juillet 2020

## Deux personnes tuées dans une attaque au Kurdistan

**D**eux personnes ont été tuées et une autre a été blessée dans une attaque "terroriste" menée par un "groupe contre-révolutionnaire" dans la province du Kurdistan, dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Iran, a annoncé jeudi l'agence officielle Irna.

Les trois victimes "aidaient des autochtones à surmonter les difficultés liées à la crise du Covid-19 avant d'être ciblées par un groupe terroriste" mercredi soir, a ajouté Irna, citant un communiqué des Gardiens de la Révolution, l'armée idéologique d'Iran.

Les Gardiens n'ont pas précisé la nature du "groupe terroriste" cité.

Selon l'agence, l'une des victimes était un habitant de la région, une autre un responsable au sein du bureau du

préfet et la dernière un membre des Bassidj, corps de vo-

lontaires islamistes pouvant agir comme supplétifs des forces de l'ordre. Leur nom n'a pas été communiqué. L'at-



Des miliciens iraniens. Photo d'archives AFP/ATTA KENARE

taque a été perpétrée près du village de Bolbar, est-il précisé dans le communiqué. L'Iran fait face depuis une quarantaine d'années à des rebelles kurdes qui utilisent

des bases dans le Kurdistan irakien voisin pour lancer des attaques contre les Gardiens de la Révolution ou des institutions sur le territoire iranien.

July 14, 2020  
By Selim Koru

## Turkey's Islamist Dream Finally Becomes a Reality

The Hagia Sophia has been designated as a mosque again, its status as a museum viewed for decades as a seal on the country's spirit.

IZMIR, Turkey — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on Friday issued a decree ordering the Hagia Sophia, a majestic 65,000-square-foot stone structure from the sixth century in Istanbul, to be opened for Muslim prayers. The same day, a top Turkish court had revoked the 1934 decree by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish republic, which had turned it into a museum.

The Hagia Sophia was built as a cathedral and converted into a mosque, and then a museum. It has for centuries been the object of fierce civilizational rivalry between the Ottoman and Orthodox worlds.

The reconversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque was an old dream of Turkey's Islamists. In the Islamist political tradition of President Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party, Ataturk's experiment in secular republican government was a foreign imposition on Turkey, and the Hagia Sophia's status as a museum a seal on the country's spirit.

After making the announcement, according to one report, Mr. Erdogan was so shaken with emotion that he did not sleep until first light the next morning. What he

thought of as an era of humiliation had ended.

After 1950, when the Kemalist regime held the country's first free elections, its political enemies began to organize. Ataturk had died more than a decade before, and the power of his memory was gradually waning.

Sections of Islamist and pan-Turkic romanticists began campaigning for the reopening of the Hagia Sophia. They believed that the secular republic, far from having saved Turkey's sovereignty, wounded it in the deepest sense possible: It had sold its soul to Western modernity. The conversion of the Hagia Sophia was the symbol of this humiliation.

The most articulate expression of this view was delivered by Necip Fazil Kısakurek, Turkey's most prominent Islamist poet and polemicist of the time, on Dec. 29, 1965, at a conference on the Hagia Sophia. Mr. Kısakurek said the decision to convert the structure into a museum was to "put the Turks' essential spirit inside a museum."

Referring to Ataturk's cabinet as a "clique," Mr. Kısakurek accused them of committing an act of unspeakable self-harm. "What the Western world has made us do inside, through its agents among us, neither Crusaders, nor the Moskof [the Soviets] nor the Hagia Sophia's salacious



A 19th-century illustration of the interior of the Hagia Sophia, before it became a museum in 1935. Mansell/The LIFE Picture Collection, via Getty Images

coveters, the Greeks, have been able to do," he said.

The poet said in that 1965 speech that the opening of the Hagia Sophia was a question of time. "It shall be opened in such a way that all lost meaning, like the bloodied and chained innocent, shall emerge from it weeping, in tatters," he said. "It shall be opened in such a way that in its cellars shall be found the files of the evil ones who were thought to have done the nation good, and the good ones who were thought to have done it evil."

The dome of the Hagia Sophia was erected by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century as the central cathedral of Byzantium, or the Eastern Roman Empire. In 1453, the Ottomans launched a spectacular siege on the capital city of Constantinople and consummated their victory by

converting the Hagia Sophia, its main cathedral, into a mosque, as was customary at the time.

It was this moment of reversal — from Christian to Muslim — that fired imaginations across Europe and the Middle East. Many dreamed of a day of reckoning as the Ottoman Empire unraveled in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the World War I, Istanbul was occupied by British, French, Italian and Greek forces, but even then, Muslims did not give up the Hagia Sophia. When a group of Greeks wanted to enter the building and install a cathedral bell, Ottoman soldiers drove them away by threatening to blow up the entire structure.

Turkish forces fought off the allied invaders under the leadership of a rebellious Ottoman field marshal, Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk), who

went on to rebuild modern Turkey. During his single-party rule, Atatürk abolished the sultanate and set up a secular republic, enacting reforms to westernize the country by decree.

There are various myths about the reasons behind Atatürk's decision to convert the Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1934. What is certain is that he decided after convening with Thomas Whittemore, a visiting American scholar of Byzantium, and was interested in restoring the structure's mosaics. Atatürk seemed to have wanted to move the country past the medieval concepts of myth and holy conquest.

When Mr. Kisakurek, the powerful Islamist poet, raised the rallying cry for the reconversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 1965, it is likely that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, an 11-year-old boy in the working-class, religious neighborhood of Kasimpasa

near the Golden Horn in Istanbul, would have heard the poet's call.

He would also have heard how even Nihal Atsız, a writer who advocated a pan-Turkic identity over that of the Islamists, revered the Hagia Sophia and thought its status a humiliation. And the young Erdoğan might even have heard how Nazim Hikmet, the great poet of the socialists, devoted stanzas to the Hagia Sophia's spirit in his youth.

As Turkey's prime minister between 2003 to 2014 and as the country's president, Mr. Erdoğan has gradually dismantled all checks on his power and shifted the country's political center of gravity in his favor. The idea was always that opening the Hagia Sophia for prayers would mark the maturation of Islamist power and cement its gains. Do it too soon, however, and it could backfire, just as Atatürk's conversion had.

When Mr. Erdoğan addressed Turkey on July 10 after the court's judgment, he cited Mr. Kisakurek's 1965 Hagia Sophia Conference and cited the other poets as well. The Turkish president wanted the entire nation, not just the Islamists, to make the spiritual journey with him.

In this address to the nation, Mr. Erdoğan did not mention Atatürk by name. He did not have to. He quoted at length Mehmet the Conqueror's will, which states that whoever changes the status of the Hagia Sophia "has committed the most grave sin of all" and that "the curse of God, the Prophet, the angels and all rulers and all Muslims shall forever be upon him. May their suffering not lighten, may none look at their face on the day of Hajj."

Various authorities of the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches voiced their indignation, and the pope expressed "profound sadness."

The governments of the European Union and the United States muttered their regrets. There are also Christian extremists who care deeply about the Hagia Sophia and its symbolism. These sentiments make the decision all the more exciting to many Turks.

The first prayer at the Hagia Sophia mosque will take place on July 24, the anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed between the Allied powers and Turkey, which drew the boundaries of modern Turkey. Mr. Erdoğan will want the Western world especially to watch closely, because the ceremony will represent what he considers the reclamation of Turkish sovereignty from its clutches.

What comes out of the Hagia Sophia's gates today is a spirit that sees itself as inherently good and its chosen enemies as inherently evil. It is the spirit of revenge, and it has catching up to do.



July 16, 2020  
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Kurdish documentary on the power of music wins Italian film prize

**E**RBIL, Kurdistan Region – The Kurdish documentary 'Harmony For After War' won best short documentary at an Italian film festival this week.

The documentary sheds light on the lives of two brothers, Mustafa and Ahmed, who were born blind. Unable to attend school or play in the streets of their native Kobane, in north-eastern Syria (Rojava), making music together at home be-

came a soul nurturing outlet. But in 2014, when Islamic State (ISIS) militants seized their city, the brothers were forced to leave their instruments behind. Returning in the summer of 2015 after the city's liberation, they were devastated to find the jihadists had destroyed their instruments, including Mustafa's prized violin. The film was directed by Argentinian Pablo Tosco and Migue Rorth.

It was "chosen as best short documentary of the 'New Italians' Jury, based on its emotional messages and story that touched all of us," reads a statement from the Sole Luna Doc Film Festival, which was held from July 6 to 12 in the southern Italian city of Palermo.

"The film gave us a message of hope when seeing that despite the land that is destroyed, a war that has destroyed people's life, and those two

brothers that live in very difficult conditions, the protagonists continued their love for music which has guided them and gave them the strength to go on," the festival added. "Furthermore, it is not only a film which shows hope, strength and passion, but it is also an inspirational message that encourages [us] to help others when you have the possibility to do so."

"I left my instruments here. I left



my violin, the guitar, my lute. I also left my tambur. There was no way to take them with me," Mustafa says in the film.

"When I returned, Daesh (ISIS) had destroyed all my instruments ... Without music, everything is more painful," Mustafa says. "Music is a nutrient for my soul."

The strict Islamic doctrines of ISIS forbade music and other art forms. Music schools and institutes across the region were smashed under ISIS dictat.

Gani Mirzo, a Syrian Kurd and

lute player who lives in Spain, composed the music for the film.

"I did not just create the music for the film, but also the idea behind the documentary was mine. It was a project to tell all how we could reconstruct our Rojava through music instruments," Mirozo told Rudaw TV from Spanish city of Barcelona on Wednesday night. "It was great for the whole of Europe that we, as Kurdish people, are all the time for peace and are interested in music."



The Kurdish documentary 'Harmony For After War' won best short documentary at the the Sole Luna Doc Film Festival. Photo: Rudaw

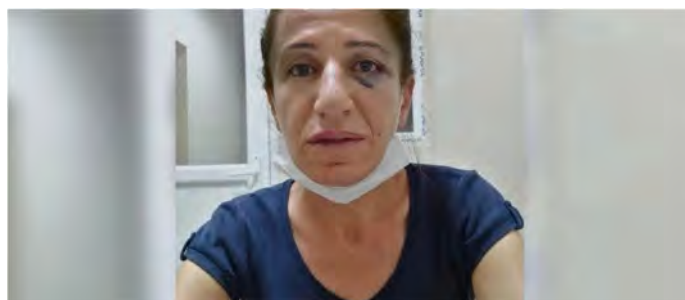
**l'Humanité**

16 juillet 2020  
Par Pierre Barbancey

## Turquie. Rojbin Çetin, élue kurde, torturée et toujours emprisonnée

**C**o-maire d'Edremit, un arrondissement de la ville de Van, située sur les rives du fleuve du même nom et à majorité kurde, Rojbin Çetin se trouvait chez elle, à Amed (Diyarbakir), ce 26 juin, lorsqu'une centaine d'hommes, dont certains cagoulés, ont encerclé son immeuble tout en menaçant toute personne mettant le nez à la fenêtre ou tentant de quitter les lieux. Une dizaine d'autres sont montés jusqu'à son appartement et ont défoncé sa porte. Le cauchemar commençait pour cette élue membre du DÖKH (Mouvement démocratique des femmes libres) – qui s'inscrit dans le cadre du protocole d'Istanbul (1) – et du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP).

La brigade d'intervention spéciale de la police (PÖH), struc-



Le HDP comme la représentante incarcérée dénoncent des droits humains « de plus en plus violés en Turquie ».

ture chargée spécialement de la répression politique, s'est alors déchaînée contre la jeune femme, qui ne pouvait déjà plus exercer son mandat, la municipalité de Van ayant été mise sous tutelle par le préfet de région, mécontent du vote des électeurs qui avaient placé le HDP en tête du scrutin. De nombreux parlementaires de ce parti ont d'ailleurs été arrêtés et/ou démis de

leurs fonctions et la plupart des municipalités « démissionnées ».

Sous prétexte de « perquisition », ils ont d'abord lâché leurs chiens sur Rojbin Çetin, qui a été mordue aux jambes. Alors qu'elle était à terre, elle a été violemment frappée au visage. Ces policiers l'ont alors déshabillée, lui ont bandé les yeux puis l'ont menottée, mains

dans le dos. Ils ont ensuite entrepris de prendre des photos d'elle, nue, et menacée de viol. Un inter

« Plus elle résistait, plus le niveau de torture augmentait. Un pistolet a été porté à sa tête. On lui a dit: "Si tu cries et ne parles pas, tu sais ce que nous ferons. Si l'appartement n'était pas au deuxième étage, mais au cinquième, tu aurais sauté de toute façon (sous-entendu "on t'aurait jetée en bas et dit que tu t'es jetée toi-même") alors nous n'aurions rien eu à faire" », raconte Meral Danis Bestas, députée et porte-parole du HDP. De son côté, Ayse Basaran, porte-parole du Conseil des femmes du HDP, dénonce: « La torture impliquait que Rojbin soit déshabillée à moitié et photographiée les yeux bandés. La question que nous devons nous poser

est de savoir ce qu'il adviendra de ces photos. Où seront-elles publiées, quels trolls mettront la main sur elles? Cela sera utilisé comme une autre forme de torture. Mais toutes ces attaques ne pourront pas faire reculer le mouvement des femmes. Ce n'est pas seulement une attaque contre des femmes kurdes. Toutes les organisations de femmes doivent réagir ensemble et reconnaître la dimension de la politique misogyne de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement, de Recep Tayyip Erdogan – NDLR).» Jointe par l'Humanité, cette dernière explique que «les droits humains sont de plus en plus violés en Turquie, particulièrement ceux des Kurdes et des femmes. C'est pire qu'après le coup d'État de 1980 (qui a instauré un régime militaire – NDLR)».

Le 22 mai, la police a violemment perquisitionné plusieurs domiciles et arrêté 18 personnes à Diyarbakir – 13 femmes et 5 hommes. Cette opération visait principalement les femmes politiques kurdes et les activistes de l'Association des femmes Rosa (RKD), du Mouvement des femmes libres (TJA), du Parti démocratique des régions (DBP) et du HDP. La police a également fait une descente au siège de la RKD et saisi les documents de l'association en l'absence de ses avocats. La RKD a été créée après que toutes les organisations de femmes de Diyarbakir ont été interdites et fermées sous le régime d'état d'urgence en 2016. C'était la seule organisation de la ville engagée dans le soutien aux femmes et la lutte contre les violences envers les femmes.

Une activité intolérable pour le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. La Turquie compte près de 2 000 détenus politiques dont 470 sont dans un état grave.

Le pouvoir central, en guerre contre la population kurde de Turquie, sous prétexte de lutte contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), fait feu de tout bois pour réprimer et punir la population. Alors que le Covid-19 se disséminait dans le pays, un certain nombre de mesures de sécurité ont été édictées, mais tout a été fait pour que le Kurdistan n'en bénéficie pas. Un seul centre de dépistage a été ouvert permettant de pratiquer des tests à Diyarbakir. Face à ce manque flagrant de moyens, des délégations ont demandé à être reçues par la direction

provinciale de la santé et par le ministère. Elles ont essuyé un refus. Les rares mairies dirigées par le HDP encore en place ont alors imprimé des affiches en kurde pour informer la population des consignes à respecter mais, sous la menace, elles ont dû arrêter cette campagne. Sous l'impulsion des militants kurdes, les commerçants ont alors fermé leurs boutiques pour éviter la propagation du virus: ils ont été forcés de rouvrir leurs boutiques.

Rojbin Çelin est aujourd'hui emprisonnée. Maintenu en garde à vue pendant 11 jours, elle a été inculpée et incarcérée pour «appartenance à une organisation terroriste».



July 17, 2020  
By C. Anthony Pfaff

## Kadhimi's moment: Controlling Iraq's militias

The July 6 assassination of Hisham al Hashimi, a well-known political analyst who criticized Iraq's sectarian politics, represented the loss of someone who made meaningful contributions to Iraq's recovery and reconciliation efforts. Hashimi's death also represented an escalation that threatens to bring back the gang-like violence Iraq experienced from 2004 to 2008.

No one has claimed responsibility for Hashimi's murder. Many suspect Kitaib Hizballah (KH), a militia which is part of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) backed by Iran. Hashimi was critical of KH and they reportedly sent him death threats just prior to his killing. Such murders of course, are

not out of character for KH or any of Iran's proxies in Iraq. They, along with Sunni extremists, were responsible for killing thousands of Iraqis during the years of sectarian conflict. More recently, these militias were responsible for killing, kidnapping, and torturing protesters, who objected, in-part, to Iran's pervasive and malign influence in Iraq.

In Hashimi's case, there is additional context that makes KH's responsibility for his death plausible. Hashimi was supportive of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Kadhimi, who in June had ordered members of KH detained. It should not be surprising then that many are taking Hashimi's assassination as a message to Kadhimi: Stop



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi speaks during a news conference in Basra, Iraq, July 15, 2020. Ahmad Al-Rubaye/Pool via REUTERS

interfering with the militias and their criminal operations.

The difficulty for Kadhimi is that

even a strong suspicion of KH culpability is not enough to make further escalation against the militia appear legiti-

mate to the Iraqi people. In fact, KH was not only able to get all their members arrested in the June raid released in 24 hours, they made a public show of welcoming them back publicly as heroes while burning American flags and tramping on images of Kadhim. Further, it is important to remember that while the case against KH may seem compelling from the outside, it is not so from the inside. Hashimi was an outspoken critic of a range of Iraqi actors and had an extensive list of enemies. Thus, any moves Kadhim makes against any suspected group without resolving uncertainty regarding their responsibility in a way the Iraqi public will accept will almost certainly escalate the violence.

Having said that, Hashimi's assassination may provide Kadhim with an opportunity to act. As the protests have illustrated, Iraqis are unhappy with the militias and Iran's interference. The prospect of another sectarian war will only make them more unpopular. If Kadhim does act against the militias, eliminating or constraining one—even one as powerful as KH—will not do much good. As in any other gang-like environment, others will fill the space left behind by the demise of one. Moreover, just because most Iraqis are unhappy with the militias does not mean that each does not have its own domestic constituency that makes it resilient to attempts to bring them in line. Whatever Kadhim does must apply to all the militias, or at least all that are engaged in destabilizing activities like KH. It also needs to appeal to the grievances and interests of the various constituencies that support the militias.

There are two paths Kadhim can take in confronting the militias. The first is the one he has already started down: direct confrontation. Further confrontation would entail removing any offending militia from the official Iraqi Government PMF structure. Official

PMF status gives militias both funding and legitimacy as a member of Iraq's security forces. Kadhim will then need trustworthy and capable security forces willing to prevent retaliation by the militias standing at the ready. Should that deterrence fail, legitimate Iraqi security forces will have to act swiftly to disrupt militia operations and detain their members. To make confrontation effective and sustainable, Kadhim will also need broad popular support for his actions. If Kadhim does not have all of the above, confrontation is likely to fail, sending Iraq into another period of chaos and insecurity.

Confrontation will not work because Kadhim does not have all of the above. Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) guarding the Green Zone did little to prevent Iranian militias from attacking the US Embassy in December 2019. It is too easy for militias to intimidate or coopt individual members of the security forces regardless of their actual sympathies. So, it is unlikely that any force in the ISF would have the stomach for an ongoing conflict with the militias.

It is also not clear how much popular support Kadhim can actually mobilize. Not only are the militias capable of intimidating protestors, many Iraqis do see them as heroes and often as the only force capable of protecting them against Daesh and other extremists. At least for now, confrontation is not a good option.

Kadhim's other path is to slowly integrate militias over time. Given his limited mandate—get Iraq to the next elections—means he will not likely see such a process all the way through. He can, however, get it started. Embarking on this path entails, at least, addressing three sources of militia power: external funding, self-funding, and political legitimacy.

Iranian support for certain Shia militias, of which KH is just

one, makes them extremely resistant to efforts by the government to integrate and control them. Without external support, they would be much more dependent on government funding and more likely to be compliant with government demands. However, even without external funding, these militias operate a number of criminal and legitimate enterprises that generate income. These other revenue sources would also have to be eliminated, or at least reduced. Finally, as noted above, militias often play an important role in protecting their constituencies as well as providing key services that the government has so far failed to provide. As a result, locally, these groups are often seen as having greater legitimacy than the government.

The choice, of course, is not either-or. It is just that the integration of Kadhim's two paths that give the best chance for eventual success. While ultimately the only sustainable change will be evolutionary, this may be a moment where the right steps can accelerate that evolution.

•First, Kadhim should investigate the assassination as impartially as possible. Despite the strong circumstantial evidence implicating KH, it will do no good to confront them if there is sufficient doubt among Iraqis that they are responsible. While the investigation is ongoing, he should also mobilize political power centers such as political parties, influential individuals such as Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr, and others to build consensus regarding the investigation process as well as reinforce messages of national solidarity and an intolerance for sectarian activities. This nationalist message is, of course, one these parties already accept. It just needs to be more focused to draw support away from destabilizing militant activities.

•Second, he should engage Iran directly regarding their

support for these militias. In this engagement he will have to assuage their security concerns regarding the presence of US combat troops in Iraq while at the same time emphasizing that Baghdad's relationship with Tehran will degrade if Iran forces Iraq to lose the security and economic assistance it receives from the United States and coalition partners.

•Third, improve the ISF's ability to secure the Green Zone and other government facilities, and, if necessary, conduct operations against the militias. Part of that effort will be physical, but the most important part will be the creation of units that are loyal to the government and resilient against Iranian or other external interference.

How the United States can help:

•Do not use Hashimi's assassination to encourage direct confrontation with Iranian-backed militias prior to the results of any investigation. As noted above, confrontation before the right political and security conditions are in place will only escalate violence. Should that happen, the United States will find itself with the forced choice needing to provide direct military support or letting the country devolve into a second civil war.

•Mobilize international support for Kadhim. The United States can also work to further isolate Iran from Europe, which would impose additional costs on their efforts to undermine Iraq's recovery. The United States should also encourage European partners to do more to build up Iraqi military capabilities, especially if US efforts are reduced.

•Be prepared to assist the Iraqi government in improving physical defenses of the International Zone and other key government offices and facilities. It would likely be a mistake for the United States to provide direct assistance,

whether material, equipment, or training as they will incentivize attacks by actors whose interest is in demonstrating the limited utility of US support. Still, the US could provide expertise and assistance in finding sources of support from coalition partners, security contractors, or other interested and capable parties.

•Provide advisors, material, and intelligence to build the capabilities of select units loyal to the Iraqi government so that are resilient against external in-

fluence and able to secure key facilities.

•Where possible, maintain and build on US capabilities to support Iraqi Security Force operations, much as was done during the fight against Daesh. While integrating the militias should be implemented slowly, over time, there is always a chance that militia activities will force an escalation. In that case, the US needs to be prepared to support the Iraqi government on terms they are willing to accept.

In this approach, militias and their constituencies would, over time, be presented with choices that, in isolation, would be in their interest to choose to cooperate with the government. Of course, there will be times when there may be no such option or if there is, the militias still choose otherwise. That is why it is important to simultaneously build up select forces that are loyal to the Iraqi government and resilient to Iranian and militia influence and intimidation. At some point in this process, the militias will be

sufficiently integrated and the ISF sufficiently capable that further violence simply is not in the militia capability or interest. Of course, no plan survives first contact and, as noted above, the potential for rapid and violent escalation will exist for some time. For that reason, the United States, along with its coalition partners should both take steps to prevent such escalation from happening as well as prepare to stop it should it start.



July 14, 2020  
By Khrush Najari

## Iran executes Kurdish political prisoners convicted in 'unfair' trial: Reports

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Early Tuesday, Iranian authorities carried out the death sentences of two Kurdish political prisoners who were convicted of involvement in the bombing of a military parade a decade earlier, in a trial that rights groups have widely described as “unfair.”

A number of local and international human rights watchdogs had previously voiced concerns about the two, Sabir Sheikh Abdullah and Diyako Rasoulzadeh, after reports indicated that Urmia Prison officials had transferred the two Kurdish men to solitary confinement cells where they would await their execution.

Hours later, multiple Kurdish rights monitors reported that the facility—located in the West Azerbaijan province’s Urmia (Wirme) city—had carried out the sentences of both.

“The two prisoners were executed in front of the families of the thirteen people who were



Various human rights groups allege that Iranian authorities often obtain confessions through the use of torture. (Photo: AFP)

killed in the Mahabad bombing of a military parade ten years ago to mark the 30th anniversary of the Iran-Iraq war,” Hengaw quoted a source at the Urmia Prison as saying. Mahabad is another city in the Kurdish-majority West Azerbaijan province.

Iranian security forces reportedly arrested both Abdullah and Rasoulzadeh in March of 2014 in Mahabad. Three years later, the Mahabad “revolutionary court” condemned them to death on accusations of membership in the Komala party, a Kurdish opposition group with

fighters inside Iran, and of having a hand in the 2010 bombing incident.

“The two young men were sentenced to death following a highly unfair trial based on confessions obtained under torture and ill-treatment,” Amnesty In-

ternational said in a series of tweets early Tuesday, shortly before the executions were confirmed to have taken place.

Amnesty wrote that the two men had “strongly” rejected the allegations against them and that judicial authorities had “not heeded the complaints” of Rasoulzadeh and Abdullah about a “lack of access to a lawyer and being tortured during detention.”

The group also called on the Iranian government to stop such executions, as it would be “mere denial of justice and a catastrophic and irreparable violation of the right to life.”

The position of different Iranian officials regarding who was indeed behind the Mahabad bombing seemed all-encompassing at times, with some

claiming Kurdish opposition parties were behind the attack—all of whom have denied it—or else members of the former Iraq regime or US “mercenaries.”

West Azerbaijan’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander, Abdolrasoul Mahmoudabadi, said in 2010 that an IRGC operation had killed thirty people in connection with the incident, including members of the former Iraqi Baathist regime and US mercenaries, AFP reported.

Iran consistently ranks among the top countries with the highest number of deaths sentences it issues and implements, with minority groups being significantly overrepresented among those killed.

According to a Hengaw compi-

lation of data on the number of executions throughout Iran, close to 24 percent of death sentences throughout the first six months of 2020 were carried out against Kurdish prisoners, most of whom were convicted on murder charges, but their number also included political activists.

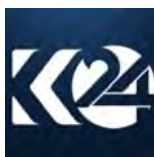
One of those cases was that of Hedayat Abdullahpour, who “was sentenced to death by Iranian Supreme Court on October 8, 2018” on charges of affiliation with another Kurdish movement, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), the group said.

Amnesty said that Abdullahpour was sentenced to death “after a grossly unfair trial.” He was reportedly secretly executed by a firing squad.

Authorities often obtain confessions through the use of torture, various rights groups allege, especially in the case of individuals captured on suspicion of membership in or collaboration with opposition groups.

Later Tuesday, after both Kurdish men were killed, Amnesty issued another statement on the case of three other men who were recently sentenced to death for participating in the latest bout of anti-government protests in 2019.

