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ROJAVA: TURKISH HARASSMENT AND ABUSES CONTINUE, THE AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION CALLS AGAIN FOR THE REPATRIATION OF JIHADIST PRISONERS

For the first time in months, clashes between Damascus regime soldiers and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters took place on 1st of March, leaving two people dead on each side. The last clashes took place in towns administered by the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), dominated by the PYD Kurds, where the regime

retains control of certain neighbourhoods, such as Qamishli or Hasakah. Nothing of the kind in the new clashes, it seems, which took place according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) in the suburbs of the Christian town of Tell Tamr. According to the official Syrian news agency SANA, the fighting started when soldiers at a check-point refused passage to SDF fighters accompanied by US troops.

During the 2019 Turkish attack, to prevent Ankara's military from advancing further, AANES had accepted the entry of regime troops and their Russian allies into its territory, while the US is present alongside the SDF as part of the anti-ISIS coalition...

One may wonder if this incident does not reflect the growing confidence of the military in Damascus while internationally, and particu-

larly on the Arab diplomatic scene, Bashar Al-Assad is gradually moving from the status of pariah to that of a leader again legitimate... As a symbol of this rehabilitation, in his first visit to an Arab country since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, the master of Damascus was received "fraternally" on the 18th by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed Bin Zayed ("MBZ"). State Department spokesman Ned Price regretted the visit, saying: *"We urge states considering a rapprochement with the Assad regime to think carefully about the atrocities committed by that regime against Syrians over the past decade"*. In Abu Dhabi, "MBZ" and Assad insisted on *"the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and the withdrawal of foreign forces"*, a barely disguised reference to the AANES and the US military – even if the Emirates are more concerned about the Iranian presence in the country... (*Le Monde*).

On 15 March, on the 11th anniversary of the uprising, the Syrian Democratic Council, the political wing of the SDF, issued a statement denouncing the Assad regime for the *"killing, displacement and destruction"* that has engulfed the country since then and accusing it of *"rejecting all initiatives for internal dialogue aimed at finding a solution"* (WKI).

Besides, other foreign forces on Syrian soil, the Turkish military, have continued their relentless harassment of AANES-administered territories this month. Two ceasefire agreements concluded separately by Ankara with the United States and Russia in October 2019 were supposed to put an end to these aggressions... At the beginning of March, artillery fire launched from the Turkish-controlled "Euphrates Shield" zone targeted villages in northern Aleppo province where Kurdish fighters and regime soldiers are deployed. On the 5th, Turkish-Kurdish exchanges of heavy weapons fire took place

near Azaz, with no casualties. On the 11th, in Al-Hesha, near Ain-Issa (north of Raqqa), 3 children aged 10 to 15 were seriously injured by Turkish rockets. The village had already been hit in mid-January when a water treatment plant was targeted. On 16 January, the so-called "Syrian National Army", mercenaries of Ankara, bombed several villages near Tell Tamr, north of Hasakah, while a Turkish drone attacked a military vehicle near Houshan (east of Ain Issa), causing material damage. The same area of Houshan was also targeted by Turkish artillery. On 18 March, reliable sources told SOHR that Turkish and proxy bombing had damaged the electricity network near Tell Tamr, causing power cuts.

On the 23rd, the Turkish army had to intervene to put an end to the deadly clashes that had been going on for almost a week between several factions of the "Syrian National Army" in Ras Al-Ain/Serê Kaniyê and its region... These recurrent internal conflicts concern the sharing of the looting of Kurdish villages and the profits from smuggling (fuel or foodstuffs, even people) to and from Turkey. On the same day, the SOHR reported fighting between SDF and Syrian factions north of Ain Issa, whose area near the strategic M4 highway was again targeted by artillery on the 25th and until the end of the month, without any casualties being reported.

On the other hand, the jihadist factions that control the Afrin region on behalf of Ankara continue their war crimes there. They kidnap civilians for ransom, engage in smuggling, sometimes drug trafficking, arbitrarily arrest residents for "relations with the former administration" – another way of obtaining ransom – physically attack, torture or murder... Even archaeological sites registered with the Syrian Ministry of Culture are preyed upon, such as Zontry, near

Sharran, on the outskirts of the city of Afrin, or those of Basarqah or Khazyan (Ma'batli), where they have brought construction machinery and dig to find artefacts for resale, thus totally destroying the different archaeological levels. They also continue to cut down the olive and fruit trees that once were the wealth and beauty of this region...

Without being able to list all the abuses committed this month, reported in particular on the SOHR website, we mention a few. On the 19th, the "military police", accompanied by members of the Turkish intelligence services, arrested two Afrin civilians in their homes, without any charges being laid against them. In the village of Jiman (Shiran), members of a jihadist faction kidnapped an 18-year-old girl and demanded a ransom of US\$ 20,000 from her parents. The father had already been kidnapped six months earlier. On the 21st, a civilian entering Afrin was arrested at a checkpoint for "participation in the Newrouz festival". On the 25th, two other people were arrested in Afrin for "relations with the former administration" (SOHR). On the 28th, unfortunately, further proof of the occupiers' disregard for human life was provided by a dramatic event, when *"a group of mercenaries named al-Hamazat, belonging to the Turkish occupation forces, opened machine gun fire on a school in the village of Mirkan, in [the occupied region of] Afrin"* (Hawar Agency - ANHA). The jihadists were looking for a teacher at the school who had punished the child of one of them, and were angry that they did not find him there (*Rûdaw*). On the 29th, the SOHR reported that a displaced girl was killed near Afrin by a Turkish armoured vehicle that did not even stop after hitting her. Another vehicle of the occupants also continued without stopping after injuring 3 civilians in their own vehicle near Azaz (SOHR).

The Iraqi Kurdish news channel

Rûdaw and the SOHR have both reported on the abuses suffered by the Afrin area in four years of occupation in several articles. The death toll stands at nearly 650, plus 7,500 abductions and 2,300 other violations against residents, of whom 1,300 are still imprisoned...

On the 18th, the sad fourth anniversary of the fall of Afrin to the Turks and their jihadist mercenaries, thousands of Kurds gathered to protest against the Turkish invasion and occupation of the region. In Afrin itself, several shopkeepers defied the occupiers by lowering their curtains. SDF General Commander Mazloum Abdi denounced the silence of the international community for ignoring its "responsibilities towards the people of Afrin", adding: "*Ending the Turkish occupation and facilitating the safe return of the people of Afrin to their homes and lands is our cause and responsibility*" (WKI).

On the other hand, ISIS jihadists are still active... On the 6th, the *Asayish* (Kurdish Security) of the Al-Hol camp, near Hassaké,

foiled a plan to break out the wives of members of the organisation who are held there. They succeeded in arresting the jihadists near the camp. The latter had coordinated with jihadist cells still active in the Syrian desert. The same evening, four tents in the camp burned down. According to the security services, this was an attempt to assassinate a woman from the camp who works with humanitarian organisations present there (SOHR). On the 19th, also in Al-Hol, the SDF and the *Asayish* announced that they had arrested several members of ISIS in the camp in a major security operation. The exact number of arrests was not given. The operation was triggered after two women escaped the day before. Despite numerous calls from the Kurdish authorities and the United States for countries of origin to repatriate their nationals interned in AANES-run camps, departures have been slow. On the 16th, four Swedish nationals left Al-Hol (*Rûdaw*).

On the 23rd, on the third anniver-

sary of the military defeat of ISIS in its last retreat in the village of Baghouz, the SDF warned for the n-th time the international community against the consequences of its "inaction" in the face of the attempts of the jihadists to re-emerge: "*The inaction of the international community, the fact that some countries have turned their backs on this issue [...] provides ISIS with an opportunity to strengthen itself*"...The massive and deadly attack on the Hassaké prison launched at the end of January by hundreds of members of the terrorist group should have prompted Western countries to react and repatriate their nationals. They remain silent and they do not respond to the demands of the Kurdish authorities to set up an international tribunal to judge the jihadists held in Syria... (AFP)

Finally, an explosion of as yet unknown origin killed at least 5 people and injured 10 others on the morning of the 30th in the district of Shehba. It was a building that exploded in Ehdas (*Kurdistan au Féminin*).

IRAQ KURDISTAN: AFTER IRANIAN STRIKES HIT ERBIL, PRIME MINISTER DENOUNCES ATTACKS ON KURDISTAN'S OIL SECTOR

The month of March was marked in Iraqi Kurdistan by a strike on its capital, Erbil, by twelve ballistic missiles fired on the 13th from neighbouring Iran. The missiles, which hit areas near the US consulate, caused only material damage.

The local television station *Kurdistan-24*, whose studios are located not far from the new US consulate premises, posted images on social networks of its damaged offices, with collapsed sections of the false ceiling and broken glass. Kurdistan's Prime Minister Masrour Barzani said in a statement: "*We condemn this terrorist attack on several areas of Erbil, and we*

call on the people to remain calm". The attack on Erbil comes almost a week after the death in Syria of two senior members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdaran*), killed in an attack blamed on Israel, and for which the *Pasdaran* had promised to "*make the Zionist regime pay*" (AFP). This attack comes just after the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear issue, which were close to a conclusion, were interrupted on 11 November, due to new Russian demands following the war in Ukraine.

The Iranian *pasdaran* quickly claimed responsibility for the strikes, saying they had targeted an Israeli "*strategic centre*" in response to "*recent crimes by the*

Zionist regime", and threatening Israel with further "*destructive*" retaliation. The missiles were in fact aimed at the residence of Baz Karim Barzinji, head of the KAR group, the largest energy company in the Kurdistan region. It was hit by at least 4 of them.

The Prime Minister of Kurdistan denounced the attack in a strongly worded statement: "*The cowardly attack in Erbil on 13 March 2022, allegedly under the pretext of striking an Israeli base near the US consulate in Erbil, targeted civilian places and its justification only serves to hide the shameful nature of such a crime*". The governor of Erbil, Omid Khochnaw, denied any Israeli presence in the region, calling

Tehran's allegations "baseless". The US State Department also condemned the attack as an "outrageous violation of Iraq's sovereignty", expressed its support for the Kurdistan government and called on Iran to "end its interference in Iraq's internal affairs". The Iraqi Foreign Ministry, denouncing the "flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty", summoned the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad, Iraj Masjedi, to communicate the government's protests. France and the European Union also condemned the attack.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told CBS that the US could provide Iraq and the Kurdistan Region with "missile defence capabilities so they can defend themselves in their cities". The US State Department also told the Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* that it did not believe the US consulate was the target.

In stark contrast to the international condemnations, in Iran, the ultraconservative daily *Kayhan* celebrated the "slap in the face of the Zionists" on its front page, repeating the official justification: "two Israeli centres have been destroyed in Erbil".

On the 14th, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and several Kurdish officials visited the site of the attack, while in Tehran, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Said Khatibzadeh warned at his weekly press conference that Iran would not tolerate "the presence near its borders of a centre of sabotage, plotting and dispatching of terrorist groups" targeting the Islamic Republic. The Iranian ambassador in Baghdad promised further attacks on Erbil if "three more Mossad [Israeli secret service] centres are not closed".

After a phone call from Moqtada Sadr to the KDP leader Massoud Barzani, the Baghdad parliament set up a commission to investigate the attack. On the 17th, Rebar Ahmed, the Interior Minister of

the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), presented a report on the attack to the Iraqi parliament in a special session and called for a "full investigation" by Iraq, the Arab states and the international community "with the participation of Iran" (WKI). On the morning of the 20th, the parliamentary enquiry committee visited the site of the strikes under the leadership of Iraqi security advisor Qasim al-Araji (*Rûdaw*).

On the 29th, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani, said from Dubai, where he had come to take part in the "Global Energy Forum" and then the "World Summit Government 2022", that the attack was aimed at undermining the development of the energy sector in Iraqi Kurdistan, at a time when the war situation in Ukraine was likely to cause shortages in this very sector. He added: "It is not only rockets that they are trying to stop us with, they are also manipulating the institutions", referring to the recent decision of the Iraqi Supreme Court to invalidate the KRG's oil and gas law (*Kurdistan-24*).

In this respect, the decision of the Supreme Court of Baghdad, which declares illegal all contracts signed by Kurdistan with foreign firms, has had an unexpected consequence. Theoretically, it also invalidates the contract by which the "federal" oil of Kirkuk, i.e. 100,000 barrels/day, is exported to Turkey by SOMO, the Iraqi national organisation for the marketing of oil! The oil passes through the pipeline crossing Kurdistan, 60% of which belongs to the Russian company *Rosneft*... In February, according to SOMO figures, nearly 1.5 million barrels used this pipeline to arrive at the Ceyhan terminal, bringing an average price of US\$ 96.93 per barrel, hence around US\$ 143 million to the country...

On the 30th, the US Treasury Department announced the swift

imposition of sanctions against Iran for the missile attack on Erbil, as well as the Tehran-backed Houthis in Yemen attacking an *Aramco* site in Saudi Arabia (*Kurdistan-24*).

In other news, Iraq is still looking for its next government – and first of all its next president, who alone can appoint a Prime minister...

On 1st of March, the Iraqi Supreme Court rejected the request of the Speaker of Parliament Mohammed al-Halbousi to reopen the registration of several presidential candidates, arguing that the Constitution does not grant this power to the Speaker of Parliament. However, it indicated that an extension could be voted by parliament. On the 5th, the coalition gathered around Moqtada Sadr, *Sayrûn-Taqaddum-PDK* was thus able to obtain a three-day extension. The KDP and the PUK are still fighting over their respective presidential candidates, the PUK hoping for the re-election of Barham Salih, the KDP opposing to him Rebar Ahmed, now also supported by Sadr. On the other hand, if the "Sadr coalition" wanted to reappoint Mustafa al-Qadhimi as Prime Minister, the group of pro-Iranian parties would favour Haidar al-Abadi (WKI). On the 23rd, however, the alliance chose Sadr's cousin and brother-in-law Jaafar, currently Iraq's ambassador to the UK, for the post of Prime minister. The son of the revered Shiite leader Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr, Jaafar has been described as a moderate with no political affiliation (*Rûdaw*).

In the middle of the month, the parliament set the session to appoint the Iraqi President for the 26th. Sadr called on all MPs to take part, especially those who are not members of his coalition or the pro-Iranian group. Parliament published a final list of 40 candidates for the post. However, on the 26th, the vote had to be cancelled

due to the lack of the required two-thirds quorum (219 present), with only 202 present out of 329. This was the second cancellation; the first attempt on 7 February had already had to be cancelled because it was widely boycotted in the context of the Supreme Court's invalidation of Hoshiyar Zebari's candidacy... (*Al-Monitor*) For the next session, set for the 30th, the score was even worse: only 178 present out of 329. As in the two previous sessions, the representatives of the pro-Iranian Shiite parties of the "Coordination Framework" were absent. This time, the Assembly adjourned its session without even proposing a new date. However, according to the Federal Court, the deputies have until 6 April to elect the President. Beyond that date, the Constitution is silent (*Le Figaro*)...

While their leaders are involved in the negotiations to appoint the future government of the country, the Kurds continue to face numerous discriminations in the territories whose administration is disputed between Baghdad and Erbil.

In particular, evictions of Kurds from their lands continue. For example, earlier this month, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence ordered the eviction of 150 Kurdish families from Kirkuk in favour of former Ba'athist officers who, after 17 years on the run, returned to claim the homes that had been allocated to them after the expulsion of the Kurds and taken away from them in 2003... The following week, the Kirkuk court ordered the confiscation of 3,000 donums from Kurdish farmers in Daquq in favour of Arab settlers. In addition, leaks from the Kirkuk provincial administration revealed that the identity cards of 100-200 families from the Hawija district and its villages had been transferred to the city of Kirkuk, in order to increase the Arab population in the province. A similar operation was revealed in Khanaqin, where the Ministry of Interior transferred between 2020

and 2022 the cards of dozens of non-Kurdish families from the districts of Baqouba and Khales. At the same time, dozens of Kurdish families in Khanaqin who were forced to flee when the federal authorities took control in October 2019 were denied the renewal of their residence cards...

On the 10th, Kurdish National Dress Day, the President of Kirkuk University, Omran Jamal Hassan, who is also the deputy leader of the pro-Iranian Badr militia in the province, had students in Kurdish clothing banned from entering the campus. In Tuz Khurmatu, out of 71 newly recruited policemen, only 7 are Kurds, the overwhelming majority being Turkmen (Shiites) and Arabs (Sunnis). In Kirkuk, raising the flag of Kurdistan (although it is constitutionally recognised) remains forbidden, and the city's brand new court, inaugurated at the end of March by the President of the Judicial Council, Faiq Zaida, in the presence of the governor, bears no indication in Kurdish, being signposted exclusively in Arabic. In another example of discrimination, in order to build a road, the Kirkuk administration plans to demolish 2,000 houses of families from the Kurdish Kakai minority in the Asra district, claiming that they were built "illegally". Furthermore, it refuses to compensate the families.

On the other hand, popular protests forced the interim governor of Kirkuk, Rakan al-Jabouri, to reverse his decision to restrict the Nowrouz festivities on the 21st to only three hours. The protests also forced the President of Kirkuk University, after an initial refusal, to allow the commemoration of the Halabja genocide.

At the end of the month, two Kurdish deputies from Khanaqin sent a memorandum to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior asking for a halt to the continuous transfer of Arab residents to the city. They

simply ask for the respect of the constitution, with a pause until the implementation of its article 140. Meanwhile, a Kurdish official from Khanaqin called for the return to twenty villages in the district of Kurds displaced since 2017: although the area has been liberated from ISIS, the lack of security and basic services prevents them from returning.

Although the number of attacks by ISIS has been decreasing for some time, the danger is still real. The proof is the memorandum dated 2 March sent by the Iraqi army's Chief of General Staff, Abdel Emir Yarallah, to the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, requesting the transfer of 3,693 peshmerga from the 20th division to federal command. According to the Baghdad-Erbil agreement concluded several months ago, they are supposed to be part of a joint Iraqi-Kurdish "second" division to be deployed in the disputed territories, but the creation of the joint units still seems to come up against the problem of financing...

Kirkuk province has seen several jihadist attacks this month, including 3 on the 8th alone, where 2 police officers were injured and 1 terrorist killed. The next day, 3 members of a suicide commando from Syria were arrested in the city thanks to cooperation with Kurdish security forces. On the 11th, an air strike eliminated 4 jihadists near Dibis. On the 14th, an attack near the Rashad district killed 1 federal policeman and injured 3 others. Another attack on the 19th targeted the police station in the village of Yangija in Tuz Khurmatu. Then on the 20th, police officers were again attacked in the Zeghaiton and Rokhana valleys, with 2 seriously injured. A new attack on Rokhana on the 26th led to clashes lasting several hours in which 2 Iraqi soldiers were killed. On the 21st, one soldier was killed and another wounded in an attack near Daquq. Other attacks targeted police officers in Khanaqin. While

the Kurdish Security (*Asayish*) is still forbidden to carry weapons in the city, some Kurdish officials have suggested their transfer to the Federal Security... Finally, on the 27th, the special forces of the Peshmerga were able to put on the run 5 jihadists on motorbikes who were trying to kidnap 3 shepherds near the Ghara valley.

In Sinjar (Shingal), the situation remains catastrophic, and a large part of the Yezidi inhabitants of the district do not want to return. The 2020 security agreement between Baghdad and Erbil has still not been implemented. A meeting

held on 28 February between the mayor and representatives of Baghdad and the United Nations set the goal of full implementation by mid-2022. By then, all security forces should be relocated outside the city. On the 16th, the military command of Nineveh province imposed an indefinite night-time curfew on the district, as tension increased between the Iraqi army and the Sinjar Protection Units (YBŞ) after unknown persons threw sound grenades at a military checkpoint on the 11th. Iraqi troops, who accuse the YBŞ of being the perpetrators of the attack, have reiterated their

demand that the armed group leave Sinjar. At the end of the month, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said it would sponsor a major conference on the Yezidi genocide, organised locally by several Yezidi organisations, to be held in May.

Finally, the war in Ukraine has begun to have an effect on Kurdistan by causing price increases for flour, oil and steel, some of which is imported from Russia and Ukraine. However, several KRG ministers assured that Kurdistan is not at risk of a wheat shortage.

TURKEY: REPRESSION OF NEWROUZ, FURTHER CRIMINALISATION OF HDP

Moscow's invasion of and war in Ukraine on 24 February poses many problems for the Turkish government. First, there are economic problems. Turkey is very dependent on Russian wheat: in 2020-2021, 78% of Turkish wheat imports came from Russia, and 9% from Ukraine. What is worse is that this is a recent dependency, largely due to the destruction in the 1990s of 3,400 Kurdish villages and the agro-pastoral economy of Kurdistan, which supplied Turkey with cereals and meat...The war has considerably reduced Turkish trade with Russia and Ukraine. Already facing annual inflation of more than 60%, Turkish consumers risk having to pay even more for bread, flour and pasta (*France Info*). The Russian company *Gazprom* also supplies Turkey with 34% of its gas and 10% of its oil. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Turkish lira, which had already plunged by 45% in 2021, has fallen by another 5% (*Le Monde*).

Finally, the Turkish tourist sector, already hard hit by two years of pandemic, cannot do without Russian tourists, who were 4.21

million in 2021 (compared to 3 million Germans and... 2.6 million Ukrainians). Unlike its NATO allies, Ankara has not imposed sanctions on Moscow, and in particular has not banned Russian planes from its airspace... and you can still see oligarchs' yachts in the marinas of Istanbul.

Beyond the economic consequences, the Russian-Ukrainian war places Ankara in a difficult geopolitical situation. Turkey indeed has good relations with Kiev, to which it supplied *Bayraktar* drones that proved to be very effective against the Russian army (on the 2nd, Ukraine indicated that it was expecting a new delivery), but it is also very vulnerable to Russia in Syria, especially in the Idlib region... Mr. Erdoğan therefore condemned the Russian invasion, calling it "unacceptable", but Turkey waited five days before announcing, on 28 February, and at Kiev's insistence, that in application of the Montreux Convention (1936), it was prohibiting the passage of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles to all warships, whether from countries "bordering the Black Sea or not"... This delay allowed the passage of a number of Russian ships now

engaged in the invasion. Moreover, the Convention stipulates that the ban does not apply to ships returning to their home ports. Moscow wanted to send another four ships positioned in Tartus (Syria) through the Black Sea. Ankara only allowed the passage of the one that was indeed based in the Black Sea (*Le Monde*).

The situation also has some advantages for Ankara. Playing a balancing act, Mr Erdoğan is trying to place himself in the position of mediator. He thus received in Istanbul on the 29th Russian and Ukrainian delegations who had come to negotiate a possible end to the conflict on Turkish soil. At the same time, he is taking advantage of the return to favour with the European Union that his country's position on the southern flank of NATO has earned him... The new geopolitical situation created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine could indirectly benefit him in terms of his domestic policy as well as his involvement in Syria, by giving him freer hands to internally repress and in Syria attack the Kurds...

The Turkish government has not shied away from repressing the

Kurds at home this month. For the Newroz festival on 21 March, it wanted to ban the celebration in Kurdish clothes throughout the country! As expected, the Kurds defied the ban. From Dersim to Diyarbakir, via Istanbul, they came out of their homes in traditional clothes literally by the millions, in freezing temperatures, to celebrate the holiday. Already at the beginning of the month, Kurdish parties, mainly the HDP, had announced their intention to celebrate Newroz all over the country despite government restrictions, under a new slogan: *"It's time for victory"* (WKI).

In Aydýn, police arrested several musicians for singing and playing "forbidden songs". In Diyarbakir, hundreds of Kurds wearing clothes with the Kurdish flag were banned from the celebrations in the main square. Images circulating on social media showed police using water cannons to disperse a massive crowd. The police attacks, which began in the morning, continued throughout the day, with several people beaten by police outside the square. Despite this violent repression, the celebrations gathered an all-time high of nearly one million people, who arrived on the morning of the 21st. At least 298 Kurds, including 74 children, were arrested and imprisoned in the city, according to the Diyarbakir Bar Association, which called for their immediate release, recalling the illegality of imprisoning minors. Women and LGBT people were particularly discriminated against on arrival at the site and throughout the day. In the morning police brutally searched women and LGBT people; later a group armed with knives attacked the LGBT group, attempting to burn rainbow flags and even lynching one person (*Rûdaw*). Celebrations also took place in Ankara, Gaziantep, Adana, Izmir, Van, Hakkari and Batman. Images of people dancing and singers performing in the snow circulated on social media. According to

Mezopotamya Agency, Newroz fires were set in 36 different locations in Turkey.

The municipality of Istanbul (CHP, Kemalist opposition) had authorised a rally in Yenikapý Square (*Le Petit Journal*). Despite the cold weather, it was attended by more than 500,000 people. The Kurds arrived at the square in the early hours of the 20th, wearing their colourful traditional clothes. Holding "Happy Newroz" postcards and HDP flags, they danced and chanted *Bijî Newroz* ("Long live Newroz!"). In a speech at the celebration, HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar said: *"This government is maintaining itself in power through its war policies: war against Kurds, war against women, war against youth, war against workers, and war against nature"*, before promising to end these repressive policies (*Rûdaw*).

Apart from the attempts to repress Newroz, the government continued its policy of anti-Kurdish repression, including judicial harassment of HDP MPs. On 1st of March, the parliament lifted the immunity of the HDP MP for Diyarbakir Semra Güzel, using as a pretext the publication of a photo showing her with a PKK member. The photo was taken in 2014 during the peace process with the PKK, when Güzel was part of an HDP delegation that came to support the PKK's talks with the government. The HDP walked out of the parliamentary session in protest while 313 MPs approved the decision. Güzel faces imprisonment for "belonging to a terrorist organisation". On the 9th, HDP international affairs spokespersons Feleknas Uca and Hişyar Özsoy recalled that already 13 HDP deputies have lost their immunity in what is *"a long string of attacks on the HDP and parliamentary democracy"*. Their statement also recalled that: *"[...] these HDP meetings with PKK leaders and members took place at the official request of the Turkish government in the framework of the*

peace negotiations. During the same period, the Turkish government encouraged Kurdish families to meet with their PKK relatives to convince them to support a peaceful settlement and return home". In fact, they state, *"HDP leaders are being criminalised for their active role in the peace process, a role that the government had asked them to fulfil"* (HDP Europe)...

In addition, arrests, charges and convictions of members of Kurdish cultural and political organisations continued. In Van, the leaders of the HDP Youth Council were arrested. On the 18th, Meryem Soylu, 79, was sentenced in Diyarbakir to six years and three months in prison for "belonging to a terrorist organisation". The court accused her of being active in the Kurdish women's organisation *Kongra Jinên Azad* (KJA), and the Martyrs' Relatives Association (MEBYA-DER), an association for solidarity with people whose relatives have been victims of state repression. She was convicted for, among other things, participating in funerals and mourning ceremonies of fallen Kurdish guerrilla fighters. In addition, proceedings for "membership of a terrorist organisation" were also initiated against members of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD). These are the lawyers who had represented MEBYA-DER in several trials concerning the desecration by the repressive forces of the graves of Kurdish fighters... (*RojInfo*) Finally, the police arrested 21 women affiliated to Kurdish movements for organising an event on the occasion of the International Women's Day in Mardin on 16 March. Among those arrested were several prominent HDP members, the chairwoman of the women's organisation *Rosa*, Adalat Kaya, and the former co-mayor of Sur district, Filiz Buluttekin (WKI).

Finally, this month the death of another Kurdish political prisoner was announced. Incarcerated in

Diyarbakir for 11 years, Bedri Çakmak had been suffering from stomach cancer but despite a medical report indicating that he could not remain incarcerated, the Turkish authorities refused to release him until the final stage of his illness in 2021. He died only a few months after his release. At the time of his release, he weighed only 35 kg. The Med Federation of Associations for Legal Solidarity with the Families of Prisoners and Convicts (MED TUHAD-FED), which made his death public, accused the government on *Twitter* of being responsible for his death (*Kurdistan au Féminin*).

It was also this month that the Diyarbakir Court of Appeal overturned a ruling granting financial compensation to the family of Kemal Kurkut, a young man shot dead by police on Newrouz 2017. This is a real denial of justice, as Kurkut was clearly no serious dan-

ger for policemen when he was killed. The governor of the province supported the police action at the time, saying there was a suspicion of suicide bombing. But photos taken by journalist Abdurrahman Gök, published the very next day, showed Kurkut shirtless and therefore unable to wear an explosive waistcoat... Gök was then charged with "belonging to a terrorist organisation", and the two police officers charged with the fatal shooting were acquitted in January 2020...

Also on the repression front, the Istanbul Criminal Court decided to keep in prison Turkish activist and philanthropist Osman Kavala, who was charged with "attempting to overthrow the government" for supporting the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2013, and has been held since October 2017. In Adana, at least ten people were arrested for criticising the government on social media. Finally, on

the 30th, the trial of military analyst and opposition politician Metin Gurcan, accused of espionage, began. A retired military officer, Gurcan is also a founding member of the opposition party DEVA ("Democracy and Progress"), led by former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan. He has also contributed articles on military issues to the *Al-Monitor* news website. Arrested at his home in Istanbul on 29 November on charges of leaking state secrets to foreign diplomats, he faces life in prison (*ABC News*).

Finally, one may wonder whether the ruling AKP-MHP tandem is not beginning to feel some "pre-election anxiety"? On the 31st, the parliament passed a law lowering the threshold for a party to enter the Assembly from 10% to 7%. As it happens, the MHP's support among the public has, according to recent polls, dropped from 11.1% to... around 7% (*Reuters*).

IRAN: THE "SEARCH FOR JUSTICE" (DADKHAHI) RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IS GROWING ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

A few days before the start of the conflict in Ukraine, all the negotiators were counting on a rapid outcome to the Vienna talks on the Iranian nuclear issue – success or failure, but in any case a conclusion around the end of February. But on 24 February the Russian invasion of Ukraine took place, and time stood still. As a partner in the talks held directly with the UK, Germany, France, China and indirectly with the US, Russia made new demands, effectively halting the talks: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov demanded assurances from the US that Western sanctions against Russia would not interfere with future Russian-Iranian trade.

In Iran, the pro-regime media describe the Ukrainian situation in Russian terms: "special military

operation". As for responsibility, in his speech of 1st of March, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was clear: it lies in the "destabilising policies of the United States" and the West's interference. There is no question of blaming the Russian ally for the delay in lifting the sanctions against the country. Khamenei even managed the feat of not even mentioning Russia in his speech on the war in Ukraine! Iranians are not fooled: "On social networks, one of the few places where Iranians can still express themselves freely, many express their dislike for Vladimir Putin and their admiration for the Ukrainian people" (*Le Monde*).

However, Iran and Russia do not have exactly the same interests: Iran wants the sanctions lifted first and foremost so that it can resume oil exports, but these will help the West to reduce its dependence on

Russian oil... Conversely, the United States fears that Russia could use its trade relations with Iran to circumvent the sanctions. Finally, the time factor is critical for the West, which is concerned about the rate of uranium enrichment already obtained by Iran: "Iran has regularly denied that it intends to build a nuclear weapon", notes the *New York Times*, "but it has enriched uranium to 60%, a level that has no civilian use, and has created uranium metal that would be needed to make a bomb". The country would be only a few weeks away from getting the bomb – although making it operational would take much longer... However, as European negotiators found the Russian demands "unacceptable", negotiations were suspended on the 11th. A diplomat speaking on behalf of the three European capitals – Paris, Berlin and London –

that signed the 2015 agreement spoke of Russian “hostage-taking”.

March is also the month of International Women’s Day on the 8th. On this occasion, the *Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)* paid tribute to women’s struggles around the world. Particularly in Iran, courageous women lawyers, activists, journalists or mothers of victims of state violence, despite the systematic human rights violations and discrimination they face, do not hesitate to demand justice, freedom, equality and basic civil liberties for all Iranians. They are often imprisoned for their activism (*IHR*). Some of them, like the “Mothers of Laleh Park” or the “Mothers of Khavaran”, initiators of the *Dadkhahi* (“Quest for Justice”) movement, are looking for the killers of their children, victims of the state while they were demonstrating. This increasingly active movement also brings together former political prisoners, relatives of political prisoners executed in the 1980s, and relatives of some of the 176 passengers killed on board the Ukrainian plane shot down by the *Pasdaran* in January 2020 (*CHRI*).

At the same time, the authorities are trying to silence women political prisoners by subjecting them to inhumane living conditions: they are deprived of medical care, prevented from speaking to their children, transferred far from their relatives, or placed in solitary confinement for long periods of time... (*IHR*) On 8 March, the human rights organisation *Hengaw* announced that in 2021, the authorities had arrested 35 women in Kurdistan, 12 of whom were subsequently sentenced to prison terms.

Women are not the only ones to suffer prison abuses, and Iranian prisons remain places of torture, especially for the many political prisoners. On the 3rd, *CHRI* Executive Director Hadi Ghaemi denounced the deliberate depriva-

tion of care to which they are subjected, naming Sepideh Qolliyan, Soheila Hejab, Zeinab Jalalian, Arsham (Mahmoud) Rezaee, and Abbas Vahedian Shahroudi, among others, and adding that he fears for their lives. These fears are reinforced by the fact that at least two political prisoners, Baktash Abtin and Adel Kianpour, have already died in Iranian state prisons in the first months of 2022 after being denied urgent medical care. *CHRI* has urged the international community to put pressure on Iran to end the denial of medical care, and to hospitalise the most urgent cases. The list of prisoners at risk on medical grounds is growing every week. On the 10th, *CHRI* sent a letter to Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, asking for her intervention in the denial of treatment and the continued imprisonment of young freelance journalist Sepideh Qolliyan. The letter states that “*Iranian law provides for such release; Article 502 of the Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that a prisoner’s sentence may be suspended if incarceration would aggravate his physical or mental illness*”, before noting that, in contradiction with the law, “*the denial of medical care is commonly used by the Islamic Republic as a means of punishing political prisoners*”. This practice becomes even more outrageous when the country is hit so hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The arbitrarily imprisoned poet Baktash Abtin has just died of this disease in Evin prison, and according to the testimony of his brother Mehdi, Sepideh Qolliyan has just contracted the disease...

In addition, the regime’s repressive forces continue to kill unarmed cross-border porters, or *kolbars*, by systematically shooting them in the mountains. In February alone, 17 of them were killed, jumped on mines or died in accidents. In early March, one was injured near Mariwan, while another froze to death near Sardasht. Another lost an eye and

a leg to a mine in Baneh... On 8 March, three *kolbars* were injured at the Nowsud border by soldiers who shot at them without warning, and had to be hospitalised. On 9 March, 4 other porters were injured when their car overturned on the Paveh-Nowsud road and had to be hospitalised. The following week, two more accidents left 11 people injured in Rawansour and Paveh, while border guards injured at least five more near Kangavar, Nowsud, and Sardasht. Three more *kolbars* were injured when they fell into a ravine near Nowsud and Salas-e Babajani. Finally, the *Hengaw* Human Rights Organisation reported that *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards) killed a 70-year-old woman and her 30-year-old son in their vehicle near Dalahu (*WKI*) on the 13th.

This year again, the Iranian authorities tried to prevent the Kurds from celebrating Newroz. Dozens of Kurds had been arrested in 2021 for celebrating Newroz by singing Kurdish songs and flying the Kurdish flag. From the beginning of the month, activists, community leaders and teachers in Iranian Kurdistan were warned not to participate in celebrations other than those “organised by the State”. Strict security measures were put in place, including the deployment of *Pasdaran*.

However, despite the regime’s efforts, tens of thousands of Kurds defied the bans and celebrated Newroz. Several Kurdish parties in exile in Iraqi Kurdistan had called for participation in the celebrations (*WKI*). At least 60 people were arrested by security forces in Sanandaj and Piranshahr, according to the human rights organisation *Hengaw*. Nine civilians, including the three organisers, were arrested immediately after participating in the Newroz celebrations at a children’s park in Sanandaj. Iranian security forces prevented people from attending the event and disrupted the cele-

bration (*Rûdaw*). A 14-year-old girl was arrested and released the next day. In the village of Ney (Marivan), security forces, military and riot police raided to prevent the ceremony. According to an informed source, they attacked the population and opened fire on the crowd, injuring several people. Intelligence and *pasdaran* agents had summoned 61 residents of Ney in advance to prevent the celebrations. In Oshnavieh, special forces and riot police dispersed the crowd using tear gas and pellet fire (*KurdPA*).

Arrests and convictions have also continued this month. On 1^{er} March, *Amnesty International* issued a call for "Urgent Action" regarding seven Kurdish political prisoners at risk of execution (. Anwar Khezri, Ayoub Karimi, Davoud Abdollahi, Farhad Salimi, Ghassem Abesteh, Kamran Sheikheh and Khosrow Basharat, affiliated to a Sunni group, were all convicted of "corruption on earth" (*ifsad fil Arz*) and sentenced to death after a grossly unfair trial in which the judge barred their lawyers from speaking, while they claim that the "evidence" used to convict them was extracted through torture. The NGO is calling for a written request to the

head of the Iranian judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, to halt the executions.

In Urmia, Kurdish activist Fairoz Mosalou, imprisoned for almost 3 years without trial in Kotel (Qotur), was sentenced to death on 7 October for *moharebeh* ("enmity against God"), "war against the state" and "membership of a Kurdish party" (*WKI, KurdPA*). On the 23rd, CHRI reported that human rights activist and former prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi had announced on *Twitter* in a message tagged in Persian "civil disobedience" (*nafermani madani*) that she would peacefully refuse to go to prison to serve the 8-year sentence she had been sentenced to after a trial lasting... 5 minutes. Narges Mohammadi has already spent the better part of the last 13 years (2009 to 2013 and 2015 to 2020) behind bars for peacefully defending her rights. With extraordinary courage, she has neither bowed to the authorities nor given up on making her voice heard, even in prison, such as when she organised a sit-in in the women's ward of Evin prison to condemn the killing of hundreds of protesters by security forces during the November

2019 protests, or the execution of wrestler Navid Afkari (*CHRI*). Narges Mohammadi is the spokesperson for the *Defenders of Human Rights Center* founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, who dedicated her prize to her.

In addition, the Intelligence (*Etelaat*) rejected Zara Mohammadi's request for temporary release to celebrate Newroz. The young woman is serving a five-year prison sentence for teaching the Kurdish language. In Urmia, two Kurds were sentenced to two to three years in prison for "belonging to banned parties" and attempting to "disrupt national security", and in Khoy, a Kurd from Turkey, Hatem Odemiz, was sentenced to death for "belonging to the PKK" (*WKI*).

Finally, the Centre for Cooperation of Kurdish Political Parties of Iran (CCIKP) denounced on the 15th the missile attack launched by the *pasdaran* on Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan, and called on the international community to "stop the Islamic Republic". In 2018, the *Pasdaran* had already launched a ballistic missile strike on the CCIKP headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing 16 people and injuring dozens.

AFRIN: THE TERRIFYING TOLL OF FOUR YEARS OF TURKISH-JIHADIST OCCUPATION OF THE KURDISH CANTON

Four years after the brutal invasion of the Kurdish canton of Afrin by Ankara and its jihadist mercenaries and auxiliaries, the toll is truly terrifying. Below are two articles that give an idea of the situation.

The first, published (in English) on the website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (*SOHR*), gives a general picture of the violations committed by the occupiers (link to the original article:).

The second, published on its website (in Kurdish) by the Iraqi Kurdish TV channel *Rûdaw*, focuses on the issue of demographic changes introduced by the occupiers, showing the anti-Kurdish ethnic cleansing at work by the Turkish will (link to the original article:).

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1) The Turkish occupation of Afrin four years on | Nearly 7,500 abductions and arrests and 2,300 other violations committed by Turkish forces and their proxy factions

Systematic plan to change the demography of Afrin and ongoing destruction of Syria's historical heritage

18 March 2022

Today, March 18, Syrians mark the fourth anniversary of the occupation of Afrin city and affiliated districts, (aka "Afrin canton") in the north-western countryside of Aleppo by Turkish forces and their proxy factions and mercenaries. These forces launched a large-scale military

operation they called “Olive Branch” on January 2018 and imposed full control of the canton on March 18, 2018.

For four years, the canton has experienced scores of humanitarian crises and security chaos which is deteriorating daily, where violations and explosions are documented regularly. Since the first day of the Turkish invasion, with the participation of factions of “Olive Branch” operations room, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has monitored and tracked all developments and documented all violations against the people of Afrin, including incidents of looting and sabotage of private and public properties, all of which have been covered by SOHR through daily news articles and reports.

Figures and details

The Turkish invasion, fierce military operations and heinous crimes by the factions have forced over 310,000 civilians, equivalent to 56% of the indigenous residents, to flee from their land and homes. Accordingly, residents lost their properties which have been taken over by Turkish-backed factions. While the situation of those residents who have chosen to stay in their areas over displacement has not been better, as they have endured absolute repression and blatant human rights violations, including kidnappings and arbitrary arrests with the aim of collecting ransoms, along with ongoing and daily incidents of seizure of harvest, houses, shops and cars. Through all of these violations, Turkish-backed factions are attempting to force the remaining residents out from Afrin as a part of Turkey’s plan of systematic demographic change.

Since January 20, 2018, the Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights (SOHR) has documented the death of 639 Kurdish civilians in Afrin, including 95 children and 86 women in explosions of IEDs and car bombs, airstrikes and ground bombardment by Turkish forces and executions, while some died under torture in prisons run by Turkish-backed factions.

Also, SOHR has documented, since the beginning of Turkish occupation of Afrin until the evening of March 17, 2022, the kidnapping and arrest of over 7,497 Kurdish civilians from Afrin, 1,300 of whom remained imprisoned, while the rest have been released, after most of them paid large ransoms which factions of the Turkish-backed “National Army” required.

According to SOHR statistics, over 4,180 families from different Syrian provinces were settled in Afrin, after having been forced to displace from their land, as a part of Turkey’s plan to change the demography of Afrin. Under Russian-Turkish agreements, Afrin was handed over to the Turks in return for allowing the Syrian regime to capture eastern Ghouta. The Syrian Observatory has been all along warning against the Turkish plan of systematic demographic change in Afrin since the first day of the Turkish occupation, where over half of the population of Afrin canton has been forced to displace from their homes, while thousands of families from other provinces have been settled in the canton instead; all of this has taken place in full view of the international community which seemed to be indifferent and kept silent.

Heinous crimes and blatant violations

In four years of the Turkish occupation of Afrin, SOHR has documented over 2,318 different violations added to those kidnap-

pings and arbitrary arrests. Here are further details of these violations:

- 647 incidents of seizure of houses and shops by members and commanders of Turkish-backed factions in Afrin city and affiliated districts. The seized houses belonged to people who have forced to displace from Afrin canton due to the “Olive Branch” operation and others of those who refused to displace.
- 364 incidents of seizure of farmlands belonging to displaced people from Afrin city and affiliated districts.
- 202 incidents of selling displaced people’s houses which had been seized earlier by Turkish-backed factions by force. The houses were sold at low prices and in US dollar in particular.
- 385 incidents of imposition of levies on civilians by the factions and local councils in return for allowing them to cultivate their land and harvest crops. The requested levies were shares of the harvest and profits or sums of money paid in US dollar and Turkish lira.
- 720 incidents of felling fruit-bearing trees by factions of the Turkish-backed “National Army” with the aim of selling them as fire logs, and tens of thousands of fruit-bearing trees have been cut down.

Sabotage of Syria’s historical heritage

Afrin is well-known for its archaeological sites which date back to different eras; the most prominent sites are:

- The city of Nebi Huri which is located nearly 23 km away from Afrin city.
- Sam’an fortress which is located 20 km to the south of Afrin city. That site contained Mar Sam’an Church which was the

- largest church in the world.
- Jabal Al-Sheik Barakat.
- Jabal Barsaya.
- Ain Dara archaeological city which hosts many monuments and a temple contains several statues.

These sites as well as many other archaeological sites around Afrin have been subject to excavation and digging work by Turkish-backed factions in the past for years, where too many relics, antiques and artefacts have been stolen from the archaeological site of Nebi Huri known as "Hagioupolis" or "Khoros" which date back to 280 B.C. (Hellenistic era).

Moreover, the excavators used heavy diggers and earth-moving machineries during excavation and digging work, searching for buried treasures to sell them abroad. Many sites have been destroyed, including the following:

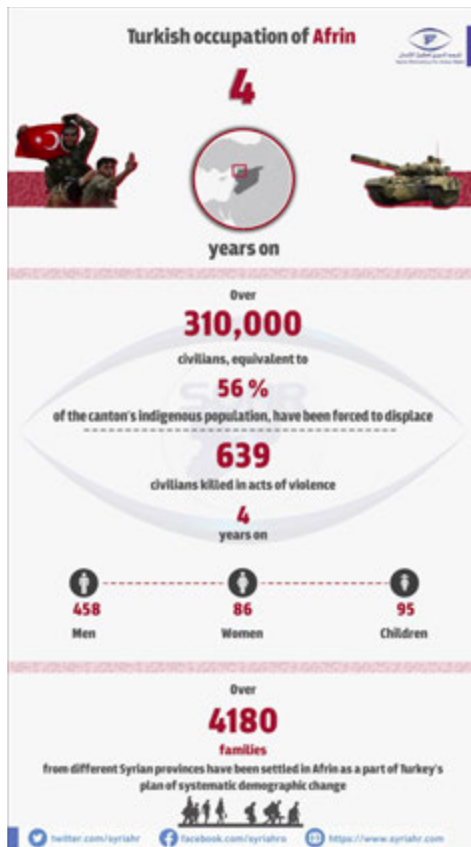
- Marania hill in Sheikh Hadeed district.

- The archaeological hill of Laq in Sharran district.
- The archaeological hill of Shourba in Ma'batli district.
- The archaeological hill of Abdalu.
- The perimeter and surrounding areas of the "Roman amphitheatre" near Nebi Huri fortress in Sharran district in Afrin countryside.
- Aqrab hill in Jalmeh village.
- Al-Sheikh Abdulrahman hill in Jendires district.
- The archaeological hill of Dodi in Maydanki village in Sharran district.
- The hills of Marsawa and Ain Dibaybah in Afrin city.
- The archaeological site of Be'r Al-Jouz in Ma'batli district.
- Qarat Tabbah hill in Sharran district.
- Qah Waqqah hill in Raju district.
- Haloubiyah hill in Afrin city.
- Faraq hill which is near Jendires district and near Afrin river.

For four years of the occupation of Afrin city and surround-

ing districts, Turkish forces and their proxy Syrian factions have wreaked havoc and committed plethora of heinous crimes breaching all international conventions and charters and human rights laws, amid "shameful" and "suspicious" inaction by the international community which exhibits no willingness to put an end to these "grave" violations, despite SOHR's repeated warnings about the dreadful humanitarian situation in the region.

We, at the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), renew our appeal to the international community to interfere immediately and exert pressure on the Turkish government and its proxy factions to stop their violations in Afrin, bring the Turkish occupation to an end and secure safe return of indigenous residents who have been forced to displace during the recent military operation.



**18/03/2022 - Rûdaw
- 650,000 Arabs and Turkmen
have been settled in the Afrin
region**

Four years have passed since the occupation of Afrin. From then until now, Turkey has systematically changed the demography of Afrin and settled 650,000 Arabs and Turkmen in the area.

After 4 years of occupation, the Turkish army and its Syrian militias have completely changed the demography of the region including the centre of the city of Afrin in Western Kurdistan, where the percentage of Kurds was about 98%.

Hundreds of thousands of Arabs and Turkmen have been settled in the Afrin region and 60% of its original inhabitants have been displaced and forced to migrate by force of arms.

According to information obtained by *Rûdaw Media Network* from several sources in the region, the demographic change in Afrin can now be described as follows: with 650,000 Arabs and Turkmen settled by the Turkish army and its Arab militias, the forced deportation of the Kurdish population has reduced the population to 250,000 or 300,000 Kurds in Afrin, which is now 35% of the population. Today, more than 100,000 Kurds have become displaced persons in the Shehba district where there are 5 camps.

Mr Ednan Murad, lawyer at Afrin Bar Association, told *Rûdaw Media Network* that the rate of demographic change is not the same in all villages and districts, but that in any case the solution is to help the people of Afrin to return to their homes. Mr Ednan Murad added: “*The*

demography is being changed in a planned way in Afrin. The population of some villages has now become 100% Arab. In some villages, 90% of the Kurds have remained on their native soil. In some places, the evacuated houses are 100% occupied by Turks and Arabs. Therefore, if our people are given the opportunity to return to their homes, it will force the demographic change plan to be suspended”.

After the Turkish occupation of the region, about 300,000 Afrin inhabitants left their region. Some of them arrived in Aleppo, Kobanê or Cizre. Some of the refugees are arriving in Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan (*Bashur*) and also in different European countries. There are also about 100,000 displaced migrants in the Shehba area, in camps or villages in the district.

La Turquie interdit le passage des navires de guerre entre la Méditerranée et la mer Noire

Le président turc Erdogan, qui n'a jamais reconnu l'annexion de la Crimée, juge « inacceptable » l'attaque russe contre l'Ukraine.

A lors que les sanctions continuent à pleuvoir sur la Russie, la Turquie, qui n'en a imposé aucune, vient malgré tout d'interdire le passage de ses détroits à tous les bâtiments de guerre, qu'ils soient issus de pays « riverains ou non de la mer Noire », a déclaré, lundi 28 février, Mevlüt Çavusoglu, le chef de la diplomatie turque.

Moscou s'est tout de suite senti visé. « *La Russie nous a demandé si nous allions, au besoin, appliquer la convention de Montreux. Nous leur avons dit que nous l'appliquerions mot pour mot* », a-t-il ajouté. Signée en 1936, la convention de Montreux permet à Ankara de réglementer le trafic maritime à travers ses détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles, entre la Méditerranée et la mer Noire, en temps de paix comme en temps de guerre. Imposer une interdiction de passage aux bâtiments militaires russes était réclamé avec insistance par le gouvernement de Kiev, ce que la partie turque rechignait à faire.

Membre de l'OTAN, la Turquie, qui entretient des relations cordiales avec la Russie, grande pourvoyeuse de gaz, et avec l'Ukraine, qui lui achète des drones, semble soucieuse de conserver une forme de neutralité [dans le conflit](#). Il n'est pas question d'« *abandonner ni la Russie ni l'Ukraine* », a précisé le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan peu avant l'annonce faite par son ministre, évoquant la nécessité de « *ne*



Manifestation contre l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie, à Istanbul, en Turquie, le 28 février 2022. DILARA SENKAYA / REUTERS

pas céder sur les intérêts nationaux ».

Ankara joue gros

Malgré son soutien affiché au gouvernement pro-occidental à Kiev, la Turquie a mis cinq jours à prendre sa décision. Sa position a évolué samedi, après un appel téléphonique du président Erdogan à son homologue Volodymyr Zelensky. Un peu plus tard, M. Zelensky a laissé entendre qu'il avait réussi à convaincre le président turc de fermer les détroits aux navires russes.

« *Je remercie mon ami, monsieur le président turc Recep*

Tayyip Erdogan, et le peuple turc, pour leur ferme appui. L'interdiction du passage des navires de guerre russes vers la mer Noire et un soutien militaire et humanitaire à l'Ukraine sont extrêmement importants à l'heure actuelle », a-t-il écrit sur son compte Twitter.

A première vue, la décision annoncée est un tournant. Jusqu'ici, la Turquie semblait soucieuse de ménager ses bonnes relations avec Moscou, son fournisseur attitré pour le gaz, l'aluminium, le blé, l'orge, l'huile de tournesol, les engrais et les missiles antiaériens S-400, qui, livrés en 2019, l'ont éloignée des autres pays de l'Alliance atlantique.

Ankara joue gros en raison de sa vulnérabilité en Syrie. Le président russe, Vladimir Poutine, peut exercer de fortes pressions au sujet de la région d'Idlib, où les offensives militaires à répétition organisées par Bachar Al-Assad avec l'appui de l'aviation russe ont poussé plus d'un million de réfugiés au plus près de la frontière avec la Turquie.

En réalité, l'interdiction des détroits aux navires de guerre ne va rien changer à la situation militaire sur le terrain. Les derniers bâtiments russes, six navires de débarquement et un sous-marin, à avoir franchi le Bosphore, le 10 février, sont à

piéd d'œuvre le long des côtes de l'Ukraine. Ils ont déjà débarqué leurs chars et leurs soldats dans les ports ukrainiens de la mer Noire et de la mer d'Azov. Pour le reste, la flotte russe basée à Sébastopol, en Crimée, a déjà été largement déployée dans la zone de guerre.

Actuellement quatre navires russes attendent leur tour pour passer de la Méditerranée à la mer Noire, selon Yoruk Isik, un observateur attentif des détroits. Les autorités turques ne devraient pas s'opposer à leur traversée dans la mesure où l'article 19 de la Convention autorise les navires des pays riverains à regagner leurs bases d'attache.

Ainsi, les bâtiments russes qui se trouvent actuellement en

Méditerranée, notamment sur la base navale de Tartous, en Syrie, pourraient être appelés en renfort en mer Noire, sans que la Turquie ne puisse rien faire pour les en empêcher. « Si les pays impliqués dans la guerre demandent à ramener leurs navires à leurs bases, cela doit être autorisé », a précisé M. Çavusoglu dans une interview publiée lundi 28 février par le quotidien *Hürriyet*.

Utilisation des drones turcs

Le président Erdogan n'a pas mâché ses mots au sujet de l'invasion russe. Lundi, il a répété qu'il considérait « inacceptable l'attaque menée par la Russie contre le territoire ukrainien », saluant au passage « la lutte du gouvernement et du peuple ukrainiens ». Puis il s'est plaint,

sans prononcer le mot Russie, du fait « que les pays à l'origine du problème siègent dans les instances d'arbitrage aux Nations unies, ce qui rend les choses inextricables ».

Bien que tributaire du gaz russe, la Turquie n'aime pas l'idée de voir la Russie étendre sa domination en mer Noire, surtout depuis qu'elle a fait main basse sur les navires ukrainiens lors de l'annexion de la Crimée, en 2014, laquelle n'a jamais été reconnue par Ankara.