Iran’s Ayatollah Khamenei “must quash the death sentences of protesters—Amirhossein Moradi, Saeed Tamjidi & Mohammad Rajabi—immediately!” the organization said. “Their trial was unfair & they said they were subjected to torture through beatings, electric shocks and being hung upside down.”



July 14, 2020  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## COVID-19: Iraq to ease health restrictions, despite recording over 2,000 infections daily

**E**RBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Friday, Iraq’s Ministry of Health and Environment, again, reported over 2,000 new cases of coronavirus infections, along with more than 90 deaths, due to the virus over the past 24 hours. The report of the latest COVID-19 statistics followed just one day after Baghdad announced it would be easing the nation-wide curfews and would allow the resumption of commercial flights.

In its daily statement, the ministry explained that health workers had conducted 17,211 tests across the country over the past 24 hours, raising the total of such tests to 762,058 since the pandemic began. Of the new tests, 2,023 were positive for the virus. The ministry

also reported that 2,179 patients had recovered, while 94

people had died in the past 24 hours.

The total number of infections in Iraq has now reached



A member of a medical team checks the temperature of an Iraqi male at a checkpoint located at an entrance of the northern city of Mosul. (Photo: Reuters)

88,171. That figure includes 56,495 recoveries, 3,616 deaths, and 28,060 individuals who are still receiving treatment.

### **Iraqi government eases restrictions**

On Thursday, Iraq's Higher Committee for Health and Public Safety announced that it would be easing several measures which had been adopted to curb the spread of the disease. Notably, Iraq will reopen its airports, as well as several border crossings.

Flights into and out of Iraq will be allowed, beginning on July 23. That decision follows an announcement earlier this

week, on Monday, from Iraq's Civil Aviation Authority which extended a ban on commercial flights for one more week—until July 22.

The decision to suspend international passenger flights was first made on March 17. Initially, the suspension was scheduled to last for one week, as the government began to take preventative measures to counter the spread of the coronavirus. However, over the following four months, the ban was successively extended for one week periods.

The committee also announced that Iraq would reopen three border-crossings with neighboring Iran and Kuwait for trade and other com-

mercial purposes. They include al-Mundhiriyah and al-Shaib on the border with Iran and the Safwan border crossing with Kuwait.

In addition, "malls and shopping centers are to reopen" the committee announced, as it also explained that people who go shopping in those places must do so "under strict conditions, including the implementation of preventative health and social distancing measures."

The time of the country's lockdown is to be reduced to the hours between 9:00 PM and 5:00 AM on most days of the week, with a "total curfew" on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—although the total cur-

few will be reviewed after the Eid al-Adha holiday later this month.

The committee emphasized that despite the loosened measures, the coronavirus "remains a serious threat" to public health, and it stressed the importance of following precautionary measures, as detailed by the government.

One problem that other countries have faced as they open up, is that many people understand the relaxation of the public health measures to mean that the virus is no longer a problem and they can return to their old routines. The result is the resurgence of the virus and the need for further restrictive measures.

**Le Monde**

17 juillet 2020

## **Asli Erdogan : « Sainte-Sophie en mosquée est une gifle au visage de ceux qui croient encore que la Turquie est un pays séculier »**

Tribune. Je viens de la ville qui s'appelait Constantinople à sa fondation et s'appelle aujourd'hui, plus d'un millier d'années plus tard, Istanbul. Entre les deux, la cité a eu plus de deux douzaines de noms différents. Elle a subi presque deux douzaines de sièges, deux épidémies de peste, près de dix tremblements de terre majeurs. Elle a survécu à d'innombrables guerres, combats, intrigues et luttes.

Elle a vu des centaines de rois venir, régner puis s'en aller, et elle a accueilli plusieurs langues, religions et monuments... Et pour moi qui suis native de la polis, comme l'appelaient les Grecs, il y a un symbole indiscutable de la singularité et de la sagesse de cette cité : Sainte-Sophie, un

monument aussi imposant et unique, pour moi en tout cas, que les pyramides égyptiennes.

Je me suis souvent demandé avec quelle justice Byzance avait été traitée dans la quête qu'a eue l'Europe de ses racines historiques. Constantinople était romaine, grecque et bien plus encore... C'était là que la Méditerranée rejoignait la mer Noire, que des civilisations d'Asie Mineure vieilles de douze mille ans rejoignaient la Thrace, la péninsule grecque et la Perse, que l'Orient rejoignait l'Occident...

### **Abolition du kémalisme**

Mais une promenade de deux jours dans Istanbul aujourd'hui suffit à montrer que la manière

dont les Ottomans ont traité Byzance était loin d'être juste. Ils en ont pourtant beaucoup appris et assimilé. Des palais en ruine, des églises transformées en mosquées, mille ans de Byzance à qui on a, en grande partie, refusé de faire de l'ombre à la gloire de l'ère ottomane...

La transformation de Sainte-Sophie en mosquée est une gifle délibérée au visage de ceux qui croient encore que la Turquie est un pays séculier. Le système séculier du kémalisme, ou plutôt de laïcité, puisque la Turquie suivit le modèle français plus que l'anglo-saxon, et qui en fut l'un des rares exemples dans tout le monde musulman, est ainsi déclaré aboli.

Bien qu'une majorité de Turcs voient cette transformation comme une manœuvre politique pour détourner l'attention de la crise économique, les partis d'opposition, en particulier le CHP, porte-drapeau du kémalisme, sont restés plutôt timides dans leurs critiques, voire silencieux, et ont même approuvé dans un ou deux cas.

Personne n'ose offenser les sentiments religieux du peuple, bien que personne ne lui ait demandé s'il souhaite effectivement une telle transformation.

### **Vers la conquête du pouvoir absolu**

A regarder les déclarations d'Erdogan, les kémalistes et le kémalisme ne sont pas les seuls à avoir reçu ainsi une

leçon. En qualifiant la transformation de « touche finale d'une conquête », il se déclare le fier successeur de Mehmet le Conquérant et d'autres sultans ottomans. « Conquête » est un terme qui appartient à la terminologie ou à l'idéologie d'une

ère passée, où le vainqueur occupait et annihilait le vaincu sans se soucier de morale.

La destruction ou la transformation des temples des vaincus était pratique courante dans le passé. Le régime d'Erdoğan déclare ainsi que, dés-

ormais, l'Empire ottoman sera le nouveau modèle de la Turquie contemporaine. Ce régime ne va plus s'encombrer de valeurs morales attribuées à l'Occident ou à la société contemporaine ni, de manière générale, des concepts de mo-

derité occidentaux, et il ne permettra pas à des bagatelles comme la loi, la démocratie, etc., de faire obstacle à sa conquête majeure... La conquête du pouvoir absolu.

Asli Erdogan(Romancière)

**MorningStar**

17 July, 2020

## Woman jailed for 10 years by Iranian regime for teaching Kurdish

IRAN'S clerical regime has been urged to stop persecuting minorities after it sentenced a woman to 10 years in prison earlier this week for teaching Kurdish.

Zahra Mohammadi, who is the director of the Nojin Cultural Association in Iran's Kurdistan province, was charged with founding "an anti-state group," according to the Kurdish human-rights organisation Hengaw.

She was first detained along with two other members of the association in May 2019 by the Iranian intelligence services, accused of working with a

banned opposition party, before being released on bail in December.

Her lawyers confirmed that Ms Mohammadi was jailed on Tuesday, for her work teaching Kurdish children their native tongue and for having been involved in other cultural activities.

"The verdict was imposed by the 1st branch of the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj on charges that Zahra Mohammadi had founded an anti-state group," a Hengaw report said.

"Apart from the cultural organisation Nojin, in which [she] was

involved seven years ago and is active as a board member, there are no other organisations or groups that can be associated with Zahra Mohammadi," it added.

There are around 12 million Kurds in Iran, forming around 17 per cent of the population.

While Kurdish culture, such as dress and music, is allowed and the language is used in some broadcasts and publications, the Kurdish minority continues to suffer deep-rooted discrimination.

Two Kurdish men, Diaku Rasoulzadeh and Saber Sheikh

Abdollah, were hanged in West Azerbaijan on Monday, accused of a deadly attack in Mahabad in 2010. But their lawyer said there was no evidence and their convictions were based on confessions elicited through torture.

A global social-media campaign appears to have halted the planned executions of three men, Saeed Tamjidi, Mohammad Rajabi and Amirhossein Moradi, who were charged for their role in anti-government protests last November.

**Ahval**

July 18, 2020

## Turkey smuggled family from ISIS detainee camp, say Syrian Kurds

Turkish intelligence agents infiltrated a Syrian displaced persons camp housing tens of thousands of women and children connected to Islamic State (ISIS) to smuggle out a Moldovan woman and her four children.

Officials with the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) confirmed the Turkish-engineered escape from the al-Hol camp on Friday, Voice of America reported.

The SDF runs security for the camp, as well as a series of

prisons across northeastern Syria that hold an estimated 10,000 ISIS fighters.

According to Turkish media reports, Turkey's intelligence service carried out the operation at the request of Moldovan officials, and Moldovan secu-

rity forces assisted in the effort.

Moldovan President Igor Dodon tweeted about Barkal's repatriation on Thursday, showing the family's arrival at Chisinau International Airport.

Anadolu news agency reported

Dodon as saying: "I thank (Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) for his extensive efforts to bring back our citizens and for his support,"

The woman, Natalia Barkal, had been living with her children at the al-Hol camp since January 2019, VOA reported.

Anadolu cited Barkal as saying that the family had gone through a very hard time during their captivity.

"At first I thought it would be fine and we would return to our country soon. But then we experienced every kind of human emotion there is," she said.

She also expressed gratitude to Turkey for its help in getting them out of the camp. I am grateful to the Turkish government. Turkey is a great country," she said.

Turkish media, quoting unnamed security sources, said Barkal and her husband had been living in Moldova's capital but travelled to Syria in 2013, settling in the city of Manbij in



the country's Aleppo province. Barkal's husband, who was of Syrian descent, was reportedly killed during fighting in 2017.

VOA said an initial investigation appeared to show that the family managed to sneak out of al-Hol camp by hiding in a modified water truck.

The SDF said it was not clear why such an operation was necessary, since it has been asking countries to repatriate their citizens with little success.

"The global coalition asked the countries to get their citizens back [with] no response. Moldova did not ask for this woman," Sinam Mohamad, the U.S. representative of the Syr-

ian Democratic Council (SDC), the SDF's political wing, told VOA.

"I don't know why Moldova did not ask to repatriate," she added.

Syrian Kurdish officials Friday said the Turkish-Moldovan operation was not only unnecessary but also dangerous as it could embolden other ISIS-linked detainees.

Seth J. Frantzman, writing in the Jerusalem Post on Friday, said that, because the SDF is not a state, but a non-state actor, most foreign ministries of countries prefer not to negotiate directly with it regarding foreign ISIS detainees and

many are reluctant to take them anyway.

The SDF cannot hand them over to the Syrian government because most governments view it as a criminal regime, and it cannot hand them to Turkey because Ankara regards the SDF as a terrorist group linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has fought for Kurdish self-rule on Turkish soil since 1984.

This leaves many of the detainees in limbo, and apparently necessitated Turkey's operation to remove the Moldovan family.

"Bizarrely this has enabled Turkey to step in to claim it is 'helping' these camp residents, portraying them as innocent," in a propaganda victory for Turkey, Frantzman said.

But the larger question is whether the same networks that smuggle women and children out of al-Hol also may work to bring out male ISIS members, Frantzman said.

## Kurdistan au féminin 18 juillet 2020

# Le nom d'Hevrin Khalaf donné à un pont en Italie

Dans la ville italienne de Berceto, le nom de la politicienne kurde Hevrin Khalaf (Hevrîn Xelef) a été donné à un pont en Italie. Cette action doit être comprise comme un « acte de solidarité », a déclaré Luigi Lucchi, maire de la commune d'Émilie-Romagne, située au sud-ouest de Parme. Le peuple kurde poursuit sa lutte pour la paix et la démocratie malgré de grandes souffrances et plusieurs massacres. Il n'est que trop humain de rendre hommage à cette résistance, a déclaré Lucchi.

Havrin Khalaf, 35 ans, était la co-présidente du parti Avenir de la Syrie. Capturée sur



ITALIE – Le nom de la politicienne kurde Hevrin Khalaf a été donné à un pont sur la rivière Rivi Freddi dans la ville italienne de Berceto. Khalaf a été assassinée par des djihadistes soutenus par la Turquie en octobre 2019, au Rojava.

l'auto-route M4, près du village de Tirwazî, entre Soulouk et Tall Tamer, elle a été violée et lapidée le 12 octobre par les

membres du «Bataillon 123» de la milice djihadiste «Ahrar al-Sharqiya», des alliés de la Turquie.

Dans le cadre de la cérémonie de nomination du pont sur la rivière Rivi Freddi, deux panneaux avec une photo de Hevrin Khalaf ont été placés aux entrées du pont. L'inscription en italien se lit comme suit: « Elle s'est battue pour les droits des femmes et est morte à cause de notre trahison ». Parmi les personnes présentes à l'événement figuraient la politicienne Paola Gazzolo, membre du parlement régional, la militante Nelly Bocchi du « Réseau de solidarité avec le Kurdistan » et Serkan Xozatli du Comité du Kurdistan italien. Dans leurs discours, ils ont exprimé leur satisfaction que le Conseil de Berceto ait décidé



de commémorer Hevrin Khalaf et son travail de cette manière.

Dans le quartier de Ghiare à Berceto, il y a une gare ferroviaire sur la ligne de Parme à La Spezia. Il a été renommé l'année dernière en l'honneur du combattant YPG Lorenzo Orsetti [Orso]. L'internationaliste de 33 ans de Florence, al-

lias Têkoşer Piling, est décédé le 18 mars 2019 en tant que volontaire lors de l'assaut final des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) contre le dernier bastion de l'Etat islamique al-Baghouz. à Deir ez-Zor, Syrie orientale. Mais ce n'est pas seulement parce que la station porte le nom d'Orsetti que Berceto est entré dans le collima-

teur de l'État turc: le 5 octobre 2019, le chef kurde emprisonné Abdullah Öcalan a reçu la citoyenneté honoraire de la communauté italienne. Berceto n'est que l'une des douze communes d'Italie à avoir franchi cette étape. Öcalan a récemment été nommé citoyen d'honneur à Fossalto au début de l'année. Comme prévu, le

gouvernement turc a réagi durement, exprimant son espoir que les autorités italiennes considéreraient cela comme une « collaboration avec le PKK ». Cependant, les communes concernées n'ont pas été impressionnées par les agitations de l'Etat turc.

**MorningStar**

19 juillet 2020

## KURDISH political prisoner Sebahat Tuncel faces an extra four years behind bars after new charges were brought against her for calling Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a misogynist.

Investigations have been opened by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office over Ms Tuncel "insulting the president," which is a crime under Turkish law.

She was indicted on Saturday for a speech she gave in protest against the detention of Diyarbakir's co-mayors Gultan Kisanak and Firat Anli in October 2018 in which she said: "Tayyip Erdogan is a complete misogynist.

"The [ruling Justice & Development Party] AKP and Tayyip Erdogan are Kurdish enemies..."

Ms Tuncel is the former co-chair of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), a sister organisation of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) that stands in regional and municipal elections.

She was originally detained in October 2016 when prosecutors sought a sentence of up to 130 years in prison on terrorism charges relating to



speeches and activities in her capacity as a politician for a legal political party.

In February 2019 she was sentenced to 15 years in prison for being a member of a terrorist organisation and making propaganda for a terrorist organisation, namely the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Even the slightest hint of criticism of Mr Erdogan is enough

to bring charges of insulting the president, which carries a maximum four-year prison sentence.

Such cases rocketed by 30 per cent in 2019, with 26,115 people investigated, some 5,000 facing court hearings and 2,462 jailed.

Each alleged insult is treated as an individual crime, meaning cumulative sentences for those found guilty.

Last year Burhan Solak was sentenced to 12 years and three months for posts critical of Mr Erdogan.

Ms Tuncel has denied the charge. She said she should be able to criticise a political opponent, warning of an attempt to "prevent freedom and thought, expression and organisation, especially the freedom of politics."

## La nièce d'un haut responsable kurde de Syrie relâchée

La nièce d'un influent homme politique kurde de Syrie, lui-même recherché par Ankara, a été relâchée lundi sous contrôle judiciaire près de deux semaines après son arrestation en Turquie, a rapporté l'agence étatique Anadolu.

Dalia Mahmoud Muslim est la nièce de Saleh Muslim, étroitement lié à l'administration semi-autonome kurde syrienne. Elle était détenue depuis le 15 juillet par les autorités turques.

Selon Anadolu, Mme Muslim a d'abord été interrogée par le bureau du procureur de Mersin, dans le sud de la Turquie. Elle a ensuite été relâchée par un tribunal de la même ville sous contrôle judiciaire, avec interdiction de quitter le territoire.

La famille de Mme Muslim avait accusé les autorités kurdes irakiennes de l'avoir remise à la Turquie alors qu'elle préparait son retour en Syrie



Saleh Muslim, influent homme politique kurde de Syrie

après s'être rendue au Kurdistan irakien voisin pour des soins médicaux. Erbil avait démenti ces accusations.

Haut responsable kurde syrien et oncle de Mme Muslim,

Saleh Muslim avait été interpellé à Prague en février 2018 et avait été libéré quelques jours plus tard, malgré une demande d'extradition d'Ankara.

Il fait l'objet depuis 2016 d'un

mandat d'arrêt émis par les autorités turques en lien avec un attentat commis à Ankara en février 2016 (29 morts). Il a nié toute implication.

Les Kurdes ont établi dans le nord-est syrien une administration semi-autonome sur de vastes territoires à la frontière avec la Turquie.

Cette autonomie de facto est mal vue par Ankara, qui qualifie milices et factions kurdes de groupes "terroristes" et les considère comme une extension en Syrie du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation classée "terroriste" par la Turquie et ses alliés occidentaux.

Selon son père, Dalia Muslim faisait partie des Unités de protection de la femme (YPJ), versant féminin de la principale milice kurde des Unités de protection du Peuple (YPG). Saleh Muslim, son oncle, a longtemps été coprésident du Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD), bras politique des YPG.



July 19, 2020

## COVID-19: Iraq reports over 2,300 new cases, total infections cross 92,000

On Sunday, the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment said it had recorded 2,310 new coronavirus infections, bringing the total number of cases to 92,530 since the outbreak of the disease.

The ministry also reported in a

statement 90 deaths due to the coronavirus and 2,036 recoveries over the past 24 hours.

It also mentioned that 15,737 tests were carried out over the same period, raising the total to 793,024.

According to official data,

about 60,528 patients have recovered from the disease, which is about 65 percent of the total infection numbers. The report also indicated that there are 28,221 active cases, and 3,781 fatalities across the country.

The Iraqi government's High

National Health and Safety Committee announced on Thursday that it was lifting some of the current coronavirus pandemic restrictions across the country, including allowing airports to reopen on July 23.

However, the Iraqi parliament's anti-coronavirus crisis cell said

on Saturday that it considered the government's recent decisions "premature," claiming they would hinder coronavirus containment efforts.

"The decisions of the High Committee for Health and Safety regarding easing procedures, ending the curfew, opening malls, and airports are unscientific and premature," said Jawad al-Musawi, the



head of the parliamentary crisis cell, in a statement. He added

also that progress made to curb the spread of the virus "will be lost" due to the moves.

Musawi claimed further that the lifting of restrictions "is evidence of the fact that there are no specialists in virology, and epidemiology in the [government] committee unlike the countries of the region and the world."



July 21, 2020

## Two Kurdish kolbar brothers shot dead by Iranian border guards in two months: rights group

**T**wo Kurdish brothers, both kolbars, have been killed by Iranian border guards in the space of two months, according to a human rights group.

Arsalan Ahmadi was shot and killed on May 24, while his younger brother Shamzin was wounded on July 9 and succumbed to his injuries on Friday.

"Shamzin Ahmadi was shot twice in the back by border guards on July 9. He was badly wounded and taken across the border to Turkey and spent 8 days in a hospital in Van city," according to the Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRC).

"The body was taken back to the Urmia forensic department on Saturday and it was handed over to the family today and they buried him," Rebin Rahmani, a KHRC board member, told Rudaw English on Monday night.

Kolbars are semi-legal porters who transport goods on their



A Kurdish language class in the western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Photo: Rudaw TV

backs over the border between the Kurdistan Region and Iran. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and lack of employment alternatives, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces.

Monitors estimate around 70,000 people, mostly Iranian Kurds, make a living as kolbars.

Arsalan, the older brother and a father-of-one, was shot dead by Iranian border guards on May 24 near the border village of Koran, according to Rahmani.

Rudaw interviewed two kolbars in May who discussed the dangers of their trade.

KHRC recorded 245 incidents in 2019 that either killed or in-

jured kolbars, in which 56 died and 153 were wounded.

The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, however, recorded at least 237 kolbars that were killed or wounded by Iranian border guards in the same period. Another 23 kolbars froze to death in the mountains, drowned in rivers, or fell from cliffs.



July 20, 2020

## Qamishli hosts book fair despite economic crisis

**T**housands of books in different languages were showcased at a rare book fair on Monday in the city of Qamishli in northeast Syria, known to Kurds as Rojava.

Some 40 publishers and a number of writers filled the shelves with about 120,000 books, mostly in Kurdish and Arabic.

“Various books about religion, ethnicity and history as well as dictionaries have been brought

from many places” said Khabat Ibrahim, who attended the event.

About 700 books were showcased by Turkey-based Kurdish publishers, having been transported to Rojava via the Kurdistan Region. No publisher from the Kurdistan Region participated in the event.

The six-day event comes as the country’s economy further spirals into crisis.

Syria’s economy has plunged further into crisis in recent months, with the Syrian Lira plummeting in value.

Visitors told Rudaw that the prices of some books, especially those sold in US dollars, are so high that they cannot afford them, despite discounts being offered.

“Prices are high and we cannot afford some even if there is a discount,” said visitor Ali Haji.

Visitor Jwan Deriki said that the prices of some books are fair but those sold in US dollars are expensive, especially English dictionaries.

Although most Syrian Kurdish writers write in Arabic, many Kurdish books were on sale - thanks to those brought from Turkey.

**The Washington Post**

July 20, 2020

## Turkey’s crackdown on political opposition finds a favored target: Elected Kurdish mayors

**T**o serve as a mayor from Turkey’s pro-Kurdish political party these days is to fear arrest at any moment and govern in circumstances that hover between stifling and absurd, said Ayhan Bilgen, one of the few who has kept his office during an unrelenting government purge.

Turkey’s clampdown on opposition parties, civil society groups and dissidents intensified after a failed coup in 2016. But the removal of so many elected mayors — representing the will of millions of voters — has been a singularly stark illustration of the dangers facing the country’s democracy, according to human rights groups, analysts and members of the People’s Democratic

Party, or HDP, which promotes Kurdish rights to cultural expression and greater autonomy.

The targeting of municipalities held by the party is becoming a feature of Turkey’s politics, rather than an aberration. In 2016, the authorities also removed elected HDP mayors en masse.

As a result, elected officials have been left in an anxious limbo.

“Every night when we go to bed, we think of the possibility that we might be taken in the morning,” said Bilgen, who is mayor of Kars, in eastern Turkey. “We all carry the concern

that it might happen at any moment. But we have not received any signal that it will happen. This is very risky situation for a state of law.”

The government’s pursuit of the pro-Kurdish mayors is largely tactical. The HDP has long been a political nuisance for Erdogan, able to peel away voters who had formed a part of his base, analysts said. Erdogan’s anti-HDP rhetoric sharpened after he made an alliance with an ultranationalist party, but even that partnership had not stopped the president’s popularity from slipping, said Gönül Tol, the director of the Turkey program at the Middle East Institute in Washington.

“He’s in big trouble. He has nowhere else to turn,” she said, referring to the crackdown on the mayors.

Turkish officials deny their actions against the HDP are political and say they are simply a matter of law. The officials have regularly accused members of the party, which remains legal, of supporting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, a banned militant group that has fought a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. Kurds make up roughly a fifth of Turkey’s population but still struggle for recognition in a nation that privileges Turkish ethnicity.

Last week, another HDP mayor lost her position, according to state media. Police on July 13 detained the mayor, Betül Yasar, on charges that included membership in a terrorist organization, a reference to the PKK, according to the state-run Anadolu news agency. By the next day, her office, in the eastern Agri province, had been placed under the supervision of an acting mayor appointed by the central government.

As the mayors vanish, those who remain in office speak together frequently, sharing tips and black humor to get through their days, said Bilgen, in a video interview from Kars.

“Of course, we joke with one another, wondering whose turn is next,” he said. “There is constantly pressure on us.”

As a province-level mayor, Bilgen is perhaps the most prominent HDP mayor still in office. He hails from Sarikamis, a town surrounded by pine forests about 30 miles from the city of Kars, the provincial capital. After attending university in Ankara, he served in a variety of posts with Mazlumder, an Islamic human rights organization, including as its chairman.

He wrote columns for several newspapers and served as a member of parliament, as well as a spokesman, for the HDP. He is not Kurdish but rather a member of the Turkmen ethnic minority, he said. In 2017, he spent more than six months in jail on charges of belonging to the PKK.

“Right now, there are eight cases against me. And none of these are regarding the municipality. Meaning, none of these have to do with work I have done as a mayor. They are regarding a tweet I posted five years ago, or a press statement I partook in,” he said.

“These are things that make it difficult,” he said, adding that he faced considerable chal-



Ayhan Bilgen, mayor of the eastern Turkish city of Kars, is perhaps the most prominent member of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party still holding that office. (ADEM ALTAN/AFP/Getty Images)

lenges as a mayor in Kars even without the threat of prosecution.

The province, in northeastern Turkey bordering Armenia, is heavily dependent on construction, tourism and agriculture and has suffered because of an economic downturn in Turkey that worsened after the coronavirus pandemic. When Bilgen took office, youth unemployment hovered near 30 percent, he said.

Adding to those difficulties was what he said was “constant” government pressure that included investigations and audits, “as if we are engaging in criminal activity,” he said. The pressure also came from pro-government media, which in the last few months had accused him of diverting public funds to families of PKK militants — referring, he said, to an initiative aimed at channeling charitable donations to low-income families who were suffering during the coronavirus pandemic.

An article in April in the pro-government *Yeni Safak* newspaper accusing him of helping militants declared: “The terrorism file of HDP’s Kars Mayor Ayhan Bilgen is thick.”

Before Bilgen and the other mayors were elected last year, Erdogan had issued a warning to the HDP, suggesting its candidates would not be allowed

to serve.

“If you send the resources given to municipalities by the state to Kandil or use them in terrorism, then immediately, instantly, without waiting, we will appoint our trustees again,” he said in February 2019, referring to the PKK’s headquarters in the mountains of Iraq.

When the election was held the next month, it delivered stunning setbacks for Erdogan’s party, which lost mayoral contests in some of Turkey’s largest cities. Most unnerving for Erdogan were the losses of Istanbul and Ankara, to candidates from the Republican People’s Party, or CHP, the country’s largest opposition party.

By August, the government had indicted three mayors from the HDP who had won landslide victories over candidates from Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party, or AKP. The mayors of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van were replaced with state officials.

Some of the newly elected HDP mayors — including Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, the mayor of Diyarbakir, the largest city in Turkey’s majority-Kurdish southeast region — had promised to investigate the financial dealings of ruling-party members who had previously held the posts.

By February, 32 HDP mayors

had been removed from their office, according to a report by Human Rights Watch that month. The group, citing an examination of 18 court cases, said the mayors’ detentions relied on “vague and generalized allegations against the mayors by witnesses, some secret, and on details of their political activities and social media postings, which fail to establish reasonable suspicion of criminal activity that would justify detention.”

In Turkey’s big cities, the election and its aftermath highlighted the extent to which “mayors have become the real threat to Erdogan,” said Tol of the Middle East Institute. The main challengers came from the CHP, including some who have distinguished themselves with their response to the coronavirus pandemic, she said.

But the story in Turkey’s Kurdish-majority areas is different. There, the stillborn elections have reinforced feelings of marginalization. “The government’s replacement of elected HDP mayors with appointed trustees has fundamentally altered the nature of local government in this region at the expense of voters’ rights and interests,” Nicholas Danforth, a fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington, wrote in a recent briefing about the election results.

Recent polls have indicated “that Kurdish young people feel more distant, and don’t feel like they are part of Turkey anymore,” Tol said. “Kurdish youth avoid talking about politics with Turkish friends.”

Bilgen fretted that the sense of estrangement made it harder for the party to compete for support with the militants.

“People who give their votes to the HDP, who are mostly Kurdish voters, who are constantly being pushed and being othered, don’t feel like they are part of the collective future of this country.”

## With a U.N. Veto, Russia and China Add to Syria's Misery

**M**oscow and Beijing are callously restricting humanitarian aid to Syria's suffering civilians as part of their campaign to prop up Bashar al-Assad. Earlier this month in the United Nations Security Council, the world saw a preview of what Russian and Chinese global "leadership" looks like: a world order where the most vulnerable suffer for the political gains of those at the top.

Twice, Russia and China vetoed U.N. resolutions which would have ensured that lifesaving humanitarian aid could reach millions of suffering Syrians through vital border crossings. The remaining 13 members of the Security Council, along with U.N. leaders and nongovernmental organizations serving Syrians, strongly and publicly advocated for the renewal and reopening of three border crossings. But after days of intense negotiations, the resolution that passed allows only one northwestern crossing point to remain open for the next 12 months. Sadly, this one crossing will not be nearly enough for the millions of Syrians who continue to depend on U.N. assistance to survive.

This nefarious alliance within the Security Council is depriving millions of innocent civilians, including children, of essential food, medicine and care, all in the interest of solidifying the so-called legitimacy of the murderous regime of Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad. No truly great power would behave in this way.



A displaced Syrian boy with packages of humanitarian aid at a camp along the border with Turkey in February. Credit...Rami Al Sayed/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The recent events at the United Nations have confirmed Vladimir Putin's and Xi Jinping's priorities. First, Russia continues to reach new lows in its quest to maintain a foothold in Syria and along the Mediterranean. Russia protects the brutal Assad regime without regard for its atrocities against the Syrian people. The United Nations has reported that Russia has assisted in the bombing of hospitals and civilian centers across Syria. Yet, the Russian regime's active participation in efforts to oppress and deny relief to the Syrian people should come as no surprise. After all, this is how Russia's leaders treat their own citizens.

Second, China has no credible interest in the Syrian conflict, yet it continues to veto resolutions that would provide lifesaving assistance — the overwhelming majority of which is provided by the West — to the Syrian people. The world has witnessed the horrific human rights abuses the Chinese Communist Party commits at home, including

those against Uighurs and Tibetans. The party claims these are internal matters, yet China's actions in the Middle East, which jeopardize the lives of Syrians, show that Beijing is not shy about meddling outside its borders. The United States supports the human rights of the Syrian people, just as we do the Uighurs, Tibetans and other persecuted minorities in China

As Russia and China continue to show their true colors, it is important to remember that the Americans are among the largest humanitarian aid providers to the Syrian people. The United States is leading the way on holding Mr. Assad accountable for the crimes he has committed, and we will continue to stand with the Syrian people by working toward a political solution. Syrians deserve a better and brighter future.

Going forward, the United States, the rest of the U.N. Security Council, private aid groups and other United Na-

tions agencies need to increase the pressure on Russia and China. The world needs to know who is responsible for cutting off this lifesaving assistance to the Syrian people. This is not a confrontation between the United States and Russia and China. It is the entire world versus Russia and China.

In 12 months, when the Syria border-crossing resolution comes up for renewal again, Russia and China will almost assuredly again be on the wrong side of humanity. These actions highlight the attitude of China and Russia on the international stage, where callous indifference toward the rest of humanity is the trademark of their foreign policy.

It is imperative that we push back against this behavior now. If we do not, we will repeat this same fight for years to come. For the sake of the Syrian people, and the rest of the world, we must not let them win.

## The so-called coup in Turkey

**T**urkey's armed forces are known for their efficiency. However, officers bungled the "coup" so badly that many question whether it was staged. Critics describe the events of July 15, 2016 as a "self-coup" organized by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to justify consolidating his grip on power. According to former US Secretary of State John Kerry, "It does not seem to have been a very brilliantly planned or executed event."

We have learned from experience the best practices to conduct a coup:

- Kill or capture the head of government
- Seize control of the media
- Rally public support
- Present someone from among the ranks of coup plotters to reassure the public

Renegade Turkish troops did not follow the script on July 15. When putschists arrived at Erdogan's hotel in Marmaris, he was gone. They missed his check-out time. Erdogan's presidential plane was allowed to take off from the Dalaman airport. F-16s failed to shoot it down. CNN Turk and TRT, two of the least watched news channels, were taken off the air. However, other channels were allowed to broadcast. Social media – Twitter, Facebook and YouTube – continued to operate. The military did not present someone as the face of the rebellion to assure the public that order was maintained. And while pro-Erdogan imams used muezzins to rally popular support, the putschists instructed people to stay indoors.

Erdogan claimed that the Turkish Grand National Assembly was bombed by war planes. However, crater analysis showed that explosions came from within parliament. Upon returning to Is-



tanbul on July 16 at 3 a.m., Erdogan stood atop a bus in Istanbul surrounded by adoring supporters who were waving Turkish flags and chanting his name. It was a made-for-television moment. "The attempted coup is a gift from heaven," he proclaimed.

Within hours, law enforcement started arresting political opponents. Erdogan declared an open-ended state of emergency, allowing rule by decree. More than 40,000 people were detained or arrested in the immediate aftermath of the so-called coup. More than 100,000 members of the military, police and judiciary were dismissed.

The education sector, a bastion of Kemalist secularism, was targeted. More than 1,500 university deans were forced to resign and about 21,000 teachers were suspended or fired.

Erdogan also targeted the judiciary, dismissing 2,754 judges, including members of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, and charging a member of the constitutional court with collusion. Detainees were denied legal counsel for up to 90 days.

Pro-Kurdish HDP parliamentarians and Kurdish community leaders were held under bogus terrorism charges. At least 30 governors were fired. Article 301

of the Criminal Code, which makes "denigrating Turkishness" a felony, was used to silence dissent.

Erdogan turned Turkey into a gulag domestically and a pariah internationally. The World Justice Index ranked Turkey 99th out of 113 countries behind Iran and Myanmar.

He also took steps to dramatically redefine Turkey's international relations, distancing Turkey from the United States. He accused the US of plotting the coup and helping to carry it out. Erdogan singled out General Joseph Votel, head of the US Central Command for "siding with coup plotters." His incendiary remarks fueled anti-Americanism, risking the safety of US citizens in Turkey.

Erdogan raged against the US for prosecuting state-owned Halkbank, which was charged with violating US sanctions on Iran. According to Erdogan, "those who could not succeed in the military coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, are now making a different attempt against our country."

After the "coup," Erdogan intensified an expansionist foreign policy, sending troops to Syria, Iraq and Libya. He repeatedly questioned the Lausanne Treaty for its demarcation of Turkey's borders. Mock dogfights with

Greek air force planes and maritime confrontation in the Eastern Mediterranean have become routine.

Did Erdogan stage the "coup" to advance political goals? It's hard to envision a hoax of such magnitude, especially when the incident resulted in 300 deaths and more than 2,000 injured. More likely, the coup was uncovered; Erdogan let it proceed so it seemed credible, then shut it down.

Erdogan proclaimed that defeating the coup was a victory for democracy. It proved, however, to be a pretext for consolidating dictatorship and purging reformers in civil society.

In 2018, Erdogan called snap presidential and parliamentary elections, leading to constitutional reform that institutionalized sweeping executive powers. Under Erdogan's dictatorship, Turkey is inexorably declining. Its democracy is in shambles; the economy has cratered. Turkey has become an outlier in Europe and a pariah state in NATO.

A military coup or outside interference cannot bring reform. To rein in or remove Erdogan, the international community should support Turks who aspire to a peaceful political transition.

David L. Phillips is director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University. He served as a senior adviser and foreign affairs expert on US-Turkey relations during the Clinton and Obama administrations. He is author of several books about Turkey, including "An Uncertain Ally: Turkey Under Erdogan's Dictatorship."

## Iraqi Kurds fear Turkey's military campaign aims beyond PKK

Iraqi Kurds worry that Turkey's pursuit of PKK militants inside Iraqi Kurdistan could result in a permanent Turkish military presence and moves to undermine their autonomous region.

An Iraqi Kurdish woman confronts riot police as she takes part in a demonstration to denounce the Turkish assault in northern Iraq, in Sulaimaniyah city, in the Kurdish autonomous region of northern Iraq, on June 18, 2020. Turkey launched a rare ground assault into northern Iraq on June 17, deploying special forces against rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is blacklisted by Ankara as a "terrorist" group. Photo by SHWAN MOHAMMED/AFP via Getty Images.

The scope of Turkey's ongoing military operations against Turkish Kurdish militants based in Iraqi Kurdistan is stoking fears in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) that its own future might be at stake as part of broader Turkish designs in the region.

For years, the KRG has acquiesced to Turkish cross-border operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has entrenched itself in Iraqi Kurdistan, using mountainous bases to sustain its armed campaign against Ankara. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant political force in Iraqi Kurdistan, has had an uneasy relationship with the PKK and sought to stay on good terms with Turkey, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the other major party in the region, has been more flexible toward the PKK. While cautious not to anger Ankara, the KDP maintains that the Kurdish problem in



An Iraqi Kurdish woman confronts riot police as she takes part in a demonstration to denounce the Turkish assault in northern Iraq, in Sulaimaniyah city, in the Kurdish autonomous region of northern Iraq, on June 18, 2020. Turkey launched a rare ground assault into northern Iraq on June 17, deploying special forces against rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is blacklisted by Ankara as a "terrorist" group. Photo by SHWAN MOHAMMED/AFP via Getty Images.

Turkey should be resolved politically and that the PKK is not welcome in the region. Beyond the official rhetoric, however, Turkey's expansive military campaign since June has fueled apprehension in KDP ranks over its ultimate objectives. Fears are on the rise that Turkey could seek a lasting military presence to weaken the KRG, cut its land connection to Kurdish areas in Syria and even push for downgrading the KRG's federal status in Iraq.

Turkey has notably reduced PKK activity inside its own borders in recent years. In the cross-border campaign, its first objective has been to paralyze the PKK's movement ability in the group's camp areas, which stretch from the Qandil Mountains on the Iraqi-Iranian border, where the PKK has its headquarters, all the way to the Syrian border to west, including Hakurk, Avashin, Gare, Zap, Metina and Haftanin.

After creating a partial buffer zone in Hakurk last year, Turkey now appears to be seeking a second buffer zone from Haftanin and Metina to Zandira,

and then a third one from Metina to the Kurazaro Mountains that would disconnect Zap and Gare. Two other areas, away from the border, have been in Turkey's crosshairs: the Yazidi-populated Sinjar, known also as Shingal, where the PKK has helped create the Shingal Defense Units, alarming Ankara that "another Qandil" is in the making, and the Makhmour refugee camp near Kirkuk, which is home to thousands of Kurds who fled Turkey in the 1990s.

In Syria, Turkey makes no secret of its intention to turn the enclaves it has seized through four military operations into a contagious buffer zone of up to 35 kilometers (22 miles) in depth, extending all the way to the Tigris River, which forms a short stretch of the Turkish-Syrian border before flowing into Iraq. And on the eastern bank of the Tigris, Ankara plans a second border crossing with Iraq to bypass the existing one, which opens into Iraqi Kurdistan, and secure a route to Tal Afar and Mosul under some form of Turkish military control. Wary of its delicate ties with Kurdistan, Bagh-

dad has dragged its feet on the project, but as soon as Mustafa al-Kadhimi became Iraq's new prime minister in May, Ankara put the issue back on the table.

In sum, all those plans and moves are stoking Kurdish fears that Turkey's objectives in Operation Claw, unfolding phase by phase since last year, go beyond the PKK.

The fourth and fifth phases, codenamed Claw-Eagle and Claw-Tiger, respectively, began in mid-June, with Turkish troops advancing to a depth of up to 30 kilometers (19 miles) and setting up 24 new bases and checkpoints, which bring the number of their deployment sites to more than 50.

Irrked by the scope of the operation, Hoshyar Zebari, a KDP member and former foreign minister of Iraq, tweeted, "The recent Turkish military incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan ... is a very serious geopolitical development. The intensity of the attack is alarming. Calls by Turkish leaders to revive historical claims [over] Mosul province [are] even far more disturbing."

Writer and political analyst Mustafa Shefik, a veteran of Kurdish movements, is among those who believe that Turkey's objective is not limited to pursuing the PKK. "There is concern that Turkey will entrench itself permanently. Such an extensive military deployment cannot be explained away with the PKK's presence in the region. Turkey's intention is to narrow the Kurds' space as much as possible," he told Al-Monitor, adding that Kurdish politicians are closely watching Turkey's moves.



Shefik believes that both Turkey and Iran cannot stomach the KRG's current status, even though it is enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution, and will use any opportunity and all means to undermine it.

Turkey may succeed in curbing PKK movement in mountainous areas to some extent, he said, but "the guerrillas could move to other mountains. Turkey cannot control all that."

According to Shefik, Turkey's military ventures, from Iraqi Kurdistan to Syria and Libya, have drawn on Washington's dwindling profile in the region. "Whether Turkey's presence could become permanent in the long run will depend on how world politics develop," he said. "Russia and Turkey are filling the vacuum resulting from uncertainty in US policies, which began under Barack

Obama and continued under Donald Trump. Trump's indifference allows Turkey to play as it likes. Things might change after the US elections."

The analyst believes that Turkey's plan for a new border crossing at Ovakoy is aimed at disconnecting Kurdish-populated regions as part of a broader strategy to encircle the Kurds. "The Ovakoy plan has military, strategic and security aspects, beyond the economic one. It is not a well-meaning project," he said. According to Shefik, the plan is aimed at disconnecting Iraq's and Syria's Kurds and could face objections beyond the KRG. "Not only Baghdad's attitude but also that of the United States will bear on this issue. Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan are the rear front in the US strategy to stay in Syria. Likewise, Kadhimi could hardly make a move by

looking from the prism of Iraq only," he said.

Shefik blames both Ankara and the PKK for the growing ramifications of Turkey's Kurdish problem. "For years, both Turkey and the PKK have insisted on a military solution, which has done no good to Turks and Kurds alike. Had Turkey managed to produce a solution observing the interests of both sides, it would have been in a much different position on the international stage today. And the PKK's policy, which gives Turkey pretexts [for military action], has been at least as dangerous and erroneous as that of Turkey," he said. The PKK "has done harm" to Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq, he added.

Turkey's actions in Syria have only fed hostility with the Kurds, Shefik said. "Where is

this going to end? They can weaken the Kurds but cannot eradicate them. The Kurds today are in a position to sway balances in the Middle East. They may not have a state, but their role is more influential than that of a state. Turkey's policy will cause it serious troubles both at home and in the international arena," he said.

Turkey's military pressure is forcing the KRG to move closer to Baghdad. Yet Kadhimi is on good terms with the Kurds and needs Kurdistan's support domestically to rehabilitate the Iraqi state, which keeps him from playing the game that Turkey offers. And the Kurds believe that regional and international conditions will help them preserve their influence.



July 20, 2020  
Hiwa Shilani

## COVID-19: KRG announces 7 deaths and 258 new infections in past 24 hours

**O**n Monday, the Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced 7 deaths, 258 new infections, and 106 cases of recovery during the past 24 hours.

The statement from the region's health ministry explained that over the past 24 hours, it had quarantined 74 individuals after they had interacted with infected people, making for a total of 1,816 individuals quarantined in the region in 24 different locations.

The statement also explained that the ministry had conducted 2,202 new tests, and 258 came back positive: 162 were from Erbil province; 50 from Sulaimani; 34 from Garmany

administration; 10 from Halabja province; and 2 from Dohuk.

The ministry stated that 106 people had left treatment centers after their test results came back negative for the virus. It also reported 7 deaths: 3 in Sulaimani; 2 in Erbil; 1 in the Garmany administration; and 1 in the Rapareen administration.

The health ministry also explained that the number of people who have been infected since the outbreak of the pandemic in the region has reached 11,109: 7,421 in Sulaimani; 2,975 in Erbil; 370 in Halabja; and 343 from Duhok, leaving 4,646 active cases in the treatment centers.

The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) anti-coronavirus committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow, Tuesday, with heads of provincial governments and administrative units to decide whether the partial curfew system and ban on movement between provinces in the Kurdistan Region should remain in place.

On Saturday, the province of Erbil decided to extend a partial curfew and a ban on movement between Erbil and other provinces in the Kurdistan Region and in Iraq until Tuesday, when the local government will issue new guidelines.

Tuesday's meeting will discuss

the new decisions on air travel proposed by the federal Iraqi government and the efforts necessary to implement the required preparations to maintain public health.

The KRG's anti-coronavirus committee will also debate the prospect of reopening public facilities.

On Thursday, the Iraqi government's High National Health and Safety Committee announced that it was lifting some of the current coronavirus restrictions, including allowing airports to reopen on July 23.

## En Turquie, le gouvernement Erdogan conduit des maires pro-kurdes démocratiquement élus

La répression par la Turquie des partis d'opposition, de la société civile et des dissidents s'est intensifiée après un coup d'État manqué en 2016. Mais la destitution de tant de maires élus – représentant la volonté de millions d'électeurs – est une illustration particulièrement sombre des dangers pour la démocratie du pays, selon des groupes de défense des droits de l'homme, des analystes et des membres du Parti démocratique populaire, ou HDP, qui promeut les droits kurdes à l'expression culturelle et à une plus grande autonomie.

Cibler les municipalités au parti devient une caractéristique de la politique turque plutôt qu'une aberration. En 2016, les autorités ont également massivement révoqué les maires élus du HDP.

En conséquence, les élus ont été laissés dans une situation troublée.

«Chaque soir, lorsque nous nous couchons, nous pensons à la possibilité d'être emmenés le matin», explique Bilgen, maire de Kars, dans l'est de la Turquie. «Nous sommes tous préoccupés par le fait que cela puisse arriver à tout moment. Mais nous n'avons reçu aucun signal indiquant que cela se produira. C'est une situation très risquée pour l'état de droit.»

La poursuite par le gouvernement des maires kurdes est en grande partie tactique. Le HDP a longtemps été une nuisance politique pour Erdogan, qui pourrait chasser les électeurs qui faisaient partie de sa base, ont déclaré des analystes. La rhétorique anti-HDP d'Erdogan

a été affûtée après avoir formé une alliance avec un parti ultranationaliste, mais même ce partenariat n'a pas freiné la popularité du président, a déclaré Gonul Tol, directeur du programme Turquie au Middle East Institute à Washington.

«Il a de gros problèmes. Il n'a nulle part où se tourner», a-t-elle déclaré, faisant référence à la répression des maires.

Les responsables turcs nient que leurs actions contre le HDP soient politiques et affirment qu'elles sont simplement une question de droit. Les responsables ont régulièrement accusé des membres du parti, qui sont toujours légaux, de soutenir le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, ou PKK, un groupe militant interdit qui se bat contre l'Etat turc depuis des décennies. Les Kurdes représentent environ un cinquième de la population turque, mais luttent toujours pour être reconnus dans un pays qui favorise l'ethnie turque.

La semaine dernière, un autre maire du HDP a perdu son poste, selon les médias d'État. La police a arrêté le maire Betul Yasar le 13 juillet pour des accusations, notamment d'appartenance à une organisation terroriste, une référence au PKK, selon l'agence de presse officielle Anadolu. Le lendemain, son bureau dans la province orientale d'Agri était supervisé par un maire nommé par le gouvernement central.

Alors que les maires disparaissent, ceux qui restent au bureau parlent souvent ensemble, partageant des conseils et de l'humour noir

pour passer leurs journées, a déclaré Bilgen dans une interview vidéo de Kars.

« Bien sûr, nous plaisantons et nous nous demandons qui est le prochain », dit-il. « Nous sommes sous pression constante. »

En tant que maire au niveau provincial, Bilgen est peut-être le maire le plus éminent du HDP encore en fonction. Il est originaire de Sarikamis, une ville entourée de forêts de pins à environ 50 kilomètres de la ville de Kars, le siège du comté. Après avoir fréquenté l'université d'Ankara, il a occupé divers postes chez Mazlumder, une organisation islamique de défense des droits de l'homme, notamment en tant que président.

Il a écrit des colonnes pour divers journaux et a été député et porte-parole du HDP. Il n'est pas kurde, mais plutôt membre de la minorité ethnique turkmène, a-t-il déclaré. En 2017, il a passé plus de six mois en prison pour appartenance au PKK.

«Il y a actuellement huit affaires contre moi. Et rien de tout cela ne se rapporte à l'église. Cela signifie qu'aucune de ces choses n'a à voir avec le travail que j'ai accompli en tant que maire. Ils parlent d'un tweet que j'ai publié il y a cinq ans ou d'un communiqué de presse auquel j'ai participé », a-t-il déclaré.

« Ce sont des choses qui rendent les choses difficiles », a-t-il dit, ajoutant qu'en tant que maire de Kars, il faisait face à des défis importants même sans la menace de poursuites.

La province, dans le nord-est de la Turquie, à la frontière de l'Arménie, est fortement dépendante de la construction, du tourisme et de l'agriculture et a souffert d'un ralentissement économique en Turquie qui s'est aggravé suite à la pandémie de coronavirus. Lorsque Bilgen a pris ses fonctions, le chômage des jeunes a fluctué de près de 30%, a-t-il déclaré.

En outre, ce qu'il a dit était une pression « constante » du gouvernement, y compris des enquêtes et des audits, « comme si nous étions engagés dans des activités criminelles », a-t-il dit. Des pressions sont également venues des médias pro-gouvernementaux, qui l'avaient accusé ces derniers mois de détourner des fonds publics vers les familles de militants du PKK – faisant référence à une initiative visant à canaliser les dons de charité vers les familles à faible revenu qui ont souffert pendant la guerre. pandémie de Coronavirus.

Un article d'avril dans le journal pro-gouvernemental Yeni Safak accusé d'avoir aidé des militants a déclaré: « Le dossier terroriste du maire de Kars HDP Ayhan Bilgen est gros. »

Avant que Bilgen et les autres maires ne soient élus l'année dernière, Erdogan avait lancé un avertissement au HDP suggérant que ses candidats ne devraient pas siéger.

« Si vous envoyez les fonds donnés par l'Etat aux municipalités à Kandil ou que vous les utilisez dans le terrorisme, nous allons immédiatement, immédiatement, sans attendre, renommer nos administrateurs

», a-t-il déclaré en février 2019, faisant référence au siège de la PKK dans les montagnes de l'Irak.

Lorsque les élections ont eu lieu le mois suivant, cela a provoqué un merveilleux revers pour le parti d'Erdogan, qui a perdu les matches des maires dans certaines des plus grandes villes de Turquie. Le plus troublant pour Erdogan a été les pertes d'Istanbul et d'Ankara, face aux candidats du Parti républicain du peuple, ou CHP, le plus grand parti d'opposition du pays.

En août, le gouvernement avait inculpé trois maires du HDP qui avaient vaincu des candidats du Parti de la justice et du développement d'Erdogan, ou AKP. Les maires de Diyarbakir, Mardin et Van ont été remplacés par des fonctionnaires de l'Etat.

Certains des maires nouvellement élus du HDP – dont Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, le maire de Diyarbakir, la plus grande ville de la région kurde du sud-est de la Turquie – avaient promis les relations financières des membres du parti au pouvoir qui occupaient auparavant les postes, enquêter.

En février, 32 maires du HDP ont été démis de leurs fonctions, selon un Rapport de Human Rights Watch ce mois-là. Le groupe, citant une enquête sur 18 poursuites judiciaires, a déclaré que les arrestations de maires étaient fondées sur « des accusations vagues et générales contre les maires par des témoins, certains secrets, et des détails sur leurs activités politiques et des rapports sur les médias sociaux, qui ne soulèvent pas de motifs raisonnables d'activités

criminelles qui justifieraient la détention. «

Dans les grandes villes de Turquie, les élections et leurs conséquences ont mis en évidence à quel point «les maires sont devenus la véritable menace pour Erdogan», a déclaré Tol du Middle East Institute. Les principaux challengers venaient du CHP, y compris certains qui se sont distingués par leur réponse à la pandémie de coronavirus, a-t-elle déclaré.

Mais l'histoire de la majorité kurde de Turquie est différente. Les élections mort-nées là-bas ont renforcé le sentiment de marginalisation. « Le remplacement des maires élus du HDP par le gouvernement par des administrateurs nommés a fondamentalement changé la nature du gouvernement local dans cette région au détriment des droits et des intérêts des

électeurs », a déclaré Nicholas Danforth, membre du Wilson Center à Washington. , dans un briefing récent sur les résultats des élections.

Des sondages récents ont montré « que la jeunesse kurde se sent plus éloignée et ne fait plus partie de la Turquie », a déclaré Tol. « La jeunesse kurde préfère ne pas parler de politique avec des amis turcs. »

Bilgen craignait que le sentiment d'aliénation ne rende plus difficile pour le parti de se disputer le soutien des militants.

« Les gens qui votent pour le HDP, qui sont pour la plupart des électeurs kurdes, qui sont constamment poussés et changés, ne se sentent pas comme faisant partie de l'avenir collectif de ce pays. »

The New York Times

July 22, 2020  
By The Editorial Board

## The Hagia Sophia Was a Cathedral, a Mosque and a Museum. It's Converting Again.

Changing the secular space back into a religious one is a risk for the World Heritage Site. In 2019, the Hagia-Sophia was the most-visited museum in Turkey. Credit... Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times

The editorial board is a group of opinion journalists whose views are informed by expertise, research, debate and certain longstanding values. It is separate from the newsroom.