Un autre motif de friction sous-jacent avec Moscou a resurgi ces derniers jours concernant l'utilisation des drones turcs Bayraktar TB2 par l'armée ukrainienne. Acquis par Kiev bien avant la guerre, les TB2

ont été employés ces derniers jours contre la soldatesque russe lancée sur les routes d'Ukraine. A Kherson (Sud), à Kharkiv (Nord-Est) et dans les environs de Kiev, des centaines de représentants des troupes d'élite, des dizaines de chars, de véhicules de transport blindés, de systèmes d'artillerie ont, semble-t-il, été atteints par les engins turcs.

Les télévisions russes dissidentes ont largement diffusé les images de ces enchevêtrements de métal. Une réalité que le Kremlin, qui cache le bilan des pertes russes dans le conflit, préfère ignorer. Ajoutant au malaise, Vasyl Bodnar, l'ambassadeur d'Ukraine à Ankara, s'est réjoui dimanche sur son compte Twitter de « l'efficacité » des drones turcs.

LE FIGARO

1er mars 2022
avec AFP

Syrie : quatre morts dans de rares accrochages entre régime et Kurdes

Les accrochages entre les forces de la région autonome kurde dans le nord-est de la Syrie et les troupes du régime sont rares dans le pays en guerre. « Deux soldats du régime ont été tués de même que deux membres du conseil militaire local (affilié aux FDS) dans un accrochage armé dans la banlieue de Tal Tamer dans le nord-est de la Syrie, a indiqué l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH).

A Damas, l'agence de

presse officielle SANA a indiqué que les soldats syriens postés à des check-points avaient interdit à une « patrouille des forces américaines accompagnée de membres de la milice des FDS de pénétrer dans une région » sous contrôle du régime près de Tal-Tamer. Les FDS ont alors attaqué des postes du régime, a-t-elle ajouté sans dire s'il y avait eu des victimes. Pour leur part, les FDS ont confirmé dans un communiqué la mort de deux des leurs et de deux soldats syriens, sans mentionner la

présence des forces américaines. Il s'agit « d'une provocation dangereuse de la part du régime syrien », ont-ils affirmé.

Après le retrait de l'armée syrienne de leurs territoires dans le nord-est de la Syrie quelques années après le début de la guerre en 2011, les Kurdes ont instauré une administration autonome se dotant d'une force militaire. L'autonomie kurde aux portes de la Turquie irrite Ankara. La Turquie considère les FDS comme l'ex-

tension syrienne du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), un groupe qu'elle qualifie de « terroriste ». En 2019, pour stopper une offensive d'Ankara contre leurs forces, les Kurdes ont accepté un accord avec le régime syrien et son allié russe, qui ont déployé des troupes dans des territoires sous leur contrôle, même si les FDS y conservent la haute main. Les Etats-Unis sont des alliés des FDS et ont déployé des soldats en Syrie dans le cadre de la coalition internationale antijihadistes.

The New York Times

Marche 1, 2022
By Carlotta Gall

Ukraine Invasion Increases Friction Between Erdogan and Putin

The Turkish and Russian leaders have found themselves on opposite sides of a host of armed conflicts. In Ukraine, the stakes may be higher than ever.

In the hours before dawn, as the world held its breath watching the first movements of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Thursday, the Turkish military made a last-minute dash to evacuate diplomatic staff and other citizens of Turkey from the capital, Kyiv.

Two military cargo planes entered Ukrainian airspace soon after midnight and circled down into Boryspil International Airport, the main civilian airport that lies 18 miles east of Kyiv city center.

But the planes ended up stranded. So too were their military crews, and the Turkish diplomats and citizens they were trying to evacuate. At 5 a.m., Russia unleashed the first salvos of its war on Ukraine, making any flight out impossible.

Pictures of the airport the next day, obtained from the commercial satellite imagery company Planet Labs, show two gray military cargo planes parked in the open at one side of the airport, which so far has not been a target of Russian airstrikes.

The stuck planes have now become Exhibit A of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's misreading of the Ukraine situation, opening him to criticism at home for not evacuating Turkish citizens in time, for misjudging President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and for not taking American warnings of an invasion seriously enough.

Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Putin have had a sometimes close, sometimes contentious relationship as the Turkish leader has cultivated links with Moscow — partly as leverage against the West, but also out of necessity, since Turkey is being squeezed from several sides by Russia.

Turkey is a NATO member, but so

much distrust has built up because of Mr. Erdogan's flirtations with Russia that it was not invited into at least one of the alliance's leadership-level meetings before the Russian invasion, according to Asli Aydintasbas, a senior fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations.

At the same time, Mr. Putin and Mr. Erdogan have in recent years found themselves on opposite sides of conflicts in Azerbaijan, Libya and Syria.

Russian troops in Syria have long threatened to press their offensive against the last rebel-held area in that country, which could force up to four million Syrians to flee into Turkey. And since 2020, the Russian military has expanded its footprint in the Caucasus region.

Now Russia looks poised to dominate the northern shores of the Black Sea with its advances in Ukraine, where Mr. Erdogan has irritated Russia by selling Turkish-made drones, some of which have been used to strike Russian armored convoys since the invasion began, according to Ukrainian officials.

Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Putin spoke on the telephone on Feb. 23, hours before the start of the invasion. Mr. Erdogan repeated his offer of mediation between Russia and Ukraine and reiterated his invitation to Mr. Putin to visit Istanbul for a meeting with Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

"President Erdogan stated that he always attaches great importance to the close dialogue he established with Russian President Putin on regional issues, that they have seen the positive results of this and that he is determined to maintain this understanding," an

official statement from the Turkish presidency said.

Mr. Erdogan has maintained an even tone in his public statements over the situation, describing the invasion of Ukraine as "unacceptable" but continuing to call for a peaceful resolution.

But there is a sense of anger in Mr. Erdogan's presidential circle that Mr. Putin lied to them about his intentions in Ukraine, Ms. Aydintasbas said.

"Turkey was late in taking action and evacuating its people," Ms. Aydintasbas wrote in a text message, adding, "They never believed the U.S. scenario of a full-scale invasion and dismissed U.S. warnings."

"I suspect Erdogan trusted his relationship with Putin and thought it would be a minor incursion," she added. "Turkey also failed to evacuate its citizens based on that belief. That's proving to be a huge miscalculation."

The situation seemed to have inspired a shift in Turkey's stance toward Russia on Sunday, when both the Turkish foreign minister and head of presidential communications described Moscow's intervention against Ukraine for the first time as an act of war.

Turkey oversees access to the Black Sea through the Montreux Convention, a 1936 international treaty that regulates sea vessels passing through the Bosphorus. Defining the situation as war would allow Turkey to close the Bosphorus to vessels of the countries involved.

There remains a loophole for Russia, since, as one of the littoral

states on the Black Sea, it can claim the movement of vessels is for them to return to their home base. Russian warships and a submarine have already passed through to the Black Sea in recent weeks and have played a part in the attack on Ukraine, but Turkey's action may complicate Russia's ability to send reinforcements or resupply its forces.

"It's not a game changer but it's a nuisance for the Russians," Ms. Aydintasbas said. "It's a nuisance not to be able to have their Mediterranean fleet go up" the Bosphorus to the Black Sea. The change in tone was "indicative of the sentiments in Turkey," she added.

Not much is known about Turkey's decision-making process in the last hours before the outbreak of war, but it is clear that Mr. Erdogan miscalculated the speed and the severity of the Russian operation, and the urgency for an evacuation. According to flight-tracking records, two Turkish Air Force planes landed at Kyiv, one with the code TUAF600, at 12:15 a.m. on Thursday and the second, TUAF601, at 3:43 a.m., said Justin Bronk, a research fellow for air power and technology at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

Two hours after the first plane landed, Ukraine announced that it was closing its airspace because of the impending Russian attack. The second Turkish plane appeared to turn back, missing its scheduled landing at 2:46 a.m., but then proceeded and landed about an hour later.

There are no flight records of the two military planes leaving in the hours after they landed, Mr. Bronk said. Both Ukraine and Russia had announced the closing of airspace by then, he noted.

The flights could have left unseen if the pilots turned off their transponders, Mr. Bronk said. But the satellite images seen by The New York Times indicate otherwise.

Turkey has been calling its citizens in Ukraine individually for the last month, urging them to leave, and is still trying to evacuate 6,600 citizens from the country, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Sunday.

A Turkish student stuck in Kharkiv, a northeastern city that has come under the most intense assault,

posted on Twitter to appeal for help on Saturday.

“We are a student community of 35 people in Ukraine/Kharkiv (this number is not the total number of students in Kharkiv),” the student, Ahmet Kagan Gumus, wrote. “3 of us were evacuated and now we are 32. For the first time, we hear the sounds of clashes, bombardments, helicopters and jets from very close.”

The predicament of Turkish citizens — students, tourists and business professionals — stuck in Ukraine

as the war intensifies is not unique. Thousands of foreigners have been struggling to flee, including Afghan refugees, African students and employees of Western companies and embassies.

Turkey, like many other nations, is scrambling to rescue citizens who manage to travel overland out of Ukraine to neighboring countries, but the borders are clogged with tens of thousands of refugees and 20-mile tailbacks. Mr. Cavusoglu said that a Turkish Airlines plane was bringing home some who had succeeded in reaching Romania.

The Turkish defense minister, Hulusi Akar, demanded to speak to his Russian counterpart to arrange an air corridor for evacuations, Mr. Cavusoglu said. Mr. Akar did reach the Russian defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, on Sunday, according to an official Turkish statement.

But that statement made no mention of any agreement for an air corridor.

Nimet Kirac contributed reporting from Rzeszow, Poland, and Safak Timur from Istanbul.



Bruno RIPOCHE.
02/03/2022

Guerre en Ukraine. La Turquie ferme ses détroits et navigue à vue

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a interdit les détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles aux navires de guerre, comme l’y autorise la convention de Montreux. Les bâtiments russes ne peuvent plus ni entrer dans la mer Noire ni en sortir. Pour autant, la Turquie ne s’est pas associée aux sanctions contre la Russie et Erdogan maintient des canaux de communication ouverts aussi bien avec Poutine qu’avec le président ukrainien Zelensky.

La décision de la de fermer le Bosphore et les Dardanelles, verrous de la mer Noire dont sont riveraines l’Ukraine et la Russie, peut-elle modifier le ? Sans doute pas, et ce n’était pas forcément le but recherché par le gouvernement de , lorsqu’il a actionné dimanche soir les dispositions de la convention de Montreux. En vertu de cet accord international de 1936, la Turquie peut – en période de conflit – interdire le franchissement de ses détroits aux navires de guerre... sauf à ceux retournant à leur port d’attache.

Les navires russes bloqués

Officiellement, il s’agit d’éviter l’escalade de la crise et le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Çavusoglu, s’est gardé de désigner la en particulier. Mais dans les faits, c’est bien elle qui est visée en première et quatre de ses navires

sont bloqués. Or, Moscou peut avoir besoin de franchir les détroits pour renforcer sa flotte de la mer Noire avec des bâtiments habituellement basés en Baltique, ou bien inversement pour envoyer des marins basés en Crimée vers la base russe de Tartous, en Syrie), où Poutine est engagée aux côtés d’Assad, alors que la Turquie soutient l’opposition au régime.

Après tout, Erdogan a dès le début dénoncé l’agression inacceptable contre l’Ukraine. Et une entreprise turque proche du Président, Baykar, a fourni à Kiev depuis plusieurs années des drones de combat TB2. Ceux-ci ont fait des ravages dans les colonnes blindées russes, notamment à Kherson (sud de l’Ukraine). Ces drones avaient déjà fait basculer les conflits en Libye et au Karabakh, au détriment des alliés de Moscou. Mais Kiev n’en possède sans doute pas

assez pour changer la donne dans la guerre en cours.

Erdogan ménage Poutine

Dans le même temps, la Turquie ne veut pas couper les ponts avec : elle a annoncé mardi soir qu’elle ne s’associerait pas aux sanctions européennes et américaines, de la même manière qu’elle avait condamné, sans joindre d’actes aux paroles, l’annexion par Moscou de la Crimée en 2014.

Elle s’est aussi abstenue lors du vote au Conseil de l’Europe sur la suspension de la Russie. Dans une interview à la chaîne Habertürk, Çavusoglu a souligné l’importance de garder des canaux de communication ouverts et de parler aussi bien à qu’à Vladimir Poutine. Erdogan l’avait proposé avant le début de la guerre : il souhaite accueillir les négociations – qui

ont débuté à la frontière biélorusse — entre les belligérants et se positionner en faiseur de paix.

La Turquie est également très dépendante de la Russie pour ses approvisionnements en gaz et pour nourrir ses 85 millions d’habitants et son industrie. Elle est la première destination des exportations russes de blé, d’acier ou d’aluminium.

Même de rien, actionner la convention de Montreux adresse aussi un message aux Occidentaux, en particulier aux pays de l’Otan dont la Turquie est un membre indiscipliné – elle s’est équipée de missiles antiaériens russes. Les alliés ne pourraient pas envoyer des navires en mer Noire pour mettre la pression sur Moscou sans son autorisation. Si Erdogan navigue à vue, son cap est bien son intérêt, national et personnel.

March 3, 2022

Denial of Medical Treatment for Ailing Political Prisoners in Iran Aimed at Crushing Dissent

The continued denial of proper medical treatment to ailing political and civil rights activists in Iran is setting the stage for deliberate crimes against the many political prisoners in the country, including Sepideh Qoliyan, Soheila Hejab, Zeinab Jalalian, Arsham (Mahmoud) Rezaee, and Abbas Vahedian Shahrودي.

“These activists represent the voices of many Iranians, which the Iranian government is trying to silence,” said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

“Iran’s State Prisons’ Organization and judiciary chief are responsible for the lives and safety of all prisoners,” he added. “Yet they are deliberately subjecting unjustly jailed political prisoners to life-threatening conditions in collaboration with security agencies.”

Fears for the lives of the activists are heightened by the fact that at least two political prisoners have already perished in Iranian state custody in the first few months of 2022 after being denied urgently required medical treatment: Baktash Abtin and Adel Kianpour.

CHRI calls on the international community, including the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, the special rapporteur for human rights, and all Member States to demand that the Iranian authorities provide immediate and full treatment for all prisoners, especially political prisoners who have long



Continued Refusal to Provide Proper Medical Care Risks More Prisoner Deaths

been targeted for denial of medical care.

In particular, CHRI urges the international community to demand that ailing prisoners be immediately released for full care in proper medical facilities.

Political Prisoners at Risk of Grave Illness or Death without Immediate Action

Following is a timeline of recent events regarding the imprisoned activists mentioned above, all of whom continue to be denied proper medical treatment despite serious ailments.

On February 24, 2022, political activist Soheila Hejab fell seriously ill and lost consciousness after suffering from untreated COVID-19 symptoms, and was taken from a penitentiary in Kermanshah, western Iran, to a hospital. The concern for her has been compounded by the fact that her condition and location are unknown.

On February 26, Abbas Vahedian Shahrودي, a teacher and

civil rights activist imprisoned in Mashhad, northeast Iran, was taken “half conscious” from Vakilabad Prison to a hospital for a few hours and returned to prison without sufficient treatment, tweeted his wife.

On February 27, civil rights activist Mahmoud (known as Arsham) Rezaee’s health worsened after three weeks on hunger strike to protest the rejection of his requests for medical furlough to receive treatment for a stomach infection and other serious ailments. His conditions remain untreated.

On February 28, journalist and civil rights activist Sepideh Qoliyan was coughing up blood after several hunger strikes along with severe COVID-19 symptoms in Evin Prison in Tehran. Researcher Navid Yousefian tweeted that prison authorities “refused to give her a [COVID-19] test and then when they did it a few days later, they wouldn’t tell her the result. Now they are taking revenge on her by refusing to grant her medical furlough.”

On February 29, political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian’s health significantly deteriorated in the Central Prison in Yazd, central Iran. During her imprisonment for the past 13 years, she has been repeatedly denied proper medical treatment despite suffering from kidney disease, pterygium (a vision-threatening eye condition), and asthma for years.

All these political prisoners have been charged with bogus crimes and convicted of unfounded national security crimes without due process. CHRI is deeply concerned for their lives and well-being and urges the Iranian authorities to immediately release them to guard against more preventable deaths in Iran’s prisons.

Meanwhile, civil rights activist Hossein Ronaghi, who lost a kidney due to denial of medical care during his imprisonment in 2011, was arrested after criticizing a bill aimed at further restricting access to the internet on February 22, 2022. He remained on hunger strike in detention until his release on March 2. Ronaghi was released from his previous imprisonment in 2016, after Iran’s state medical examiner determined he was physically unfit for incarceration.

The UN has expressed serious concerns over Iran’s continued denial of appropriate healthcare to detainees, which violates the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Guerre en Ukraine : le Guide suprême iranien ménage la Russie

Dans un discours prononcé mardi, Ali Khamenei a imputé la responsabilité de la guerre actuelle aux Etats-Unis et à l'Occident

Parler d'un conflit en omettant de mentionner le nom du principal belligérant : c'est l'exercice auquel s'est livré le Guide suprême iranien, Ali Khamenei, pour parler de la guerre en Ukraine. A l'occasion d'un discours d'une quarantaine de minutes prononcé le 1er mars depuis Téhéran – le premier depuis le début de l'offensive russe, le 24 février –, la première autorité du pays s'est bien gardée de prononcer ne serait-ce qu'un mot ayant trait à la Russie, un proche allié politique de l'Iran. Ceci alors même que les militaires russes intensifient leurs bombardements dans Kiev et que la deuxième ville du pays, Kharkiv, est encerclée.

Ali Khamenei a au contraire mentionné une vingtaine de fois le mot « Etats-Unis » et une dizaine fois le mot « Occident », sur lesquels il impute la responsabilité de la guerre actuelle. « L'Ukraine a été la victime des politiques déstabilisatrices des Etats-Unis. Ce pays a conduit l'Ukraine dans la situation actuelle, en se mêlant des affaires internes de ce pays, en organisant des rassemblements contre les gouvernements et en créant des révolutions de velours, des coups d'Etat », a soutenu Ali Khamenei, répétant le récit officiel du régime iranien selon lequel les racines de tout conflit ou soulèvement résident dans les ingérences américaines et occidentales.

Poursuivant son propos, le Guide suprême a également laissé entendre que le gouvernement ukrainien était dépourvu de tout appui de la part de sa propre population. « Le peuple est le plus grand soutien des gouvernements. Si le peuple ukrainien était entré en scène, la situation du gouvernement ukrainien aurait été différente.



Ali Khamenei, en janvier 2021. WIKIPEDIA

Les gens ne sont pas là parce qu'ils ne croient pas dans le gouvernement », a dit Ali Khamenei, alors que l'armée ukrainienne résiste et qu'un grand nombre d'hommes et de femmes rejoignent les unités de volontaires en Ukraine depuis le début de l'offensive russe. Il a également fait abstraction de la popularité grandissante du président ukrainien, Volodymyr Zelensky. Selon une étude publiée en février par le centre Razumkov, 90 % des Ukrainiens plébiscitent leur président, contre 45 % avant l'offensive.

Des négociations sur le nucléaire au point mort

Si la plus haute autorité politique et religieuse iranienne a assuré qu'il était « pour la fin de la guerre » en Ukraine, il n'a fait nulle mention du rôle que pourrait jouer la Russie dans la solution qu'il préconise. « Le remède pour toute crise passe par la résolution de la racine du problème. Et en Ukraine, les racines sont les politiques américaines », a conclu Ali Khamenei. Les propos du Guide suprême ira-

nien surviennent tandis que les négociations pour relancer l'accord de 2015 sur le dossier nucléaire iranien (le JCPOA) sont en cours à Vienne, de manière directe, avec le Royaume-Uni, l'Allemagne, la France, la Russie et la Chine, et, de manière indirecte, avec les Etats-Unis.

Quelques jours avant le début du conflit en Ukraine, toutes les parties impliquées pariaient sur une issue dès la fin du mois de février, c'est-à-dire la conclusion d'un accord ou l'échec des pourparlers. Or, aujourd'hui, tout laisse penser que les négociations risquent de durer encore longtemps. « En effet, nous avions des raisons de nous attendre à ce que les pourparlers sur le JCPOA soient menés à bien d'ici à la fin février. Ces attentes ne se sont pas réalisées, a ainsi prévenu l'ambassadeur russe auprès de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), Mikhaïl Oulianov, dans un message publié sur Twitter le 28 février. Regrettable mais pas dramatique. C'était un échéancier, pas la date limite. Nous avons encore le temps de finaliser les pourparlers dans les jours à venir. »

« Despotisme et dictature »

Dans les pourparlers nucléaires, Téhéran voit Moscou comme un soutien face au camp occidental. D'où les propos d'Ali Khamenei, qui a ménagé la Russie, au point de refuser d'évoquer le rôle joué par cette dernière en Ukraine.

Même tonalité sur les chaînes de la télévision publique iranienne : la guerre en Ukraine y est qualifiée d'« opération militaire spéciale », le terme utilisé par Vladimir Poutine pour décrire l'invasion du pays. Les points presse des officiels russes sont diffusés en direct et les informations données par le ministère de la défense russe défilent en bandeaux lors des journaux télévisés. Le message ? A l'unisson des déclarations du Guide suprême : faire confiance à l'Occident est une erreur, alors que la Russie reste un partenaire solide.

Sur les réseaux sociaux, l'un des rares espaces où les Iraniens peuvent toujours s'exprimer librement, ils sont nombreux à faire part de leur aversion pour Vladimir Poutine et de leur admiration pour le peuple ukrainien. « L'enthousiasme de la République islamique d'Iran pour Poutine n'est pas dû aux intérêts que les deux pays ont en commun. C'est parce que, écrit une journaliste depuis Téhéran qui préfère rester anonyme, les dirigeants des deux pays ont un penchant pour le despotisme et la dictature. »

Mercredi 2 mars, l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies a adopté une résolution qui « exige que la Russie cesse immédiatement de recourir à la force contre l'Ukraine », lors d'un vote approuvé massivement par 141 pays, 5 s'y opposant et 35 s'abstenant, dont l'Iran.

March 3, 2022

Kirkuk Minute March 3, 2022

Kirkuk

On Wednesday, March 2nd, owners of large poultry farms protested in front of the Agricultural department, against the Iraqi forces for forcing them to pay “bribes” for transporting livestock to Kirkuk. The demonstrators said that despite having legal permission, the army checkpoints demand “100 USD per truck” as a bribe required to let them pass. The majority of the 500 poultry farms in Kirkuk are located outside of the city. The Iraqi Army’s checkpoints have resulted in a 100% price increase in poultry prices. Elsewhere in Kirkuk, the Iraqi army has confiscated 6,700 dunams (1,655 acres) of Kurdish-owned farmlands, after the agriculture department advised its ministry to “rent” the land to Iraq’s defense ministry. The Iraqi defense ministry is constructing a large armory for the newly established military division in Kirkuk. The farmlands are located near the Dibis district in Mama and Alighair villages.

Iraq’s Supreme Court Ruling against Kurdistan’s oil and gas laws has backfired with regards to Kirkuk’s oil exports since the ruling dissolves Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) contract with foreign companies. However, Kirkuk’s oil, which is under the federal government’s authority, is exported via the Kurdistan pipeline, which is 60% owned by Rosneft, a Russian firm. If unsolved, the ruling will affect Iraq’s oil revenues. Kirkuk’s oil production is estimated at 100,000 barrels per day, and exported via the Kurdistan pipeline. Meanwhile, Iraq’s State Organization for Marketing of Oil (SOMO) reported 1,475,345 oil barrels exported



in February via Ceyhan Terminal, using the Kurdistan pipeline. SOMO said it grossed 143,005,190 USD, with an average price of 96.93USD per barrel.

College graduates, mainly from engineering schools, were beaten by the Energy Police forces for demanding jobs during a demonstration at the North Oil Company (NOC). The video went viral on social media angering locals. Over the past 4 years, protesters have been demanding job opportunities from the oil company of Kirkuk which is under Baghdad’s control.

After an agreement, Wasfi al Asie was sworn in as a lawmaker, instead of the winner Rakan al Jabouri, acting governor of Kirkuk. The deal keeps al-as acting governor for the next two years while his former counterpart, Wasfi al Asei, and his al Obadi tribe agree to support al Jabouri, the actual winner of the seat. After years of disputes, both the al Obaidi and al Jabouri tribes have recently agreed on many issues. The agreement was mediated by Khamis al Khanjar, a Turkish-backed Sunni leader.

The Turkish-backed lawmaker Arshad al Salihi demanded the opening of Kirkuk’s airport, calling Iraq’s Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi to personally attend and open the airport himself, since it was “completed.” Despite security issues Kirkuk has been facing since October 16th, 2017, al-Salihi insists on opening the airport. Kurdish observers see Turkish pressure behind Salihi’s statement to open the airport in order to open a new logistical line for Turkey to support its proxies in the disputed territories.

Khanaqin

On Tuesday, March 1st, the Integrity Commission announced the arrest of the director of Khanaqin Execution Directorate for “embezzlement of debtors’ money.” The department is responsible for implementing the civilian cases of court rulings, mainly debt disputes.

Tuz Khurmatu

After four days of the arrest of an Iranian-backed militant for attacking a Kurdish family and pulling a gun on them, the perpetrator, Mustafa Ragheb, was released by Kirkuk’s Command

Operation. According to sources, pressure from Iranian-backed militia leader Mehdi Taqi resulted in the attacker’s release. Last week, Kirkuk Military Operation Commander Ali al Farji released a video capturing the attacker and vowing “justice,” but it only took four days for the attacker’s release. The attacker, Ragheb, is from Tuz Khurmatu.

The controversial Turkmen politician, Niyazi Mamaroglu, called upon Shia Turkmen to form a new party under his leadership against the current party leader, Hassan Turan of the Turkmen Front. Mamaroglu is an ultra-nationalist, anti-Kurdish, Turkmen whose son was caught possessing drugs in a political scandal last year.

Shingal (Sinjar)

On Monday, February 28th, a senior security delegation from Baghdad, representatives of Nineveh administration, the Mayor of Shingal, United Nations (UN), and Ministry of Displacement and Migration held a meeting. The sides discussed the overall situation in the area. The meeting discussed the return of the displaced Yazidis and the 2020 security agreement between Baghdad and Erbil. Media reports suggested that the parties set a goal of mid-2022 for the security agreement to be fully implemented. Until then, all the security forces should be relocated outside the town.

The KRG’s office for Freeing Kidnapped Yazidis said only 15% of victim families had donated DNA samples for identifications. The office said the pandemic has delayed collecting DNA samples, and so far, 150 victims are unrecognized.

la Turquie verrouille les détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles aux navires russes

Selon le gouvernement ukrainien, une nouvelle cargaison de drones turcs est attendue à Kiev. Le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan tente toutefois de ménager la Russie

Quatre navires de guerre russes qui comptaient rejoindre la mer Noire n'ont pas pu passer par les détroits turcs, verrouillés par Ankara depuis le début de la semaine. Répondant à une « sollicitation amicale » de la Turquie, Moscou a renoncé à faire transiter ses navires, a indiqué le ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, dans un entretien à la chaîne Habertürk, mardi 1er mars. « Nous avons dit à la Russie de ne pas envoyer ces navires et la Russie a déclaré qu'ils ne traverseraient pas le détroit », a-t-il expliqué.