On Friday, after 86 years as a museum, the great Hagia Sophia in Istanbul will once again echo with Muslim prayers. To Turkish Islamists, the conversion marks the fulfillment of a long-held dream of restoring a symbol of Ottoman



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visiting the Hagia Sophia on July 19. Credit... Turkish President Office

grandeur. For many others around the world, the change is a dismaying setback for one of the world's greatest architectural and cultural landmarks.

Grandly arrayed on a hilltop

over the Bosphorus where it divides Europe and Asia, the Hagia Sophia's 15-century history is suffused with events, myths and symbols important to both East and West. Built in the sixth century by a Byzan-

tine emperor, Justinian I, as the premier cathedral of the Roman Empire and dedicated to "Holy Wisdom," it was for almost 1,000 years the largest church in the world, a temple so majestic that upon its dedication the emperor is said to have proclaimed, "Solomon, I have surpassed thee!" Its influence on history and architecture and religion, Christian and Islamic, is profound.

When Constantinople fell to Ottoman forces in 1453, Mehmed II the Conqueror converted it to a mosque, the Great Mosque of Ayasofya, and with time the Byzantine mosaics were covered over or destroyed and four great minarets were raised around the structure. It remained a

mosque until 1934, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the secular, modern republic of Turkey, transformed the Hagia Sophia into a museum, exposing long-concealed mosaics and marble floor decorations, in what was seen as a bid to free the monument, and the nation, from myths of sacred conquest.

It became the most-visited museum in Turkey, attracting about 3.7 million visitors in 2019. It was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, identified as a landmark of exceptional cultural significance to all humanity, worthy of conservation.

Why President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan chose to reverse Atatürk's decision is a matter of some conjecture. A product of an Islamist political tradition, he said he was unable to sleep on the night he issued the presidential decree making the change. Only a year earlier he had argued against the conversion. What is clear is that despite the great powers Mr. Erdoğan has seized over 17 years in power as prime minister and president, his current political standing is shaky, and he needs to feed his nationalist base.

In his address to the nation on July 10 announcing the conversion, Mr. Erdoğan made no mention of Atatürk. There was no need — his speech was preceded by a ruling of the Council of State, the highest administrative court of the country, nullifying Atatürk's decree. And in his speech, Mr. Erdoğan extensively quoted Sultan Mehmed's will, calling down frightful curses on anyone who would change the Hagia Sophia's status.

Reversing Atatürk's secular legacy plays well among Turkish nationalists, for whom the museum inside the Hagia Sophia long represented a humiliating foreign imposition and a blot on the Ottoman past they glorify. And evidently not only nationalists. The conversion of the museum has drawn little criticism within Turkey and among Muslims outside, and all political parties save one applauded the change.

The reaction from Christian leaders has been relatively muted, perhaps for fear of fomenting sectarian strife. Pope Francis said only that he was "pained," while the Eastern Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, who as a resident of Turkey needs to be

cautious in his pronouncements, expressed regret that the Hagia Sophia would cease being "a place and symbol of encounter, dialogue and peaceful coexistence of peoples and cultures."

UNESCO was more direct. A statement from the organization said it "deeply regrets" that the decision was made without any prior discussion, adding: "Hagia Sophia is an architectural masterpiece and a unique testimony to interactions between Europe and Asia over the centuries. Its status as a museum reflects the universal nature of its heritage, and makes it a powerful symbol for dialogue." The statement also warned that alterations to physical structures or changes to accessibility of the site could violate the 1972 World Heritage Convention, to which Turkey was a signatory.

Mr. Erdoğan, for his part, has sought to reassure the world that when not being used for prayer, the Hagia Sophia would remain open to the public, and that Christian frescoes would remain on display, though covered with curtains during Muslim prayers.

It is critical that at least on

these matters, he be held to his word. It is a sad reflection on the state of Turkey's democracy that a monument of such global importance and value should become an authoritarian leader's political tool. But what's done is done; there is no chance that Mr. Erdoğan would reverse his decree, even if he could, without firing the fury of his base.

But the Hagia Sophia remains a World Heritage Site in the most profound sense of the designation, a structure of surpassing beauty with a deep overlay of the histories of East and West, Christianity and Islam. That need not preclude prayer; nor should it preclude Turks from feeling a powerful connection to a monument that has been the pride of their nation for centuries. But like the damaged Notre-Dame in Paris, or the Acropolis in Athens, that must not undermine its calling as a place of exceptional significance to all humanity.

In converting the Hagia Sophia to a mosque, Mr. Erdoğan has assumed the weighty responsibility of a custodian of one of the world's cultural landmarks. He ought not be allowed to forget that.

LE TEMPS

20 juillet 2020  
By Luis Lema

## Erdogan, le croquemitaine

Dans quelques jours, la basilique Sainte-Sophie, ce bijou byzantin, va redevenir un lieu de culte pour les musulmans. Piétinée, l'idée que cet édifice millénaire pourrait revêtir une autre signification pour toute l'humanité qui ne se résumerait pas à son seul usage religieux. Oublié, aussi, l'héritage de Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, ce «père des Turcs»

qui a été le ciment intouchable de ce pays pendant des décennies. A sa place, voilà Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ce «néo-sultan» qui consolide ainsi sa place de croquemitaine quasi universel. De la Syrie à la Libye, du Kurdistan au Caucase, le président turc passe désormais pour l'incarnation du mal absolu. Et ce n'est pas Emmanuel Macron qui dira le contraire, lui qui

évoque désormais sans sourciller une «Turquie criminelle».

Il est difficile de trouver des circonstances atténuantes à un Erdoğan qui, quatre ans après le coup d'Etat qui a failli l'emporter, a rempli les prisons de son pays, a pratiqué des purges à outrance, et a envenimé de nouveau, sans doute pour très long-

temps, les relations des Turcs avec les Kurdes, fusent-ils de Turquie ou de Syrie. Pourtant, les critiques à l'encontre de cette figure incarnant les nouvelles «démocraties illibérales» auraient plus de poids si elles s'accompagnaient d'une fermeté, en matière de défense des valeurs, qui fait aujourd'hui cruellement défaut loin à la ronde.

Un Erdogan qui «islamise» Sainte-Sophie? L'image n'est pas très éloignée, en réalité, de celle d'un Donald Trump empoignant la Bible alors que les policiers autour de lui jouent de la matraque. Tétanisés par la peur d'un nouvel afflux de réfugiés, incapables en outre de trouver la moindre solution en Libye, c'est-à-dire à leur porte, les Européens manient eux aussi tout ce qu'ils peuvent, sauf la cohérence en matière de principes et de valeurs. Quant à Emmanuel Macron, impossible de ne pas voir, dans ses déclarations virulentes contre le président



Un Erdogan qui «islamise» Sainte-Sophie? L'image n'est pas très éloignée, en réalité, de celle d'un Donald Trump empoignant la Bible alors que les policiers autour de lui jouent de la matraque. — © Turkish Presidential Press Service/AFP Photo

turc, le reflet de ses propres faiblesses, à l'heure où la

France se cabre sur «la défense de la République» et s'en prend de toutes sortes de manières au communautarisme, avant tout musulman. La Turquie affirme aujourd'hui, de manière très agressive, sa projection internationale hors de la sphère européenne. Cela ne devrait pas surprendre une Europe qui, pendant longtemps, n'a pas voulu de la Turquie sans jamais vraiment oser se le dire à haute voix. Mais aujourd'hui, elle ne peut pas se laisser faire et doit se forcer à jouer jeu égal.



July 22, 2020

## COVID-19: Kurdistan announces 252 new infections, eases restrictions

The Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced 13 deaths and 252 new infections with the emerging coronavirus within the past 24 hours.

A ministry statement specified that health professionals in the autonomous region conducted a total of 2,241 new tests, with 252 of them coming back positive. According to government figures, 130 of these were in Sulaimani province, 98 in Erbil, 14 in Duhok, and 10 in Halabja.

The statement also specified that 13 patients who had previously contracted the highly-contagious disease had died in the past day and marked 122 as having recovered.

Since the first case of the virus was confirmed in the Kurdistan Region in March, 11,361 people have been infected and 432 have died.

On Tuesday evening, the Kurdistan Region's interior minister announced in a press conference that some anti-coronavirus restrictions would be relaxed in coordination with local governments of the four provinces and independent



Kurdistan Region Interior Minister Reber Ahmed speaks during a press conference in Erbil, July 21, 2020. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

administrations.

"We discussed the issue of the resumption of airport activity, border movement with neighbouring countries Turkey and Iran, and also the movement of citizens within the region with other provinces," Reber Ahmed, Minister of interior said following the meeting with the region's local officials, stating that commercial truck drivers will be allowed into the Kurdistan Region provided that they are tested for COVID-19.

"Our airports will not be eligible to resume flights until the 1st of August. The ban on movement to

and from other Iraqi provinces will remain the same, but with exceptions for trade, especially for the agricultural and poultry sectors," Ahmed added.

The minister also explained that there will be more easing of restriction limiting movement between the region's provinces. To accomplish this, a plan to grant individuals electronic licenses permitting them to make such travel will be issued by provincial governments.

He continued, "Currently, we feel that there is a good level of awareness among the people, but

more still needs to be done. The implementation of the measures is the responsibility of the citizens and we ask the media to play a greater role in raising awareness."

"We formed a committee to follow the official working hours of government institutions because a number of them do not adhere to preventive measures and we will take action against them," added Ahmed.

"We also decided to keep the gyms, celebration halls, and cafes serving hookahs closed. Additional instructions will be issued regarding mosques, Eid al-Adha prayer, and Friday prayers during the coming days."

Cross border travel to Iran and Turkey, Ahmed concluded, "will only be for the essential travel because the virus is still circulating." The coronavirus has infected more than 14.8 million people worldwide and killed over 611,000 according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or under-reporting.



July 23, 2020

## Black waters: Oil spills pollute northeast Syria creeks

In his village near a northeast Syria oil facility, Abdulkarim Matar said he has watched his horses die because of oil spills that have polluted waterways in the resource-rich region.

The landowner said winter floods caused oil waste from a nearby storage facility to spill over onto his land.

"The oil waste... sticks to our soil and agricultural lands" the 48-year-old said, complaining of a poor harvest in the village of Abu Hajar.

"I have lost two Arabian horses because of the river water", he added, explaining they had drunk water contaminated by oil.

Oil pollution in Syria has been a growing concern since the 2011 onset of a civil war that has taken a toll on oil infrastructure and seen rival powers compete over control of key hydrocarbon fields.

In the Kurdish-held northeast, a large storage facility in the Rmeilan oil field in Hasakeh province is of particular concern, according to the Dutch peace organisation PAX.

Oil leaks from the Gir Zero storage facility have been suspected since at least 2014, the latest in March, it said in a June report.

Thousands of barrels have leaked out into creeks in the area over the past five years, threatening the health and livelihoods of people in dozens of villages, according to PAX and Samir Madani, co-founder of oil shipping website Tanker Trackers.

Matar said the polluted tributary running past his land "contaminates our groundwater and constantly emits odours".



Horses have reportedly died after drinking water polluted by oil in Syria's Kurdish-controlled northeastern Hasakeh province DELIL SOULEIMAN AFP

"It's also a hotbed for diseases, including skin infections," he added, of the waters that eventually feed into the Khabour river in the city of Hasakeh.

- Oil-soaked sheep -

With the help of US forces, a semi-autonomous Kurdish administration controls some of Syria's most sought-after oil fields in the northeast and relies on them as a key source of revenue.

The major Rmeilan field, located near a US airbase, has been among the Syrian Kurds' most prized assets since regime forces withdrew early on in the war.

But oil wealth comes at a heavy cost for livestock farmers like Hasan Abdul Mahmoud, who is in his thirties.

In another creekside village, he pointed to a thick coating of oil dripping from the fleece of one of his sheep, blaming it on oil waste floating down from the Gir Zero facility, near the village of Tall Adas.

"Since the start of the conflict, the water coming from Tall Adas has become polluted with oil and

the most affected are the sheep," Mahmoud said.

Around him, several herders explained how their sheep and cows have died because they drank oil contaminated water.

Residents too suffer heavily from the pollution, Mahmoud said, describing the foul odour of gas and crude oil wafting over the area at dusk.

"We regularly have to take our children to the doctor to put them on a respirator because of the fumes," he said.

Compounding the situation, makeshift oil refineries have cropped up across the northeast in recent years, dumping oil waste in the waterways, PAX said.

These informal refineries receive oil from nearby fields and process it to provide benzine, gasoline and diesel to locals.

- 'Difficult solutions' -

In one such refinery near the town of Al-Qahtaniya, plumes of black smoke rose overhead as workers walked past blackened storage tanks, their faces covered with scarves.

Exposure to oil and its waste products, whether through inhalation or skin contact, has created problems for many in the trade, including Ahmad Mohammad who works at the refinery.

He complained of constant headaches and chest pains because of fumes and said the rudimentary set-ups used to burn the crude have burnt him and his coworkers.

"We have to do this because there are no other jobs," said the 37-year-old, his fingers tainted black. "I'm forced to do this to feed my children."

The oil contamination has tainted water supplies in a region also grappling with an outbreak of the novel coronavirus that has so far infected six people, one of whom died, according to data collated by the United Nations.

Wim Zwijnenburg, the author of the PAX report, said people along the creeks use local ground water, now likely contaminated, or surface water for basic household use.

But "they are reluctant now to use these water sources due to the fact they are polluted", he said.

Kurdish authorities said they are aware of the problem but claim there is very little they can do.

"It is one of our biggest environmental concerns," said Berivan Omer, an environmental official with the Kurdish administration.

"But solutions at this stage are difficult to find because they require large finances and the right expertise," she told AFP from her office in Qamishli.

## Coronavirus: les vols commerciaux reprennent en Irak après quatre mois d'arrêt

**L**es vols commerciaux ont repris jeudi dans la plupart des aéroports en Irak, après quatre mois de fermeture en raison du nouveau coronavirus, dans un pays où l'épidémie progresse toujours mais où le déconfinement est vital pour maintenir à flot une économie à genoux.

Jeudi matin, plusieurs avions ont décollé de l'aéroport international de Bagdad vers le Liban et la Turquie, ont constaté des journalistes de l'AFP. Le personnel masqué et ganté vérifiait les tests des

passagers, qui doivent prouver qu'ils ne sont pas porteurs du virus pour pouvoir voyager. Les aéroports de Bassora et Najaf, dans le sud, ont également repris leurs vols alors que ceux d'Erbil et Souleimaniyeh, dans le nord, resteront fermés jusqu'au 1er août, ont indiqué les autorités de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Les autorités irakiennes, qui ont décrété un temps le couvre-feu total, ont déjà assoupli le confinement alors que le nombre de contaminations ne cesse de grimper. Près de

100.000 cas de nouveau coronavirus ont été officiellement recensés en Irak, dont plus de 4.000 décès.

Les Irakiens sont ainsi autorisés à circuler entre 6 heures du matin et 21H30 le soir, soit plusieurs heures de plus qu'avant, quand les autorités avaient opté dans la plupart des provinces pour un confinement entre 18 heures et 5 heures du matin. Le confinement sera entièrement levé après la fête de l'Aïd al-Adha fin juillet. Les centres commerciaux ont également rouvert et

seuls les restaurants et cafés n'ont toujours pas le droit de recevoir des clients, se limitant aux livraisons.

L'épidémie de Covid-19 est particulièrement inquiétante en Irak car le pays, deuxième producteur de pétrole de l'Organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (Opep), vit la pire crise économique de son histoire récente. La chute du cours du baril ne cesse de creuser son déficit alors que le confinement a privé des millions d'Irakiens de revenus.



July 23, 2020  
By Hiwa Shilani

## Kurdistan Region stresses need for active participation in prosecution of ISIS terrorists

**M**asrour Barzani (right), Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), with the head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD), Karim Ahmad Khan, July 23, 2020. (Photo: KRG) ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani on Thursday stressed the importance of a swift trial for the accused members of the so-called Islamic State and extended the region's willingness for more active cooperation in the trials.

Prime Minister Barzani made the comments in a meeting with the head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD),



Kurdistan Region Interior Minister Reber Ahmed speaks during a press conference in Erbil, July 21, 2020. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

Karim Ahmad Khan, in Erbil. During the meeting, Prime Minister Barzani and Khan spoke about the ongoing preparations for the trial and sentencing of Islamic State criminals.

Meanwhile, the special adviser and head of the UN investigation team highlighted the legal and technical measures to try terrorists on crimes committed against humanity.

Khan also mentioned the process of collecting evidence and electronic archiving for those crimes and thanked the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for its coordination and cooperation.

On his side, Prime Minister Barzani stressed the need to expedite the prosecution of Islamic State criminals, stressing that the court would represent an important step to achieve justice and prevent the recurrence of such crimes in the future.

"We are ready to provide all forms of coordination and cooperation, and the Kurdistan Region must be an effective participant in the court's procedures because it is the most affected by ISIS compared to the rest of the other regions," Barzani concluded.

## Jailed Kurdish leader says opposition can unite against Erdoğan

**J**ailed former co-chair of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Selahattin Demirtaş said that the opposition should unite to defeat President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the next elections.

In a lengthy interview with *Cumhuriyet* published on Tuesday, Demirtaş said that the HDP does not need a formal alliance for the parliamentary or presidential elections.

But he said that other opposition parties should come together to collaborate with the HDP around democratic principles and solutions, and said that no one can be elected as president in the current system without cooperation.

"In my opinion, it is necessary to reach consensus on a new constitution, a democratic parliamentary system, freedom of association, freedom of expression and a free press, and an independent and impartial judiciary," he said.

Demirtaş said the opposition is too engaged with Erdoğan's agenda, and instead needs to come together to form its own solutions to Turkey's problems by holding open-air forums, meetings, rallies and peaceful protests, and engaging directly with the public.

"Any peaceful demonstration is both a constitutional right and a guarantee of a democratic opposition," he said. "The opposition should take care not to break with the public."

The Kurdish politician has been in prison since November 2016 for his alleged links to ter-



rorism and faces multiple life sentences if found guilty. Demirtaş is among scores of Kurdish politicians who have been ousted from their positions or jailed on the same charges.

Last month, Turkey's Constitutional Court ruled that his lengthy imprisonment violated his rights to freedom and had exceeded a reasonable period. He told *Cumhuriyet* that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had changed Turkey's political system through a "shock doctrine" approach since the 2016 failed coup attempt but that it could not establish a sustainable system of governance, and that "70 percent of the society is against the one-man regime".

Demirtaş is known for his vocal criticism of Erdoğan and was a key contributor to the party's successes, preventing the AKP from winning a legislative majority in elections in 2015. The polls were re-run later the same year. The HDP's election performance in 2018 also prevented an AKP majority.

Turkey accuses Demirtaş and many other officials of the HDP of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), accusations they all deny. The PKK has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy for four decades in a conflict that has cost almost 40,000 lives. The group is labelled as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Demirtaş was reluctant to be drawn on questions over Kurdish nationalism in the *Cumhuriyet* interview, but he likened the plight of Kurds in Turkey to the movement for racial justice and equality in the United States and the killing of George Floyd, an African-American, by police.

He said that the biggest problem facing Turkey and the globe was capitalism.

"Today, the biggest cause of poverty, unemployment, hunger, misery, death, wars and exploitation is the neoliberal capitalist system. The only antidote to capitalism is socialism," he said.





July 23, 2020

## Report: 180 civilians killed, wounded in past five years by Turkish bombing of Kurdistan Region

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) on Thursday stated that over 180 civilians were killed and wounded in the Kurdistan Region due to Turkish bombing over the past five years.

The committee said in a report that from August 2015 until now, 85 civilians were killed in the border areas of the Kurdistan Region because of Turkey's bombings by warplanes, on-ground operations, and artillery strikes.

The report pointed out that 15 civilians were killed and 95 injured during the first half of 2020.

It also mentioned the evacuation of hundreds of villages in the border areas of the region due to the Turkish bombing, stressing that the lives and property of the people are now vulnerable.

CPT is a specialized independent monitoring body of the Council of Europe. It consists of independent, impartial experts such as lawyers, medical doctors, and specialists of prison or police matters.

Turkey has intensified its bombing of the border areas in the Kurdistan Re-



A residence in the Kurdistan Region that was damaged by recent Turkish airstrikes targeting alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) positions, May 27, 2020. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

gion, as well as launched ground incursions since mid-June as part of its operation against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), leaving human and material losses.

The Kurdistan Region has condemned the Turkish strikes, which have led to the death of civilians, and called on the PKK and Turkey to take their fight elsewhere.

Baghdad also condemned the Turkish attacks, summoned the Turkish ambassador twice, and delivered two strongly worded protest notes. The federal go-

vernment also deployed border guards at several points in Dohuk province, on the Turkish border.

The PKK is headquartered in the Qandil Mountain range and has bases strewn across the Kurdistan Region's border areas to the north and east. Turkey—as well as the United States and NATO—considers the armed group a “terrorist” organization and has in recent years upped its efforts against it and its perceived affiliates, both domestically and regionally.

In recent years, Turkey

has carried out military operations against alleged PKK positions based in the Kurdistan Region with continued regularity, with troops sometimes crossing into the region up to 20 kilometres deep in some areas to target the guerilla group.

Ankara has killed dozens of civilians unaffiliated with the PKK during its bombings and has caused extensive damage to farms and killed locals' livestock. Residents of such areas have long called on the Turkish military and the PKK to take their fighting elsewhere.

## En Turquie, première prière islamique à Sainte-Sophie transformée en mosquée

**R**eccep Tayyip Erdogan a assisté à la cérémonie, vendredi, avec de nombreux fidèles. Le président turc espère galvaniser son électorat grâce à la conversion de la basilique.

Aux cris de « Dieu est grand », des milliers de fidèles musulmans ont convergé, vendredi 24 juillet, vers la célèbre basilique Sainte-Sophie d'Istanbul, pour prendre part de loin à la première grande prière islamique depuis que la « grande église » a été transformée en mosquée, le 10 juillet, à la demande du président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Tout le quartier historique a été bouclé, la circulation a été interrompue, l'encadrement policier était impressionnant.

Des milliers d'hommes et de femmes se sont massés dans les endroits prévus pour eux, avec séparation des sexes, sur le parvis de la basilique, sur les places et dans les rues adjacentes, au mépris des pratiques de distanciation sociale mises en place en raison de l'épidémie due au coronavirus. Nombre de fidèles avaient campé là toute la nuit pour être sûrs d'entendre la prière scandée depuis les minarets qui flanquent l'imposante basilique.

Joyau de l'architecture byzantine, construite en 537 par l'empereur Justinien, Sainte-Sophie a été transformée en mosquée après la conquête ottomane de Constantinople, le 29 mai 1453. Après plus de quatre siècles d'existence en tant que mosquée, elle est devenue un musée en 1934, sous la présidence de Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, soucieux de la « restituer à l'humanité ».

### M. Erdogan veut galvaniser son électorat

Le 10 juillet, Erdogan a annoncé sa reconversion en mosquée après que le Conseil d'Etat – la plus haute juridiction administrative de Turquie – a déclaré illégal son statut de musée.



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan (centre) lors de la prière du vendredi, à la grande mosquée Sainte-Sophie, à Istanbul, le 24 juillet. MUSTAFA KAMACI / AFP

Rendre la basilique byzantine au culte musulman, un statut conféré par le sultan Mehmet II dit le Conquérant lors de la prise de Constantinople en 1453, était un « rêve de jeunesse » caressé par Erdogan et par le mouvement islamique turc depuis longtemps. Cette conversion est cohérente avec l'objectif affiché du président, qui veut islamiser davantage son pays, jusqu'à rompre avec les fondements laïques de la République posés par Mustafa Kemal dit Atatürk, le père de la République née des cendres de l'Empire ottoman en 1923.

Apparemment, Sainte-Sophie convertie en mosquée restera ouverte aux touristes en dehors des heures des prières. L'accès en sera gratuit. Des rideaux amovibles blancs ont été installés pour recouvrir les mosaïques byzantines de l'édifice aux moments des prières, l'islam prohibant strictement les représentations figuratives.

Trois imams et cinq muezzins ont été nommés par la direction aux affaires religieuses, devenue désormais plus puissante dans l'organigramme de l'Etat turc que les ministères de l'intérieur et des affaires étrangères réunis. La cérémonie se voulait historique. En début d'après-midi, le

président Erdogan a pris place dans la basilique pour assister à la première prière musulmane communautaire jamais dite en quatre-vingt-six ans. Avant la prière, il a récité des versets du Coran, un exercice dont il est coutumier. L'événement avait des relents de campagne électorale.

Officiellement, les prochaines élections n'auront pas lieu avant 2023, mais M. Erdogan, dont la popularité est érodée après dix-huit ans de pouvoir absolu, espère galvaniser son électorat grâce à ce coup d'éclat.

### Un motif de fierté nationale

Friand de sondages, il sait que son parti islamo-conservateur, l'AKP, est en perte de vitesse. On l'a vu lors des dernières élections municipales, au printemps 2019, lorsque les grandes villes turques (Istanbul, Ankara, Adana, Antalya, Mersin) ont été remportées par l'opposition kémaliste. L'économie est entrée en récession, le revenu des ménages a diminué de moitié par rapport à ce qu'il était en 2012, le chômage fait des ravages, surtout parmi les jeunes. Il s'agit donc de détourner l'attention des faux pas commis par son gouvernement, notamment de la mauvaise gestion de l'économie. Présentée comme une « nouvelle

conquête », la prise de Sainte-Sophie est devenue un motif de fierté nationale, susceptible de fédérer les islamistes, les nationalistes et l'homme de la rue. « Sainte-Sophie est à nous, elle a été conquise, nous en faisons ce que bon nous semble », ont dit des hommes rencontrés dans la péninsule historique d'Istanbul. Pour le moment, ce stratagème fonctionne, une large partie de la population soutient cette cause.

L'ambition d'Erdogan est double. Rehausser sa cote de popularité, mais aussi adresser un signal à l'Occident. A travers cette réappropriation, il vient rappeler à ses partenaires occidentaux à quel point la Turquie a changé. Sous sa houlette, elle apparaît désormais plus islamisée, plus éloignée de l'Europe, plus agressive sur la scène internationale.

Le défi n'est pas sans risques. La conversion de Sainte-Sophie est susceptible de nuire davantage aux relations déjà difficiles avec les Etats européens, notamment la Grèce, avec laquelle les tensions sont à leur comble.

M. Erdogan aime gouverner par la tension. La date choisie par lui pour sa prière islamique, le 24 juillet, n'est d'ailleurs pas fortuite. Elle marque le 97<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la signature du traité de Lausanne, qui fonde les frontières de la Turquie actuelle et que le président, nostalgique de l'Empire ottoman, invite souvent à réviser.

Les problèmes et les fronts militaires s'accroissent. La Turquie patage dans le borbier syrien, elle mène une offensive risquée en Libye, elle exacerbe les tensions en Méditerranée orientale en menant des activités d'exploration et de forage gazier en grande partie dans la zone maritime grecque. Elle promet d'être un casse-tête lancinant pour ses partenaires traditionnels au sein de l'Union européenne et de l'OTAN.



July 24, 2020  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## COVID-19: Iraq reports over 2,400 new daily infections, 90 fatalities

**O**n Friday, Iraq's Ministry of Health and Environment announced over 2,400 new cases of the highly contagious coronavirus, as well as 90 deaths from the disease.

The ministry reported that 18,234 tests for the virus had been carried out over the same period, raising the total of such tests to 879,399.

According to official data, about 71,268 patients have recovered, around 68 percent of the total number of those had been infected.

Recoveries refer to a patient who no longer carries a detectable virus in their system, but it does not necessarily mean that they are well. A substantial number of those who catch the virus report lingering symptoms, such as fa-

tigue and muscle weakness, even after they are officially declared "recovered."

The ministry's report also stated that there are 29,231 active cases, while there have been 4,212 fatalities across the country.

Since July 1, Iraq has regularly reported over 2,000 new infections daily, and its death toll has nearly doubled.

On Thursday, Iraq's three international airports reopened for commercial flights in the center and south of the country, as the government moves to ease restrictions which had been imposed to limit the spread of the virus.

The Kurdistan Region has not yet opened its airports, but authorities have said they plan to do so on August 1.



A health worker administers a coronavirus test at a drive-thru testing facility in the central Iraqi city of Najaf, on July 15, 2020. (Photo: AFP)

The Iraqi airports that welcomed regular passengers for the first time in months are located in the country's capital, as well as in the cities of Najaf and Basra. Neighboring Iran, the original epicenter of the disease in the Middle East, began to ease its restrictive measures in April. The consequence was a significant rise in infections, and last Friday, Tehran was obliged to reimpose

some of its earlier restrictions.

Turkey responded to the resurgence of the virus in Iran two days later, by suspending flights to and from that country, which had resumed on June 16.

Such developments, which other countries have also experienced as they loosen their coronavirus restrictions, suggest that Iraq now is also likely to suffer an increase in the spread of the coronavirus.



24 juillet 2020

## Turquie Eau dans le gaz et vice versa

**C**omme si produire des tomates en Turquie les avait rendues gratuites, Erdoğan promet à tous les bons républicains ottomans bientôt une quasi gratuité du gaz, dès que quelques petits problèmes annexes auront été réglé avec la Grèce et la Russie. Encore une promesse de plus pour 2023.

Il paraît qu'au large de nos côtes, extensibles depuis quelque temps, une fortune se-

rait retenue prisonnière, comme une princesse méditerranéenne attendant d'être libérée par son prince charmant, néo-ottoman et à moustaches de préférence.

Tous les justificatifs sont donnés par Erdoğan pour ses expéditions en Lybie, sa petite guerre des îles, et ses rodomontades à propos de Chypre : il y va de l'avenir de la république et des Turcs en 2023.

On en oublierait presque la guerre officielle qui continue ses bombardements contre les forces et populations kurdes en Irak et en Syrie Nord.

Le gaz est présent désormais à tous les étages des ministères de la république, et on va l'installer à Sainte Sophie aussi, si ça continue. C'est l'enfumage du petit peuple, le gazage pour la partie qui n'y croirait pas.

Mais, quels sont les faits ? Et les méfaits...

Depuis peu, dix-huit navires de guerre, rien que ça, escortent un navire d'exploration gazière sous-marine, le Fatih, jusque dans les eaux territoriales de la Grèce, à 130 km de l'île de Rhodes, mais à moins de sept kilomètres de la côte sud de la Turquie. L'héritage d'un certain traité de Sèvres, bientôt à son terme, puis des échanges de populations sous Atatürk

créent une certaine confusion dont le "républicain nationaliste néo-ottoman" profite abondamment. Les limites territoriales sont paperassières, et leurs extensions maritimes aussi. La marine grecque est sur le coup. Les "diplomaties" européennes "s'alarment".

Ce sont sous les eaux chypriotes que la princesse gaz serait la plus belle et évanescence, mais au large de la Lybie, la manne financière serait possible aussi. 5 765 milliards de mètres cubes, promettent les estimations.

Erdoğan veut bien partager, à condition d'imposer sa grosse part. En tant qu'héritier de l'Empire, la princesse sous marine lui reviendrait. Et il prend les devants pour qu'elle ne s'évapore.

Non, je ne suis pas en train de vous faire croire que la diplomatie guerrière d'Erdoğan repose seulement sur un produit volatile.

Déjà, un accord avec Poutine, qui commande à Gazprom, avait mis en émoi l'UE, puisque désormais un gazoduc, "Turkstream" passant sous la mer noire, amènera 31 milliards de mètres cube. Déjà la moitié ira à la Turquie, le reste cheminera en Europe, évitant le point noir de

## Ankara et les forages au large de Chypre

La Turquie a annoncé de nouvelles opérations de forage de gisements gaziers en Méditerranée



l'Ukraine. Poutine, toujours lui, déjà bien présent pour tempérer les ardeurs de notre Reis en Syrie, participe aussi du tour de Lybie, dans une équipe concurrente. Là aussi, certainement pas pour la gloire diplomatique. Bref, le gaz ne fait pas la politique, mais ça y participe.

Quand on regarde de près les choses, on constate que depuis le début du XXIe siècle, le jeu d'alliances et de mésalliances d'Erdoğan, ses petites et grandes guerres régionales,

l'ont conduit en suspension au dessus de nulle part, et en négociations de rapports de forces avec tout le monde. Et qui finalement reste son meilleur allié ? L'Union Européenne, par crainte de l'immigration, donc leurs opinions publiques xénophobes.

Les bisbilles autour des "droits de l'homme et de la démocratie" sont là pour faire oublier la présence militaire tolérée de la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, sur des territoires qui ne sont pas les siens, et les trahisons

post-Daech en Syrie. Serviront-elles toujours pour ce qui est là une future histoire de gros sous ?

La princesse à l'énergie fautive sera-t-elle la dernière aventure qui remettra Erdoğan à sa place ?

On ne va pas quand même pas aller prier à Sainte Sophie pour que les grands groupes gaziers fassent pression !

Forbes

July 24, 2020  
By Paul Iddon

## Iraqi Kurds Have To Make Do With Antiquated Armor

The Iraqi Kurds have their own autonomous region and their own armed forces, the Peshmerga. However, they are unable to purchase or import military hardware since they don't have an independent state, and Baghdad hasn't supplied the region with any modern armor. As a result, Iraqi Kurdistan has

to make do with limited and mostly antiquated armored forces.

The Iraqi Kurds gained a lot from the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Their autonomy became officially enshrined in the Iraqi constitution, and their region not only remained mostly peaceful during the dark years

of the Iraq War (2003-11) but even flourished.

During the invasion, the Peshmerga fought alongside the U.S. military against the Iraqi Army. That gave the Kurds the chance to snatch up some heavy weapons from Hussein's collapsing army. As a result, the Kurdish fighters, who hi-

therto mostly fought in the mountains using guerilla tactics, now had their own tanks.

However, the equipment they captured was hardly cutting edge. Far from it. It mostly consisted of vintage Soviet-era armor such as T-55 and T-62 tanks.

When relations between Kurd-

istan and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki became strained in the early 2010s, the Iraqi government even made an issue over the fact that the Peshmerga had these old weapons, insisting they should all be in the possession of the federal state.

Maliki modernized Iraq's armed forces during this period, taking delivery of 140 M1 Abrams main battle tanks from the United States and helicopter gunships from Russia, the most significant Iraqi military build-up since Saddam Hussein's rule.

The Peshmerga's armored forces, on the other hand, weren't modernized at all during this period.

The Iraqi Kurds at that time even tried to convince the U.S. not to sell Iraq F-16 jet fighter-bombers, fearing Maliki might be tempted to invade their region if he possessed such aircraft, something he once hinted he might do.

Peshmerga T-55 and T-62 tanks saw combat during the war against the Islamic State (ISIS) group, including in offensives that pushed back the group from the region's frontiers in the summer of 2016 during the lead-up to the lengthy Iraqi battle to liberate Mosul from ISIS rule.

However, those tanks clearly showed their age and lacked any kind of active protective systems, which are of crucial importance for surviving attacks from anti-tank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades.

During this period, the U.S. also supplied the Peshmerga with armored vehicles, mostly Humvees and Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs) but no tanks. The U.S. insisted on upholding its one Iraq policy and supplied the vehicles and weapons for the Kurds through Baghdad



An example of a Peshmerga T-55 tank at a front-line during the war against the Islamic State. (Photo ... [+] by Vianney Le Caer/Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty Images) LightRocket via Getty Images

rather than delivering them directly to the autonomous region.

The Iraqis apparently meddled with some of the MRAPs allocated to the Peshmerga since they arrived in Kurdistan without any side armor, essentially making them death traps if used in combat. One former U.S. Army Special Forces member went so far as to say that "riding in those MRAPs with all the amount of RPG 29s in the country is committing suicide."

While the delivery of a few dozen MRAPs and several Humvees did help the Peshmerga's war effort against ISIS, it was far from a major improvement or upgrade of the autonomous region's armored forces.

U.S. diplomat Peter Galbraith pinned the blame on former prime minister Maliki and his successor Haider al-Abadi for blocking any potential U.S. supply of Abrams tanks to the Peshmerga "even when the Kurds were the only ground force stopping ISIS from taking the entire north of Iraq."

Such tanks would have been a massive upgrade for the Peshmerga's antiquated armored forces and would undoubtedly have bolstered the defenses and security of the region substantially.

Ironically, rather than receiving any Abrams tanks, the Iraqi Kurds found themselves coming under attack from Iraqi M1s in October 2017.

Iraqi forces promptly seized the disputed Kirkuk region from the Kurds that month.

Clashes subsequently ensued along the border demarcating the autonomous region from federal Iraq between the Iraqi Shiite-majority Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) paramilitaries and the Peshmerga. In one firefight, the Kurds successfully took an Iraqi Abrams tank those paramilitaries were using against them out of action with an anti-tank missile.

Then in December 2017, General Dynamics Land Systems withdrew maintenance and technical support for Iraq's Abrams fleet since that support was conditioned on Iraq keeping all its Abrams tanks firmly under the control of the army. As a result, many of those tanks soon became inoperable.

Baghdad has since taken delivery of a new fleet of Russian-built T-90 tanks.

The Peshmerga's armored forces, on the other hand, still mostly have to make do with the hardware captured in 2003.

The Kurds have improvised and modified civilian vehicles for potential combat. One me-

chanic in the Kurdish city of Dohuk, for example, modified civilian vehicles, by adding armor and making them more suitable for tough off-road terrain, for the Peshmerga.

Such improvised armored vehicles are often described as real-life versions of the kind of cars in the Mad Max movie franchise by the media, especially ones built by the Syrian Kurds — who have even more limited armored forces than their Iraqi Kurdish brethren.

In one dramatic use of an armored car, a Peshmerga named Ako Abdulrahman successfully used his bulletproof BMW to save several people from an ISIS siege on Kirkuk.

In October 2016, shortly after the U.S.-backed Iraqi operation to liberate Mosul from ISIS began, militants belonging to the group infiltrated the city of Kirkuk and occupied important buildings, killing several security forces and civilians alike.

Abdulrahman drove his BMW into ISIS' line of fire countless times, using it to shield civilians and then drive them to safety. He saved the lives of dozens of people this way.

By the time the militants were ousted from the city and their takeover plot foiled, Abdulrahman's BMW was riddled with 123 bullet holes but had proven itself the ideal rescue vehicle for those dramatic circumstances.

Such modified vehicles are certainly useful for transporting troops to and from the battlefield, evacuating wounded personnel and rescuing civilians besieged by small arms fire but not much else. They are certainly no substitute for tanks.

The fact remains that Iraqi Kurdistan's armored forces are very old and of limited use for any future wars the region might find itself having to fight. And that's not likely going to change anytime soon.

The New York Times

July 24, 2020  
By Livia Albeck-Ripka

## Refugee and Author Long Detained by Australia Gets Asylum in New Zealand

**B**ehrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian exile, said the news showed the vast differences between the two neighboring countries on human rights.

CAIRNS, Australia — Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian refugee and writer who documented abuses under Australia's tough immigration policies during his yearslong detention on a remote Pacific island, has been granted asylum in New Zealand.

Mr. Boochani has spent the past several months in Christchurch, where he applied for refugee status after being given a temporary visa to attend a writers' festival last November.

On Thursday — which was also Mr. Boochani's 37th birthday, and exactly seven years since he was first detained on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea — he received official notification that his application for a one-year working visa in New Zealand had been successful.

Mr. Boochani said he planned to apply for permanent residency, which is a pathway to citizenship. "It's like the end of a chapter of my life," he said, adding that his news was bittersweet because he feared for those still being detained by the Australian authorities.

Under the Australian government's strict policies for those who attempt to reach the country by boat, thousands of people, many from the Middle East and Africa, have been detained indefinitely on Manus



Mr. Boochani in Christchurch, New Zealand, last year. Credit...Kai Schwoerer/Getty Images

and the island nation of Nauru. "The policy exists, and so that's why it's really difficult to fully enjoy this," he said.

Mr. Boochani said that the vast differences in the way he had been treated by the Australian and New Zealand authorities revealed a chasm in their leadership on human rights.

"We ask people in the international community to look at this country, to look at Australia and what they have done and what they are doing," he said, adding that he hoped others in detention would also eventually be given asylum. "They must release them."

Mr. Boochani, who formerly worked as a journalist with the Kurdish-language magazine Werya, fled Iran in 2013 after

the police arrested several of his colleagues and raided his office. He spent a few months in Indonesia before trying to travel to Australia by boat, but he was intercepted by the Australian Navy and sent to Manus Island.

There, he documented human rights abuses against himself and others, raising awareness of the squalid conditions and deteriorating mental health of the men he lived with — many of whom had fled persecution in their home countries.

Mr. Boochani's posts on social media, which detailed self-harm and suicides by detainees, as well as inadequate access to health care, helped expose policies that had largely been obscured by extremely limited access to the

camps for journalists and activists.

In early 2019, Mr. Boochani was awarded Australia's highest-paying literary prize for his book "No Friend but the Mountains," which was written entirely via WhatsApp. It further detailed abuses in the camps, cementing him as a voice for those who had largely been silenced by Australia's strict policies. He could not attend the awards ceremony because of his detention.

In November, he received a visitor visa to New Zealand in order to attend the WORD literary festival in Christchurch. He has been living there since, working as a researcher with the University of Canterbury.

## Kurdistan au féminin 23 juillet 2020

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

# L'Iran a exécuté 6 Kurdes en une semaine

**E**n 2018, les Kurdes représentaient 28 % des personnes exécutées en Iran, alors qu'ils ne constituent qu'environ 10 % de la population. L'année 2020 s'annonce pire. En effet, en une semaine, 6 Kurdes ont été exécutés par le régime iranien.

Le régime iranien a exécuté l'un des prisonniers kurdes détenus dans la prison de Nexede. Kamil Qadri Eqdem, originaire de Piranşar, a été exécuté par pendaison le matin du 22 juillet à la prison centrale de Nexede où il était détenu.



Selon Hengaw, l'une des organisations de défense des droits humains du Rojhilat (Kurdistan de l'Est sous l'occupation iranienne), le nombre de prisonniers kurdes exécutés en une semaine avec Kamil Qadri

Eqdem était de six. La manifestation de militants des droits civiques de Piranşar devant la prison de Nexede n'a pas empêché l'exécution.

L'Iran a exécuté le 14 juillet les prisonniers politiques kurdes

Diako Rasoulzadeh et Saber Cheikh Abdollah, accusés de « guerre contre Dieu », à la prison d'Oroumieh. Les deux hommes avaient été arrêtés en 2013 et après une année sous la torture dans les services du renseignement de la ville de Mahabad, ils avaient été condamnés à mort.

Selon les documents obtenus par Hengaw, au moins 6 prisonniers kurdes ont été exécutés en une semaine dans les prisons de Kirmashan, Ourmiyê et Nexede.

**The Guardian**

July 23, 2020

## Behrouz Boochani granted refugee status in New Zealand

**E**xclusive: Journalist who became the voice of the victims of Australia's punitive detention system granted a visa after seven-year ordeal Behrouz Boochani, the Kurdish Iranian exile and journalist who became the voice of those incarcerated on Manus Island, has had his refugee status formally recognised by New Zealand, and granted a visa to live there.

He said he finally felt secure "knowing that I have a future".

"I am very happy to have some certainty about my fu-

ture, I feel relieved and secure finally," he told the Guardian from Christchurch. "But, at the same time, I cannot fully celebrate this because so many people who were incarcerated with me are still struggling to get freedom, still in PNG, on Nauru, in detention in Australia. And even if they are released, Australia's policy still exists."

Boochani was officially notified by New Zealand's government that his claim for asylum had been accepted on Thursday, exactly seven years to the day after his arrival in Australia in 2013.

The date – 23 July – is also Boochani's birthday. He turned 37.

Over the course of six years held within Australia's offshore processing regime in Papua New Guinea, Boochani emerged as the voice of the Manus Island detention centre and a tireless campaigner for the rights of those detained by Australia.

He has written extensively for the Guardian on life in detention and won Australia's richest literary prize for his book, *No Friend But the Mountains*, which is being made into a film. He secured a temporary

visa to fly to New Zealand in November last year as a guest at a writers' festival, and lodged a claim for protection when he arrived.

Behrouz Boochani: how I got out of my Manus Island hell – video

Boochani has now been granted a one-year work visa, and can apply for permanent residency in New Zealand, a pathway to citizenship. He has lived in Christchurch since leaving Papua New Guinea.

He says while some New Zealand politicians have sought to politicise his asylum claim – in the context of an election there this year –

his reception in his new homeland has been overwhelmingly welcoming.

At the height of the pandemic, people left gifts and flowers at Boochani's door. "People care about each other in New Zealand. They pushed back when some politicians tried to demonise me, they said 'we don't accept that hate speech'," he said.

He is stopped in the street regularly by people who recognise him, and want to talk.

And Christchurch, he told the Guardian, suited him. He rides a bicycle around the city – "I feel free on my bike" – and hikes in the hills surrounding the city.

"This city is still traumatised," Boochani said, in reference to the mosque shootings of March last year, "but this city is building itself, people are bringing life into this city, day by day, and there is a very peaceful community here."

Boochani is working still: collaborating with Canterbury, Melbourne and New South Wales universities on projects about climate change and displacement, and writing another book, a collection of short stories.

He said he speaks to, and continues to advocate for, those he was incarcerated with who remain in detention. "I have a responsibility to those people, and to that six years of my life. That's why I must work still. I cannot forget about those people, or ignore that time, that would be immoral."

A Kurdish investigative journalist in his homeland, Iran, Boochani was persecuted for his reporting and his support for Kurdish rights, and fled for Australia in 2013.



Behrouz Boochani, the Kurdish Iranian exile and journalist who spent years detained on Manus Island, has been granted refugee status in New Zealand Photograph: David Fanner/The Guardian

He arrived by boat on Christmas Island, an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean, on 23 July, the first place he reached where he could claim asylum.

He was forcibly transferred to Manus Island just over a month later, to a detention facility that was later found to be illegal. He would spend 2,269 days held by Australia's offshore processing regime.

After a protracted court case, he and nearly 2,000 others were compensated for their unlawful detention.

Over the six years he was held on Manus Island and in Port Moresby, Boochani witnessed friends shot, stabbed and murdered by guards on Manus Island, saw others die through medical neglect, and watched others descend into mental anguish and suicide.

He was twice tortured for several days in the notorious Chauka solitary confinement block, in the now-demolished Manus detention centre. He was jailed for eight days for reporting on a hunger strike in the centre, which was put down by force by PNG police.

But throughout he maintained a role as a working journalist on the island, the most prominent – and, initially, the sole – voice bearing witness from within the secretive regime.

"I am still a journalist in this place," he told Guardian Australia in 2015. "This is my work, my duty."

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July 24, 2020

## COVID-19: KRG reports 222 new cases after conducting about 2,000 tests

The Kurdistan Region's Health Ministry on Friday announced it had recorded 222 new coronavirus cases over 24 hours after health workers conducted about 2,000 tests for the virus.

A ministry statement reported that 127 patients had recovered from the disease over the same period. Nine more people also passed away due to the virus, according to the ministry.

Since the outbreak of the virus, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities have confirmed about 12,000 coronavirus cases from over 185,000 tests for the disease. Of the total, close to 5,000 remain active, 464 have died, and nearly 6,600 have recovered.

Since the spike in late May, Sulaimani province has had a relatively higher proportion of new cases, as authorities across the autonomous region eased lockdown measures and trade resumed with Iran.



A healthcare facility in the Kurdistan Region where COVID-19 patients are treated. (Photo: Archive)

Iran has the worst outbreak in the Middle East and from where it spread to regional states.

Of the total active cases, about 4,000 are in Sulaimani, which is over four times the number of infections in Erbil province. The two areas have relatively similar populations. Duhok and Halabja provinces, both having lower population counts, have active cases numbered in the dozens.

Youngest Case of COVID-19 in Kurdistan

On Friday, health authorities confirmed the Kurdistan Region's youngest person to contract the coronavirus, which is that of a 17-day old baby in the city of Duhok.

Many members of the child's family have been infected with the disease, including the parents and siblings. While their father is currently quarantined, the rest of the immediate family is in the hospital.

The child's uncle, who is virus-free, is caring for them at the

moment at the same hospital where the rest of the family is.

"Seven persons in our family have caught the virus," the child's uncle, Omar, told Kurdistan 24. The number includes the child's parents and siblings. "Only the conditions of my father and mother are a little bad; the rest are stable," he added.

It is still unclear how the child became infected.

"This newborn is the youngest case of the coronavirus recorded in the Kurdistan Region," a doctor at the Duhok hospital told Kurdistan 24. "Their condition is very stable and has not shown any symptoms of the disease."

On Thursday, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) anti-coronavirus committee issued a new order, tightening the region's preventive measures to fight the spread of the disease.



25 juillet 2020  
Par Anne Andauer

## Erdogan hisse l'étendard de l'islamo-nationalisme sur SAINTE-SOPHIE

En rappelant que l'islam avait jadis conquis la basilique de Constantinople, le président, allié électoral de l'extrême droite, exalte l'identité turque et ses rêves d'empire.

TURQUIE Le 29 mai 1453,

jour de la prise de Constantinople, le sultan Mehmet II traverse la ville à cheval jusqu'à Sainte-Sophie, où il fait prononcer la prière musulmane. Cet acte fondateur convertit en mosquée la vieille basilique byzantine. À 21 ans, le «

Conquérant » accomplit le rêve de sa dynastie. Il assoit son prestige et renforce son règne, qui durera encore vingt-huit ans.

À quoi pense Recep Tayyip Erdogan, 567 ans plus tard, alors qu'il entre dans l'histoire de la

République de Turquie comme le dirigeant qui a rendu Sainte-Sophie à l'islam ? Lui qui, après dix-huit ans de pouvoir, s'est réjoui d'avoir exaucé son « plus grand rêve de jeunesse » et payé sa « dette à l'Histoire » ?

Les grincheux sont prévenus. Dénoncer cette décision - ils sont peu nombreux, en Turquie, à l'avoir fait ouvertement - c'est « avoir honte de la conquête d'Istanbul », un « sentiment qui ne devrait pas exister chez quiconque se dit turc et musulman », assénait le président le 14 juillet.

L'islamo-nationalisme, ou le national-islamisme : tel est, depuis quelques années, le cheval de bataille de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, dont on oublie souvent qu'il ne préside plus seul aux destinées de son pays. Pour faire voter ses lois, il dépend du soutien d'un parti d'extrême droite, le Parti d'action nationaliste (MHP). Les paroles de son chef, Devlet Bahçeli, donnent le ton de la politique intérieure et étrangère turque presque autant que celles du président.

Dans le discours officiel, Sainte-Sophie n'est donc pas seulement célébrée comme un édifice musulman, mais aussi comme un bien acquis, fondamentalement turc, marqueur de souveraineté. Sainte-Sophie sert à exalter cet islamo-nationalisme dont Tayyip Erdogan n'est pas, tant s'en faut, l'inventeur.

« Erdogan ne personnifie pas une rupture, insiste Étienne Copeaux, historien spécialiste de la Turquie. Il est le produit d'une longue évolution qui a, dès le début, défini la nation turque comme musulmane. La transformation de Sainte-Sophie en mosquée est le point d'aboutissement du nationalisme turc. »

Certes, « jusqu'à Erdogan, les instances étatiques ne le formulaient pas ainsi », concède l'historien. « Je compare ça à une plante qui aurait grandi souterrainement pendant un siècle et arriverait au grand jour, sans complexe, avec Erdogan, en bénéficiant d'une longue durée puisque son pouvoir est celui qui a duré le plus longtemps dans l'histoire de la République. »



Autrement dit, vu de Turquie, le débat sur Sainte-Sophie s'articule moins autour des concepts d'islam et de laïcité qu'autour des notions de nation et de souveraineté. Ou plutôt, autour de l'instrumentalisation de ces notions par le pouvoir actuel à des fins électorales.

Paradoxalement, pendant les premières années de son règne, Recep Tayyip Erdogan semblait prêt à braver les tabous de l'ère républicaine - la tutelle de l'armée, les questions kurde et arménienne... Sur ces deux derniers points, il a fait demi-tour. « Sans doute s'est-il rendu compte que si on reconnaissait le génocide arménien et si on réglait à fond le problème kurde, alors il fallait remettre à plat la définition de la nation, et notamment en évacuer l'élément religieux », avance Étienne Copeaux. Alors que son régime chancelle, sans doute a-t-il aussi choisi la facilité, considérant qu'il valait mieux se placer du « bon côté » (numériquement parlant) des failles qui traversent la société - musulmane sunnite et ethniquement turque dans sa grande majorité.

Consolider sa base

« On pourrait penser qu'Erdogan a rouvert Sainte-Sophie aux prières parce qu'il a jugé qu'il était assez puissant sur la scène nationale et internationale pour le faire, commentait récemment le journaliste

Rusen Çakir, l'un des meilleurs connaisseurs de l'islam politique turc. En réalité, c'est l'inverse. Erdogan agit ainsi précisément parce qu'il est faible. »

Aux sondages qui attestent l'effritement de son électorat, notamment le rejet des jeunes et le désamour d'une partie de la classe moyenne conservatrice, sont venus s'ajouter des signaux d'alerte concrets : la perte des grandes villes, dont Istanbul et Ankara, aux municipales de 2019, la crise économique aggravée par l'épidémie, et l'émergence, ces derniers mois, de deux partis nés d'une scission de sa formation, l'AKP.