Lundi, Ankara a annoncé avoir fermé les détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles en vertu de la convention de Montreux, signée en 1936. Cet accord lui permet d'empêcher les bâtiments militaires de passer en temps de guerre, sauf s'ils regagnent leurs bases. « La Russie a déclaré que quatre de ses navires traverseraient le détroit les 27 et 28 février. Trois d'entre eux ne sont pas basés en mer Noire », a précisé le chef de la diplomatie turque.

Les détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles relient la mer Méditerranée à la mer Noire, à partir de laquelle la Russie a lancé son invasion du sud de l'Ukraine. Bien avant le début de l'assaut, de nombreux navires russes étaient déjà positionnés sur la mer Noire.

Liens commerciaux

Du 9 au 16 février, six navires de débarquement et un sous-marin ont franchi le Bosphore en direction de la péninsule de Crimée, la presqu'île ukrainienne annexée par la Russie. Fortement sollicité par le gouvernement pro-occidental de Kiev, Ankara a fini par accepter de fermer le passage à tous les navires de guerre à l'exception de ceux dont le port d'attache est en mer Noire.

Tout en condamnant l'agression russe, le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan tente de ménager la Russie, qui fournit à la Turquie du gaz (34 % de la consommation), du blé, des missiles antiaériens, une centrale nucléaire opérée à 100 % par le géant russe Rosatom et plus de quatre millions de touristes par an.

Les liens commerciaux sont excellents aussi avec l'Ukraine, qui a acheté des drones Bayraktar TB2 et devait en produire sur son sol. La société mixte créée à cet effet entre Baykar, le producteur des TB2, et l'entreprise ukrainienne Ukrspetsexport venait tout juste d'acquérir un terrain situé non loin de la base aérienne de Vassylkiv, à 53 kilomètres de Kiev, où se trouve un centre de contrôle des drones. Aprement défendue par l'armée ukrainienne, la base a été visée il y a cinq jours par des missiles

russes qui ont atteint les dépôts de carburant, causant un énorme incendie.

Jouer les médiateurs

L'équilibre que M. Erdogan tente de maintenir entre ses deux voisins de la mer Noire est difficile à préserver compte tenu de l'intensification des frappes russes et du renforcement de la pression occidentale sur le maître du Kremlin. En fermant les détroits, la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, a choisi son camp, ce qui lui a valu un satisfecit des Etats-Unis ainsi que « la reconnaissance de l'Ukraine » selon le message de l'ambassadeur à Ankara, Vasyl Bodnar.

Pour autant, elle ne prévoit pas de se joindre aux sanctions imposées par l'Union européenne. Son espace aérien est toujours ouvert aux avions russes. « Nous ne voulons pas faire de geste susceptible de nuire à notre pays », a expliqué mercredi Ibrahim Kalin, le porte-parole du président.

L'autre raison avancée est qu'il faut laisser ouvert le canal de la communication. « Qui parlera à la Russie une fois que tous les ponts auront été brûlés ? » Jouer les médiateurs est l'ambition du numéro un turc, qui, dès le début du mois de février, avait invité les belligérants à mener des pour-

parlers à Istanbul, une proposition saluée par le président ukrainien, Volodymyr Zelensky, mais repoussée par le Kremlin. Mercredi, M. Kalin a reconnu que les négociations ukraino-russes organisées récemment à la frontière biélorusse en vue d'un cessez-le-feu n'étaient pas « prometteuses ». Les exigences de Moscou, à savoir la reconnaissance de l'annexion de la Crimée et le désarmement de l'Ukraine, sont, selon lui, « irréalistes ».

Sauver les relations commerciales avec la Russie est une question de survie pour M. Erdogan. A seize mois de la prochaine présidentielle, sa popularité est au plus bas à cause de la crise monétaire traversée par le pays. Une nouvelle flambée des prix du gaz naturel et de l'électricité, dont les tarifs ont fortement augmenté (+ 50 %) en janvier, risquerait d'aggraver le mécontentement de la population, touchée de plein fouet par l'inflation (48,69 % sur un an).

D'ores et déjà, le partenariat turco-russe bat de l'aile. Parmi les griefs, le verrouillage des détroits et aussi la fourniture de drones TB2 à l'Ukraine. Une nouvelle cargaison de drones est attendue à Kiev, a annoncé mercredi le ministre ukrainien de la défense, Oleksii Reznikov. De quoi irriter un peu plus le Kremlin.

Turquie : sanctions ou pas, l'invasion russe de l'Ukraine fragilise l'économie

Soucieuse de préserver une forme de neutralité, Ankara redoute l'impact du conflit sur les prix du gaz, des métaux et des produits agricoles.

Si le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a condamné sans réserve la guerre menée par la Russie en Ukraine, la décrivant comme « inacceptable », il y a peu de chances pour que son gouvernement se joigne un jour au train de sanctions adopté contre Moscou par les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Les Turcs ont gardé un très mauvais souvenir des sanctions imposées par Moscou en 2015, après que la chasse turque a abattu un Soukhoï 24 russe au-dessus de la frontière avec la Syrie. Depuis, les relations se sont réchauffées et il n'est plus question de mesures punitives.

En premier lieu, Ankara cherche à ménager ses liens économiques étroits avec la Russie, grande pourvoyeuse de gaz via les gazoducs TurkStream et Blue Stream. Les liens sont excellents aussi avec l'Ukraine, qui a acquis récemment des drones de combat Bayraktar TB2, lesquels devaient être en partie produits sur le sol ukrainien. La société mixte créée à cet effet entre Baykar, le producteur turc des TB2, et l'entreprise ukrainienne Ukrspetsexport venait tout juste d'acquiescer un terrain situé non loin de la base aérienne ukrainienne

de Vassylkiv, à 53 kilomètres de Kiev, qui est en ce moment l'objet de combats acharnés entre les belligérants.

Contrairement à ses alliés de l'OTAN, la Turquie n'a pas cessé ses échanges commerciaux avec la Russie et n'a pas interdit son espace aérien aux avions russes. Le fermer porterait un rude coup au tourisme, dépendant lui aussi de l'arrivée des vacanciers venus de Russie, au moment où ce secteur reprend des couleurs après deux années de vaches maigres dues à la pandémie de Covid-19. En 2021, 4,6 millions de touristes russes ont séjourné en Turquie, devant les touristes allemands, 3 millions, et les Ukrainiens, 2,6 millions. La guerre, les sanctions contre la Russie, la flambée des cours du pétrole risquent d'entraîner une baisse du nombre des visiteurs russes et ukrainiens sur les plages d'Antalya et de Bodrum.

« Risque d'un nouveau choc »

D'ores et déjà, la mer Noire, une artère majeure pour les échanges commerciaux, céréales, métaux, pétrole, est devenue un point chaud. Les ports ukrainiens – Odessa, Mykolaïv, Marioupol et Tchernomorsk –,

d'où partent 80 % des exportations du pays, sont bloqués à cause du conflit. La mer d'Azov est impraticable, 150 navires sont à l'arrêt. A cause des sanctions, les contrats de céréales avec la Russie ont été suspendus.

Instable, la livre turque a perdu 45 % de sa valeur en 2021 et 5 % depuis le début du conflit

Soucieuse de préserver une forme de neutralité, la Turquie redoute avant tout l'impact du conflit sur les prix des matières premières essentielles à son économie, à savoir le gaz, les métaux et les produits agricoles : 34 % du gaz consommé est fourni par Gazprom, 10 % du pétrole acheté vient de Russie, 87 % du blé et 79 % de l'orge importés en 2021 viennent des deux greniers à blé de la région de la mer Noire, l'Ukraine et la Russie. Ankara était aussi le plus gros acheteur d'aluminium russe en 2020, devant la Chine, le Japon et l'Allemagne.

Contraint de faire face à une inflation galopante, soit 48,69 % sur un an selon les chiffres officiels, le gouvernement turc est sous pression car la crise a fait grimper les prix du pétrole,

du gaz naturel et de l'électricité. Les factures d'énergie des ménages ont déjà accusé des augmentations drastiques (50 %) en janvier, donnant lieu à des protestations de rue. « L'économie turque est confrontée au risque d'un nouveau choc dû à la hausse rapide des prix de l'énergie et des matières premières agricoles causée par la guerre entre l'Ukraine et la Russie, qui pèse également sur la monnaie », estime Piotr Matys, analyste chez In Touch Capital Markets, cité par l'agence Bloomberg le 28 février.

Instable, la livre turque a perdu 45 % de sa valeur en 2021 et 5 % depuis le début du conflit, le 24 février. Accusé par l'opposition d'avoir encouragé la hausse des prix en contraignant la banque centrale à baisser ses taux d'intérêt, le président Erdoğan voit sa popularité entamée à seize mois des élections – législatives et présidentielle – prévues pour le mois de juin 2023. La crise monétaire est actuellement le plus gros défi de sa carrière politique depuis le coup d'Etat raté de juillet 2016. Dans ce contexte, il ne tient pas à mettre en péril ses relations commerciales avec la Russie.

International Women's Day: Women in Iran are Leading the Struggle for Human Rights

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) celebrates women everywhere who are at the vanguard of the struggle for human rights despite crushing adversity.

In Iran, courageous women, including lawyers, activists, journalists, and mothers of the victims of state violence, are demanding justice, freedom, equality, and basic civil liberties for all Iranians, despite facing systemic human rights abuses and discrimination.

Every day, women in Iran see their rights challenged and their freedoms curtailed:

The peaceful advocacy of women's rights is criminalized and many women have been imprisoned for their activism

Women face widespread, legalized violence including inadequate protections against domestic violence and child marriage for girls aged 13 and even younger

Women do not have equal rights



Despite Abuses and Discrimination, Women Fight for Justice, Equality, and Rights for All

to justice or in family or financial matters, and face discrimination in the workplace and the political and public spheres

The unbreakable spirit of Iranian women is also seen among mothers whose children have been killed by the state. These mothers, which include the Mothers of Laleh Park and the Mothers of Khavaran, are helping to lead the new "Seeking Justice" (Dadkhahi) movement in Iran despite constant harassment and intimidation by state security agencies and imprisonment.

"My purpose in going on with life is to find my son's killers," Nahid Shirpisheh, who witnessed the fatal shooting of her son Pouya Bakhtiari by state security forces at a street protest in November 2019, told CHRI. "I want to see the punishment of the person who ordered the killing of Pouya and other Pouyas in such an atrocious manner."

Meanwhile women political prisoners are subjected to inhumane living conditions and abuse, in a further effort to silence their voices. They are:

Prevented access to crucial medical care

Blocked from visiting or speaking to their children

Transferred to prisons far from their families and forced into prolonged periods of solitary confinement

The Iranian government has also been reducing social services and reproductive healthcare for women in need. For example, the House of the Sun, an NGO that provides services to thousands of women suffering from drug addiction, is one of many NGOs that have been forced to close its doors due to state pressure, and the government has reduced access to reproductive care in state clinics.

The Center for Human Rights in Iran salutes the brave women of Iran and their struggle for justice, equal rights, and civil and political rights for all Iranians, and calls on the international community to express their full support for these women as well.

The New York Times

March 8, 2022
By Steven Erlanger

Iran Nuclear Deal Nears Completion, but Russia Poses Complication

With the world eager to wean itself from Russian oil after the invasion of Ukraine, negotiators appeared close to signing a revived nuclear pact with Iran and lifting sanctions. Then Moscow put up a hurdle.

With negotiators all but finished with their work to restore the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has made an agreement both more urgent and more difficult to get.

Western governments, intent on punishing Russia for the attack, have said they want to wean themselves from Russian oil, which has kept generating revenue for the country even as economic sanctions kick in.

But to isolate Russia and still keep oil flowing, the West would lift the restrictions now in place on Iranian oil sales as part of a revived nuclear deal, and Moscow just put up a hurdle that some fear may scuttle any agreement.

Even before that there remained three or four outstanding issues between Iran and the United States that entail difficult political decisions for both sides regarding the scope of remaining sanctions on Iran, senior European and U.S. offi-

cialists say. The deal would sharply restrict Iran's nuclear program and allow it to sell its oil freely on the world market at a critical moment when the war in Ukraine has threatened supplies. But to get there, the Iranians are insisting that President Biden lift one of the terrorism designations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, senior European officials say.

The corps was declared a "foreign terrorist organization" by the United States in April 2019, nearly a year after President Donald J. Trump pulled out of the Iran deal, and any removal of that designation would face sharp criticism in Congress. Then on Saturday, Russia added a new complication when its foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, demanded assurances from the United States that the Western sanctions imposed on Russia over the war not interfere with Russia's future trade with Iran.

Mr. Lavrov said he wanted a written guarantee that sanctions "launched by the U.S. will not in any way harm our right to free, fully fledged trade and economic and investment cooperation and military-technical cooperation with Iran."

Following a call between Mr. Lavrov and his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Russia said a restored nuclear deal must "ensure that all its participants have equal rights" to develop "cooperation in all areas" with Iran.

There is concern that Russia, a signatory to the nuclear deal, may see an opportunity to put a hole into the sanctions against it, and the United States quickly dismissed its demands.

The sanctions imposed after the invasion, said Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, "have nothing to do with the Iran nuclear deal." He said they "just are not in any way linked together, so I think that's irrelevant."



An Iranian gas field in 2015. Iran can produce more than two million barrels of oil a day. Credit... Raheb Homavandi/TIMA, via Reuters

With Iran believed to be only several weeks away from enriching enough uranium to create a nuclear bomb — though weaponizing it would take much longer — a revived deal is considered more important than ever.

Iran has regularly denied intending to build a nuclear weapon, but it has enriched uranium to 60 percent, a level that has no civilian use, and has created uranium metal that would be required to build a bomb.

Should an agreement on reviving the deal be reached and Iranian oil brought back onto the market, it would be an important signal to Moscow that global dependence on Russian energy may be diminishing.

Iran can produce more than two million barrels of oil a day, and if these supplies were able to reach the markets, the surge in prices would be slowed.

But implementation, or reimplementation, of any deal would take several months, perhaps until June. Sanctions would first need to be lifted, and Iran would have to export its excess uranium and then seal away the many advanced centrifuges that violate the terms of the deal.

Criticism of a new deal has mounted in Congress. Under a law passed in 2015, when the original deal was signed, Congress has the right to review any new agreement, and the Senate

minority leader, Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, has called for "major hearings." But even if Congress voted to disapprove it, it is doubtful that opponents could muster the two-thirds majority in both houses needed to override a presidential veto.

Negotiators believed they were close enough to finishing that



Iran wants President Biden to lift one of the terrorism designations on the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. Credit... Agence France-Presse - Getty Images

there were plans to sign the deal on both Saturday and Sunday. They were postponed, and the key negotiators returned to their capitals.

In a statement on Tuesday, Britain, France and Germany urged completion.

"The window of opportunity is closing," they said. "We call on all sides to make the decisions necessary to close this deal now, and on Russia not to add extraneous conditions to its conclusion."

But Russia is now a new un-

known, and its intentions are not yet clear.

If Russia wants guarantees limited to its obligations under the nuclear deal, that can be managed, officials say. If the Russian demand is broader, and includes exemptions from Western financial and trade sanctions, the deal could quickly die.

Iran, which wants the deal done and the removal of the tough economic sanctions the United States has imposed on it, criticized the new Russian demands. Mr. Amir-Abdollahian told Iranian media on Monday that Iran "will not allow any external factor to impact the national interests for removal of the sanctions."

While Russia is a member of the pact — the United States withdrew in May 2018, and these negotiations have been

to get Washington and Tehran back into compliance with the accord — Moscow's approval may not be legally necessary. But China and Iran may not want to proceed without it, and Russia remains a member of the commission that oversees compliance.

The new deal envisions Russia taking Iran's large stock of highly enriched uranium in excess of the deal's limits, and it is not clear, officials say, whether any other country is ready to do the same. Britain and France are both signatories and both nuclear

states, so in principle they could take the uranium; the important thing is to get it out of Iran.

If in the end, after 11 months of painful negotiations, there is no deal, European officials fear more instability in the Gulf and a new race among other countries to build their own nuclear weapons.

Traveling in Estonia on Tuesday, Mr. Blinken said he did not expect Russia to obstruct progress in the Iran nuclear negotiations.

"We continue to work to see if we can come back to mutual compliance with Iran on the deal," Mr. Blinken said. "Russia

continues to be engaged in those efforts. And it has its own interests in ensuring that Iran is not able to acquire a nuclear weapon."

The deal as negotiated does not include follow-on talks on Iran's missile program, regional activities or even its nuclear program, the officials say, which were original goals of Mr. Biden.

There are also separate and highly sensitive negotiations taking place with Iran over the return of Americans being held there.

The U.S. envoy to Iran, Robert Malley, has suggested that securing the nuclear pact is un-

likely unless Tehran frees four U.S. citizens, including an Iranian-American father and son, Baquer and Siamak Namazi, whom Washington says Tehran is holding hostage. But Mr. Malley has always insisted that the negotiation over the citizens is separate from the nuclear talks.

Another complication was lifted by an agreement over the weekend with Iran by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael M. Grossi, on a three-month plan for Iran to finally answer outstanding questions about possible past military activities stemming from unexplained particles of uranium found at three old but undeclared sites.

If the deal is finally done, the plan is for a ministerial meeting of the joint commission of the deal among its current members — Iran, China, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union. Mr. Blinken would send a letter confirming American agreement to re-enter the pact. Mr. Amir-Abdollahian and Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union foreign-policy chief, would attend in person; others would attend virtually.

It is unclear whether Mr. Lavrov would want to attend in person.

David Sanger contributed reporting in Washington; Lara Jakes in Paris and Farnaz Fasih in New York.



March 9, 2022
By Yousif Ismael & Giulia Anderson

The Month of March and Kurdistan's Independence - Washington Kurdish Institute

March is remembered as a bloody month in Kurdish history, as for many years, the Kurdish population suffered from tremendous atrocities. An overview of brutalities which occurred, in time, during the month of March and analysis how much of what happened could have been avoided with independence.

March in History

The March Manifesto of 1970, put an end to the war with Iraq, but it did, however, become a pre-condition of the 1974-1975, 2nd Iraqi-Kurdish War – a detour from the Iran-Iraq dispute over the Shatt al-Arab river. This second conflict with Iraq had numerous consequences for the Kurds, as Kurds were resettled, forcibly displaced, many families disappeared, and many others were banished from their lands. These events were a way for the Iraqi government to destabil-



ize the Kurdish community and eradicate them from their social identity, also known as *kurdayetî*, just because they felt threatened by the power the community had

domestically and internationally (e.g., at the time, Iran saw the Kurds as instruments, as a way to weaken Iraq).

Moreover, March is also the anniversary of the brutal *al-Anfal* campaigns: eight genocidal missions Saddam Hussein and his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, por-

trayed against the Kurds in Iraq in 1988-1989. Saddam, as all leaders in Iraq, tried to negotiate with the Kurds, but fiercely shifted away from "friendship" and turned against them, appointing al-Majid (Chemical Ali) as secretary of the northern bureau and responsible for the region's stability and security. However, Iraqi Kurdistan was entirely inhabited by the Kurdish community, which consequently became the threat and the enemy to destroy. Initially, al-Majid decided to recognize the northern region of Iraq as a "prohibited" zone, forcing people to leave the homes, roots, and hide in the mountains to find shelter. However, for Saddam and al-Majid this was not enough, in fact, as Samantha Power wrote in her book 'A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide', they believed that "the best way to stamp out rebellion was to stamp out Kurdish life" – after this, the al-Anfals (spoils of war) started in mid-February and all through March. The Jafati Valley was al-Majid's first target: he had the Iraqi military surround the valley, bomb it, and oblige people to surrender. During this first campaign, which lasted a total of three weeks, the city of Halabja was chemically bombed with cyanide and mustard gas on March 16th, killing thousands of Kurds and marking a turning point on Iraq's – at this point – hatred, towards the Kurds. Halabja is considered the most tragic attack on the Kurdish community and the deadliest chemical attack on civilians in history. What happened in Halabja still has consequences today, people suffer from the chemicals used during the attack both physically and morally because something as harsh is not hard to forget.

To complete the overview on the al-Anfals, the second attacks were carried out in the Qaradagh area; the third in the German lands; the fourth in Kirkuk and Koyeh; the fifth, sixth, and seventh in the Qaradagh area and Erbil; whereas the last stage of the campaign again in the German lands.

The last occurrence worth mentioning is the Newroz celebration,

the beginning of the new year for Kurdish culture. This festivity, which also celebrates light, goodness, and purity, is usually held on March 21st. Notwithstanding the importance of this festivity, Kurdish people have often been banned from celebrating their new year – still today. For example, Turkish authorities settled at the border with Syria do not recognize Newroz as a public holiday, and so banned any sort of celebration or parade – most importantly, the United Nations considers Newroz as an International Day. Moreover, in the past years, the Turkish government started considering this celebration as an act of separatism and a way to express a non-Turkish culture, which, considering Turkey's recent domestic developments, is not allowed. Also in Syria, Kurds in Afrin have been banned from celebrating it, and this recalls when in both 1986 and 2005, the regime opened fire on multiple Kurds simply enjoying their new year's.

Last, these above-mentioned events are not the only brutalities the Kurds went through historically in March. One may recall the Sheikh Said rebellion and its consequences in 1880-1925, the Dersim Massacre of 1937 in Turkey against the Kurds, the fall of the Republic of Mahabad in the late 1940s, and the execution of Qazi Mohammed, an Iranian Kurd, in 1947 – all of which occurred in March.

But, could all of this be avoided if Kurds were given independence?

Independence provides citizens protection

In recent history, it is proven that having a state of your own, decreases mass killings by an outsider and at best prevents the changes of demography and occupation of lands. For example, when the former Dictator Saddam Hussien invaded the State of Kuwait in 1990, more than 900 innocents were killed including civilians and military members. However, the international community soon allied under the leadership of the US and liberated

the country to the last inch of it, such that crippling sanctions were imposed on Iraq for more than 13 years.

To further this idea, many genocides and massacres, which occurred around the world, happened against stateless groups. The most brutal being the Holocaust, followed by many others like the Kurdish Anfal and Halabja campaigns mentioned above, the Kosovo War and consequent Srebrenica genocide, the Armenian genocide, the South Sudanese Conflict, the Sri Lankan War on the Tamill, the Rohingya genocide, and more. All of these groups did not have a State of their own. In fact, the independence of Israel, Kosovo, Armenia, and South Sudan, have prevented further genocides simply due to the fact they now enjoy a recognized entity at the United Nations (UN) which translates into support by the international community and protection.

Indeed, some massacres and genocides have occurred internally and during civil wars, like the Rwandan genocide, and the Syrian and Lebanese civil wars, but these internal divisions are also ethnic, sectarian, and religious. As a result of having an independent state, the international community kept the drawn borders and intervened to restore what they have on record as an "independent state." Today, Syria is divided into three de facto states, yet the UN and the international community remain committed to the same borders drawn a century ago, even though history shows they have not worked. In Lebanon, after decades of civil war, the country's borders did not change either, and similar cases apply to Iraq, Yemen, and other states.

If the Kurds in any part of greater Kurdistan, had an independent state, they would avoid the ethnic cleansings that remain in place by their enemies.

Self-determination is irrelevant to governing systems

Oftentimes, the anti-Kurdish voices use arguments about Iraqi

Kurds "not being ready" for independence since the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has mismanaged the region. Further, there is also the rhetoric on "the Kurds are divided" in too many political parties. In fairness, yes, there are serious issues that need to be addressed, and the KRG should impose long-due reforms in all sectors. It is also true that the Iraqi Kurds are so divided that in some cases their enemies take advantage of it. However, both issues are irrelevant to self-determination and independence. For example, almost every country in the world suffers bad governing. These governments, in many cases, do not represent the will of the people, and if they do, then it is toward a certain group or party. Moreover, almost all states around the world suffer deep political division, including the United States. Both bad governing and political division, not only do not justify the occupations and ethnic cleansings but also do not make sense, given that almost every country became independent in chaos and in much worse shape than the KRG or the Kurdish division. The governments of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey have decades of mismanagement history, and Turks, Persians, and Arabs are as much divided as the Kurds, if not more. Thus, if bad governing and political division is a measure for establishing a state, then most of the countries around the world should not exist. That said, good governance would give more legitimacy and support for establishing a state.

It is easy to criticize a nation that has been divided into four states for more than a century and facing all sorts of repressions. However, the bitter reality is that Kurds are landlocked among four states with four Kurdish populations. This geographical configuration has made Kurdish parties depend on and consider regional equilibriums, and so have them accept aid from governments that opposed the Kurds. It is more realistic to convey to the Kurds for these above-mentioned reasons and in order to achieve self-determination, they need to work much harder than

other nations that hold their own state. Setting a good example of governing, and somewhat unity, would indeed bring more support and attention to the cause. So far, both support by the international community, mainly by the US, for Iraqi and Syrian Kurds have been only via military cooperation. While the US supports the entity of the KRG within a unified Iraq, it lacked any support for Kurdistan's independence.

The case of the Iraqi Kurds

In September of 2017, the Iraqi Kurds held an Independence Referendum that had two goals: pressuring Baghdad to implement the constitution concerning Kurdish rights and declare independence from Iraq. Both aims of the referendum have been repeated by Kurdish officials before and after the referendum. However,

the aftermath of the referendum resulted in the loss of half of the Kurdistan lands outside of the KRG official borders. Though the process gained more than 93% in-favor votes, the Kurds paid a heavy price after the international community, headed by the US, opposed the process while the governments of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey launched economic and military attacks on the Kurds. After more than three years, the Kurds have yet to recover. On the contrary, the central government, and mainly the Iranian-backed parties, have further imposed economic restrictions on the Kurdistan region.

The referendum results remain frozen, but current Iraq is in even worse shape than 2017. For instance, the Iranian-backed militias continue to target the US-led coalition, the

economy is in a dire situation, the political division is at the highest rate since the establishment of the country, even if the government has high support, and one Iraq policy remains in place with the US and the rest of the world.

The Iraqi Kurds should not give up on independence, neither in the short nor in the long term, since there is no guarantee that another genocide and massacre will not happen against them in the future. The Iraqi Kurds should simultaneously build an institution-based government before independence and present a successful working-experiment to the world; unlike the establishment of the newest state of South Sudan, which cannot be considered as a good example. The Kurdistan region is already unique in comparison to the rest of the

regional powers going towards the West. It has proven that it is not a threat for its neighboring countries and its ideology is much more developed than the rest of the country, especially toward minority rights, such as Christians and non-Kurds. The KRG should lay out a plan for a future state where a decentralized system is implemented that ensures the rights of the minorities with the UN's help and recognition. Undoubtedly, Western support is much needed for the Kurds, but building their state is as much as important, if not more. March is a reminder of the tragedies the Kurds were forced to face, but it should also be a wake-up call for the international community, and for the Kurdish parties: the case of independence is a natural right and it should be supported as did for the 195 countries around the world.