Consolider sa base, à défaut de séduire de nouveaux électeurs, telle est la priorité du chef de l'État d'ici aux prochaines élections, programmées pour l'instant en 2023. Tous les moyens sont bons pour étouffer l'opposition et exalter l'identité nationale que le pouvoir entend incarner. Juste après la transformation de Sainte-Sophie en mosquée, l'AKP et son allié MHP ont ainsi adopté une loi qui fragilise les barreaux d'avocats, figures de la défense des vestiges de l'État de droit. Ils viennent d'en rédiger une autre qui accroît considérablement le contrôle des réseaux sociaux. En même temps qu'il resserre l'étau sur la société turque, Recep Tayyip Erdogan multiplie les passages en force sur

la scène internationale. Achat d'un système de défense anti-aérienne russe, interventions militaires en Syrie et en Libye, forages gaziers et pétroliers en Méditerranée orientale... Partout où il le peut, le dirigeant s'efforce d'imposer « l'intérêt national turc » à des Européens trop divisés pour réagir et aux États-Unis qui, pour l'heure, le ménagent.

Là encore, le contraste est frappant avec l'époque des premiers mandats de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, pendant lesquels la Turquie - en quête d'influence régionale - accordait la priorité aux initiatives diplomatiques. « Aujourd'hui, même si elle continue d'exploiter son soft power en prétendant à un rôle de leader du monde musulman sunnite, on voit clairement que la Turquie s'appuie de plus en plus sur la force militaire pour défendre ses intérêts », constate Soli Özel, professeur de relations internationales à l'université Kadir Has d'Istanbul.

Les chiffres le confirment. Le budget du ministère turc de la Défense a augmenté de 16 % cette année (un record après celui du ministère de la Santé), quand celui des Affaires étrangères baissait. Quant à l'autorité des Affaires religieuses, dont dépend désormais Sainte-Sophie, son budget a bondi de 335 % en dix ans.

## Un sultan agressif qui défie l'Union européenne

**L**ES RÊVES européens d'une Turquie libérale, héritière d'Atatürk et de ses convictions laïques, appartient désormais au jardin des illusions. Le projet néo-ottoman de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, le chemin nationaliste, islamiste et autoritaire qu'il emprunte depuis plusieurs années, l'affirmation de ses ambitions néo-impériales autour de la Méditerranée et son combat mené contre la culture occidentale l'ont éloigné de ses alliés traditionnels. Le grand perturbateur du Moyen-Orient est, avec la Russie de Vladimir Poutine et la Chine de Xi Jinping, l'un des principaux troubles internationaux.

Erdogan est devenu le principal problème de l'Union européenne. Son chantage aux migrants, son combat contre les forces kurdes de Syrie alliées à la coalition internationale anti-Daech, les forages illégaux en Méditerranée orientale, dans la zone économique de Chypre, son style autocrate et les violations des droits de l'homme qui se multiplient depuis la tentative de coup d'État en 2016 : la plupart des actions de la Turquie posent un problème de sécurité au continent européen ou bien heurtent de front les valeurs de l'Union. En transformant l'ancienne basilique Sainte-Sophie en mosquée, en faisant appel au passé ottoman pour nourrir sa volonté de revanchisme identitaire, le président turc met sans doute le point final à une époque où il était facile d'emprunter le pont entre l'Orient et l'Occident. « Il fait un pas supplémentaire dans l'engrenage qui pourrait nous mener vers une guerre des civilisations et des religions », commente un diplomate français.

La Turquie est aussi devenue le problème des alliés de l'Otan. Pendant longtemps ils avaient fermé les yeux et fait silence sur les provocations d'Erdogan, notamment sur l'achat par la Turquie de missiles S400 à la Russie, qui considère l'Alliance atlantique comme un ennemi. Ce temps-là a été renvoyé à l'histoire par Emmanuel Macron, qui a se-

coué le cocotier en annonçant la « mort cérébrale de l'Otan ». Les propos du président français ont brisé le tabou turc et rendu public le malaise des alliés vis-à-vis de ce partenaire qui a longtemps gardé le flanc sud-est de l'Otan. Au sein de l'Alliance comme vis-à-vis de l'UE, la Turquie d'Erdogan est devenue un allié de moins en moins fiable, qui joue sa propre partition et mène une politique de la force et du fait accompli. Mais si l'Union européenne peut facilement abandonner son projet de rapprochement avec la Turquie, l'Otan, qui fonctionne par consensus, ne peut ni exclure un membre, ni lui imposer des sanctions.

En transformant Sainte-Sophie en mosquée, Erdogan se compare indirectement au sultan Mehmet II qui, avec la conquête de Constantinople en 1453, avait déjà islamisé une première fois la basilique chrétienne du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, symbole de l'Empire romain d'Orient. En convoquant le passé et en réécrivant l'histoire, il démolit tous les symboles d'Atatürk, dont il discrédite sans cesse la politique laïque. Ce faisant, il détourne l'attention populaire de ses échecs en politique intérieure : crise économique, inflation, mécontentement populaire lié aux 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens accueillis par la Turquie. Erdogan joue de l'indifférence américaine et des hésitations européennes pour profiter de l'appel d'air et s'implanter sur la rive sud de la Méditerranée.

Mais c'est avec la France que les relations sont les plus tendues. Paris a déploré la transformation de Sainte-Sophie. « Ces décisions remettent en cause l'un des actes les plus symboliques de la Turquie moderne et laïque », a regretté Jean-Yves Le Drian. Emmanuel Macron voudrait aussi « sortir de l'hypocrisie » les relations entretenues entre l'UE et la Turquie, dont « le projet panislamique est régulièrement présenté comme anti-européen ». Il dénonce les ingérences du pouvoir turc, qui veut promouvoir l'agenda nationaliste et religieux d'Ankara dans la diaspora en France. Mais



c'est surtout l'intervention militaire en Libye qui a mis la France hors d'elle. En apportant son soutien au gouvernement de Sarraj à Tripoli, y compris en faisant venir de Syrie des milices islamistes et en violant l'embargo sur les armes de l'ONU, la Turquie a changé le cours de la guerre. « C'est une responsabilité historique et criminelle pour qui prétend être membre de l'Otan », a affirmé Emmanuel Macron. En forçant le maréchal Haftar à se replier dans son fief, l'opération turque a rebattu les cartes du jeu libyen en défaveur de Paris. La France avait un temps misé sur le maréchal Haftar au nom de la lutte contre le terrorisme. Il était aussi censé verrouiller la frontière méridionale et empêcher les groupes djihadistes de rejoindre le Sahel où l'armée française est engagée. Les tensions franco-turques ont connu leur paroxysme en juin, quand une frégate française a été prise à partie par un navire turc accompagnant un cargo soupçonné de livrer des armes à la Libye. Mais dans son opposition à la Turquie, la France s'est trouvée bien seule. Elle a saisi l'Alliance atlantique mais n'a pas vraiment réussi à convaincre, puisque 8 pays sur 30 seulement ont soutenu sa démarche. Malgré le différend sur les S400, les États-Unis continuent de considérer la Turquie comme un allié et Donald Trump est séduit par Erdogan. Certains ont été agacés par les propos d'Emmanuel Macron. « Nous avons besoin de garder la Turquie dans l'Alliance occidentale. Ce serait un vrai problème si elle se jetait dans les bras de la Russie. Sur le fond, le point de vue britannique rejoint celui d'Emma-

manuel Macron. Mais nous avons des différences tactiques avec la France », explique un diplomate britannique. L'Allemagne, même si elle encore dénoncé cette semaine les « provocations turques » en Méditerranée orientale, reste elle aussi sur la réserve, notamment à cause de l'importante minorité d'origine turque qui vit sur son sol. Quand aux pays d'Europe orientale et occidentale, ils suivent comme de coutume la position américaine. La France a répondu au manque de soutien de l'Alliance en suspendant sa participation à une opération de l'Otan. « Si bien qu'il y a désormais deux problèmes au sein de l'Alliance : le problème turc et le problème français », commente un diplomate.

Cela ne crée pas forcément un boulevard diplomatique à Erdogan. Le jeu géopolitique du président turc au Moyen-Orient est dangereux. Il a écarté ses alliés traditionnels. Il s'est rapproché de la Russie mais sans réduire son approche contradictoire avec le Kremlin : en Libye comme en Syrie, Ankara et Moscou soutiennent des camps opposés. La position turque est d'autant plus risquée que depuis la purge qui a suivi la tentative de putsch de 2016, l'armée a été décapitée. Selon certains spécialistes, « elle n'est plus que l'ombre d'elle-même ». Mais la Turquie n'est pour l'instant guère défiée par l'Union européenne. Emmanuel Macron ne cesse pourtant de le dire : « Il est crucial que l'Europe s'empare des dossiers géopolitiques méditerranéens et reste maître de son destin sans le laisser à d'autres puissances.

## Autour du président, les officiels se pressaient sur le tapis de prière

Il est 13 H 27 à Istanbul. Des minarets de Sainte-Sophie s'élève la voix du muezzin. Elle clame « Allah est le plus grand » et interpelle les fidèles : « Venez à la prière ! Venez à la félicité ! » Ils sont déjà là, par milliers, contemplant l'instant historique. Celui où Sainte-Sophie, qui fut au temps des Ottomans la première mosquée d'Istanbul (convertie aussitôt conquise), résonne à l'unisson de celles qui l'ont suivie.

Techniquement parlant, il n'y a là rien d'exceptionnel. Les haut-parleurs de Sainte-Sophie diffusent l'appel à la prière depuis presque trente ans, même si peu de Turcs le savent. En 1991, alors que l'édifice était encore musée, les autorités de l'époque avaient ouvert au culte une salle attenante, réservée autrefois au sultan et à sa famille. Mais ce 24 juillet 2020, pour la première fois depuis 86 ans, c'est sous la grande coupole que les fidèles sont invités.

Il s'agit d'une invitation en bonne et due forme. Cinq cents personnes ont été conviées au « programme d'ouverture de la Mosquée sacrée de la Grande Sainte-Sophie », le nouveau nom des lieux, en présence du président, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Ministres, chefs de parti, représentants d'associations et journalistes proches du pouvoir avaient reçu ces derniers jours leur carton. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, le chef du principal parti d'opposition, est l'un des rares qui manquent à l'appel. Il a refusé de prier « devant les caméras », sans pour autant désapprouver la reconversion en mosquée. Depuis le début de cette matinée de vendredi, les fidèles foulent le tapis neuf aux nuances turquoises, dont le fabricant raconte fièrement que « même les fibres 100 % laines sont tournées vers La Mecque ». Chacun se dé-

chausse à l'entrée et les femmes, tête voilée, avancent vers l'espace qui leur est réservé. En turban et tunique blancs, le chef de l'Autorité des affaires religieuses (Diyanet) grimpe les marches du minbar. Il tient un sabre dans la main gauche - une tradition ottomane - et prononce le sermon avant la prière rituelle. « Nous sommes témoins d'un moment historique (...) Dieu merci, c'est la fin d'une blessure profonde dans le cœur de notre nation », proclame cet imam, en préambule d'un prêche d'une vingtaine de minutes.

Sous le dôme, les fidèles l'écoutent, éloignés les uns des autres par un mètre de « distance sociale ». La scène est toute différente dehors, sur la vaste esplanade et dans les rues adjacentes, où des dizaines de milliers de fidèles se joignent à la prière, presque collés les uns aux autres. Un écran géant retransmet les images de la mosquée, tandis que 21 000 policiers surveillent la foule qui se prosterne sous le soleil brûlant de midi.

« Il ne s'agit pas de gagner un nouveau lieu de culte. Derrière nous, il y a la mosquée de Sultanhahmet, on pourrait très bien y prier. Il s'agit de prendre en charge l'héritage de notre ancêtre, le sultan Mehmet le Conquérant », s'enthousiasme Cihat Cengiz, un jeune enseignant qui a fait 150 km pour prier devant Sainte-Sophie. « J'y étais déjà venu quand elle était musée, c'était impossible d'y prier, les gens marchaient avec leurs chaussures là où les fidèles auraient dû poser leurs tapis. Grâce à notre président, la Turquie s'est enfin libérée de cette malédiction. »

Aux premières loges, les yeux rougis par une nuit d'insomnie,

Serhat Maden a hâte d'entrer dans l'édifice. Il ne comprend pas les critiques de certains pays étrangers. « Nous ne convertissons pas une église en mosquée, nous récupérons une mosquée qui n'aurait jamais dû être un musée ! », s'exclame-t-il. « Des frères musulmans du monde entier sont ici aujourd'hui... Nous respectons toutes les croyances et nous attendons la même chose des autres. »

Tout est allé très vite. Le 10 juillet dernier, le Conseil d'État révoquait le statut de musée offert à l'édifice en 1934 par le fondateur de la République turque, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Son lointain successeur, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, décidait aussitôt de restituer l'édifice au culte. En pratique, moins de quinze jours auront suffi pour que le musée devienne mosquée, avec tous les aménagements que ce changement de statut implique.

Le principal défi fut de cacher, tout en les préservant, les fresques et mosaïques héritées de la « première vie » de Sainte-Sophie, qui naquit église byzantine (537-1453). Les autorités ont choisi un système de rideaux, assurant que « pas un seul clou » n'avait été planté dans la structure du monument.

« Après son ouverture au culte, la mosquée Sainte-Sophie commença à accueillir les touristes. Un couloir spécial a été créé pour eux dans la mosquée, séparant ainsi les espaces dédiés à la prière », précisait cette semaine la télévision d'État (TRT). L'an dernier, près de quatre millions de personnes avaient visité Sainte-Sophie, un record pour un musée turc.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan s'est engagé à ce qu'en dehors des heures de prière, Sainte-Sophie

reste ouverte « à tous, musulmans et non-musulmans ». Une promesse faite principalement aux visiteurs étrangers. Car les minorités de Turquie, notamment les orthodoxes hellénophones - les Roums, descendants des Byzantins - ont vu leur population fondre au fil du XXe siècle, à force de pogroms, d'expulsions et de discriminations.

Les Roums d'Istanbul étaient au moins 100 000 au début des années 1950. Ils ne sont plus que 1 800. Ceux-là ont accueilli dans un silence inquiet l'islamisation de Sainte-Sophie. « Juste avant les pogroms de 1955, on lisait dans la presse des articles dénigrant et menaçant les Roums », se souvient Mihail Vasiliadis, une figure de cette communauté. « Avec tous ces débats autour de Sainte-Sophie, on a vu réapparaître des articles similaires qui ont apeuré les Roums et toutes les minorités religieuses. À tel point que quand la décision sur Sainte-Sophie a été annoncée, beaucoup se sont dit "Ouf ! Cette affaire se termine sans qu'il nous soit arrivé quoi que ce soit". »

Aux yeux de Garo Paylan, un député d'opposition d'origine arménienne, le mal est déjà fait pour l'image de la Turquie. « Notre pays suscitait l'intérêt du monde tant qu'il renvoyait une image multi-identitaire et multiculturelle », avance-t-il. « Le pouvoir est en train de ruiner cette image, celle d'une Turquie qui tenait compte des sensibilités de ses minorités chrétiennes, aussi peu nombreuses soient-elles. Une Turquie uniformisée n'intéresse personne. Elle devient un pays banal, qui se soucie uniquement de la sensibilité des musulmans. »

## Kurdistan au féminin

25 juillet 2020

# TURQUIE. La police turque attaque le 800e rassemblement des mères du samedi – Kurdistan au féminin

La police turque a attaqué les mères du samedi rassemblées à l'occasion de leur 800e rassemblement hebdomadaire pour exiger le sort de leurs proches portés disparus. Trois proches des disparus, dont une mère âgée, ont été arrêtés par la police turque.

Depuis 25 ans, les mères du samedi se ressemblaient tous les samedis sur la place Galatasaray, à Istanbul, pour exiger la fin des disparitions forcées et demander qu'on leur rende leurs proches portés disparus.

Selon l'Association des droits de l'Homme (IHD), entre 1992 et 1996, 792 disparitions forcées et meurtres par l'État ont été si-



gnalés dans les régions kurdes de la Turquie.

Le 25 août 2018, les autorités turques ont annoncé qu'elles avaient interdit les rassemblements des mères du samedi. Suite à cette annonce, lors de leur 700ème manifestation pa-

cifique, les mères de samedi ont subi des violences policières et plusieurs des participants ont été arrêtés, dont Emine Ocak, une mère de plus de 80 ans. Depuis le début de la Pandémie de coronavirus, leurs actions ne se sont dérou-

lées qu'en ligne.

Pour le 25e anniversaire de leur premier rassemblement, elles avaient tenté de se rassembler sur la place Galatasaray. La police les avait de nouveau attaquées. Aujourd'hui, on a assisté au même « spectacle » lamentable de la police turque qui s'en prend à des femmes âgées pacifiques...

L'attaque de la police turque a été condamnée, notamment sur Twitter sous les hashtags #CumartesiAnneleriSusmayacak et #CumartesiAnneleri800Hafta

## Kurdistan au féminin

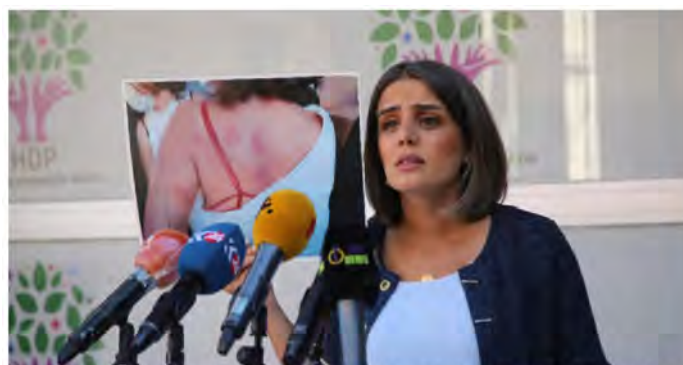
23 juillet 2020

# Députée du HDP : Le viol est une méthode de guerre

La députée d'HDP, Ayşe Acar Başaran, a décrit les cas les plus récents de viols par des militaires turcs visant les femmes et adolescentes kurdes comme une méthode de guerre spéciale, et a ajouté que les déclarations sur un éventuel retrait de la Turquie de la Convention d'Istanbul étaient inacceptables.

Ayşe Acar Başaran, porte-parole du Conseil des femmes du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP), a commenté l'augmentation des cas de har-

cèlement sexuel et de viol au Kurdistan du Nord (Bakur) lors d'une conférence de presse à Ankara. Elle a notamment cité la tentative de viol d'une jeune fille kurde de 13 ans à Şırnak et le viol d'une jeune fille kurde de 17 ans à Batman. Dans les deux cas, les auteurs étaient des sous-officiers de l'armée turque. « Il devient évident presque chaque jour que c'est une méthode de guerre spéciale de la coalition gouvernementale de l'AKP et du MHP », a déclaré la députée.



Cela inclut également la répression contre les femmes politiquement actives, a déclaré Ayşe Acar Başaran ajoutant : « Nous savons ce que

signifie l'utilisation de chiens dans la torture de Rojbin Çetin, l'arrestation de femmes de 70 ans et la criminalisation de l'association de femmes Rosa.

C'est pour nous signaler que nous sommes confrontées à tous les instruments de violence lorsque nous nous défendons contre des attaques visant les femmes ».

Concernant les récents meurtres de femmes en Turquie, Başaran a déclaré : « Pour chaque meurtre d'une femme, nous déclarons à nouveau qu'il est le résultat de la politique de l'AKP. Rien qu'en juin, 27 femmes ont été assassinées, 23 autres femmes sont mortes de manière suspecte. Depuis que l'AKP est arrivé au pouvoir, plus de 3000 femmes ont été assassinées. C'est un féminicide ».

La politicienne du HDP a également critiqué la violence policière lors des manifestations de femmes contre la violence patriarcale. Elle a montré des photos de militant.e.s de Muğla, maltraité.e.s par la police lors de la manifestation contre le meurtre de l'étudiante kurde Pinar Gültekin, âgée de 27 ans.

Ayşe Acar Başaran a également pris la parole lors du débat sur le retrait de la Convention d'Istanbul du Conseil de l'Europe sur la violence à l'égard des femmes. La Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la prévention et la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes a été

adoptée lors d'une conférence à Istanbul en 2011 et ratifiée par la Turquie la même année. Les responsables politiques de l'AKP estiment qu'elle porte atteinte aux valeurs traditionnelles. Début juillet, le chef adjoint de l'AKP, Numan Kurtulmuş, a déclaré que la signature de la convention était une erreur. Il a déclaré que la convention remettait en question les images traditionnelles des sexes, encourageait les groupes LGBT et mettait la famille en danger.

Başaran a expliqué que cette discussion est inacceptable alors que des femmes sont assassinées et violées quotidiennement : « Chaque jour, il y a

des débats télévisés sur ce sujet, mais les femmes n'ont pas la possibilité de s'exprimer. On prétend que la Convention d'Istanbul est un acte de clémence du gouvernement. Ce n'est pas vrai. La Convention d'Istanbul est le résultat d'une lutte menée par des milliers de femmes. Nous ne laisserons pas cette réalisation nous être retirée. Nous n'avons aucune garantie du gouvernement, de la police ou de la justice qui, avec sa politique d'impunité, encourage les hommes violents. Notre garantie, ce sont les droits pour lesquels nous avons lutté et que nous n'abandonnerons jamais ».



26 juillet 2020

## Syrie: trois attentats en quatre jours à Ras al-Aïn, à la frontière turque

Il s'agit de la troisième fois en quatre jours que la ville de Ras al-Aïn, frontalière de la Turquie, est frappée par un attentat. L'explosion du dimanche 26 juillet a eu lieu dans un marché aux légumes et a provoqué d'importants dégâts et un incendie. Samedi, quatre personnes avaient péri et dix autres avaient été blessées dans un attentat à la voiture piégée dans cette même ville.

Ras al-Aïn est la première localité prise par les forces turques et leurs supplétifs syriens lors de l'offensive lancée en octobre dernier contre les milices kurdes qui contrôlent le nord-est de la Syrie. Cette opération militaire avait permis à la Turquie d'occuper une bande de 120 kilomètres sur une profondeur de 30 kilomètres en territoire syrien.



Bombardement de l'armée turque sur la ville syrienne de Ras al-Aïn contrôlée jusque-là par les milices kurdes, dans le nord-est du pays, le 9 octobre 2019. (Photo d'illustration) Delil SOULEIMAN / AFP

Mais l'insécurité règne dans ces régions administrées par des groupes rebelles syriens proches d'Ankara. Attentats,

assassinats, enlèvements et exactions sont monnaie courante. L'explosion de dimanche n'a pas été revendiquée. Ankara a cependant accusé les

milices kurdes, liées au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), d'être à l'origine de cet attentat.



July 26, 2020  
Zhelwan Z. Wali

## Eight civilians killed, several wounded in Sari Kani explosion: monitor

**A**t least eight civilians were killed and scores more injured on Sunday in an explosion in the northern Syrian of Sari Kani (Ras-al Ain), currently under the control of Turkey-backed fighters.

State-run Syrian outlet SANA and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the blast was caused by a motorcycle rigged with explosives that had been parked nearby a vegetable market.

They reported women and children among the dead.

The number of the injured is unclear, but SANA reported that many have "sustained serious injuries".

The explosion comes just days after another blast is said to have rocked the border town, killing four civilians.

Sari Kani has been controlled by Turkish-backed factions since October of last year following Operation Peace Spring, a military offensive launched by Ankara to clear the area of the multi-ethnic Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who control much of northeast Syria.

The town now lies in a 'buffer zone' under the control of Turkish-backed militias, stretching from Sari Kani to the town of Gire Spi (Tel Abyad).

No group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Ankara usually blames explo-



The blast was reportedly caused by a rigged motorcycle parked near a market. Photo: SOHR

sions in regions they hold in northeast Syria on Kurdish fighters linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), while the Kurdish authorities in Rojava blame them on infighting between Syrian opposition groups, including Turkish-

backed fighters.

The US Department of State warned last month that "continuous violence" is an impediment to conflict resolution in the country.



July 28, 2020  
Jabar Dastbaz

## Iran's Kurdish kolbars: Two sons, two deaths, two months

**S**hamzin Ahmadi's wedding date was coming up, and he'd worked hard to make sure his plans would be paid for. He woke up soon after dawn to make what he swore would be one last trip carrying heavy loads of goods across the Iran-Turkey border. His mother, Jawahir, was already in mourning for her older son, killed six weeks earlier while making that same hazardous journey. She begged

Shamzin to take good care of himself as he set off for the merciless mountains.

At 5 am on July 1, Shamzin hoisted a load of cigarettes destined for the neighboring Kurdish region of Turkey onto his back and began his perilous trek. Shot at and injured by Iranian border guards, Shamzin somehow managed to push into Turkey, where he was taken to a hospital in the Kurd-

ish city of Van by Turkish border forces. He died from his injuries eight days later, on July 9. It was Turkish border forces that shot and killed older brother Arsalan Ahmad on May 24.

Kolbars are porters who transport untaxed goods on their backs over the mountainous Kurdistan Region-Iran and Iran-Turkey borders, through treacherous terrain, unforgiv-

ing weather, and armed, expectant border guards. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces. Monitors estimate around 70,000 people, mostly Iranian Kurds, make a living as kolbars.

News of kolbar deaths and injuries without relent. An estimated 237 kolbars were killed

or injured in 2019, most by direct fire from Iranian border guards according to Hengaw, a human rights monitor based outside of the country.

To hear the story of the tragic deaths of two kolbars from the same family, I travel from Sanandaj, to Urmia, a journey signposted as being over 450 kilometers long. From Urmia, I struggle to find a driver willing to take me north, all the way to the border between Iran and Turkey, to the village of Kuran.

I eventually manage to find a driver willing to take me to my destination, via a myriad of checkpoints manned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Ten kilometers before the village, we turn off the asphalt road and encounter a charming view of lush green orchards. Then, rugged mountains start to frame our route, and plumes of infertile, fine dust begin to tail us.

"As you can see, there is no other source of income for villagers in this area than working as a kolbar," the driver from Urmia says as we near the village. Kuran, home to around 200 families, is surrounded on three sides by mountains, a small river dissecting it into two. In the near distance stand both Iranian and Turkish border observation posts.

We arrive at the front courtyard of a house, where harrowed family members sit dressed in mourner black. Among them is Hakem Ahmad, a 52-year-old father grieving the loss of two sons at once.

"The death of two of my sons has shocked me and my family to the extent that we believe our lives will never be normal again," the distraught father told Rudaw English.

Looking over to the mountains his sons had so recently climbed, Hakem recalls his own past as a kolbar. The mo-



Hakem Ahmadi (left) holds a photo of spn Arslan, shot dead by Turkish border guards in May; Jawahir Ahmadi holds a photo of son Shamzin, killed by Iranian border guards on July 1. Photo Dastbaz/Rudaw

tivations may have been the same, but conditions were less deadly, Hakem says.

"I worked as a kolbar for 15 years, but the border guards were not as merciless as they are these days. They used to confiscate our loads, but in the past few years they haven't hesitated to fire on the kolbars."

Fire at the kolbars has become so frequent that border guards have killed six young men from Kuran alone since 2016, Hakem says.