March 10, 2022

Plea to UN to Demand Freedom for Gravely Ill Sepideh Qolliyan

Two months after two political prisoners died in Iranian state custody, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has sent a letter to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urging her to call for the immediate release of prisoner of conscience Sepideh Qolliyan, who is gravely ill and in need of urgent medical care.

Qolliyan, 27, is being unlawfully kept behind bars in Tehran's Evin Prison for her peaceful dissent despite stipulations in Iranian law that allow for her release.

"The UN high commissioner should call for Sepideh Qolliyan's immediate release before another prisoner of conscience is silenced for-

ever in an Iranian prison," said CHRI Executive Director Hadi Ghaemi.

Qolliyan is among a group of ailing political prisoners who are currently being denied proper medical treatment, including Soheila Hejab, Zeinab Jalalian, Arsham (Mahmoud) Rezaee, and Abbas Vahedian Shahroudi. Political prisoners in Iran are singled out for harsh treatment, which often includes denial of medical care, as a means to punish and silence dissent.

Following is the full text of CHRI's letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

March 9, 2022

H.E. Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Madam High Commissioner,

The Islamic Republic of Iran's denial of critically needed medical care to the unjustly imprisoned activist and freelance reporter Sepideh Qolliyan represents an egregious human rights violation and poses a potential threat to her life and well-being.

The Center for Human Rights in Iran respectfully requests the high commissioner to forcefully condemn the denial of medical treatment for Ms. Qolliyan and to call upon the Iranian authorities to immediately release her from Evin Prison so that she may receive proper care in a hospital.

We wish to note that Iranian law provides for such a release; Article 502 of Iran's Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that a prisoner's sentence can be suspended if incarceration could make his or her physical or mental illness worse.

We hope the high commissioner will urge other human rights bodies and experts, such as the Human Rights Council, the special rapporteur for human rights in Iran and other relevant special procedures, as well as all Member States, to join in this condemnation of Ms. Qolliyan's treatment and call for her immediate release.

The denial of medical care is routinely used by the Islamic Republic as a means of pun-

ishment for political prisoners, and as such this practice should be explicitly and forcefully condemned. This is especially so during the current pandemic, where multiple political prisoners have died in Iran's overcrowded and unhygienic prisons due to COVID-19. Most recently, the arbitrarily detained poet Bak-tash Abtin died after contracting COVID-19 in Evin Prison.

Without concerted pressure by the international community, the Islamic Republic will continue to criminalize and punish peaceful dissent, and the authorities' life-threatening actions towards Sepideh Qoliyian and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience that include the denial of critical medical care will continue as well.

Ms. Qoliyian's case follows an entrenched pattern in the Islamic Republic of prosecution of human rights defenders without due process, the imposition of lengthy prison sentences, and harsh, even life-threatening treatment for political prisoners once imprisoned.

Initially arrested in November 2018 in Shush, southwest Iran, for her participation in a strike by sugar mill workers, Ms. Qoliyian has been outspoken inside and outside prison about the torture she and fellow detainees were subjected to while in detention. She was among nine labor activists who were each sentenced to five years in prison in December 2019, on the charge of "assembly and collusion against national security."

She began serving her five-year sentence in June 2020, in Evin Prison, after refusing to sign a letter of apology to



Fears Mount for Young Activist Who is Being Denied Crucial Medical Treatment

Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei. In March 2021, she was banished to the Central Prison in Bushehr on Iran's southern coast.

In September 2021, while on furlough, she was charged with "publishing falsehoods online" and "propaganda against the state," after publishing a series of tweets describing inhumane conditions in Bushehr's Central Prison. She was detained during a raid by the security forces on her family home in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, on October 11, 2021, and on October 15, 2021, transferred back to Evin Prison and held in Ward 209, controlled by the Intelligence Ministry.

During her imprisonment, she has been on hunger strike several times to protest her unjust prosecution and inhumane prison conditions, and, like many other political prisoners, subsequently contacted COVID-19 in Iran's overcrowded, unhygienic prisons.

On February 22, 2022, it was reported she has been moved to the quarantine unit

in Evin Prison with severe stomach bleeding, kidney pain, diarrhea, nausea and a high fever and continues to be denied medical furlough so that she can receive proper treatment outside the prison. Her brother, Mehdi Qoliyian (also spelled Gholiyian), wrote on Instagram on March 6, 2022:

"My sister Sepideh Qoliyian's life is still in danger. After the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus in Evin Prison's Women's Ward, Sepideh contracted the virus...Sepideh's body has become so weak and fragile from underlying untreated diseases caused by banishments [to different prisons], hunger strikes and constant pressures, that even a cold can overwhelm her. Because of the impact of the Omicron variant, Sepideh's body cannot absorb much water or food due to indigestion; she vomits everything. Her temperature has not returned to normal. Her weakness, lethargy, and jaundice are visible...the case judge, who previously claimed that Sepideh was not entitled to fur-

lough and had crossed 'red lines,' finally agreed to sign the leave form, yet she remains imprisoned."

Her brother believes she is being treated this way because she spoke out against prison conditions and the torture and harassment of women in Bushehr prison.

Ms. Qoliyian is among the many human rights defenders who have been imprisoned in Iran for peacefully expressing their views. The silencing of peaceful dissent and the denial of freedom of expression are the autocrats' weapons of choice; in this manner, individuals are forced to pay a terrible price for their willingness to speak truth to power and to challenge repressive state narratives. Speaking out against this injustice is fundamental to the defense of the rule of law, which underpins a peaceful international order.

Respectfully yours,
The Center for Human Rights
in Iran, New York

March 10, 2022

Kirkuk Minute March 10, 2022

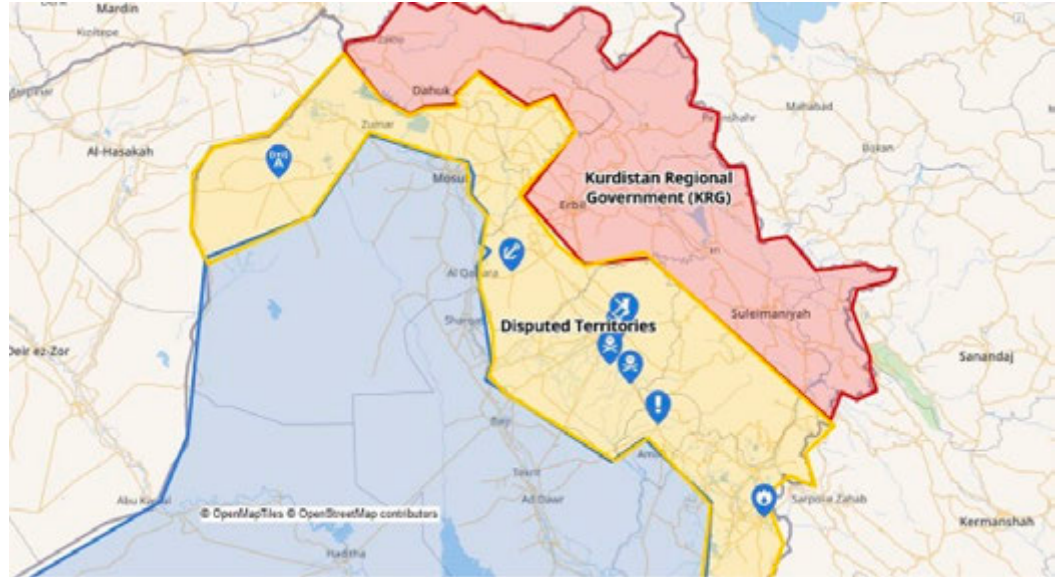
Kirkuk

Iraq's Minister of Defense has ordered the eviction of 150 Kurdish families. The minister ordered the expulsion after former owners, mostly senior al-Ba'ath officers, claimed the ownership of the homes after 17 years of fleeing due to involvement in war crimes. The Kurdish families were displaced before 2003 and were given houses by the Kurdish parties. Additionally, the North Oil Company (NOC) threatened to evict 263 displaced Kurdish families from homes "they built on NOC lands" in 2003. Since October 16, 2017, the Iraqi government has restored the Arabization policies against the Kurds.

On National Clothing Day, March 10, the authorities at the University of Kirkuk prevented Kurdish students entry because they were wearing Kurdish clothes. The decision was taken by the President of the University, Omran Jamal Hassan, who's also the deputy head of the Iranian-backed militia of al Badr in the province.

On Tuesday, March 8, ISIS (Da'esh) launched three attacks in Kirkuk, including one against Iranian-backed militias in al-Bashir village, killing one militant. The other two attacks targeted the Kurdish Mansori village and a Federal Police post in Daquq district, resulting in the injury of two officers.

A memorandum dated March 2, by Iraq's Chief of the General Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces Abdel Emir Yarallah requested the transfer of 3,693



Peshmergas of the 20th division to Iraq's defense ministry. After the Baghdad-Erbil agreement, the Peshmerga are supposed to become part of a "second" joint military division with Iraqi forces, deploying in the disputed territories.

For the first time since becoming acting governor, Rakan al Jabouri admitted that Kirkuk is the worst province in the country in providing electricity. During a meeting with various tribes in Kirkuk, al Jabouri said: "Kirkuk is the worst province for electricity provision," blaming Baghdad for not providing the province with enough power. Al Jabouri said, "Kirkuk is the biggest power producing province in the country, yet it receives the least power." Since October 16, 2017, Kirkuk has faced electricity, water and gas shortages and no waste collection leading to garbage piling up throughout the province. Currently, the province has only ten hours of "national power" per day. Separately,

produce wholesale shops in the city's Khan Khurma neighborhood were shut down for two days after owners protested the high taxation on their goods. The strike caused an increase in the prices of vegetables and fruit by 100%.

Khanaqin

Local police in Khanaqin defused an alleged Da'esh grenade trap which was thrown into the home of a police officer. Meanwhile, the Kurdish security forces (Asayesh) have remained unable to carry weapons or conduct missions in the town since 2017. Some Kurdish officials suggested transferring them to Iraq's National Security office.

Tuz Khurmatu

Among 71 new police hires by the Saladin governorate for Tuz Khurmatu, only seven are Kurds, while the overwhelming majority were Shia Turkmen and Sunni Arabs. Kurds face

discrimination in hiring and basic rights in the town. After continued security issues facing the region, a senior Iraqi security delegation visited Tuz Khurmatu on Tuesday, March 8th. The delegation, led by Abdul Amir al Shimari, deputy commander of the joint operations, met with Iranian-backed militias in the town and warned of further Da'esh attacks.

Shingal (Sinjar)

The leader of the Yazidi bloc in the Iraqi parliament, Naif Khalaf Saido, said that the instability in the Shingal has prevented the displaced Yazidis from returning to their homes. Saido said, "More than five years have passed since Sinjar was taken from the grip of ISIS but our areas are still unstable, in terms of administration, security and services," Saido said, describing the region as being "at the mercy of regional and domestic conflicts." Thousands of Yazidis remain in displaced camps in the Kurdistan Region.

Kurdistan au féminin 11 mars 2022

Décès d'un autre prisonnier politique kurde

Le prisonnier politique kurde, Bedri Çakmak était atteint d'un cancer de l'estomac mais les autorités turques ont refusé de le libérer jusqu'à la phase finale de sa maladie en 2021. Çakmak est décédé quelques mois après sa libération de la prison d'Amed / Diyarbakır où il est resté captif pendant 11 ans.

Bedri Çakmak a été libéré seulement en 2021 alors qu'il ne pesait que 35 kg en raison d'un cancer de l'estomac. Son

décès a été rendu public par la Fédération Med des associations de solidarité juridique avec les familles des détenus et des condamnés (MED TUHAD-FED).

MED TUHAD-FED a déclaré sur son compte Twitter:

« Nous avons reçu une autre triste nouvelle alors que des cercueils sortent un à un des prisons. Le prisonnier gravement malade Bedri Çakmak, qui était en prison depuis 11



ans, est décédé. Malgré ses graves maladies et le rapport selon lequel il ne pouvait pas rester en prison, il a été libéré en 2021, car il avait atteint le

dernier stade de sa maladie. Le gouvernement est responsable de la mort de Bedri Çakmak. (...) »



March 11, 2022

Three Kolbars were injured at the Nowsud border

On the evening of Tuesday, March 8th, three Kolbars named "Pouria Abdolrahmaninejad", "Pejman Abdi" and "Mansour Abdi" from the city of Salas_e_Babajani were wounded by government soldiers at the Nowsud border.

Government troops fired on these three Kolbars without any prior notice.

The three Kolbars were taken to medical centers for medical treatment and their general condition was reported to be good.

In this regard, on Wednesday, March 9th, a car carrying Kolbars overturned on the Paveh-Nowsud road, and four Kolbars named "Zakaria Firoozbakht, Aras Ahmadi-Tabar, Farhang



Sahragard and Soroush Naqdi" from the city of Sala_e_Babajani

were injured. The four Kolbars were taken to

Quds Paveh Hospital for medical treatment.

La Russie prend en otage les négociations sur le nucléaire iranien

Les discussions de Vienne, entrées dans leur phase finale, ont été suspendues vendredi.

Mise au ban des nations en raison de la guerre en Ukraine, la Russie a bel et bien pris en otage le sauvetage de l'accord sur le nucléaire iranien. Les tractations étaient sur le point d'aboutir à Vienne, mais elles ont été suspendues vendredi 11 mars. En cause, les garanties réclamées par Moscou afin d'obtenir de larges exemptions sur les sanctions massives prises par les Occidentaux en riposte à l'invasion décidée par Vladimir Poutine en Ukraine. Au bord du défaut de paiement en raison de ces représailles, la Russie exige qu'elles n'entraient pas sa coopération économique avec l'Iran.

La demande est jugée « inacceptable » par les négociateurs européens, qui portent à bout de bras les tractations relancées en novembre 2021, afin de permettre aux Etats-Unis de réintégrer le compromis baptisé JCPOA (joint comprehensive plan of action). « Nous devons faire une pause dans les pourparlers en raison de facteurs externes », a justifié vendredi Josep Borrell, le chef de la diplomatie de l'Union européenne (UE), qui coordonne le processus.

Les requêtes de Moscou ont été jugées « hors sujet » par le chef de la diplomatie américaine, Antony Blinken. « Les nouvelles sanctions liées à la Russie sont absolument sans lien » avec l'accord et « ne devraient avoir aucun impact » sur ces discussions, a ajouté le porte-parole du département d'Etat américain. « Nous n'avons aucune intention d'offrir à la Russie quoi que ce soit de nouveau ou de spécifique. »

« Il s'agit d'une prise en otage du JCPOA pour obtenir un retour en arrière sur les sanctions prises à l'encontre des Russes », dénonce un négociateur, au nom des trois capitales européennes – Paris, Berlin, Londres – signataires de l'accord de 2015, avant que celui-ci ne soit dénoncé par Donald Trump en 2018. Pour ce diplomate, un blocage à ce stade très avancé de la négociation « serait irresponsable de la part de la Russie », puisqu'un accord « est sur la table et doit être conclu de manière urgente ». Moscou, comme Pékin, est également signataire de l'accord de 2015. « Notes de bas de page »

Le compromis étant tout proche, les négociateurs européens ont d'ailleurs quitté Vienne depuis vendredi 4 mars. S'ils ne se parlent toujours pas en direct, les représentants des Etats-Unis, Robert Malley, et de l'Iran, Ali Bagheri Kani, sont restés dans la capitale autrichienne : ils tentent depuis, par l'intermédiaire du représentant de l'Union européenne, de surmonter d'ultimes points de divergences, en particulier sur la façon de traiter les gardiens de la révolution – un sujet sensible. Mise à l'épreuve en Afghanistan, et en Europe, l'administration Biden place la relance du JCPOA parmi ses priorités diplomatiques.

« On en est aux notes de bas de page », estime Enrique Mora, le médiateur européen. Pour en arriver là, l'administration Biden a accepté de lever une bonne partie des mesures imposées par Donald Trump dans l'idée alors de bloquer

toute perspective de retour au texte de 2015 et d'exercer une « pression maximale » sur le régime iranien. L'interdiction d'exporter du pétrole serait aussi levée.

En échange, l'Iran renouerait avec ses engagements passés. D'après les experts, le pays enrichit d'ores et déjà assez d'uranium pour passer à la fabrication d'une bombe, s'il en décidait ainsi. Ce temps dit « de break-out », de quelques semaines à ce stade, serait allongé de manière substantielle avec le nouvel accord, sans atteindre les douze mois agréés voici sept ans. Après le retrait des Etats-Unis, Téhéran avait en effet accéléré son programme, multipliant le nombre des centrifugeuses nécessaires à la production de matière fissile. Des progrès qui inquiètent les négociateurs, soucieux de sceller au plus vite un compromis, avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.

C'était avant que la Russie ne vienne gripper le processus. Le blocage a été abordé dans un récent coup de fil entre le président chinois Xi Jinping, le chancelier allemand Olaf Scholz et le président français Emmanuel Macron, mardi 8 mars – l'appel portant avant tout sur la guerre en Ukraine. « La Chine a un rôle très important à jouer », estime un négociateur européen, pour convaincre la Russie de transiger.

« Pause » attribuée aux Américains

De son côté, l'Iran temporise et cherche à minimiser la gravité de la pause. « Aucun facteur externe ne va affecter notre

vœu commun d'un accord collectif », a écrit le porte-parole du ministère iranien des affaires étrangères, Said Khatibzadeh, sur Twitter : « La pause peut fournir l'élan pour résoudre les problèmes restants. »

L'agence officielle iranienne IRNA s'est voulue rassurante, et affirme que les parties sont « prêtes pour un accord ». L'agence cite « une source proche du dossier », qui attribue la responsabilité de la pause annoncée vendredi aux Américains qui, « en cette dernière phase des négociations, ont créé de nouveaux défis en posant de nouvelles conditions ».

« Mon évaluation est que le compte y est pour Téhéran, c'est dans l'intérêt de Téhéran que cet accord puisse se faire et que cet accord puisse être signé », indique une source européenne. En guise de compromis avec Moscou, « des assurances avaient déjà été données pour affranchir des sanctions les actions prévues pour la Russie dans le cadre de l'accord », dit-il. En cas de deal, Moscou devrait en effet reprendre, pour les stocker, les quantités d'uranium enrichi dont l'Iran va devoir se défaire.

Dans l'hypothèse d'un blocage persistant, faudra-t-il se passer de l'aval russe pour conclure ? « Le JCPOA est un accord dont la Russie est signataire, notre priorité est donc de conclure cet accord avec la Russie. Si le blocage russe devait être définitif, nous serions obligés de regarder d'autres options », prévient un négociateur.

Nadhim Zahawi: how I escaped Saddam's Iraq

One night in December 1977, when Saddam Hussein was deputy leader of Iraq and already the strongman of the government, Nadhim Zahawi's father was tipped off that Saddam's secret police were after him. Zahawi, a Kurd working in Baghdad, decided to leave right away. He phoned the office to say that he was travelling to the north of the country for work and quickly set about his escape. The Baathist secret police did come for him that night, but by the time they arrived at his house, he was at Baghdad International Airport with a ticket to London.

An 11-year-old Nadhim nervously saw him off at the airport with his mother and sister – it would have looked suspicious if the family hadn't so they stood at a viewing platform where you could see passengers walk to the aircraft and go up the steps. It meant he was watching when the plane was intercepted by the military. 'Just before take-off, an army truck drove to the plane,' Zahawi says. 'We were all terrified. We were convinced they were going to bring him down off the plane: that's what they do. But they brought a different man down.' It was the man sitting behind Zahawi's father. Shortly after this escape, the rest of the family flew out and met him in London.

This is the story Zahawi hinted at when winning 'Minister to Watch' at The Spectator's Parliamentary awards last year. 'When I stand in the mirror shaving,' he told guests, 'I have to pinch myself. How did a boy from Iraq, who ended up on these shores at the age of 11 without a word of English, become Secretary of State for Education?' He didn't say any more than that – this is the first time he has told the full story

about his journey to the UK.

Iraq in the late 1970s, he says, was a terrible, paranoid place. 'That's how mind control is: you create fear between neighbours, fear between parents and children. Teachers would even encourage pupils to say what you talked about last night with your family – just in case the family were being negative about the [Baathist] party.' His dad was no activist, he said, 'but being Kurdish, you're always under suspicion because the Kurds historically wanted to separate'.

When the family (who arrived as migrants, not refugees) was reunited in London, Zahawi found it 'genuinely hard' to integrate at first. 'When you can't speak the language, you sit and hide in the back of the class.' He attended the comprehensive Holland Park School in west London – now nicknamed the 'socialist's Eton'. It was brutal back then. 'There were these three kids who decided to chase me around Holland Park, picked me up and put me in the pond upside down. At that point I was thinking: where am I? It was horrific. But I look back now and I think how lucky I was. I've got second cousins who ended up on the front line in the Iraq-Iran war, life completely destroyed.

'I'm your best friend – why haven't I got a peerage?'

Zahawi had to educate himself. 'I couldn't make any sense of the Telegraph because my English wasn't good enough. But I started reading the Sun, and it actually helped me improve my reading.' Later on he was admitted to UCL and his interest in politics was unintentionally kindled by a student selling Socialist Worker. 'All I

did was say: "No, thank you." He took offence and decided he was going to beat me up.' After this, he said: 'I went to find out what the other side thinks. It was called the Conservative Collegiate Forum.' He quickly came round to this way of thinking – he cites Margaret Thatcher as the greatest prime minister (Tony Blair is his preferred Labour choice).

Zahawi became a Tory activist and during the Gulf War got involved in the successful campaign to persuade John Major to protect the Kurds with a no-fly zone. This introduced him to Jeffrey Archer, the novelist, who had taken up the Kurds' cause. They stayed in touch and in the late 1990s, when Archer ran for mayor, Zahawi was enlisted to his campaign team, with perhaps the most formidable bunch of advisers ever put together for local politics.

'Around the table, there were these young Conservatives – Sajid Javid, Priti Patel, Tobias Ellwood, Adam Afriyie, Shailesh Vara, Robert Halfon and Kwasi Kwarteng.' What did they have in common? They had all caught Lord Archer's eye over the years. Somehow, this disgraced peer ended up selecting the stars of Boris Johnson's government. Patel, like Zahawi, is from a family who came to the UK, in their case from Uganda, to escape persecution – now she's making the policy on refugees.

When Archer's campaign collapsed (he ended up in Belmarsh rather than City Hall), Zahawi got together with another aide, Stephan Shakespeare, and set up YouGov, an online opinion poll firm. It's now worth £1.2 billion, and the Zahawi family has an estimated £100 million property empire. Reminders of this venture hang

in his office today: three brightly coloured pieces by Derek Boshier, a Britpop artist, are behind his desk. 'Stephan bought three pictures, I bought three, and we had them in our YouGov office. Wherever I go, I bring them with me.'

His high-flying career turned into a decade of political nothingness when he entered parliament in 2010; he was never part of the David Cameron set. 'Do you know why I was in the cold?' he asks. 'Because along with Jesse Norman, I led the rebellion against House of Lords reform. I figured that I didn't come to this great country to vandalise its unwritten constitution and saddle it with Nick Clegg's 450 senators. All that power, with no accountability, would have been a disaster. To create a system that is as gridlocked as America's? Madness.'

By his own admission, Zahawi was pretty bad at climbing Westminster's greasy pole. He was known as a Boris Johnson supporter but ended up backing Dominic Raab (the son of a Jewish refugee) in the 2019 leadership election. His break came when he was made vaccines minister – and then oversaw what turned out to be a stunning success, mainly driven by Kate Bingham's vaccine taskforce. Six months ago he was made Education Secretary, and given the job of trying to fix the mess caused by lockdown. The hope was that he'd bring the vaccine can-do spirit to repairing education. So how will he do it?

At this stage, his story starts to sound less like a thriller and more like an accountancy handbook. 'The lesson I brought from vaccines – something I am totally passionate about, but won't get many headlines until I deliver it – is

that data and transparency is your ally when you're trying to reform or improve complex systems.' By which he means that he'll publish all the vital figures: on the skills gap, on damage done in lockdown, on exam results, in the belief that once problems are exposed, they are more likely to be solved. 'I will be the evidence-led secretary of state,' he says.

More data, he thinks, can move things beyond the Blair-era target of getting students into university, by asking, for example, if going to university did them much good. 'What's the dropout rate? Where do they end up afterwards? Did they get a job that is equivalent to the investment they've made by borrowing the money to get there? Let's publish all that because, actually, you create a better system.'

When asked which previous education secretary most inspires him, he names Nicky Morgan – citing how he wants to 'complete that journey' on mass academisation, something that will soon be laid out

in his schools white paper (due by the end of the month). He's asked her about what went wrong: how to avoid the situation she found herself in in 2016 when the government had to U-turn on plans to force schools to become academies by 2022. He wants to turn more primaries into academies too.

In recent months, Zahawi has been talked up as a potential 'dark horse' leadership candidate – his supporters point to his vaccine role, his decent approval ratings and his backstory. When asked whether he has any hopes for No. 10 one day, he simply responds that his ambition is 'to be the best secretary of state for education', which isn't quite a denial. But Zahawi argues that his current boss won't be going anywhere anytime soon – then launches into a long defence of Johnson, particularly in relation to Ukraine.

'We were the first European country to send in lethal defensive weaponry – absolutely the first country – and that was against some of the advice.

Everybody's followed through behind us,' he says. 'The nation is seeing him again make the big calls – they like that quality. With my old pollster's hat on, the nation thinks that Boris has got a lot more to offer.' And what about those No. 10 suitcases of booze in lockdown? 'The partygate stuff cut through. No doubt. But people can see that he gets the big calls right.'

But still with his pollster's hat on, has he ever known a prime minister to recover from such awful approval ratings? At the last count, Johnson had the worst figures of any PM since Black Wednesday. 'If you look at the national polls, we are ten points behind nationally. But that is not moving to Keir Starmer! Force a choice, take out the don't-knows, we're about three points behind,' Zahawi replies.

If the Ukraine crisis is really to mark a turning point for Johnson, his response needs to match the moment. But as the number of refugees from Ukraine runs into the millions –

with people fleeing circumstances just as dangerous as those which brought the Zahawi to Britain – the government is only taking people with family members here or who are sponsored by charities or individuals (the rules of the latter scheme are yet to be published). Does Zahawi think the government should do more?

'I think we've struck the right balance, because it's right to have some checks as to who we're settling here,' he says. 'I want to go further and see how much more we can do to support the Ukrainians who will be refugees in neighbouring countries.' What about those trying to come here? At the last count, just 300 Ukrainians refugees had been given visas. 'I think you're going to see a couple of hundred thousand Ukrainians be settled – and welcomed – in this country,' he says. If so, it will be the biggest influx of people fleeing persecution in living memory. But as the Raabs, Patels and Zahawis have shown, this is – now more than ever – part of Britain's story.

LE FIGARO

13 mars 2022
avec AFP

Missiles tirés sur Erbil en Irak : les Gardiens de la Révolution d'Iran disent avoir ciblé « un centre stratégique » israélien

Douze missiles balistiques ont visé dimanche le consulat américain à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak, sans faire de victime, ont affirmé les forces de sécurité kurdes.

Les Gardiens de la Révolution, armée idéologique de la République islamique d'Iran, ont affirmé dimanche avoir ciblé un «centre stratégique» israélien peu après l'annonce par les autorités du Kurdistan en Irak d'une attaque de missiles vi-

sant le consulat américain. «Le "centre stratégique de la conspiration et du vice des sionistes" a été visé par de puissants missiles de pointe du Corps des Gardiens de la Révolution islamique», a indiqué un communiqué publié sur Sepah News, le site des Gardiens.

Quelques heures plus tôt, les forces de sécurité kurdes ont affirmé que des «missiles balistiques» tirés «hors des frontières de l'Irak, et plus

précisément de l'est», ont visé dimanche le consulat américain à Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan d'Irak, sans faire de victime.

Paris a condamné «avec la plus grande fermeté» les tirs de missiles sur Erbil, dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche, estimant qu'ils menaçaient la stabilité de toute la région. Cette attaque «menace la stabilité de l'Irak et de la région», selon un communiqué du ministère français des Affaires étrangères,

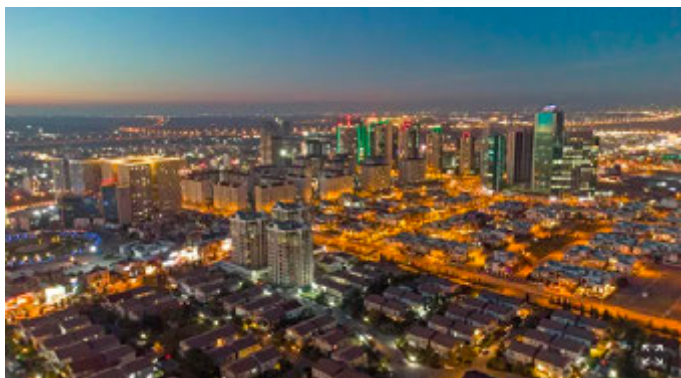
qui rappelle son «attachement à la souveraineté de l'Irak, ainsi qu'à sa stabilité et celle de la Région autonome du Kurdistan en son sein».

L'Irak partage sa longue frontière orientale avec l'Iran, qui exerce chez son voisin irakien un rôle incontournable sur le plan politique et économique. Mais en Irak, ce sont généralement des tirs de roquettes ou des drones piégés, jamais revendiqués et d'une ampleur moindre, qui visent les intérêts

américains et les troupes de la coalition internationale antidjihadistes. Washington accuse des factions irakiennes pro-Iran, qui réclament le départ des soldats américains.

Dimanche avant l'aube, un correspondant de l'AFP à Erbil, dans le nord de l'Irak, a entendu trois explosions. L'attaque a été menée avec «douze missiles balistiques tirés contre un quartier d'Erbil et qui visaient le consulat américain», selon un communiqué de l'unité de lutte antiterroriste du Kurdistan. «Les missiles ont été tirés hors des frontières de l'Irak et du Kurdistan, (venant) plus précisément de l'est» du pays. «Il n'y a pas de pertes humaines, que des dommages matériels», ajoute le communiqué. De son côté, un porte-parole du département d'État américain a assuré qu'il n'y avait «ni dommage, ni victime dans aucune des installations du gouvernement américain».

La chaîne de télévision locale Kurdistan24, dont les studios se trouvent non loin de nouveaux locaux du consulat américain, a publié sur ses réseaux sociaux des images de ses bureaux endommagés, avec des pans effondrés du faux plafond



Erbil. SAFIN HAMED / AFP

et du verre brisé. «Nous condamnons cette attaque terroriste lancée contre plusieurs secteurs d'Erbil, nous appelons les habitants à garder le calme», a indiqué dans un communiqué le premier ministre du Kurdistan Masrour Barzani.

Tensions régionales

Les tirs contre Erbil interviennent près d'une semaine après la mort en Syrie de deux hauts gradés des Gardiens de la Révolution, armée idéologique de la République islamique d'Iran, tués dans une attaque imputée à Israël. «Le régime sioniste (Israël, NDLR) paiera pour ce crime», promettaient mardi les Gardiens dans un communiqué. En janvier 2020, l'Iran

avait tiré des missiles en Irak sur des bases abritant des soldats américains, en représailles à l'assassinat par Washington du général iranien Qassem Soleimani mené quelques jours plus tôt sur le territoire irakien. En une demi-heure, 22 missiles sol-sol iraniens s'étaient ainsi abattus sur les bases de Aïn al-Assad (ouest) et Erbil (nord).

Les tensions régionales et les aléas géopolitiques se répercutent régulièrement sur l'actualité irakienne. Le pays avait connu en début d'année une recrudescence d'attaques à la roquette ou aux drones armés. Téhéran et plusieurs groupes alliés dans la région commémoraient le deuxième anniversaire de la mort du général

Soleimani et de son lieutenant irakien Abou Mehdi al-Mouhandis, tués par un tir de drone américain. Fin janvier, six roquettes ont été tirées sur l'aéroport international de Bagdad, sans faire de victimes. À Erbil, la dernière attaque du genre remonte à septembre, quand des «drones armés» ont visé l'aéroport.

L'attaque de dimanche intervient aussi au moment où les négociations sur le nucléaire iranien, sur le point d'aboutir, ont été brutalement suspendues, à la suite de nouvelles exigences de Moscou. Conclu par l'Iran d'un côté, et les États-Unis, la Chine, la France, le Royaume-Uni, la Russie et l'Allemagne de l'autre, ce pacte était censé empêcher Téhéran de se doter de la bombe atomique en échange de la levée des sanctions qui asphyxient son économie. Mais il s'est délité en 2018 après le retrait de Washington, décidé par Donald Trump, qui a rétabli ses mesures contre l'Iran. En réaction, l'Iran s'est progressivement affranchi des limites imposées à son programme nucléaire. Les négociations avaient repris après l'élection de Joe Biden à la Maison-Blanche.

L'Iran revendique le tir de missiles sur Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien

L'Iran revendique le tir de missiles sur Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien

Des tirs de missile ont visé, dimanche 13 mars avant l'aube, Erbil, capitale du Kurdistan autonome, dans le nord kurde de l'Irak. L'attaque a été menée avec «douze missiles balistiques tirés contre un quartier d'Erbil et qui visaient le consulat américain», a indiqué dans un premier temps un communiqué de l'unité de lutte antiterroriste du

Kurdistan. « Les missiles ont été tirés hors des frontières de l'Irak et du Kurdistan, plus précisément de l'est. »

Les gardiens de la Révolution, l'armée idéologique de la République islamique d'Iran, ont revendiqué dimanche les tirs de missiles sur Erbil, affirmant avoir ciblé un « centre stratégique » israélien et menaçant

l'Etat hébreu de nouvelles opérations « destructrices ».

L'Irak partage sa longue frontière à l'est avec l'Iran, qui jouit d'un rôle incontournable sur le plan tant politique qu'économique chez son voisin irakien. Sur leur site Sepah News, les gardiens de la révolution ont affirmé que « le "centre stratégique de la conspiration et du

vice des sionistes" avait été visé par de puissants missiles de pointe ».

Réagissant aux accusations de Téhéran, les autorités du Kurdistan ont ensuite déclaré dans un communiqué que l'endroit visé était un « site civil », fustigeant « une justification visant uniquement à dissimuler ce crime ». « Il s'agit d'allégations

sans fondements », a assuré dimanche le gouverneur d'Erbil, lors d'une conférence de presse : « Il n'y a pas de sites israéliens dans cette région, il n'y a que le nouveau bâtiment du consulat américain. »

« Pas de pertes humaines, que des dommages matériels »

Dans un communiqué, l'unité de lutte antiterroriste du Kurdistan a dit qu'« il n'y [avait] pas de pertes humaines, que des dommages matériels ». De son côté, un porte-parole du département d'Etat américain a assuré qu'il n'y avait « ni dommage ni victime dans aucune des installations du gouvernement américain ». L'aéroport de la ville, où se trouve une base de la coalition internationale antidjihadistes, a informé ne pas avoir essuyé de dommages, niant toute interruption des vols.

La chaîne de télévision locale Kurdistan24, dont les studios se trouvent non loin de nouveaux locaux du consulat américain, a en revanche publié sur ses réseaux sociaux des images de ses bureaux endommagés, avec des pans de du faux plafond effondrés et du verre brisé. L'influent Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), aux commandes à Erbil, a organisé pour les médias la visite d'une vaste résidence luxueuse, propriété d'un magnat kurde du pétrole, ravagée par les tirs. A Bagdad, le ministère des affaires étrangères a convoqué l'ambassadeur d'Iran, Iraj Masjidi, et lui a communiqué les protestations du gouvernement fédéral au sujet des frappes, dénoncées comme une « violation flagrante de la souveraineté » d'Irak, selon un communiqué.

« Nous condamnons cette attaque terroriste lancée contre plusieurs secteurs d'Erbil, nous appelons les habitants à garder leur calme », avait déclaré plus tôt, dans un communiqué, le premier ministre du Kurdistan, Masrour Barzani. De son côté, Paris a condamné « avec la



Le parlement régional du Kurdistan à Erbil, en février 2019. SAFIN HAMED / AFP

plus grande fermeté » les tirs de missile. Cette attaque « menace la stabilité de l'Irak et de la région », selon un communiqué du ministère des affaires étrangères français, qui rappelle son « attachement à la souveraineté de l'Irak, ainsi qu'à sa stabilité et celle de la région autonome du Kurdistan en son sein ».

Un contexte toujours tendu

Cette attaque survient près d'une semaine après la mort en Syrie de deux hauts gradés des gardiens de la révolution, tués dans une attaque imputée à Israël. « Le régime sioniste [Israël] paiera pour ce crime », promettaient, mardi, les gardiens dans un communiqué. L'attaque de dimanche intervient aussi au moment où les négociations pour relancer l'accord de 2015 sur le nucléaire iranien (JCPoA) à Vienne ont été brutalement suspendues, à la suite de nouvelles exigences de Moscou. « De telles actions mettent en péril les efforts pour permettre un retour au JCPoA auxquels l'Iran contribue par ailleurs, estime le communiqué français. Il y a une urgence absolue à conclure les négociations ouvertes voici près d'un

an et à cesser de tels comportements irresponsables et dangereux. »

Conclu par l'Iran, d'un côté, et les Etats-Unis, la Chine, la France, le Royaume-Uni, la Russie et l'Allemagne, de l'autre, ce pacte était censé empêcher Téhéran de se doter de la bombe atomique en échange de la levée des sanctions qui asphyxient son économie. Mais il s'est délité en 2018 après le retrait de Washington, décidé par Donald Trump, qui a rétabli ses mesures contre l'Iran. En réaction, l'Iran s'est progressivement affranchi des limites imposées à son programme nucléaire. Les négociations avaient repris après l'élection de Joe Biden à la Maison Blanche.

Des frappes jamais revendiquées

En Irak, des tirs de roquettes ou des drones piégés, jamais revendiqués, visent régulièrement les intérêts américains et les troupes de la coalition internationale antidjihadiste en Irak, où des groupes armés pro-Iran réclament le départ des soldats américains.

Le pays avait connu en début d'année une recrudescence de ce type d'attaques. L'Iran et plusieurs groupes alliés dans la région célébraient alors le deuxième anniversaire de la mort du général iranien Ghassem Soleimani et de son lieutenant irakien Abou Mahdi Al-Mohandes, tués par un tir de drone américain en Irak en janvier 2020. A la fin de janvier, six roquettes ont été tirées sur l'aéroport international de Bagdad, sans faire de victimes, la dernière en date d'une série d'attaques généralement imputées par Washington aux factions irakiennes pro-Iran. A Erbil, la dernière attaque du genre remonte à septembre, quand des « drones armés » ont visé l'aéroport.

Ces attaques surviennent aussi dans un contexte post-électoral tendu, marqué par des tractations interminables pour former une coalition parlementaire, élire un président et désigner un premier ministre. « Erbil sous le feu des perdants », a réagi dans un tweet le leader religieux chiite Moqtada Al-Sadr, grand vainqueur des législatives d'octobre, qui ont vu les factions pro-Iran enregistrer un net recul.

L'Iran frappe le Kurdistan irakien après un bombardement israélien en Syrie

Les tirs de missiles sur Erbil, qui n'ont pas fait de victimes, surviennent quelques jours après la mort de deux hauts gradés iraniens à Damas.

Les gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique de Téhéran, ont revendiqué dimanche la responsabilité de tirs de missiles sur la ville d'Erbil, la capitale du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, dans le nord de l'Irak. Les missiles ont atterri dans une zone proche du consulat américain sans faire de victime. Les gardiens disent avoir visé « le centre stratégique de la conspiration des sionistes » (les Israéliens, dans le jargon officiel iranien) à Erbil en représailles des « crimes récents » d'Israël. Le 7 mars, deux hauts gradés des gardiens de la révolution (Pasdaran) ont été tués dans des attaques israéliennes sur le territoire syrien, ce à quoi cette unité d'élite avait promis de riposter.

Dimanche, le conseiller américain à la sécurité nationale, Jake Sullivan, a déclaré à la chaîne américaine CBS News que l'attaque au missile n'avait atteint aucune installation américaine ni aucun citoyen américain. La chaîne de télévision par satellite Kurdistan24, située près du consulat américain, a annoncé avoir subi des dommages du fait de l'attaque. M. Sullivan a affirmé que Washington négociait avec le gouvernement irakien pour l'aider à mieux défendre ses villes contre les frappes de missiles. Le ministère irakien des affaires étrangères a convoqué le même jour l'ambassadeur de la République islamique d'Iran à Bagdad, Iraj Masjedi, pour protester contre l'atteinte à son territoire.



A Erbil (Irak), le 13 mars 2022. SAFIN HAMED / AFP

Escalade significative

Dirigeants et militaires iraniens ont à plusieurs reprises, dans le passé, dénoncé une présence des services de renseignement israéliens dans la région du Kurdistan irakien, ce que rejettent les responsables kurdes. Dimanche, le gouverneur d'Erbil, Oumid Khouchnaw, a une fois de plus nié toute présence d'Israël dans la région, qualifiant les allégations de Téhéran de « sans fondement ». Lundi, Israël n'avait toujours pas réagi aux déclarations iraniennes.

La frappe iranienne dans le nord de l'Irak et le fait que Téhéran la revendique ouvertement marquent une escalade significative dans le face à face entre Washington et Téhéran. La confrontation indirecte à laquelle se livrent ces ennemis de longue date s'est souvent jouée en Irak, pays dont le gouvernement est allié des deux pays. L'attaque de dimanche survient alors que les négociations à Vienne pour relancer l'accord sur le dossier nucléaire de Téhéran de 2015

marquent une « pause », depuis le 11 mars, en raison de demandes de Moscou. La Russie exige des États-Unis la garantie qu'en cas d'accord les sanctions qui ont été infligées à Moscou en réaction à l'invasion de l'Ukraine n'affecteront pas ses relations commerciales avec l'Iran. Une position que certains observateurs qualifient de « prise en otage » du « deal » nucléaire.

La présence américaine en Irak a très souvent été dénoncée par l'Iran, mais les tensions ont augmenté après la frappe de drones américains de janvier 2020

Quelques heures après l'attaque à Erbil, l'Iran a annoncé avoir suspendu « unilatéralement et temporairement » les tractations en cours avec l'Arabie saoudite, qui sont facilitées par l'Irak. Ces négociations avaient pour but de calmer les tensions entre les deux puissances régionales – qui se veulent respectivement cheffes de file des chiites et des sunnites au Moyen-Orient – qui n'ont plus de relations diploma-

tiques depuis 2016. L'annonce de cette suspension intervient après que le royaume saoudien a annoncé avoir exécuté 81 personnes, dont une quarantaine de chiites.

La présence américaine en Irak a très souvent été dénoncée par l'Iran, mais les tensions ont augmenté après la frappe de drones américains de janvier 2020 qui avait été fatale à Ghassem Soleimani, chef des forces Al-Qods, la branche des gardiens de la révolution chargée des opérations extérieures, près de l'aéroport de Bagdad. En représailles, Téhéran avait lancé une salve de missiles sur la base aérienne d'Al-Assad en Irak, où étaient stationnées des troupes américaines, faisant des blessés, mais aucune victime.

Dimanche soir, la France a, de son côté, condamné l'attaque de Téhéran qui « menace la stabilité de l'Irak et de la région ». Même son de cloche de la part de l'Union européenne, qui a affirmé qu'il n'y avait « pas de justification pour un tel acte de violence contre le territoire d'un État souverain ». Lundi, les journaux iraniens de tout bord ont, de manière unanime, publié en « une » la version de l'attaque fournie par Téhéran. « La gifle puissante des gardiens aux sionistes : deux centres israéliens ont été anéantis à Erbil », a ainsi titré le quotidien ultraconservateur Kayhan, qui promet d'« autres vengeances, en temps voulu ».

Iran claims responsibility for missile strike near US consulate in Iraq

Revolutionary Guards say target in Erbil was Israeli 'strategic centre' following attack in Syria

Iran has claimed responsibility for a missile barrage that struck early on Sunday near a sprawling US consulate complex in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil, saying it was retaliation for an Israeli strike in Syria that killed two of its Revolutionary Guards.

No injuries were reported in the attack, which marked a significant escalation between the US and Iran. Hostility between the countries has often played out in Iraq, whose government is allied with both countries.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on their website that they launched the attack against an Israeli "strategic centre of conspiracy" in Erbil. They did not elaborate, but in a statement said that Israel had itself been on the offensive, citing the strike in Syria. Earlier, a US defence official and Iraqi security officials said the strike was launched from neighbouring Iran.

One Iraqi official in Baghdad initially said several missiles had hit the US consulate in Erbil and that it was the target of the attack. Later, Lawk Ghafari, the head of Kurdistan's foreign media office, said none of the missiles had struck the US facility but that areas around the compound had been hit. A statement by the interior ministry of Iraq's Kurdistan region said the missiles were launched from outside Iraq, from the east, without naming Iran.

The US defence official said it was still uncertain exactly how many missiles were fired and exactly where they had landed. A second US official said there was no damage at any US govern-



A building damaged by the Iranian missile barrage in Erbil, northern Iraq. Photograph: Azad Lashkari/Reuters

ment facility and that there was no indication the target was the consulate building, which is new and currently unoccupied.

Neither the Iraqi official nor the US officials were authorised to discuss the event with the media and spoke to Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The satellite broadcast channel Kurdistan24, which is located near the US consulate, went on air from its studio shortly after the attack, showing shattered glass and debris on the studio floor.

The attack came several days after Iran said it would retaliate for the Israeli strike near the Syrian capital, Damascus. On Sunday, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Iraqi media acknowledging the attacks in Erbil, without saying where they originated.

The Iraqi security officials said there were no casualties in the

Erbil attack, which they said occurred after midnight and caused material damage in the area.

Another US official said in a statement that the US condemned what it called an "outrageous attack against Iraqi sovereignty and display of violence".

US forces stationed at Erbil's airport compound have come under fire from rocket and drone attacks in the past, with US officials blaming Iran-backed groups. The top US commander for the Middle East has repeatedly warned about the increasing threats of attacks from Iran and Iranian-backed militias on troops and allies in Iraq and Syria.

In an interview with Associated Press in December, Marine Gen Frank McKenzie said that while US forces in Iraq have shifted to a non-combat role, Iran and its proxies still want all American troops to leave the country. More attacks may be

triggered as a result, he said.

The Biden administration decided last July to end the US combat mission in Iraq by 31 December, and US forces gradually moved to an advisory role last year. The troops will still provide air support and other military aid for Iraq's fight against Islamic State.

The US presence in Iraq has long been a flashpoint for Tehran, but tensions rose after a US drone strike in January 2020 near Baghdad airport killed a top Iranian general. In retaliation, Iran launched a barrage of missiles at al-Asad airbase, where US troops were stationed. More than 100 service members suffered traumatic brain injuries in the blasts. Iraq's prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, tweeted: "The aggression which targeted the dear city of Erbil and spread fear amongst its inhabitants is an attack on the security of our people."

Kurdistan's Weekly Brief March 15, 2022

Iraq

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) acknowledged it struck Erbil with a dozen Fateh-110 ballistic missiles on March 13. The IRGC claimed it was targeting an Israeli base in an official statement that read, "Last night, the strategic center of the Zionist conspiracy and evil was targeted by the powerful missiles of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps." However, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) rejected the Iranian claims and said, "We reiterate that the propaganda of the perpetrators of this attack is far from true." The missiles struck near the site of the new US consulate, causing damage to local media outlet Kurdistan 24's headquarters and a businessman's home. At the same time, the attack drew immediate outrage from the international community and Iraq's Kurdish parties. The US State Department denounced Iran's "outrageous violation of Iraq's sovereignty," while US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said, "We are in consultation with the Iraqi government and the government in Iraqi Kurdistan, in part to help them get the missile defense capabilities to be able to defend themselves in their cities." On Monday, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and several Kurdish officials toured the site of the Iranian attack. Also, on Monday, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Iraj Masjedi, vowed Iran would launch more attacks on Erbil if "three other Mossad centers were not closed." Lastly, the Council of Representatives of Iraq established an investigation committee to probe Sunday's attack after Muqtada al-Sadr, head of Iraq's largest parliamentary coalition, spoke with Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) head Massoud Barzani via phone.

Iran

The Cooperation Center for Iranian Kurdistan's Political Parties (CCIKP) denounced the IRGC's missile attack on Erbil and called for the international community to "stop the Islamic Republic." "For many years, the Islamic Republic of Iran ignored the international laws and norms, not only by breaching the sovereignty of Iraq but by meddling in its affairs and creating crises and issues for the country," read the CCIKP statement. In 2018, the IRGC launched a ballistic missile strike on the exiled CCIKP's headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing 16 and wounding dozens.

11 Kurdish border porters (kolbars) were injured in two separate car accidents in Rawansour and Paveh (Pawa). Further, Iranian border guards wounded at least five kolbars in ambushes near Kangavar, Nowsud, and Sardasht. Three more kolbars were injured when they fell from cliffs near Nowsud and Salas-e Babajani. Lastly, the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights reported IRGC personnel killed a 70-year-old woman, Sorat Siadi, and her 30-year-old son, Pouria Razei, in their vehicle near Dalahu on Sunday.

Iranian authorities warned activists, community leaders, and teachers across Iran's Kurdish region to refrain from participating in celebrations other than those "organized by the state" during Newroz. Dozens of Kurds were arrested in 2021 for celebrating Newroz by singing Kurdish songs and displaying the Kurdish flag. Separately, Urmia's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish political prisoner named Fairouz Mosalaou to death for "waging war on the

state" and "membership of a Kurdish party."

Syria

Turkish and Russian forces conducted their 92nd joint military patrol near the Kurdish town of Kobani. That said, while joint Russian-Turkish patrols are intended to enforce a 2019 Russian-brokered ceasefire between Turkey and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), they have failed to prevent Turkey and its Syrian proxies from launching hundreds of attacks on SDF-controlled territories, including several that wounded at least three children near Ain Essa last week. Concurrently, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported the SDF exchanged fire with Turkish proxies northwest of Hasakah. On a separate note, the SDF conducted a security operation targeting ISIS (Da'esh) cells in al-Shadadi. Moreover, Russia continued to support the Assad regime's efforts to reestablish control over the Badiya by bombing several Da'esh positions in the area.

On the 11th anniversary of the Syrian uprising, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) released a statement blaming the Assad regime for creating a "humanitarian catastrophe" and the "killings, displacement, and destruction" that have engulfed the country since March 15, 2011. The SDC statement also accused the Assad regime of "rejecting all internal dialogue initiatives seeking a solution" and "allowing Syria to become a hostage in the hands of regional and international powers." The SDC then called for all opposition parties to forge a "unified vision" and chart a "road map" for ending the ongoing crisis and "occupations."

Turkey

The Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) refuted the immunity lift on its Kurdish lawmaker of Semra Güzel, calling the process by the Turkish parliament "the latest attack on parliamentary democracy in Turkey." The Turkish ruling parties, led by Justice and Development (AKP), removed Güzel's immunity as the government launched criminal investigations against her for photos dated back in 2014, showing the lawmaker with her fiancé, a member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraqi Kurdistan. However, the HDP said that many of its "leaders, including the party's co-chairs, visited PKK" during the peace process after a "formal request of the Turkish government as part of peace negotiations" between 2013-2015. Since 2016, thirteen HDP deputies have been removed from the parliament by the government.

The Turkish police arrested three Kurds, HDP's Youth Council leaders, in Van. Separately, a second appellate court in Diyarbakir (Amed) ruled in favor of the police's fatal shooting of a young Kurd in 2017 during the Newroz Celebration. Previously, an appeal court in Amed ruled for compensation by the police department of the family of the victim, Kemal Kurkut.

The Kurdish parties, mainly the HDP, announced their plans to celebrate Newroz across the country under a new slogan, "It's the era of victory." Despite the government's restrictions, millions of Kurds celebrate Newroz in the Kurdish Region of Turkey, as it symbolizes freedom and rebellion against tyranny.

Afrin: Four Years of Darkness Under Turkish Occupation

March 18, 2022, marks the fourth anniversary since the Turkish invasion of the Kurdish city of Afrin and its districts. The invasion resulted in the death of hundreds of Kurdish civilians and anti-ISIS fighters at the hands of Turkey and its radical Syrian proxies. After four years, Turkey depopulated the Kurdish areas, part of its ethnic cleansing process in Afrin. The remaining Kurds face death, extortion, and kidnappings by various armed groups backed by Turkey. Kurdish-owned homes and farms are confiscated, and new settlements for non-Kurds are built.

The Paris Kurdish Institute and the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) cordially invite to you a webinar: Afrin: Four Years of Darkness Under Turkish Occupation.

Dr. Nadine Maenza– Chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)
Sinam Mohammed– Representative of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) to the US

Dr. Nazand Begikhani– Vincent Wright Chair 2019/2020 & Visiting Professor, Sciences Po, Paris
Dr. Mannan Seuleiman– Emeritus Professor of Chemistry

Sierwan Najmaldin Karim: President of Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI)

Nadine Maenza is a noted speaker, writer, and policy expert with more than two decades of experience as an advocate for working families and a champion for international religious freedom.

Nadine is the President of Patriot Voices, where she provides her expertise to shape the organization's special emphasis on public policies that support working families. Drawing on her extensive network and coalition-building experiences, she has helped build unique coalitions on issues such

as paid family leave, health care, tax reform, and international religious freedom. Since June 2021, Nadine has served as the Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, having been re-appointed by the White House in May of 2020 to a second two-year term. She served as Vice Chair in 2019. She has represented USCIRF in delegations to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Taiwan, and Uzbekistan. She has traveled in her own personal capacity to better understand religious freedom conditions in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Bangladesh as well as recently spending a month in northeast Syria. She is most honored to have met with persecuted communities of various faiths from around the world. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Institute for Global Engagement, the Sinjar Academy, and the Freedom Research Foundation. Previously, she was Chairman of Hardwired Global, an organization working to stop religious oppression around the world. Nadine has advised several major organizations on faith engagement, policy development, and strategic partnerships through The Clapham Group including The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The College Board, and The Anne E. Casey Foundation. She has served as a senior advisor to presidential and Senate campaigns. She has decades of experience in fundraising and coalition building, having worked with presidential and Senate super PACs, served as the finance director for the Pennsylvania Republican Party, and as a consultant to the Republican National Committee. She worked on Capitol Hill in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Nadine's writings on various policy topics have been published in numerous publications domestically and internationally. She is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University. She is married with three children living

outside of Philadelphia in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Sinam Sherkany Mohamad was the founding Co-President of the People's Council of Rojava. The People's Council of Western Kurdistan (Rojava) was founded in 2011 during the first term of the Syrian opposition uprising, and operated as the supreme political body of the liberated areas of northern and northeast Syria. She was a member of The Kurdish High Commission, which was the political representation for the Syrian Kurds during the agreements of Erbil between the National Kurdish council and Rojava people council in 2012. This governing body is now known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). She served as the European diplomatic representative of the AANES. She is now the Co-Chief of the US Mission of the Syrian Democratic Council in Washington DC, Mohamad is currently a top diplomat of the AANES and Syrian Democratic council. She is also a member of the Presidential Council of the SDC. Mohamad is a Kurdish woman and has been a leading advocate for women's rights and democracy in Syria. She was twice nominated to run for Syrian Parliament, in 2003 and 2007 during the Assad regime's rule. Mohamad was born in Damascus, Syria. She is a graduate of the University of Aleppo. She is married with four children.