"Yet people don't give this job up, because there are no other jobs to do."

He stops to light a cigarette before talking about his lost sons.

"My eldest son, Arslan, was 28, and got married six years ago. He is survived by two sons, and his wife is pregnant with the third child," he says with a sigh. "Arslan was very smart. He had a house, and sometimes he would even help me [financially]."

He recalls the night that he had gone to see Arslan's body.

"The night before Eid al-Fitr, I called Arslan and asked him to come round the next day. He said 'alright, tonight I'm going to work, and we'll spend Eid day together.'"

"Hours later, just as I had fallen asleep, I received a phone call from one of his friends, who said Turkish border forces had shot Arslan and that he was injured. I immediately rushed to the scene," Hakim says, before bursting into tears.

"He was not injured. Bullets crashed into his chest, and he was dead."

Jawahir Ahmadi, 50, is the mother of the two slain kolbars. She is gripped by grief, and struggles to keep her composure as she tells me Shamzin's story.

"After Arslan was killed, I panicked a lot. I constantly begged Shamzin to give this work up.. But he insisted that he needed to make some money for his planned wedding. He kept saying, 'I'll stop once I get married'."

"The night before he left, he slept early. He said, 'Mom, please wake me up at 5 am.' I was very worried and twice decided not to wake him up. But I eventually woke him up."

That morning, Jawahir watched her son walk towards his ill fate in the mountains with two of his friends.

"I kept praying for him to come back safely," she recounts through sobs.

"Night fell and it was very late, but he had not come back. I

eventually realised something had gone wrong. Then, one of his friends called us and said that Shamzin and two of his friends had been wounded and were rushed to a hospital in Van [in Turkey]."

"I kept praying for Shamzin to recover and come back to us. But, after eight days, his father was called and told that our son had died," she says while wiping away her tears.

Jawahir alleges that she was forced by Iranian border guards to pledge not to file any lawsuit against the Iranian government. "We received the body on the border, and it was taken to the forensic department."

"What has really crushed me is that Shamzin did not manage to fulfil his dream of holding his wedding...he would talk about the planned wedding saying they must hurry up and organize it. But he took the dream with him to his grave. Whenever I remember these moments, my whole body starts to hurt."

Ozal Ahmadi, 18, survives his two brothers. We visit the side-by-side graves of Arslan and Shamzin at the cemetery behind the village, and he walks me to where four other kolbars are buried - two of them his cousins.

Describing his family's situation as "destitute", Ozal says he dropped out of school in the tenth grade - going further in education than most local children.

"The majority of children in our village drop out as soon as they finish elementary school, because it is difficult and they cannot afford to pay the tuition fees needed to study in Urmia," Ozal says.

With few other job prospects available, Ozal followed in the footsteps of his older brothers and became a kolbar too. "But after I lost the two of them, I decided to give up."





July 28, 2020

## Six civilians killed during attack by Turkish-backed forces in Manbij: report

**T**he Manbij Military Council (MMC) on Monday said six civilians were killed when Turkish-backed forces bombed villages in the countryside of Manbij.

In a statement, the MMC said the bombings occurred in the villages of Qurt Wiran and Willanli, from the Turkish base in Sheikh Nasser and Awlashli village located to the northwest of the city of Manbij.

According to the statement, six civilians, including children and women, were killed while six other children were injured.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said five people, including children, were killed and 10 others injured by shelling from a Turkish military base in the village of Sheikh Nasser.

The MMC, supported by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), liberated Manbij from the so-called Islamic State with American support in 2016 in one of the bloodiest campaigns Syria has witnessed against the terror group.

However, US forces left the town and other border regions in northern Syria in October 2019 after Turkey targeted the SDF-held towns of Tal Abyad and Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain).

In a deal Moscow brokered,



Turkish army tanks and military personnel are stationed in Karkamis on the Turkish-Syrian border in the southeastern Gaziantep province, Turkey, Aug. 25, 2016. (Photo: Reuters/Umit Bektas)

the SDF invited Syrian forces to prevent a Turkish expansion. The deal paved the way for Russian and regime forces to enter Manbij.

After Turkey intervened in northeastern Syria in October 2019, Russia and the US reached separate ceasefire deals with Ankara that limited Turkish control of the area between Tal Abyad and Serekaniye.

Despite these agreements, Turkish-backed groups and the Turkish army continue to periodically target SDF-held areas in which civilians are killed.

In late June, three Kurdish women's rights activists were killed by a Turkish drone strike in the city of Kobani.

Turkish-backed groups from

Al-Bab and Jarabulus often shell Manbij in which civilians near the frontlines are either injured or killed.

For instance, on Feb. 16, one civilian was killed and another injured after Turkish-backed groups shelled the countryside of Manbij. Also, on May 19, one civilian was injured and civilian homes destroyed when six shells fell on the Arab Hassan village close to the frontline.

Moreover, car and booby-trapped motorcycle bombings in Turkish-controlled areas such as Afrin, Ras al-Ain, and Tal Abyad have also killed civilians.

On July 26, eight civilians, including women and children, were killed by an explosion in Ras al-Ain, the local pro-Syrian government SANA news

agency reported.

On Monday, the US Embassy in Syria condemned the Ras al-Ain bombing.

"There's no justification for attacks on civilians. This violence must stop," the embassy said in a tweet.

On June 23, the US State Department also expressed sympathies for civilians killed and injured during a bombing in Turkish-occupied Tel Halaf and the alleged Turkish airstrike in Kobani that killed three female activists.

The UN Special Envoy for Syria has called on all parties in the conflict to avoid civilian harm and appealed to both local and international stakeholders "to exercise restraint and uphold existing arrangements that have provided calm throughout this year."

## Turquie: la nièce d'un haut responsable kurde de Syrie relâchée

La nièce d'un influent homme politique kurde de Syrie, lui-même recherché par Ankara, a été relâchée lundi 27 juillet sous contrôle judiciaire près de deux semaines après son arrestation en Turquie, a rapporté l'agence étatique Anadolu. Dalia Mahmoud Muslim est la nièce de Saleh Muslim, étroitement lié à l'administration semi-autonome kurde syrienne. Elle était détenue depuis le 15 juillet par les autorités turques.

Selon Anadolu, Mme Muslim a d'abord été interrogée par le bureau du procureur de Mer-

sin, dans le sud de la Turquie. Elle a ensuite été relâchée par un tribunal de la même ville sous contrôle judiciaire, avec interdiction de quitter le territoire. La famille de Mme Muslim avait accusé les autorités kurdes irakiennes de l'avoir remise à la Turquie alors qu'elle préparait son retour en Syrie après s'être rendue au Kurdistan irakien voisin pour des soins médicaux. Erbil avait démenti ces accusations.

Haut responsable kurde syrien et oncle de Mme Muslim, Saleh Muslim avait été interpellé à Prague en février 2018 et avait été libéré quelques

jours plus tard, malgré une demande d'extradition d'Ankara. Il fait l'objet depuis 2016 d'un mandat d'arrêt émis par les autorités turques en lien avec un attentat commis à Ankara en février 2016 (29 morts). Il a nié toute implication. Une administration semi-autonome en Syrie

Les Kurdes ont établi dans le nord-est syrien une administration semi-autonome sur de vastes territoires à la frontière avec la Turquie. Cette autonomie de facto est mal vue par Ankara, qui qualifie milices et factions kurdes de groupes «terroristes» et les considère

comme une extension en Syrie du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation classée «terroriste» par la Turquie et ses alliés occidentaux.

Selon son père, Dalia Muslim faisait partie des Unités de protection de la femme (YPJ), versant féminin de la principale milice kurde des Unités de protection du Peuple (YPG). Saleh Muslim, son oncle, a longtemps été coprésident du Parti de l'union démocratique (PYD), bras politique des YPG.



July 28, 2020

## COVID-19: Iraq announces over 2,500 new infections, more than 90 fatalities

An Iraqi volunteer throws a hazmat suit into fire after burying corpses of those died due to COVID-19 complications. (Photo: Reuters)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – On Monday, Iraq's Ministry of Health and Environment announced over 2,500 new cases of the coronavirus, as well as 96 deaths from the disease.

The ministry reported that 17,141 tests for the virus had been carried out over the same period, raising the total of such tests to 929,839.

According to official data, about 77,144 patients have recovered—around 68.5 percent of the total number of those infected.

Recoveries refer to a patient who no longer carries a detectable virus in their system, but it does not necessarily mean that they are well. A substantial number of those who catch the virus report lingering symptoms, such as fatigue and muscle weakness, even after they are officially declared "recovered."

The ministry's report also stated that there are 30,983 active cases, while there have been 4,458 fatalities.

Since July 1, Iraq has regularly reported over 2,000 new infections daily, and its death toll has nearly doubled.

The Iraqi government announced on Sunday that it would impose a total lockdown in advance of the long Eid al-

Adha holiday. Such events have proven to spread the virus in Iraq, as well as the Kurdistan Region, as people gather together to celebrate the occasion—and then neglect the public health guidelines.

Iraq will impose "a nationwide curfew throughout the Eid Al-Adha holiday, from Thursday July 30 to Sunday August 9," the government stated.

Notably, it also added that potential extensions would be considered after the holidays—yet another indication that Baghdad may be in danger of losing control over the country's health situation.

Indeed, Iraqi health officials have expressed their fears that the healthcare system may be

on the brink of collapse, as the number of daily infections has continued rising since late May, after Iraq opened some border crossings with Iran, the original epicenter of the virus in the Middle East.

On Friday, the General Secretariat of Iraq's Council of Ministers announced the arrival of mobile healthcare units and medical supplies from Qatar and Jordan.

Despite Iraq's deteriorating health situation, on Thursday, three of the country's international airports reopened for commercial travel, as the government moved to ease restrictions that had limited the spread of the virus.



July 28, 2020

## Germany arrests ISIS woman who abused Yezidi woman in Syria

**G**erman police arrested a German woman who is accused of ISIS membership and was involved in abusing a Yezidi woman, the German Federal Prosecution announced on Monday.

She was arrested in Frankfurt airport upon her return to Germany, after being deported from Turkey.

In a statement, the Attorney General at the Federal Court of Justice (GBA) said that the suspect, Nurten J., travelled to Syria in the spring of 2015 with her four year-old daughter to join the 'foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State (IS)' and to live in their territory.

In Syria, she married and raised children with a German ISIS fighter who had also left Germany. They were living together and raising her children, according to directions to serve ISIS.

The suspect received monthly payments from ISIS and lived in apartments whose owners were killed or evicted by ISIS.

Between 2016 and 2017, Nurten J. had frequent visits from a friend to her apartment. At the request of Nurten J., her friend brought along an enslaved Yezidi woman, who was used by Nurten J. to clean her living quarters without pay.

"Nurten J. thus followed the ideology of ISIS, from whose perspective the enslavement of Yezidis was religiously justified," the Federal Prosecution affirmed.



When ISIS lost its territories in Syria, Nurten J. was captured by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF.) Later she was held in Turkey and deported to Germany.

The German prosecution did not make clear how the suspect was able to reach Turkey from Syria.

Most likely, the suspect escaped the infamous al-Hol camp. It was built to house 40,000 individuals, but currently holds around 65,000 people, mostly women and children. This includes nearly 11,000 foreign women with alleged ties to ISIS and their children.

According to a recent UN report released on Thursday "a steady stream of ISIL (ISIS) affiliated women are reported to have escaped the (al-Hol) camp into Turkey with the aid of corrupt guards and smugglers."

On Friday, Nurten J. was brought in front of the investigative judge of the Federal

Court of Justice who ordered her pre-trial detention.

German Yezidi journalist, Düzen Tekkal, told Kurdistan 24 that this case highlights how ISIS women "are perpetrators, not victims or innocent 'brides.'"

Often the ISIS women are portrayed in the media as simple housewives who were not involved in any crimes.

"They committed terrible crimes also - and especially against other women - for which they are responsible and therefore have to be held accountable. As a woman's rights activist, I believe in full equality between men and women," Tekkal said. "That means: the same law applies to men and women. In court, it has to be about the deeds - not the chromosome set."

This is not the first case against a German ISIS female suspect.

In March, Omaima Abdi, the former wife of two German

ISIS fighters, was charged with crimes against humanity; membership in a terrorist group; and the enslavement of a 13-year-old Yezidi girl.

The charges were the result of the work of two investigative reporters, Harald Doornbos, a Dutch journalist based in the Middle East, and Jenan Moussa, a reporter for Dubai's Al Aan TV. The two exposed Abdi's return to Germany from Syria.

German Minister of State, Niels Annen, during a meeting of the UN Security Council on Thursday, said that Germany is putting members of the Syrian regime; ISIS; and Jabhat al-Nusra, a Salafist group which has fought against the Syrian regime, on trial for war crimes committed in Syria.

"Our message is clear: Whoever commits crimes against humanity or war crimes cannot feel safe anywhere and will eventually be held accountable," he concluded.

Kurdistan au féminin

27 juillet 2020

Les femmes à l'avant de la lutte libérale

## Un chauffeur de l'UNICEF tente de faire sortir des familles de l'EI du camp d'al-Hol

Un chauffeur de citerne d'eau travaillant pour l'UNICEF a tenté de faire sortir des femmes et des enfants de l'Etat islamique détenus par les Kurdes dans le camp d'al-Hol, dans le nord de la Syrie.

Des documents et des images obtenus par l'agence North Press montrent un chauffeur de camion-citerne travaillant avec le Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance (UNICEF) essayant de faire passer en contrebande plusieurs familles de l'EI du camp d'Hawl près de



Hasakah, dans le nord de la Syrie.

North Press a obtenu des documents montrant que le chauffeur travaille pour l'UNICEF, et une vidéo montre comment le chauffeur a caché des proches des terroristes de

l'Etat islamique dans une pièce cachée au fond du réservoir avant qu'ils ne soient arrêtés par les forces de sécurité.

Le camp d'hol abrite environ 11 000 femmes et enfants de familles de l'Etat islamique ori-

ginaires d'environ 54 pays, qui sont détenus dans une section distincte du camp connue sous le nom de section des étrangers. Ils sont connus pour être extrémistes dans leurs opinions, selon l'administration du camp.

Plus tôt dimanche, North Press a publié une vidéo montrant des chauffeurs de citernes d'eau appartenant au Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés (NRC) faisant passer en contrebande des familles des membres de l'EI depuis le camp.

Kurdistan au féminin

28 juillet 2020

Les femmes à l'avant de la lutte libérale

## IRAN. Une manifestante kurde condamnée à 5 ans de prison et à 30 coups de fouet

Une femme kurde du Rojhilat a été condamnée à 5 ans et 5 mois de prison et à 30 coups de fouet pour sa participation aux manifestations nationales de l'année dernière en Iran.

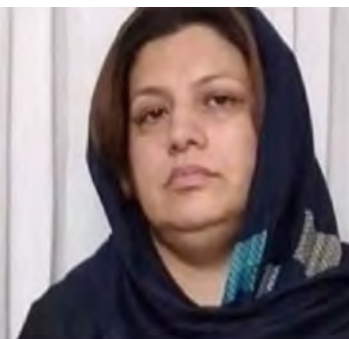
Fateme Davand qui vit à Bukan, au Kurdistan de l'Est sous l'occupation de l'Iran, a été arrêtée lors des manifestations nationales de novembre 2019 lorsque des milliers de personnes sont descendues dans la rue pour protester contre le triplement des prix de l'essence. Elle a été condamnée dans deux affaires distinctes devant le tribunal pénal de Bukan et le tribunal révolutionnaire de Mahabad.

«Le deuxième procès a eu lieu le 12 mai dans la 1ère chambre du tribunal révolutionnaire isla-

mique de Mahabad, présidé par le juge Javad Gholami, avec un avocat commis d'office. Le 21 juin, le verdict a été annoncé comme cinq ans de prison pour «rassemblement et collusion contre la sécurité nationale», a déclaré une source à Kurdistan Human Rights Network.

La source a ajouté que Mme Davand ne s'est pas opposée à la peine et qu'un quart de la peine devrait être déduit conformément à la loi, mais le verdict final n'a pas encore été annoncé.

Fateme Davand a été arrêtée le 16 novembre 2019 pour avoir participé aux manifestations nationales en raison de la hausse soudaine des prix de l'essence. Elle a été arrêtée dans l'une des maisons de ses proches à Saq-



qez, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran. Davand a été détenue au centre de détention des renseignements d'Urmia pendant 13 jours, où elle a été forcée d'avouer sous la contrainte et la torture psychologique.

Ses aveux forcés ont ensuite été diffusés à la télévision publique quelques jours après son arrestation. Après des interroga-

toires, elle a été transférée à la prison centrale d'Ourmia et a été libérée sous caution de 1 milliard de toman (près de 43 000 dollars) le 25 mars.

Le régime iranien a condamné de nombreux manifestants à de lourdes peines de prison, à des coups de fouet et même à mort pour empêcher de nouvelles manifestations.



July 28, 2020

## Kurdistan COVID-19: Kurdistan announces 302 new cases, no new restrictions for Eid

**T**he Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced just over 300 new coronavirus infections and eight deaths during the previous 24 hours.

A ministry statement specified that out that 2,295 tests had been conducted in that time period, with 302 of them coming back positive.

According to government figures, 139 of them were in Erbil province, slightly more than Sulaimani which has usually seen the highest numbers of cases in the autonomous region over the past several weeks, which reported 124. Additionally, health officials reported 24 new infections in Duhok and 15 in Halabja.

Six of the fatalities occurred in Erbil and the other two in Sulaimani. The ministry also said



Security forces stop vehicles at a checkpoint in the Kurdistan Region's city of Sulaimani. (Photo: AFP)

it was classifying 225 patients as having recovered over the past day.

Of the 3,652 patients that remain under medical care, 2,580 are in Sulaymaniyah, 899 in Erbil, 112 in Duhok and 61 in Halabja.

Since the first confirmed case of the coronavirus in the Kurdistan Region was reported in

early March, total infections have reached 12,937 and deaths now number at 504.

Earlier in the day, regional Health Minister Saman Barznji announced that the High Governmental Committee to Combat the Coronavirus has not so far decided to reimpose earlier curfews during the upcoming Eid al-Adha holiday. He told reporters that the committee's decision made during the

previous week to ease restrictions is, for now, still in effect. Also on Tuesday, Iraq's federal Ministry of Health and Environment in Baghdad announced over 2,700 new coronavirus cases and 77 deaths related to the disease.

These figures do not include today's numbers listed above for the Kurdistan Region, which has its own health ministry and typically announces results later in the day. As such, Kurdistan's figures are usually added to the following day's national tally.

The coronavirus has infected more than 16.6 million people worldwide and killed over 657,000 according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or underreporting.



July 29, 2020

## Sulaimani province wildfire put out after scorching swathes of forest, pastures

**F**ierce wildfires that ripped through parts of Sulaimani province over the course of four days were brought under control in the early hours of Wednesday, a local official has announced.

Wednesday's firefight was the third time fires in the north of the province, close to the Iranian border, had to be brought under control since Sunday.

"The fire initially broke out on Sunday and it was controlled. That

night, it broke out again and was controlled. But yesterday's blaze was huge, and difficult to control," Gapilon sub-district mayor Kameran Abdulla said.

"With the help of firefighting teams from Mawat and Sharbazher districts, and Sulaimani municipality, we managed to put out the blaze."

The fire is suspected by locals to have been ignited by a lightning strike on Sunday.

Efforts to extinguish the fire were made more difficult by the "inacces-

sible" and "rugged" site of the fire.

"The area was also littered with landmines that could have detonated in the fire," he added, which stopped authorities from sending civil defense teams to combat the blaze.

A countless number of unexploded landmines are scattered across the Kurdish border areas of Iran and Iraq, the legacy of a devastating war between the two countries in the 1980s. Dozens of people on both sides of the border are

maimed or killed every year by stepping on landmines.

The fire has "burned 1,000 dunams [250 acres] of forests, bushes, and wild brush" since Sunday, in the vicinity of four Gapilon sub-district villages - Wilakhlu, Balikh, Kuna Masi and Dolbeshk, according to Abdulla.

"The pastures of the four villages have been burned," he added.

Fires are common in the Kurdistan Region's summers, when temperatures can reach 50 degrees.

Ahval

July 29, 2020

## Jailed PKK leader's lawyers take contact ban to European Court of Human Rights

The lawyers of the Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) jailed leader have applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) over a contact ban with Abdullah Öcalan, pro-Kurdish Firat News Agency reported on Wednesday.

Öcalan's legal team has taken his years-long ban – and that of three other inmates in Turkey's İmrali island prison – to Europe's top court after an appeal in June was denied by Turkey's Constitutional Court, the agency said.

The PKK leader was last al-



lowed a rare visit by his lawyers in May 2019.

Öcalan, who is serving a life sentence for treason after being captured in 1999, had

been barred from meeting his lawyers since 2011 – not including the visit last year – and has had only limited family visits since the collapse of a peace process between Turkey and the PKK in 2015.

The three other detainees in question have yet to talk to their lawyers since their transfer to İmrali five years ago, Firat said.

The PKK is an armed group that has been at war for Kurdish self-rule for over three decades. Over 40,000 people, mostly Kurds, have died in the conflict since 1984.

DAILY  
STAR

July 30, 2020

## Car bomb kills 6 in northeast Syria: Observatory

A car bomb in northeast Syria targeting a checkpoint manned by Turkish-backed forces killed six people, mostly fighters, near the border town of Ras al-Ain Thursday, a war monitor said.

The blast in the village of Tal Halaf held by Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies also wounded 15 others, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies last year seized a 120-kilometre (75-mile) stretch of land inside the Syrian border from Kurdish forces, running

from Ras al-Ain to Tal Abyad.

Many bombings have since rocked the area, several in the past week alone.

An explosives-rigged motorbike in Ras al-Ain Tuesday killed two civilians and a fighter, the Observatory said, two days after another in a vegetable market in the town killed eight people, six of them civilians.

The Kurdish-led People's Protection Units, from whom the Turks and their allies seized the territory, have played a key role in the US-backed fight against Daesh (ISIS) in Syria.



But Ankara views them as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that has waged a deadly insurgency in southeastern Turkey since 1984.

Syria's civil war has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions from their homes since erupting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.



July 30, 2020  
David Phillips

## The U.S. must rein in Erdoğan's war-mongering

Proclaiming “zero problems with neighbours”, former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu heralded a new era of Turkish foreign policy in 2013. However, Davutoğlu and other stalwarts of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) were eventually side-lined as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan consolidated his dictatorship.

With Turkey's economy collapsing, Erdoğan is fuelling regional conflicts in order to distract Turks from his economic mismanagement. Instead of helping Turkey, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has turned a blind eye to Turkey's economic strife, democratic deficit, and nefarious role in the region.

Today, Turkey is engaged in multiple armed conflicts.

Turkey invaded northern and eastern Syria, killing hundreds in the Syrian Defence Forces, America's ally against Islamic State (ISIS). Kurds, Armenians and Syriac Christians were targeted. Hundreds of thousands were driven from their homes in Afrin and communities east of the Euphrates River.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, Yazidis in Sinjar and Christians in Zakho were victimised by Turkey's bombing and occupation. Yazidis, who barely survived a genocide by ISIS, now face persecution from Turkey's jihadist proxies. Forced conversion to Islam, rape of women and girls, arbitrary arrest, torture, and ethnic cleansing are routine.

Turkish warships are plying the eastern Mediterranean to disrupt an agreement between Egypt and Greece on an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which will produce natural gas with Israel as a major beneficiary.

Mock dogfights regularly occur between Greek and Turkish war planes, as Erdoğan questions the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that established Turkey's current borders. Seizing islets in Greek territorial waters would be a major provocation and *causus belli* between NATO allies.

Turkey recently encouraged Azerbaijan to launch cross-border attacks against Armenia. With drones and missiles from Turkey, Azerbaijan is threatening to renew the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.



Turkey has also intervened in Libya, where tribal and regional factions are in desperate need of reconciliation. There is real risk of conflict escalation between Turkey and Egypt, who support different sides in Libya's civil war.

While all these front-line states are at-risk from Turkey's aggression, Libya is a laboratory for Turkey's malign foreign policy. During the first months of 2020, Turkey deployed up to 3,800 Syrian mercenaries to Libya. These mercenaries from the National Syrian Army, some allegedly drawn from al-Qaeda and ISIS remnants, are notorious for war crimes. They have beheaded opponents, raped women and girls, tortured and killed opponents. They are the dregs – the worst of the worst.

Their deployment to Libya swung the tide in favour of the Government of National Accord (GNA),

led by Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj. Turkey's actions are fuelled by geo-strategic and economic interests. Libya is an oil-rich country with energy assets coveted by foreign powers. Backing Farraj gives Erdoğan influence over Libya's energy sector.

Since 2011, when Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi was ousted, Libya has been at war with itself. Libya has been divided for years between Farraj's GNA and the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Khalifa Haftar. Backed by Russia and the Gulf States, the LNA's

forces were on the verge of seizing Tripoli when Turkey and its mercenaries intervened. Having turned the tide, the GNA now vows to capture Sirte, the gateway to Libya's oil fields, and the al-Jufra air base.

Egypt, which backs the LNA, has pledged to defend Sirte. To this end, the Egyptian parliament authorised the deployment of troops "to defend Egyptian national security against criminal armed militias and foreign terrorist elements". Recent developments pit Turkey against Russia and the United Arab Emirates. Tensions could boil over into a full blown war without a ceasefire and international mediation.

These are times when countries look to the United States for leadership. However, the Trump administration does not have a Libya policy. Its ambivalence and lack of leadership has opened the space

for ill-intended and self-serving powers to intervene. It is understandable that the United States wants to avoid another entanglement in the Middle East. But America's neglect of Libya is another example of a situation gone awry when the United States abrogates its leadership role

In each of the violent conflicts where Turkey is involved, the Trump administration has failed to lead.

Trump gave Erdoğan a green light to invade and occupy northeast Syria, betraying the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which lost 11,000 fighters killed and 24,000 wounded fighting ISIS.

U.S. officials barely said a word when Turkey invaded Iraqi Kurdistan, threatening American troops and oil companies.

And as Turkey provokes Greece and Cyprus, there is serious concern whether the Trump administration would enforce Article 5 of the North Atlantic Charter in the event of a clash between treaty allies.

None of these problems are intractable if the United States uses diplomatic leverage to address them. Regarding Libya, the U.S. should call for a ceasefire and humanitarian access while endorsing a United Nations-led mediation. U.S. national interests are served by upholding sovereignty and international humanitarian law. Trump's fawning over Erdoğan is inexplicable. Erdoğan is a serial war-monger who will continue his aggression until a punitive reprisal from the U.S.

Much damage has been done. However, it is not too late to stabilise these conflicts. If Trump is unable or unwilling to do, his successor must.

## En Turquie, Recep Tayyip Erdogan asphyxie les réseaux sociaux

Une nouvelle loi voulue par le président donne toute latitude aux autorités pour censurer les contenus en ligne.