Vincent Wright Chair 2019/2020 & Visiting Professor, Sciences Po, Paris, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol, UK. Begikhani is a leading researcher on gender-based violence (GBV), having conducted research on many aspects of violence and gender relations, including honour-based violence and honour killings in the UK and in Iraq: She has particularly focused on women and war, examining rape and sexual violence during conflict in Iraq and Syria. She recently finished a

two-year research project on gender-based violence and displacement, which was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). She has worked as an expert advisor with a range of national and international organizations and government departments, including the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), UN Women, the UK Metropolitan Police, the Swedish Ministry of Integration and Amnesty International. She has addressed social policy in post-conflict Iraq and currently advises the Kurdistan Region's President on Higher Education and Gender. In addition, she is the Middle East editor for the journal-of-gender-based-violence (<https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/journals/journal-of-gender-based-violence>) and the director a Specialized Imprint (Collection) at the L'Harmattan, entitled 'Peuples cultures et littératures de l'Orient'. Between 2009 -2013, she was the Editor-in-Chief of Le Monde Diplomatique, Kurdish edition. Nazand is also an internationally known poet, having won several poetry prizes, including France's Simone Landrey's Feminine Poetry Prize in 2012.

Mannan Seuleiman MCHC, Emeritus Parisian Institute of Molecular Chemistry (ERMESS team). Professor Seuleiman is also the leader of the European and American Solidarity Committee for Afrin (CSEA for Afrin – Espoir Afrin), a group of Kurds of European and American nationalities from Afrin.

Mr. Sierwan Najmaldin Karim, President of the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), was previously security director and senior advisor to the late governor of Kirkuk, Dr. Najmaldin O. Karim, Founder and past President of WKI. From a young age, under the tutelage of his father, Mr. Karim has been involved in Kurdish activism, serving in various roles with several Kurdish organizations, promoting a united

free Kurdistan representing Kurds from all areas. In his professional life, Mr. Karim has extensive experience as a real estate asset

manager and land developer, and provides consulting services to commercial real estate investors. He holds a bachelor's degree in

accounting from the University of Maryland and is a master's candidate at Georgetown University, where he was recently elected as

Chairman of the Student Advisory Board of Real Estate. He is a resident of Florida, where he lives with his wife and daughter.



March 17, 2022

Kirkuk Minute March 17, 2022

Kirkuk

In a new wave of Arabization, the Kirkuk court ruled in favor of the Arab settlers, taking 3,000 Dunams (741 acres) of agricultural land from the native Kurds near Daquq district. The lands will be confiscated from Kurds and given to Arabs, in a continuing of the Arabization policies of the Ba'ath party regime. Separately, newly leaked documents of the Kirkuk administration uncovered the transferring the identification cards of 100-200 families from the Hawija district and its villages, to Kirkuk city, in an attempt to increase the Arab population in the Kurdish province.

Kirkuk continues as the worst province at providing electricity to its citizens. According to the newest statistics released by the Ministry of Electricity, Kirkuk is supplied with only nine and half hours a day of electricity. Recently, the acting governor, Rakan al Jabouri, and the Turkish-backed lawmaker, Arshad al Salihi, admitted Baghdad's failure to provide basic services to Kirkuk in a rare confession. Both politicians were against the Kurdish administration who provided twenty hours of electricity before October 16, 2017.

Public pressure from Kurdish residents obliged Kirkuk's acting governor Rakan al Jabouri to reverse his initial decision, restricting the Kurdish celebration for Newroz to just three hours. Al Jabouri issued a second memorandum shortly after, allowing

the Kurds to celebrate Newroz, but "under the supervision" of the security forces. Kurds in Kirkuk have been deprived of cultural rights, including raising the constitutionally-recognized flag of Kurdistan. Furthermore, public pressure also pushed the Iranian-backed President of Kirkuk University, Omran Jamal Hassan, to allow the commemoration of the Halabja Genocide after his initial rejection. On National Clothing Day, March 10, Hassan prevented Kurdish students from entering the campus because they wore traditional clothes. However, the university repeatedly holds memorial events for deceased Iranian leaders and their Iraqi proxies.

On Saturday, March 10th, the Arab and Turkmen parties rallied their supporters and protested the continuation of the closure of Kirkuk's airport despite the completion of its building. The protesters demanded the "immediate opening" of the airport for civilian aviation, a request that the federal government has rejected, citing security concerns. Kirkuk's airport has been hit with rockets on several occasions, and due to terror attacks, the authorities remain uncommitted to opening it.

The Integrity Commission announced the arrest of "two local officials" for corruption charges related to "occupying two parcels of government land, and using them as parking lots. The Integrity Commission did not release the names of the officials, but it

estimated the land value at four billion Iraqi Dinars (about two million USD). The land belonged to Kirkuk's municipality and the finance ministry.

On Monday, March 14, ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists attacked the 3rd brigade of the 19th division of the Iraqi federal police near Rashad district, killing an officer and injuring three more. Further, Iraq's operation command announced the arrest of three Da'esh suicide bombers in Kirkuk, who traveled from Syria. The capture of the terrorists was "in cooperation" with Kurdish security forces on Wednesday. Moreover, according to Iraqi forces, four Da'esh terrorists were killed near Dibis after an airstrike was conducted on Friday, March 11th. Despite the deterioration of the security in Kirkuk since October 16, 2017, the Baghdad-Erbil agreement to establish joint military forces for the disputed territories remains unimplemented due to a lack of budget allocations.

Tuz Khurmatu

Four years after the October 16, 2017 events, Kurdish families who lost their homes and were displaced by Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed militias are yet to receive compensation from the federal government. Dozens of families filed lawsuits against atrocities committed by Shia militants, backed by Iran. An investigative committee of the federal government has confirmed damage to the homes, but the compensation has yet to be paid.

Khanaqin

Iraq's Interior Minister has transferred the identification cards of dozens of non-Kurd families from Diyala's Baquba and Khalis districts, part of the ongoing Arabization process. The leaked documents showed the fraud occurring over a three year span, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Makhmour

In a Da'esh attack on Iraq's 14th army division, two Iraqi soldiers were killed, and five others were wounded near Gerda Hara village of Makhmour on Monday, March 13. Three of the soldiers were injured due to an IED explosion during the clashes. Further, an IED killed a child while he was collecting recycling cans near a waste site in Naseri village.

Shingal (Sinjar)

On March 16th, the Nineveh Operation Command imposed a curfew on Shingal and its sub-districts and villages, starting at 10:00 pm and ending at 06:00 am. Officials didn't issue a clarification after the decision, which stated it would continue until "further notice." Meanwhile, tension increased between the Iraqi forces and the Shingal Resistance Units (YBS) after unknown gunmen threw two stun grenades into an army checkpoint on Monday. Iraqi troops accused the YBS of being behind the incident and have repeatedly informed the armed group to leave Sinjar.

Meryem Soylu, 79 ans, condamnée à plus de six ans de prison

Meryem Soylu, 79 ans, a été condamnée à six ans et trois mois de prison pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste » en raison de son activité au sein de l'Association des proches de martyrs (MEBYA-DER).

Le procès de Meryem Soylu devant la 5ème cour pénale de Diyarbakır s'est terminé jeudi par une condamnation à six ans et trois mois de prison. La Mère de la paix a été condamnée pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste armée » en raison de son activité au sein de l'Association des proches de martyrs (MEBYA-DER).

La justice turque reproche à la femme de 79 ans d'être membre du conseil d'administration de MEBYA-DER et « cadre » de l'organisation de femmes kurdes Kongra Jinên Azad (KJA). Ainsi, la liste des membres de l'association a été retenue comme «

preuve ». En outre, le jugement indique que Mme Soylu a participé aux funérailles et aux cérémonies de deuil des combattants de la guérilla kurde tombés au combat.

L'avocat de la femme kurde, Muhtin Muğuç, a contesté les allégations de l'accusation, déclarant : « L'association a été fondée principalement à cause des attaques contre des cadavres et des tombes en Turquie. Ma cliente n'a agi au nom d'aucune organisation pendant qu'elle était active au sein de l'association. Les rassemblements auxquels elle a participé relèvent de la liberté d'expression. » Néanmoins, Meryem Soylu a été condamnée. Elle a la possibilité de faire appel dans un délai d'une semaine.

MEBYA-DER au centre de la criminalisation

Une vague massive de criminalisation est en cours contre l'association. Mercredi, on a appris qu'une procédure pour « appar-



Meryem Soylu, membre de l'association des proches de martyrs (Mebya-Der)

tenance à une organisation terroriste » avait été engagée pour un motif similaire contre des membres de l'Association des avocats pour la liberté (ÖHD). Les avocats ont été interrogés principalement pour avoir représenté MEBYA-DER dans des procès concernant la destruction de tombes de combattants kurdes. Ils ont également été interrogés sur les activités de l'association.

Qu'est-ce que MEBYA-DER ?

MEBYA-DER est une association de solidarité avec les personnes qui ont perdu des proches dans la lutte de libération kurde. Elle est depuis longtemps au centre de la répression étatique en Turquie. La structure qui possède des antennes dans plusieurs villes kurdes milite contre la guerre psychologique pratiquée par l'État turc au travers des actes de profanation des tombes ou de mutilation des corps des guérilleros tombés au combat.



March 18, 2022

Hundreds of civilians killed in Afrin since Turkey's invasion of the city

Thousands of Kurds have been arrested and kidnapped while hundreds of others were killed since Turkey seized control of Afrin city in northwest Syria, a conflict monitor said on Friday as the invasion marks its fourth year.

At least 639 Kurds, including 95 children and 86 women were killed in "IED explosions, car

bombs, airstrikes, ground bombardment by Turkish forces, and executions," the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) with a ground network in Syria reported.

Some civilians also died under torture in prisons run by Turkish-backed forces, it added.

The Turkish forces and their Sy-

rian proxies launched Operation Olive Branch on January 20, 2018, in Afrin. Ankara seized control of the city from the People's Protection Units (YPG) on March 24.

Over 7,000 Kurds from Afrin were kidnapped and arrested since the invasion, reported SOHR, with that around 1,300 of them remaining in prison.

"For four years of the occupation of Afrin city and surrounding districts, Turkish forces and their proxy Syrian factions have wreaked havoc and committed a plethora of heinous crimes breaching all international conventions and charters and human rights laws," SOHR stated in its report.

Seeking sanctuary, thousands

of indigenous Kurds were forced to flee Afrin to Kurdish-controlled areas in northeast Syria (Rojava) when Ankara invaded the city.

The conflict forced over 310,000 families to flee the area, SOHR said.

Turkish-backed groups have been widely accused of human rights violations against Afrin's locals, including kidnap, looting and extortion.

Over 580 people including women and teenagers were arrested in Afrin last year.



Smokes rises from Afrin in northwest Syria. File photo: AFP

A graphic video of a civilian being tortured by Turkish-backed forces in Afrin circulated on social media in September. In August 2018, Amnesty International reported that "Afrin residents are enduring widespread human rights violations, mostly at the hands of Syrian armed groups equipped and armed by Turkey."

In its annual report for 2019, Amnesty documented a "wide range of abuses" against Afrin's civilians at the hands of Turkish-backed groups, including the arbitrary detention of more than 50 locals.



March 19, 2022

ISIS affiliates arrested in al-Hol in an ongoing security operation

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the internal security forces (Asayish) have arrested several Islamic State (ISIS) suspects and affiliates in a large-scale ongoing military operation in al-Hol camp in northeast Syria (Rojava), a conflict monitor reported on Saturday.

The security forces have arrested several ISIS-affiliated men of different nationalities on Friday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said, as the operation entered its fourth day.

SOHR did not disclose the exact number of those detained.

The SDF and Asayish launched a large-scale security operation at the camp after two ISIS-affiliated women escaped from the fifth section of al-Hol on Wednesday as the escape alerted the forces.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) arrested thousands of ISIS fighters and



Al-Hol camp at dawn on March 28, 2021. File photo: Hawar News Agency

their wives and children when they took control of the group's last stronghold in Syria in March 2019. Most of these people are held at al-Hol, which is home to more than 60,000 people - mostly women and children of different nationalities.

Security forces arrested 14 Ira-

qis for committing violations at the camp in late November.

Al-Hol has been branded a breeding ground for terrorism, with human rights groups warning of squalid conditions at the camp.

There have been repeated calls from Kurdish and US offi-

cialists asking the international community to repatriate their nationals from al-Hol, but only a few countries have responded positively as they are worried about security concerns.

Four Swedish nationals, including two children from ISIS families, were repatriated from the camp on Wednesday.

Assad aux Emirats, étape-clé dans la normalisation du régime syrien

La venue à Abou Dhabi du maître de Damas constitue sa première visite dans un pays arabe depuis le début du soulèvement en Syrie en mars 2011.

C'est sa première visite dans un pays arabe depuis le déclenchement en 2011 du soulèvement qui a bien failli lui coûter son siège : le président syrien, Bachar Al-Assad, s'est rendu vendredi 18 mars aux Emirats arabes unis (EAU), où il s'est entretenu avec le dirigeant de fait de cette pétromonarchie, le prince héritier d'Abou Dhabi, Mohammed Ben Zayed. Ce déplacement constitue un pas important dans le sens d'une réintégration du maître de Damas sur la scène diplomatique arabe.

Traité comme un paria par la grande majorité des chancelleries de la planète, qui lui impute la destruction de son pays et la responsabilité de centaines de milliers de morts, Bachar Al-Assad n'était jusque-là sorti de Syrie, depuis 2011, que pour de brèves visites en Russie et en Iran, ses deux principaux alliés, dont l'aide militaire a été cruciale dans l'écrasement de la révolution. Coïncidence amère pour les opposants syriens, le voyage aux Emirats de leur bourreau est intervenu deux jours après la célébration du onzième anniversaire du début de la révolution, le 15 mars 2011.

Washington, dont les relations avec les Emirats se sont singulièrement refroidies ces derniers mois, en raison de divergences marquées sur la guerre au Yémen et sur le dossier nucléaire iranien, a critiqué ce déplacement en des termes inhabituellement vifs. Le porte-parole du département d'Etat, Ned Price, a déclaré que les Etats-Unis étaient « profondément déçus et troublés par

cette tentative apparente de légitimer » Bachar Al-Assad. « Nous exhortons les Etats envisageant un rapprochement avec le régime Assad de réfléchir attentivement aux atrocités commises par ce régime contre les Syriens au cours de la dernière décennie », a-t-il dit.

« Relations fraternelles »

A Abou Dhabi, la capitale des EAU, où le président syrien a été reçu par Mohammed Ben Zayed, dit « MBZ », les deux hommes ont discuté des « relations fraternelles » entre leurs pays, selon un communiqué de l'agence de presse émiratie Wam. Le texte affirme que les deux dirigeants ont insisté sur « la préservation de l'intégrité territoriale de la Syrie et le retrait des forces étrangères », « MBZ » qualifiant la Syrie de « pilier essentiel de la sécurité arabe ».

Des milices chiites pro-iraniennes, dépêchées par Téhéran en renfort de l'armée régulière, sont déployées en Syrie, au grand déplaisir des puissances du Golfe, notamment de l'Arabie saoudite et des Emirats, qui n'ont de cesse de dénoncer, depuis une dizaine d'années, l'ingérence de Téhéran dans les affaires des Etats arabes. Ce sont ces « forces étrangères » que le communiqué de Wam vise avant tout, même si plusieurs autres unités combattantes non syriennes sont présentes dans le pays : des Russes, des Turcs dans la région d'Idlib (Nord-Ouest) et des Américains dans les zones kurdes du Nord-Est.

De son côté, l'agence officielle syrienne SANA a salué « la position des Emirats, cohérente dans son soutien à l'intégrité territoriale de la Syrie et à sa stabilité ». « Le prince héritier a exprimé le souci des Emirats de renforcer la coopération avec la Syrie pour répondre aux aspirations des deux peuples frères », affirme le communiqué. Après Abou Dhabi, Bachar Al-Assad s'est rendu à Dubaï, la capitale touristique et financière des EAU, fédération de sept principautés, où il a rencontré l'émir local, le cheikh Mohammed Ben Rachid Al Maktoum.

Cette visite est la suite logique des efforts déployés depuis quatre ans par les Emirats pour réhabiliter le régime Assad. Soutien de l'opposition au démarrage de la révolution, la monarchie s'était très vite mise en retrait de ce dossier, par aversion pour les mouvements islamistes, devenus les plus puissants au sein de la nébuleuse anti-Assad. Alors que ses voisins qataris et saoudiens alimentaient la rébellion en armes, les EAU ont adopté une position ambiguë, autorisant la sœur de Bachar Al-Assad, Bouchra, à s'installer sur leur territoire.

Autonomisation diplomatique

Puis, en 2018, Abou Dhabi a rouvert son ambassade à Damas, suivi quelque temps après par le Bahreïn. Depuis, les Emirats plaident ouvertement en faveur du retour de la Syrie au sein de la Ligue arabe. Damas avait été exclu de cette organisation régionale en novembre 2011, en réaction

à la répression de la révolte, qui était encore à cette époque majoritairement populaire et non violente. En novembre 2021, enfin, le ministre émirati des affaires étrangères, cheikh Abdallah Ben Zayed Al Nahyane, avait rencontré Bachar Al-Assad à Damas.

Ces manœuvres visant à réintégrer la Syrie dans le concert des nations arabes se heurtent depuis le début à l'opposition des Etats-Unis. Le Caesar Act, un arsenal de mesures anti-Damas, adopté par l'administration Trump en 2019, qui menace de sanctions toute entité passant des contrats avec l'Etat syrien, visait, sans le dire, à empêcher toute normalisation arabe avec Damas.

En passant outre ces mises en garde, les Emirats poursuivent leur entreprise d'autonomisation diplomatique vis-à-vis de Washington. Dans un monde de plus en plus multipolaire, alors que les Etats-Unis se désengagent du Moyen-Orient et pivotent vers l'Asie, Abou Dhabi affirme de plus en plus sa différence. Une attitude qui se manifeste aussi sur la question de la guerre en Ukraine. En dépit des pressions insistantes de Washington, les Emirats refusent pour l'instant de rallier le front occidental anti-Poutine et rechignent à augmenter leur production de pétrole pour contenir l'envol du prix des hydrocarbures. Signe de la mauvaise passe que traversent les relations Abou Dhabi-Washington, le secrétaire d'Etat, Antony Blinken, a annulé vendredi sa tournée prévue dans le Golfe, qui devait le mener aux Emirats et en Arabie saoudite.



20 mars 2022

Newroz : en Turquie, les Kurdes fêtent leur nouvel an et l'arrivée du printemps

Basée sur le calendrier persan, la fête est célébrée par la communauté kurde à travers la Turquie, mais également dans des pays du Moyen-Orient et d'Asie centrale (jusqu'en Chine). Cette fête présente une grande variété de rituels et de traditions de célébrations qui diffèrent d'un peuple à l'autre.

Les origines de Newroz

Newroz (Norouz en persan) viendrait de la légende de Kawa le Forgeron (en kurde "Kawayê Hesinkar") qui s'opposa au roi Dihak (ou Dehak), lequel faisait régner la terreur en Mésopotamie (dans les montagnes de Zagros, entre l'Iran et l'Irak) ; Kawayê Hesinkar permit alors de libérer le peuple de son tyran.

Newroz, qui signifie "jour nouveau", marque ainsi le début du printemps depuis des centaines d'années, et cette fête est devenue le symbole de la délivrance du peuple kurde de son tyran, le symbole de la révolution contre la répression.

Lors de cette fête, il est courant d'allumer des feux, de s'habiller en costumes traditionnels, de chanter et danser. Les Kurdes peuvent également arborer leurs couleurs : vert, jaune et rouge.



Newroz, la fête traditionnelle qui marque le nouvel an et qui coïncide avec l'équinoxe de printemps, est célébrée en Turquie ce 21 mars.

Si les festivités sont très marquées dans le sud et sud-est turc, où la communauté kurde est nombreuse, ce dimanche 20 mars, la préfecture d'Istanbul a autorisé un grand rassemblement sur la place de Yenikapi.

Nevruz ou le Newroz en Turquie

Au même titre que toute manifestation de la culture, de la langue et de l'identité kurdes, la célébration de Newroz en Turquie est restée interdite et sévèrement réprimée de 1924 à 1995. La répression de ces festivités avait d'ailleurs fait une centaine de

morts en 1992 (Cizre, sud-est).

Depuis la fin des années 1990, le régime turc tente de s'approprier cette fête, rebaptisée "Nevruz", considérée comme une "fête du printemps" des peuples turcophones. "Nevruz" commémorerait le jour de libération où les Turcs quittèrent la plaine d'Ergenekon, dans laquelle ils avaient trouvé refuge lors d'invasions étrangères.

Si dans le passé, la célébration de Newroz a pu créer des tensions entre les chefs kurdes qui, s'exprimant dans leur langue maternelle à la tri-

bune, provoquaient la réaction du pouvoir à Ankara, cette année, la fête a été célébrée dans le calme, alors que Selahattin Demirtaş, le chef du parti pro-kurde (HDP), est en prison depuis 2016, et que son parti est menacé de fermeture.

En français, "Norouz" est également appelé "Nouvel An iranien" ou "Nouvel An persan", et il est inscrit à l'inventaire national du Patrimoine culturel immatériel depuis 2019.

Newroz Pîroz Be!



March 21, 2022

Kurds mark the Kurdish New Year in mass celebration in Istanbul

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds took part in a massive Newroz celebration in Istanbul on Sunday despite the cold weather and government crackdown, with the slogan "Biji Newroz" echoing in Yenikapi Square.

More than 500,000 people arrived at the square in the early hours of Sunday morning, wearing the traditional colorful Kurdish clothes.

Holding "Happy Newroz" postcards and flags of the pro-Kurdish opposition party, the people danced and celebrated the New Kurdish Year on its eve.

Newroz celebrations hold particular importance for Kurds in Turkey, who were not allowed to celebrate the occasion that signals the beginning of spring for decades and are facing increasing pressure from the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in recent years.

"This government survives with its war policies. The war against



Kurds hold a mass Newroz celebration in Istanbul on March 20, 2022. Photo : Omer Sonmez/Rudaw

Kurds, the war against women, the war against youth, the war against laborers, and the war against nature," co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Mithat Sancar said in a speech delivered during the celebration, adding that they are working towards "knocking down" and putting an end to these policies.

Leading a path to peace, Sancar said the road to peace starts with "a democratic solution" to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Cel-

ebratory events also took place in the Turkish capital of Ankara, Antap, Adana, Izmir, and in the Kurdish-populated areas of Van, Hakkari (Colemerg), and Batman.

With the Kurdistan flag being waved in Van, footage of people dancing and singers performing as it snowed in the city circulated on social media.

"We will celebrate this Newroz even if it rains stones," Mezopotamya Agency quoted an elderly

in Van as saying on Sunday. The Newroz fire was ignited in 36 centers in Turkey, according to the agency.

The Turkish state has at times denied the existence of Kurds, with the use of the word "Kurdistan" also often creating controversy in the country.

Last year, Turkey's top prosecutor filed an indictment in the Constitutional Court demanding the closure of the HDP, claiming that the party members have attempted to "disrupt and eliminate" the unity of the Turkish state through their statements and activities.

The HDP has been under pressure for years, accused of being the political wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a charge the party denies.

Turkey considers the PKK a terrorist organization, and arrests hundreds of HDP supporters, members, and officials on alleged links to the group.



March 13, 2022

Firuz Musalou, a Kurdish political prisoner, was sentenced to death

Hengaw: A political prisoner from Qatur (Kotool), a village near Khoy city, held in Urmia prison, was sentenced to death.

According to a report received by the Human Rights Organization, in recent days, Kurdish political prisoner, Firuz Musalou, was sentenced to death after 32 months of indecision by the

Second Branch of the Urmia Revolutionary Court. It charged Musalou with "Moharebe" through membership in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The sentence was officially announced to him on Monday, March 7, 2022, by the officials of Urmia Central Prison. The last hearing in the charges against Firuz Musalou Lou was

held in early March. Firuz Musalou, a former member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), surrendered to security forces on Thursday, July 11, 2019, at the Sardasht border.

This Kurdish citizen was transferred from the Urmia IRGC Intelligence Detention Center to the political ward of Urmia Central Prison on Thursday, Ja-

nuary 2, 2020, after five months and ten days. Since then, he has been undecided and without the right to leave.

Earlier, Hengaw reported that the security services of the Islamic Republic of Iran had accused Firuz Musalou of "membership in the Kurdistan Workers' Party" and "armed uprising."



March 21., 2022

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe on her release: 'It should have happened six years ago'

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has said it should never have taken the government so long to secure her release from prison in Iran.

She told a news conference she had been overwhelmed with emotion to be reunited with her husband and daughter, describing the reunion as precious.

But she said "what's happened now should have happened six years ago".

The British-Iranian was speaking for the first time since her dramatic return to the UK last week.

Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested on spying charges while visiting her parents in Iran, with her then two-year-old daughter Gabriella, in April 2016. Last week, she was freed after spending six years in detention. Her release came after the UK government paid a £400m debt to Iran dating back to the 1970s, although both governments have said the two issues should not be linked.

Speaking to the media in Westminster, Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe thanked all those who had worked to get her released, paying tribute to her "amazing, wonderful" husband, Richard Ratcliffe, who she said had campaigned tirelessly. She also thanked her daughter "for being very, very patient with mummy".

But she took issue with the credit her husband had granted Foreign Secretary Liz Truss for her release, saying: "I have seen five foreign secretaries change over the course of six years. How many foreign sec-



Sir Lindsay gave Gabriella a Speaker Bear fluffy toy, which she decided to call Speechless

retaries does it take for someone to come home?"

She added: "We all know... how I came home. It should have happened exactly six years ago."

'Richard showed us what love really means'

British-US national held in Iran on hunger strike

Who are the dual nationals jailed in Iran?

"I had been waiting for that moment for such a long time," she said.

"It was lovely to get to hold her, to braid her hair and to brush her hair. That was a moment that I really, really missed."

She said she was looking forward to getting to know Gabriella better again and doing everyday things like taking her to school.