Avant de partir en vacances, le Parlement turc a adopté, mercredi 29 juillet, une loi draconienne destinée à renforcer la censure sur les réseaux sociaux, refermant ainsi une soupape de la liberté d'expression dans un pays où les voix dissidentes pouvaient compter sur ce canal pour se faire entendre. Le même jour, la présidence turque a publié un décret qui interdit aux fonctionnaires de l'Etat d'utiliser des applications mobiles « d'origine étrangère », invoquant des problèmes de sécurité.

La nouvelle loi donne toute latitude aux autorités pour censurer les contenus en ligne. Elle contraint les plates-formes de réseaux sociaux de plus de 1 million d'abonnés, telles que Facebook, YouTube, Twitter et d'autres, à nommer des représentants en Turquie afin de répondre à des plaintes concernant leurs contenus dans les quarante-huit heures, sous peine de poursuites.

Les entreprises refusant de désigner leurs représentants officiels seront soumises à des amendes, des interdictions d'afficher de la publicité et des réductions de bande passante susceptibles de rendre leurs réseaux inutilisables. Plus alarmant pour les critiques du gouvernement turc, la législation exige que les fournisseurs stockent les données de leurs utilisateurs en Turquie et, au besoin, les transmettent au gouvernement. Selon Rumeysa Kadak, la députée du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, au pouvoir

depuis 2002) qui défendait la loi au Parlement, celle-ci va permettre de lutter contre la cybercriminalité et d'empêcher « les insultes faites aux femmes ».

L'opposition parlementaire, minoritaire, a eu beau crier à la « censure », la loi est passée grâce aux voix majoritaires de l'AKP et de son allié ultranationaliste, le Parti de l'action nationaliste (MHP). « De cette façon, on coupe le dernier lien de l'opposition avec l'opinion publique », a déclaré Garo Paylan, député du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, pro-kurde, opposition). L'article 9 du texte précise que la loi « est régie par le président ». Ennemi déclaré des réseaux sociaux, M. Erdogan mène une lutte personnelle. C'est à sa demande que la nouvelle loi a été adoptée. Au début du mois de juillet, le président turc était apparu très en colère à la télévision, promettant de « rétablir l'ordre » en faisant interdire tous les réseaux sociaux. Il avait à cœur de faire taire les utilisateurs insolents qui, sur Twitter, avaient ironisé sur l'annonce de la naissance de son huitième petit-fils.

### Twitter particulièrement visé

Les internautes turcs sont déjà sous la loupe des autorités. Près de 100 000 personnes ont ainsi fait l'objet d'une enquête pour « insulte au chef de l'Etat », qui expose, selon l'article 299 du code pénal, à une peine maximale de quatre années de prison. Trente mille condamnations ont été prononcées depuis l'accession à la présidence de Recep Tayyip Erdogan en 2014. Le défunt général Kenan Evren, l'auteur du putsch de 1980, qui fut chef de l'Etat pendant neuf ans, fit



Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, à Istanbul, avant le vote par le Parlement turc d'une loi destinée à renforcer la censure sur les réseaux sociaux, le 28 juillet 2020. AP

condamner 80 personnes pour ce même article, son successeur Turgut Özal, 207, et après lui Süleyman Demirel, 158. Abdullah Gül, un ancien allié de M. Erdogan qui fut président de 2007 à 2014, a fait condamner 848 personnes pour insulte.

Depuis le coup d'Etat manqué de juillet 2016, l'emprise des autorités sur la Toile s'est resserrée. D'après Freedom House, une ONG basée aux Etats-Unis spécialisée dans la défense de la démocratie et des droits humains, la Turquie se classe actuellement derrière le Zimbabwe, le Rwanda et l'Azerbaïdjan en matière de liberté sur Internet. Selon le dernier rapport sur la transparence réalisé par Twitter, la Turquie était, au premier semestre 2019, en tête des Etats demandant le retrait de contenus sur ce réseau social, avec plus de 6 000 requêtes. Fin 2019, 408 494 sites Web étaient bloqués, y compris Wikipedia.

L'entreprise Twitter est particulièrement visée par Ankara. La présidence turque lui en veut d'avoir suspendu en juin 7 000 « faux comptes » gérés par un réseau de trolls au service du

parti présidentiel. Ces suspensions faisaient partie d'une opération plus large au cours de laquelle Twitter a supprimé 32 242 comptes de propagande au service des gouvernements en Chine, en Russie et en Turquie. Le directeur de la communication du président turc, Fahrettin Altun, avait alors dénoncé « la machine de propagande de Twitter ».

La population turque est friande de réseaux sociaux et de sites d'information en ligne. Selon l'institut des statistiques turc, 88 % des foyers ont accès à l'Internet haut débit. Privés d'informations de qualité en raison de la mainmise du parti au pouvoir sur les médias, les Turcs ont de plus en plus recours aux médias en ligne et aux réseaux pour s'informer ou se familiariser avec des opinions critiques. C'est ce que révèle une enquête publiée en mars 2020 par la chercheuse Didem Tali avec le soutien de Freedom House, et selon laquelle 54 % des personnes interrogées préfèrent utiliser Internet pour s'informer tandis que 31 % seulement restent fidèles à la radio et la télévision, véritables porte-voix du pouvoir.





July 31, 2020

## Kurdistan airports prepare to re-open with strict coronavirus rules

**S**ulaimani International Airport will require all passengers to produce a coronavirus test before they are permitted to board their flight, despite government regulations that say the test is not mandatory for people leaving the Kurdistan Region. The airports reopen to commercial flights on Saturday.

"We inform tourists that they have to conduct a PCR [polymerase chain reaction] test 48 hours before their flight," read a statement from the airport on Friday. Those who do not get tested will not be allowed to travel.

The tests can be done at the coronavirus-dedicated hospital, Martyr Tahir Ali Wali Bag, in Sulaimani's Sarchnar area, according to the statement.

Mohammed Qadir, spokesperson for the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) health ministry, told Rudaw English that



Some of the last passengers to travel through Sulaimani International Airport wear masks on March 15, 2020. Photo: Sulaimaniyah International Airport

the test is not mandatory for outbound passengers, unless the airliner requests it.

"However, those who come to the Region should conduct the test and they should promise to quarantine themselves for 14 days," said Qadir.

Drivers bringing passengers to the airports must also be tested, at a cost of \$40, while tests for

people boarding flights cost \$80, according to a government official speaking on condition of anonymity.

After months of a coronavirus-related ban, Iraq reopened its airspace for commercial flights on July 23. The KRG, however, delayed reopening Erbil and Sulaimani airports in order to put into place special procedures to handle the COVID-19 risk.

"Our airports are currently not ready for international flights. Therefore, we have asked both Erbil and Sulaimani airports to get ready by August 1," Interior Minister Reber Ahmed said at a press conference in Erbil on July 21, adding that health measures must be taken.

"The travelers who come will be tested then sent home. If they test positive but don't have symptoms they will be quarantined at home if not they will be sent to special hospitals," he said.

Rudaw English has learnt that Sulaimani International Airport has three flights scheduled to depart late Saturday: two to Turkey and one to Qatar.

The Kurdistan Region recorded 243 new cases of coronavirus as well as 109 recoveries and 13 deaths on Friday. This brings the total number of cases to 13,857. Of this, 9,083 people have recovered and 541 died.

duvaR.english  
Tevkîfî çarî meclîsîyê Kurdîstanê

July 31, 2020

## Kurdish language department students banned from writing theses in Kurdish

**S**tudents enrolled in the Kurdish language departments of universities in Turkey will no longer be allowed to submit their dissertations in Kurdish. Former academic Selim Temo has also announced that from now on, all lectures at these departments will be conducted only in Turkish.

Students attending the Kurdish Language and Literature department of Turkish universities will no longer be allowed to write their dissertations in Kurdish, in line

with a decision of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

The information was disclosed by former academic Selim Temo, who used to be an associate professor in the field of Kurdish studies at Mardin Artuklu University before being sacked by a statutory decree (KHK) in 2017 for signing a peace petition that criticized the Turkish government's actions in southeastern Turkey.

"I am unveiling this tactless ap-

proach implemented towards Kurdish for ten years. And this is the new act of impertinence: Writing a dissertation in Kurdish at universities' Kurdish Language and Literature departments has been banned and all lectures will be given in Turkish. This is what local and national academy is!" Temo wrote on his Twitter account.

The Kurdish Language and Literature department exists in four universities in Turkey: Dicle University in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır, Mardin Artuklu

University, Bingöl University and Muş University.

Education in mother tongue has been a pivotal demand of Turkey's Kurds. The Turkish government introduced Kurdish as an elective course in schools and launched Kurdish studies programs at universities during the Kurdish peace process, also known as the Kurdish opening or the resolution process. But today, Kurdish language education is no longer said to be high on Ankara's agenda as the peace process collapsed.

## Free but restless, Behrouz Boochani takes tentative first steps into new life

It's the middle of the day in a sleepy, affluent suburb of Christchurch and Kurdish Iranian refugee Behrouz Boochani is burning lunch.

It has been seven months since he arrived in New Zealand and the subtleties of cooking elude his grasp – and interest. His large house down the road from the University of Canterbury has a bachelor-pad vibe. Books are stacked untidily on every surface, and two broken heaters sit on the floor beside a heat pump turned to max.

Three boxes of sultana bran and crushed coffee grinds sit on the kitchen benches, while outside a ball rests on the concrete porch. In the evenings, Boochani plays lone games of football in the garden.

It's a large home for a single man, and the dimensions jar with its occupant, whose nervous energy is only slightly quelled by rollie after rollie after rollie cigarette.

"I am terrible at cooking," he says, smiling over a simple lunch of boiled rice, fried salmon fillets and pickled vegetables from a jar.

He smiles easily, leavening tales of horror from his six years of detention with playful asides and a mischievous air.

"Everything, when I came here, was new; the house, cooking. It was really difficult, it's not easy. You struggle for a while as you get to know a city and establish a new life.

"I still really enjoy it when I make coffee. I really enjoy my privacy and my autonomy."

Known around the globe as the



Behrouz Boochani stands outside the abandoned naval base on Manus Island where he and other asylum seekers were locked up for the first three years. Photograph: Jonas Gratzner/LightRocket via Getty Images

"Voice of Manus Island", journalist, activist and award-winning writer Boochani, 37, spent six years incarcerated in Australian offshore detention before making his way to New Zealand in late 2019.

After staying beyond his one-month visitor visa he claimed asylum and was granted refugee status last week.

New Zealand's opposition party has criticised the government in parliament, alleging Boochani's case was approved at ministerial level, which the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, denies.

Boochani scoffs at the furore, accusing the National party of "hate speech and dehumanisation" for using his humanitarian right to sanctuary as political fodder.

"It's difficult for me to support or trust any politicians. Power is always dangerous, and it is our duty as active citizens to always push back," he says. "Jacinda Ardern, I am not going to admire her – it is against my principles to say any politician is good."

In November crowds of thousands greeted Boochani on a whirlwind tour of the country to promote his bestselling book *No Friend but the Mountains*.

Afterwards, exhausted, he moved into his new home in Christchurch, drew the curtains and let out a long sigh of relief.

"In Manus we were in a war zone – always," he says, sitting on a threadbare sofa, sipping black coffee, smoking, and scrolling social media simultaneously. "I was used to too much adrenaline all the time – it was like being engaged in a war for six years non-stop. Fighting, surviving. It was very harsh circumstances.

"But here it is peaceful, the exact opposite of Manus. But my body has created fake adrenaline – because that's what it is used to. Adrenaline is like an addiction."

A Kurdish investigative journalist in his homeland, Iran, Boochani was persecuted for his reporting and his support for Kurdish rights, and fled for Australia in 2013.

He arrived by boat on Christ-

mas Island, an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean, on 23 July, the first place he reached where he could claim asylum.

He was forcibly transferred to Manus Island just over a month later, to a detention facility that was later found to be illegal. He would spend 2,269 days held by Australia's offshore processing regime.

After a protracted court case he and nearly 2,000 others were compensated for their unlawful detention.

Over the six years he was held on Manus Island and in Port Moresby, Boochani witnessed friends shot, stabbed and murdered by guards, saw others die through medical neglect, and watched some descend into mental anguish and suicide.

He twice endured treatment amounting to torture for several days in the notorious Chauka solitary confinement block, in the now-demolished Manus detention centre. He was jailed for eight days for reporting on a hunger strike in the centre, which was put down by force by PNG police.

But throughout he maintained a role as a working journalist on the island, the most prominent – and, initially, the sole – voice bearing witness from within the secretive regime.

"I am still a journalist in this place," he told Guardian Australia in 2015. "This is my work, my duty."

### 'Secure, finally'

Five years later and Boochani is finally master of his own life, and he fills it with reading, long walks, trips to the cinema and seaside, bike rides and of course – work.

"I am very happy to have some certainty about my future, I feel relieved and secure finally," Behrouz says, saying he'll sometimes walk or ride for four hours a day.

Despite his evident joy at these new pleasures, he is also somewhat flummoxed by the soporific tranquillity of his new suburban home.

He has been afflicted by nightmares since arriving, and keeps odd hours, heading to bed at 5pm and sleeping till 7pm, when he wakes, has a coffee and writes till 2am.

His life – perhaps always – has been about the work. Frivolity, relationships and indulgence take a firm back seat.

"I don't plan life, I just want to work, and walk," he says. "Sometimes I feel like I can't have a girlfriend. I can – but I don't want to live with a girlfriend. I enjoy privacy and I need this time to think about myself. I need it. So I don't think about long relationships with women at the moment. I am not ready."

Passersby halt as he strolls the streets of Riccarton, and locals do a double-take when they spot him sipping a drink in his neighbourhood cafe, while a

passing driver toots and waves.

The attention makes him uncomfortable. He isn't an actor or a celebrity, he insists, he is a human rights activist, a writer – the work is what matters, not his personal story.

But it is partly his story, and his charisma, that have helped make his human rights campaigns so effective.

His literary talent has made him a global celebrity, and despite loathing the recognition, Boochani can't help but follow the story, his story, writ large by a press he largely distrusts.

During our interview he repeatedly reads excerpts from just-published news stories about him, lambasts the New York Times for using a semi-clothed photo of him, quotes from a debate in New Zealand parliament about his refugee status ("hate speech") and reads slurs from Twitter trolls aloud.

He rejects a suggestion to block the accounts.

"I have to know what they're saying, otherwise how can I challenge them?" he says.

"The media, NGOs, they think I am different – 'Oh Behrouz is an exception, Behrouz is special'. And that allows them to forget all other refugees, who at this point in time are the most forgotten people in society."

The wall of Boochani's local cafe is painted with a larger than life portrait of Venus – the goddess of love. Boochani sits uneasily in the bland space, fake mosaic tiles at his feet, surrounded by middle-aged pakehas [European New Zealanders] shooting him curious glances.

New Zealand's beauty is "too much," he says. Lockdown

was a peaceful experience, allowing him to catch his breath and cycle down the empty four-lane highways of Christchurch. And the country is made for walking, exploring, with nothing to stop his rambles but the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

"I was by myself in a lockdown bubble, I enjoyed it," says Boochani.

"Because for the first time I had complete privacy. And I was deprived of that for seven years. I was living with four men in a small room, and then for two years in a room with 50 men. Can you imagine living with 50 men, the bad smell?" he says, laughing.

While becoming fond of New Zealand over the last seven months, Boochani has also found it a quiet, small and somewhat complacent country – a danger for any society, especially when the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, wields her power with a smile.

"New Zealand takes humanitarian responsibility seriously but I think we need New Zealand to do more," he says. "Voice objection towards the ongoing mistreatment of refugees by the Australian government."

When the borders reopen Boochani has plans to accept invitations from writers' festivals in Germany, Italy and France, among others. He has friends, contacts and work offers all over the world.

Right now, though, with the pandemic bringing most travel to a halt, he is travelling in his mind, reading short stories by American writers. "Tomorrow it will be Russian novels – I'm always changing."

After nearly seven years in detention, being caged – or the shadow of it – haunts him.

He is a soul for whom settling means giving up, but also freedom.

Besides the nightmares, he claims to never think of his time on Manus; the privations, the torture, the hunger and the filth. It is a claim he makes with a gentle smile while glancing quickly up, and quickly away.

"I don't think about those six years at all – so that's why I manage very well," he says. "I just don't think about it at all." News is under threat ...

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## ROJAVA. La situation empire dans le canton kurde d'Afrin

**A**près avoir envahi Afrin, l'armée turque et ses mercenaires ont intensifié leurs crimes de guerre et crimes contre l'humanité visant les civils, des féminicides et harcelent les autochtones restants afin de les forcer à quitter leurs terres et d'y installer des colons transférés d'autres régions syriennes pour modifier la démographie de la région en plus de changer les noms des localités et des sites pour annexer Afrin à la Turquie. En parallèle, les lieux de culte et les écoles transformés en quartiers généraux et en prisons où on torture les civils.

Les violations de l'occupation turque et de ses mercenaires contre la population indigène ont forcé plusieurs centaines de milliers d'eux à quitter leurs maisons, à se rendre dans les régions de Shehba. L'histoire de M.A, une femme kurdes de 50 ans, ne diffère pas de ceux qui ont quitté Afrin.

M.A, 50 ans, a été enlevée chez elle à Afrin par la police militaire en juin 2019, et elle a été emmenée à la branche de la police de l'ancienne école de commerce, transformée en quartier général de torture et d'assassinat des civils.

Elle a été surprise de voir que sa fille de 27 ans et sa petite-fille de 3 ans soient emprisonnées. Kidnappée, elle aussi, MA est restée dans une branche de la police militaire pendant 20 jours et a été soumise à divers types de tortures, à toutes



sortes de méthodes brutales, accusée de travailler comme membre de la commune du quartier avant l'occupation de la ville : «Les mercenaires Abo Sayer et Abo Ziyad ont enquêté sur des femmes et des hommes. J'ai été interrogée pendant plusieurs heures sur mon travail au sein de l'administration autonome et sur mon rôle dans la commune du quartier, et j'ai toujours répondu que je n'avais rien à voir avec eux. Je suis resté vingt jours dans une cellule qui m'a paru comme si c'était vingt ans. J'ai été soumise à toutes sortes de tortures avec des tuyaux d'eau et d'électricité, sans parler des paroles immorales qui ont aggravé mon état psychologique et physique. En vingt jours, j'ai perdu 19 kilos sous la torture. La torture commençait à minuit jusqu'à quatre heures du matin. Nous ne pouvions pas dormir à cause des cris des enfants et des femmes sous la torture. Ils torturaient avec des bâtons qu'ils appelaient

« Akhdar al-Ibrahimi », les pendaient au milieu de la pièce et les [torturaient] à coups de chocs électriques ».

MA a confirmé que les mercenaires avaient établi plusieurs prisons dans lesquelles ils pratiquent le viol contre les femmes, à savoir : la prison de Maarateh, la prison de l'école de commerce, et parmi les prisons les plus nombreuses dans lesquelles ils pratiquent des violations contre les civils, en particulier les femmes, se trouve la prison du jardin Kawa, où les femmes sont violées et droguées.

La nourriture de bonne qualité est taxée

En ce qui concerne la situation des habitants du canton d'Afrin, M.A a déclaré que la situation des habitants d'Afrin va de mal en pis car ils ne peuvent pas préparer des repas de bonne qualité, les aliments sont trop chers

et ils craignent de devoir payer une taxe.

« L'occupation turque et ses mercenaires volent les fils électriques et imposent des taxes aux habitants pour rétablir l'installation, ils leur imposent la monnaie turque et le dollar américain, les hôpitaux distribuent des médicaments en livres turques, ainsi que l'imposition de cartes d'identité turque aux citoyens ».

Après 26 jours de torture, elle est sortie de prison après avoir payé une rançon de 1 000 dollars.

Elle et sa famille n'ont trouvé que la fuite, après que sa maison et 5 000 dollars aient été volés par les mercenaires, et elles se sont dirigées vers le canton de Shehba, le lieu le plus sûr et le plus stable. MA et sa famille ont pu atteindre le canton de Shehba il y a environ une semaine, et souffrent d'une mauvaise santé vu leurs conditions de vie.

July 31, 2020

## HDP's draft bill on Zilan massacre rejected over 'Kurdish geography,' 'massacre' remarks

**H**DP's draft bill on Zilan massacre rejected over 'Kurdish geography,' 'massacre' remarks

A draft bill submitted to the Parliament Speaker's Office by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on establishing a site to remember the victims of the Zilan massacre was rejected for including "Kurdish geography" and "massacre" remarks. "This is called hypocrisy. There is the understanding of denial and rejection regarding massacres committed against Kurds," HDP deputy Murat Sarısaç said.

A draft bill submitted to the Parliament Speaker's Office by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on establishing a site to remember the victims of the Zilan massacre was rejected for including "Kurdish geography" and "massacre" remarks.

The bill submitted by HDP deputy Murat Sarısaç on July 13



proposed setting up the site to remember the victims of the massacre in the Erciş district of the eastern province of Van in 1930.

Sarısaç called for cancelling the hydroelectric power plant construction on the Zilan River, saying that the project would destroy the memories of the massacre.

He also said that some 15,000 people were killed when their villages were burned 90 years

ago at the area, adding that the site has gravestones and bones of those killed.

"A hydroelectric power plant would destroy the memory. In addition to the massacres carried out in the Kurdish geography, a massacre of nature has also been taking place for years," read the draft bill.

Parliament Speaker Mustafa Şentop rejected the bill, saying that it includes "rude and hurtful remarks." He also said that

the bill could be put into process if the said remarks are removed.

Sarısaç slammed Şentop's move, saying that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) are scared of different voices.

"The AKP and MHP are putting limits on the opposition not only on social media, but also in parliament. That's why our proposals are rejected for being 'rude and hurtful,'" Sarısaç said, adding that the government doesn't refrain from calling the Kurdish-majority southeast Kurdistan to get Kurds' votes during election periods.

"This is called hypocrisy. There is the understanding of denial and rejection regarding massacres committed against Kurds," he also said.

LE FIGARO

Par Minoui Delphine  
le 31 juillet 2020

Cet article est issu du n° 2020801

## L'été liberticide d'Erdogan en Turquie

À une loi renforçant les pouvoirs de milices de quartier désormais armées, en juin, a succédé, en juillet, au Parlement, un projet qui accroît la surveillance du pouvoir sur les réseaux sociaux.

Le visage plongé dans ses deux mains, Deniz, 32 ans, fait défiler sur son smartphone les images éparses de son monde d'avant : le procès à rallonge d'un ami activiste, la traque des journalistes à travers le pays, la destitution des maires élus du parti d'opposition pro-kurde. « Et puis, avec le Covid, c'est comme si on avait sou-

dainement appuyé sur la touche "pause". Tout le monde chez soi. Les tribunaux fermés. La vie au ralenti. En termes de lutte contre la pandémie, la Turquie s'en est d'ailleurs mieux sortie que de nombreux pays. Mais avec le déconfinement, c'est un autre virus qui menace notre monde d'après : celui de l'accélération de la dé-

rive autoritaire », se désole la jeune militante démocrate. Ses grands yeux verts cernés de noir trahissent des nuits trop courtes et agitées. « Depuis début juin, je ne trouve plus le sommeil », concède-t-elle.

Elle a ses raisons d'être inquiète. Le 11 juin dernier, une loi particulièrement controver-

sée a pris de court les militants de sa trempe. Ce jour-là, les députés turcs, réunis dans l'Hémicycle d'Ankara, ont voté à la majorité en faveur d'un renforcement des pouvoirs des « bekçi », ces « vigiles de quartier » en chemise caramel qui veillent sur les villes et les villages à la nuit tombée. Le nouveau texte, défendu d'ar-

rache-pied par les membres de l'AKP, le parti du président Erdogan, autorise cette police de proximité à stopper des individus pour les contrôler ou les fouiller, mais surtout à porter et à faire usage d'une arme à feu, en cas de besoin. « C'est une milice déguisée, la porte ouverte à tous les dérapages. Dans un État coercitif où l'arbitraire est roi, où la répression est légion, ne faut-il pas craindre que cette police agisse sur ordre du pouvoir, à la façon des "bassidji" iraniens ou des "shabihas" syriens ? », s'insurge la jeune femme.

Par le passé, les « Aigles de la nuit » - c'est ainsi qu'on les surnomme - avaient toujours joui d'une relative bonne réputation. Dans les vieux films turcs, ils sont ces oncles bienveillants qui patrouillent les rues, un siflet entre les lèvres, à l'affût des voleurs et des fauteurs de troubles. Dans les livres pour enfants, ils réveillent les habitants du quartier en période de ramadan. Une chanson populaire, qui emprunte sa partition à Frère Jacques, leur est même consacrée. Dans les années 1990, ces « gardiens noctambules » avaient disparu du paysage urbain, concurrencés, entre autres, par l'émergence des caméras de vidéosurveillance. Leur réapparition soudaine, en 2017, fut d'abord justifiée par la psychose sécuritaire suscitée par les attentats de Daech et du PKK, mais aussi par le coup d'État avorté de juillet 2016.

Si, deux ans plus tard, l'augmentation de leurs pouvoirs in-



Depuis le 11 juin, les *bekçi*, une police de proximité, peuvent arrêter des individus pour les contrôler ou les fouiller, mais aussi porter et faire usage d'une arme à feu.

quiète autant, c'est qu'elle fait craindre l'émergence d'une horde armée au garde-à-vous devant le régime, et dont les nouvelles recrues, formées à la va-vite, seront choisies, non en fonction de leurs compétences, mais de leur allégeance envers certaines valeurs religieuses et nationalistes. « La Turquie compte déjà 256 000 officiers de police, 190 000 gendarmes et 21 000 *bekçi*. Pourquoi renforcer ces vigiles ? C'est accorder plus de pouvoir au parti dominant. C'est favoriser la création d'une armée qui leur est propre », s'insurge, pour sa part, Saruhan Oluç, un député du HDP, le parti laïc prokurde.

Mais les pro-Erdogan ne veulent rien entendre de ce déluge d'inquiétude. Au contraire. Profitant de l'été, ils démultiplient les mesures liberticides. Ce mercredi 29 juillet, le Parlement a de nouveau frappé en adoptant un projet de loi, également défendu par l'AKP, qui élargit l'emprise du pouvoir sur Twitter et Facebook. « Les réseaux sociaux sont d'une importance capitale pour de nombreuses personnes qui les utilisent pour s'informer. Cette loi annonce une sombre période de censure en ligne », estime l'ONG Human Rights Watch. Ces décisions controversées sont d'autant plus troublantes qu'elles confirment

une érosion à marche forcée de la liberté d'expression, qui n'épargne aucun pan de la société civile : avocats récemment soumis à un contrôle renforcé, dans le cadre d'une réforme de la structure des barreaux ; députés de l'opposition déchus de leur mandat, à cause de différents procès ; journalistes épinglés pour « espionnage politique et militaire », ou pour des révélations de « secrets d'État » après des articles critiques sur l'intervention turque en Libye... « C'est un coup d'État civil », se désole la jeune Deniz.