Image source, Getty Images

Describing her arrival back in the UK, Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe recalled the "precious" and "glorious" feeling of stepping off the plane and seeing her daughter again.

Also speaking at the news conference, Mr Ratcliffe joked that it was "nice to be retiring" from his role as a campaigner, and thanked everyone for "making us whole again".

"I'm so pleased she's back home, that she came home to us. We're still negotiating whether daddy's allowed in the same bed as Gabriella and Nazanin. We'll get there."

Mr Ratcliffe continued: "I think we'll do this and then we will disappear off and heal a bit."

Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe declined to speak about her ordeal, saying it would always haunt her.

But she added: "I always felt like I was holding this black hole in my heart all these years... I am going to leave that black hole on the plane." While in Iran in September 2016, Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a project manager for the Thomson Reuters Foundation, was accused of plotting to overthrow the Iranian government and was given a five-year sentence.

Then, in April 2021, she was sentenced for another year on charges of propaganda against the government.

Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe has always denied those allegations and said that she was only in Iran to visit her family.

Speaking on Monday, she said she had been told by Iranian authorities shortly after her arrest that they wanted "something off the Brits", and that they would not let her go until they had got it.

"And they did keep their promise," she said.

Earlier during her visit to Westminster, Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe met Speaker of the House Sir Lindsay Hoyle in his parliamentary rooms.

The Speaker told her "the whole nation rejoiced" when she returned to the UK.

He added: "You have achieved something that many others before you have not - in uniting the House in their efforts and hope to get you home."

Another British-Iranian national, Anoosheh Ashoori, was released at the same time as Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

But Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe also used the event to draw attention to the plight of other dual nationals still detained in Iran.

Morad Tahbaz, who has British, Iranian, and American citizenship, remains in detention, and there are numerous people from other countries who are being held on various allegations of working to undermine the Iranian regime.

Mr Tahbaz's daughter, Roxanne, also appeared at the conference, and said her family felt her father had been "abandoned and left behind" in Iran.

She said they had been told by the Foreign Office that Mr Tahbaz would be included in any deal to release hostages in

Iran, and called on the prime minister and the foreign secretary to continue to work for his release.

"I believe that the meaning of freedom is never going to be complete until such time that all of us who are unjustly detained in Iran are reunited with our families," Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe said.

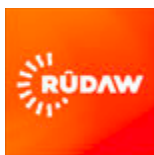
"There are so many other people - we don't know their names - who have been suffering in prison."

Tulip Siddiq, Labour MP for

Hampstead and Kilburn, has called on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to investigate why the debt the UK had with Iran took "so long" to be paid.

Ms Siddiq - who represents Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's constituency and has called herself the "Nazanin MP" - said she had written to the chair of the committee, Tom Tugendhat.

Mr Ratcliffe welcomed the investigation and said it would be "really valuable for Parliament to take up that challenge and to talk it through."



March 22, 2022
By Julian Bechocha

Hundreds of Kurds arrested in Iran, Turkey during Newroz celebrations

Hundreds of people were arrested in the Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iran during Newroz celebrations on Monday, as millions of Kurds gathered to celebrate the ancient festivity.

At least 298 people, including 100 children, in Turkey's southeastern Kurdish-populated city of Diyarbakir (Amed) were "detained unlawfully" during large-scale celebrations of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, the Diyarbakir Bar Association said on Tuesday.

The association called for the detainees to be released immediately, decrying the unlawful nature of holding children in detention, as it is a "violation of the ban on ill-treatment," and further urging for "the practice that violates fundamental rights and freedoms" of children to be abandoned.

Meanwhile, across the border in Iran at least 60 people were arrested by security forces while



Several civilians arrested during Newroz celebration in Iran. From left: Jamal Al-Asadi, Sohrab Jalali, and Fuad

celebrating Newroz in the Kurdish cities of Sanandaj and Piranshahr, Hengaw human rights organization reported.

Arsalan Yarahmedi, the head of organization, told Rudaw English that some of the civilians were detained immediately after participating in the Newroz celebrations at a children's park in Sanandaj. Iranian security forces prevented the people from attending the event and disrupted the celebration.

The disruption of celebrations was not limited to Iran given that Turkish security forces prevented numerous Kurds dressed in their traditional dress from attending the large Newroz celebration held in Diyarbakir on Monday, according to Rudaw's reporter on the ground, Rawin Sterk, who said that outfits with "a national theme" are prohibited at the event.

In the Kurdish areas in Turkey,

Newroz celebrations hold a particular importance to Kurds given that they have not been allowed to celebrate their new year for decades, and are increasingly facing pressure from the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Footage circulating on social media showed police forces using water cannons to disperse a large crowd of visitors as they headed to the celebration in Diyarbakir.

Ethnic minority groups, including Kurds and Azeris, are disproportionately detained and more harshly sentenced for acts of political dissidence, according to a July 2019 report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran.

On Tuesday afternoon, Hengaw announced on their Instagram account that 14-year old Ariana Salimi, one of the arrestees, was released from detention.

Erdogan demande à l'UE de relancer les négociations d'adhésion

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a demandé mardi à l'Union européenne (UE) de relancer les "négociations d'adhésion" avec Ankara, à la veille d'un sommet européen à Bruxelles consacré à l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie.

Nous attendons de l'UE qu'elle ouvre rapidement les chapitres des négociations d'adhésion et qu'elle entame les négociations sur l'union douanière sans céder à des calculs cyniques", a déclaré M. Erdogan au terme d'une rencontre à Ankara avec le Premier ministre néerlandais Mark Rutte.

Les déclarations du président turc interviennent alors que la guerre en Ukraine permet à Ankara un retour sur la scène internationale en raison des efforts de médiation qu'elle déploie.

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Les négociations sur une éventuelle adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, démarrées en 2005, se sont enlisées ces dernières années du fait de tensions parfois vives avec Bruxelles sur de multiples fronts.



Le Premier ministre néerlandais Mark Rutte et le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan à Ankara, le 22 mars 2022

La Commission européenne avait ainsi estimé fin 2020 que les chances d'adhésion d'Ankara étaient "au point mort" à cause des décisions contraires aux intérêts de l'UE prises par ses dirigeants.

"La Turquie a continué à s'éloigner de l'Union européenne, avec un sérieux recul dans les domaines de l'Etat de droit et des droits fondamentaux", déplorait la Commission dans un rapport sévère.

Les relations entre Bruxelles et Ankara s'étaient très fortement tendues après la tentative manquée de putsch de juillet 2016 et la répression touchant opposants et journalistes qui a suivi.

Les chefs d'Etats et de gouvernements de l'UE se réunissent à Bruxelles mercredi pour un sommet de deux jours consacré à la gestion des conséquences de l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie.

Un sommet extraordinaire de l'Otan doit également se tenir à Bruxelles jeudi.

Le président turc a reçu en l'espace de neuf jours quatre dirigeants de pays de l'UE et de l'Otan.

Allié de Kiev et membre de l'Otan, la Turquie s'efforce depuis le début de la crise en Ukraine de faciliter une médiation entre Moscou et Kiev mais a refusé de s'aligner sur les sanctions occidentales visant la Russie.

Kurdistan's Weekly Brief March 22, 2022

Turkey

Turkish police arrested 21 women affiliated with Kurdish movements for holding an event on International Women's Day in Mardin on March 16. Among the detained were several senior HDP members, the president of the Rosa Organization for Women's Issues, Adalat Kaya, and the former co-mayor of the Sur District, Filiz Buluttekin. Simultaneously, a high criminal court in Istanbul dismissed the objections of detained human rights activist and philanthropist Osman Kavala's attorneys and extended his detention. The Turkish government has accused Kavala of aiding protests in Istanbul in 2013. Finally, Turkish authorities arrested at least ten people in Adana for criticizing the government on social media.

Millions of Kurds defied the Turkish government's ban on celebrating Newroz in traditional clothes, though Turkish authorities persisted in attempting to crack down on Kurdish political and cultural activity. Turkish police in Aydin arrested several musicians for singing and playing "forbidden songs." Likewise, police in Diyarbakir (Amed) banned hundreds of Kurds who were wearing Kurdish clothes featuring the colors of the Kurdish flag from joining celebrations in the main square.

At least 298 Kurds including 100 children were illegally detained in Amed according to the Diyarbakir Bar Association. That said, thousands of Kurds went out in freezing temperatures to celebrate Newroz in Istanbul and Dersim.

Iran

Iranian authorities implemented stringent security measures in Iran's Kurdish region, including the deployment of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel, to prevent Kurds from celebrating Newroz with music, dance, and the display of the Kurdish flag. Iranian security forces also threatened several Kurdish activists for organizing Newroz gatherings that advocated Kurdish nationalism. Despite the Iranian regime's efforts, however, tens of thousands of Kurds defied restrictions and celebrated Newroz. At the same time, several exiled Kurdish parties in Iraqi Kurdistan called for participation in Newroz celebrations because the "Islamic Republic failed to control the population with threats and crackdowns." Newroz traces its roots to the legend of Kawa the Blacksmith's liberation of the Kurds from the Assyrian tyrant Dehak in 612 B.C. and has coincided with numerous Kurdish revolts and uprisings.

Khoy's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish man from Turkey, Hatem Odemiz, to death for "membership of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)." Moreover, Urmia's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish activist named Amen Iranibzadeh to two years and six months in prison and another, Shirzad Shawqi, to three years in prison for "membership of banned parties" and attempts to "disrupt national security." Concurrently, Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela'at) detained two Kurds, Burhan Darkhashani of Marivan and Bahman Chesthta of Piran-

shahr, for unspecified reasons. Lastly, Ettela'at rejected Zara Mohamadi's request for a temporary release from prison to celebrate Newroz. Mohammed was sentenced to five years in prison for teaching the Kurdish language.

Iraq

An investigative committee formed by Iraq's Council of Representatives and an Iraqi security committee headed by National Security Advisor Qasim al Araj inspected the site of a March 13 Iranian ballistic missile attack in Erbil. On March 17, Rebar Ahmed, the Minister of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), presented a report on the attack and demanded "a comprehensive investigation" conducted by Iraq, Arab states, and the international community with "Iranian participation" during a special session of the Council of Representatives. The KRG previously rejected the Iranian regime's claim it was targeting an Israeli Mossad facility. Iran and its proxies have carried out numerous attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan since 2020.

The Council of Representatives scheduled a vote for Iraq's next president on March 26. The leader of Iraq's largest parliamentary bloc, Muqtada al Sadr, called for "independent deputies who love their country" to vote in the March 26 session and avoid obstructing the election by being part of the "disabled third," which consists of lawmakers who have yet to side with Sadr's bloc or the Iranian-backed parties. Granted, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) remain com-

mitted to their respective presidential candidates and show no signs of reaching a compromise.

Syria

Thousands of locals and internally displaced Kurds protested the Turkish invasion of Afrin on its fourth anniversary on Friday. Further, some Kurdish business owners in Afrin defied pressure from Turkish proxies and went on strike. Concomitantly, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) General Commander Mazloum Abdi blamed the international community for ignoring its "responsibilities towards the people of Afrin" and added, "Ending the Turkish occupation and facilitating the safe return of Afrin's people to their homes and land is our cause and responsibility."

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ethan Goldrich, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran Jennifer Gavito, and Director for Iraq and Syria at the National Security Council Zehra Bell traveled to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and held separate meetings with Mazloum Abdi and Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) leader Ilham Ahmed. Several statements from the AANES claimed both meetings focused on countering ISIS (Da'esh) threats and enhancing US-SDF cooperation. On a different note, the UN-backed Syrian Constitutional Committee convened for the seventh time in Geneva on Monday, though it continues to exclude Syria's Kurds due to Turkey's veto and has failed to achieve any tangible results so far.

Un million de Kurdes réunis pour le Newroz d'Amed

Ce lundi 21 mars, près d'un million de Kurdes se sont réunis hier à Amed / Diyarbakir – « capitale » du Kurdistan du Nord – pour les célébrations du Newroz (nouvel-an kurde). A travers ce rassemblement monstre, les Kurdes ont envoyé un message fort à Erdogan: La guerre colonialiste menée par l'armée turque au Kurdistan est vouée à l'échec, la volonté du peuple kurde de vivre libre ne fait que se renforcer d'année en année.

Le rassemblement d'Amed a marqué le point culminant historique du Newroz au Kurdistan en 2022. La coprésidente du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP), Pervin Buldan a rappelé l'urgence de mettre en œuvre la déclaration (lue lors du Newroz d'Amed en 2013) d'Abdullah Öcalan (surnommé « Apo ») afin de parvenir à la paix sociale dans le pays.

Le rassemblement de masse dans le bastion de la résistance d'Amed (Diyarbakır) a marqué le point culminant historique des célébrations du Nouvel An du Newroz au Kurdistan cette année. Toute la ville, illuminée de partout en vert, rouge et jaune, était debout. Des centaines de milliers étaient en mouvement, finalement il y avait un bon million de personnes dans la région de Newroz. « C'est maintenant le temps du succès », la devise de Newroz cette année avec comme principale revendication « Liberté pour Abdullah Öcalan », était visible dans les masses se rendant au parc réagissant aux tirs de grenades à gaz et de canons à eau avec le slogan « Bijî Serok Apo » (Vive Président Apo). Les provocations policières en



tendant d'arrêter des jeunes à d'innombrables points de contrôle et sur les lieux de la célébration ont échoué face à la détermination de la foule. Comme toujours, le Newroz à Amed était plus qu'un simple festival.

Le programme était riche et varié. Sur scène, des discours politiques ont alterné avec de la musique d'artistes tels que Rojda, Azad Bedran, Servet Kocakaya, Kazo, ainsi que des messages envoyés depuis la prison par l'ancienne députée HDP Leyla Güven et le maire déchu d'Amed, Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı. Les présidents des partis de l'Alliance du Kurdistan sont apparus sur scène avec le politicien Ahmet Türk. L'homme de 79 ans a lancé un appel aux partis politiques du Kurdistan, divisés en quatre, pour retrouver « l'unité nationale ».

Le coprésident de la coalition de base Congrès de la société démocratique (DTK), Berdan Öztürk, a commencé son discours en disant : « Le ton du Newroz de cette année est in-

dubitable ; C'est le temps du succès, c'est le temps de la victoire. Ce Newroz est la célébration de la liberté d'Abdullah Öcalan. Il est temps que nous nous réunissions pour formuler des positions communes. Si nous nous soucions vraiment de la cause kurde, nous devons nous entendre et mettre de côté nos divergences.

L'histoire ne nous pardonnera pas de nous comporter différemment, et notre peuple non plus. Il est nécessaire d'adapter les politiques à la nouvelle ère, de renforcer les forces démocratiques et de rallier notre peuple autour de valeurs communes. » Öztürk a parlé de la phase de 2014, lorsque le soi-disant plan d'anéantissement (« Çökertme Planı »), un concept militaire et politique d'anéantissement contre la société kurde et ses structures organisées, a été lancé à Ankara et que la guerre, les crises et les conflits se sont déroulés depuis, continuent de s'intensifier. « C'est la seule stratégie des dirigeants d'Ankara. Ils ont choisi l'hostilité envers les

Kurdes comme moyen au lieu d'écouter les paroles d'Abdullah Öcalan, qui disait : liberté, égalité, démocratie et paix juste. Il n'est pas trop tard pour s'écarter du mauvais chemin et faire la paix avec ce peuple. »

Le point culminant du Newroz de cette année à Amed a été le discours de la coprésidente du HDP, Pervin Buldan, qui a été accueillie avec le slogan « Bijî Serok Apo » (Vive Président Apo) et a reçu un tonnerre d'applaudissements. « Une fois de plus, ce sont les habitants d'Amed qui écrivent l'histoire en ce jour. Newroz est notre festival historique traditionnel du printemps, qui est devenu un festival politique de résistance à l'oppression et au colonialisme. Newroz signifie aussi espoir, fraternité et courage.

En ce jour historique, vous avez une fois de plus défié ceux qui ne respectent pas vos droits. Cette attitude, qui mérite d'être appréciée, est l'expression manifeste de la Feuille de route pour la démocratie, la paix et la justice. »

Au moins 298 personnes arrêtées lors des célébrations du Newroz à Diyarbakir

Au moins 298 personnes ont été arrêtées lundi à Diyarbakir, lors des célébrations du Newroz, nouvel an kurde, qui ont réuni près d'un million de personnes dans le bastion kurde de la résistance.

Lundi 21 mars, dès les premières heures du matin, des foules de gens parés des couleurs kurdes jaune, rouge et vert, ont commencé à affluer vers la place du Newroz. Les célébrations du nouvel an kurde ont réuni cette année près d'un million de personnes dans la ville métropolitaine, marquant un nouveau re-



cord historique. Malgré la ré- pression sévère pratiquée par

le régime d'Erdogan, les habitants de Diyarbakir et des alentours ont répondu en masse à l'appel du HDP à participer à cette fête de la résistance placée cette année sous le mot d'ordre : « L'heure est à la victoire ».

L'événement a été marqué par des attaques policières qui ont commencé le matin et se sont poursuivies tout au long de la journée. Plusieurs personnes ont été battues par la police à l'extérieur de la place. Au moins 298 personnes, dont 150 enfants, ont été placées en garde à vue.

Conflit en Syrie: des enfants risquent de rester 30 ans dans des camps de réfugiés

Le rapatriement des enfants étrangers de djihadistes présumés détenus dans les camps du nord-est de la Syrie va prendre 30 ans au rythme actuel, a averti mercredi l'ONG Save the Children.

L'appel de cette association à accélérer ces rapatriements coïncide avec le troisième anniversaire de la chute en Syrie du "califat" du redouté groupe Etat islamique (EI), défait par des forces kurdes syriennes avec l'aide d'une coalition dirigée par Washington.

"Si les rapatriements se poursuivent au rythme actuel, il faudra 30 ans avant que les enfants étrangers coincés dans les camps (...) du nord-est de la

Syrie puissent rentrer dans leur pays" a mis en garde l'ONG dans un communiqué.

L'offensive des forces kurdes et américaines qui a permis la chute du califat --autoproclamé en 2014 à cheval entre la Syrie et l'Irak--, a donné lieu à l'arrestation de dizaines de milliers de djihadistes présumés, et membres de leur famille, dont de nombreux étrangers, et leur incarcération dans des camps.

Save the Children a indiqué que 18.000 enfants irakiens et 7.300 mineurs originaires d'autres pays étaient retenus dans les camps d'Al-Hol et de Roj, contrôlés par l'administration semi-autonome kurde, y déplorant de "mauvaises" conditions de vie. "Plus ces enfants restent à Al-Hol et Roj, plus ils font face à des dangers", s'est alarmée la directrice pour la Syrie de l'ONG, Sonia Khush.

Le camp d'Al-Hol, où vivent

quelque 56.000 personnes selon l'ONU, a été notamment le théâtre de tentatives d'évasion et d'attaques. En 2021, 74 enfants y sont morts, dont huit ont été tués, a indiqué l'ONG.

Malgré les exhortations répétées des Kurdes, la plupart des pays occidentaux refusent de rapatrier leurs citoyens de ces camps, se contentant de rapatriements au compte-goutte par crainte d'éventuels actes terroristes sur leur sol.

March 23, 2022

Civil Disobedience: Rights Defender Narges Mohammadi Resists Prison Summons

Growing Civil Society Movement Refuses to Accept Unlawful Rights Violations

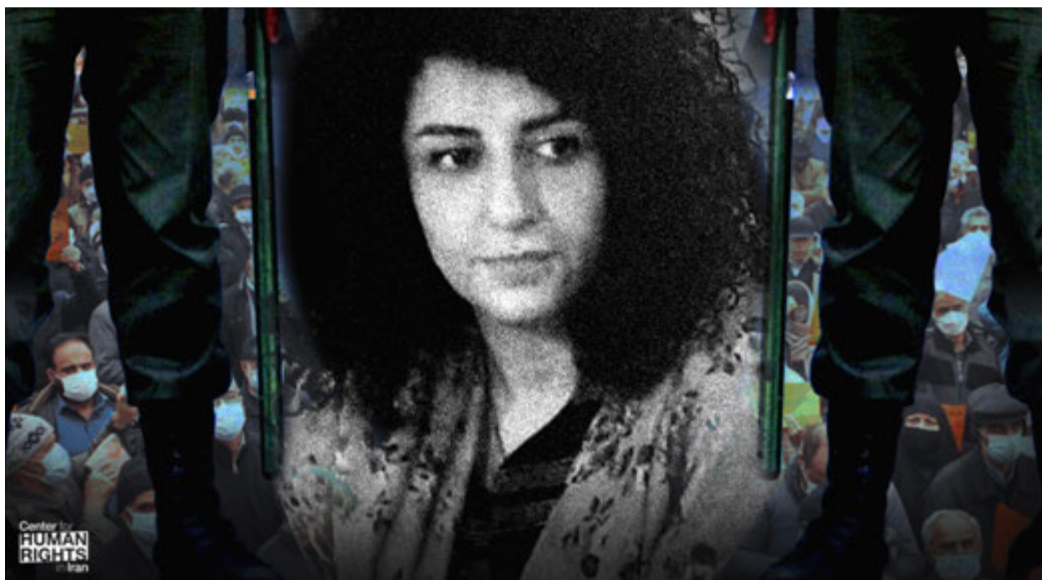
Longtime human rights defender and former prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi is peacefully refusing to report to prison in Tehran to serve an eight-year sentence that was issued against her after a five-minute trial.

She announced the news using the Farsi-language hashtag “#بندم_نی_آمرهان”, which means civil disobedience.

The peaceful political protest campaign has emerged against a backdrop of the wider “Seeking-Justice” movement, which includes former political prisoners, relatives of political prisoners who were executed in the 1980s, a group of mothers whose children were executed or killed by state security forces, and relatives of some of the 176 passengers who were killed on board the Ukrainian plane that was shot down in Iranian airspace by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

“I do not accept the verdicts against me, and now I am on the sixth day of absence and rebellion against returning to prison,” Mohammadi wrote on Instagram on March 18, 2022.

“I will disobey the prosecutor’s order to return to prison as long as my rebellion and disobedience do not lead to the confiscation of my guarantor’s property,” said Mohammadi,



who remained at home as of the writing of this article on March 23.

Mohammadi’s “guarantor” had previously posted bond to secure her release from prison at 500 million tomans (about \$120,000).

Independent journalist Hossein Razzagh tweeted that he has also refused to report to prison.

“Two days ago I received a warrant for the enforcement of one of the sentences against me, giving me five days to report [to prison],” he wrote on March 17. “But the orders of a judiciary that is the arm of oppression, and its only mission is injustice, should not be obeyed. I will not surrender myself to any place...”

zagh is facing two sentences of six months each by the Revolutionary Court, one in Tehran and another in Amol, a city in

northern Iran, for his written commentaries on political affairs, including his boycott of last year’s presidential elections. The sentences have been upheld on appeal.

“The sentencing of political, civil, and trade union activists by non-independent courts is not for the sake of justice, but repression and intimidation of the society,” wrote Mohammadi on Instagram.

“We, the people, must stand against it not only to realize the ‘right’ but also to fulfill our ‘duty’ and show our authority in the face of the illegitimate government,” she said.

Like other prominent activists, Mohammadi has been jailed repeatedly in Iran; she has in fact spent the better part of the last 13 years (from 2009 to 2013 and from 2015 to 2020) behind bars for her peaceful rights advocacy.

The authorities have used similar tactics against other human rights defenders, for example, with the defense attorney Nasrin Sotoudeh, the activist Atena Daemi and Golrokh Iraee Ebrahimi, and the teachers’ rights advocate Esmail Abdi, just to name a few, issuing new convictions continuously to keep them behind bars.

Mohammadi has proved to be a particular thorn in the authorities’ side, refusing to be silent either in prison or during her brief periods of release between convictions.

She had already been serving a 30-month sentence at Ghar-chak Prison after she organized a sit-in at Evin Prison’s Women’s Ward to condemn the killing of hundreds of protesters by state security forces during the November 2019 protests, and the unjust execution of wrestler Navid Afkari.

Les Kurdes déplorent "l'inaction" face à l'État islamique

Trois ans après la défaite territoriale du groupe État islamique (EI), les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les Kurdes, ont mis en garde la communauté internationale mercredi contre les conséquences de "l'inaction" face aux tentatives d'expansion de l'EI en Syrie et en Irak. "L'inaction de la communauté internationale, le fait que certains pays ont tourné le dos à ce dossier (...) constitue une opportunité donnée à l'EI pour se renforcer," ont indiqué les FDS dans un communiqué publié mercredi à l'occasion du troisième anniversaire de la défaite du "califat" du groupe ultra-radical.

En première ligne dans le combat contre le groupe jihadiste, les FDS, soutenues par la coalition internationale, ont annoncé le 23 mars 2019 la chute de l'EI en Syrie en le



Des Kurdes de Syrie ayant fui les combats commémorent le quatrième anniversaire de la fin de la bataille d'Afrine, le 18 mars 2022. Photo Delil souleiman / AFP

chassant de son dernier fief de Baghouz dans la province de Deir Ezzor (est). Fin janvier, le groupe jihadiste a mené une attaque meurtrière - la plus importante depuis sa défaite - contre une prison tenue par les FDS dans la région de Hasaké (nord-est). Mais début février, les États-Unis ont éliminé l'ancien chef de l'EI lors d'une

opération dans le nord-ouest de la Syrie.

"Le groupe jihadiste tente de raviver ses rêves et de contrôler certaines régions en Syrie et en Irak, afin de constituer un danger plus important pour les populations", ajoute le communiqué des FDS précisant que l'EI veut également attirer de

nouvelles recrues. La chute du califat - autoproclamé en 2014 à cheval sur la Syrie et l'Irak -, a donné lieu à l'arrestation de milliers de jihadistes présumés. Des membres de leur famille parmi lesquels de nombreux étrangers ont été incarcérés dans des camps et y sont retenus avec des déplacements.

Malgré les exhortations répétées des Kurdes, la plupart des pays occidentaux refusent de rapatrier leurs ressortissants et n'ont plus répondu aux demandes des autorités kurdes de mettre en place un tribunal international pour les juger. L'ONG Save the Children a averti mercredi dans un communiqué que le rapatriement des enfants étrangers de jihadistes présumés détenus dans les camps du nord-est de la Syrie allait prendre 30 ans au rythme actuel.



March 23, 2022

Deadly Violence against LGBT People in Iraq

News circulated in February that a 23-year-old transgender woman, Doski Azad, had been killed by her brother in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. I read the news, having just concluded my research on killings by armed groups, abductions, torture, and sexual violence against LGBT people in Iraq, and thought, how can the LGBT community get justice and accountability when they can be killed and abused with impunity, even

in their own homes?

Over the past six months, I interviewed 54 LGBT Iraqis who have survived harrowing violence at the hands of Iraqi armed groups and the police. Some of them also had intimate knowledge of other LGBT Iraqis who had been killed or disappeared by armed groups due to their gender presentation or perceived sexual orientation.

Our new report documents 8 abductions, 8 attempted murders,

4 extrajudicial killings, 27 instances of sexual violence, 45 threats to rape and kill, and 42 cases of online targeting by armed units within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), groups nominally under the prime minister's control since 2016, against LGBT people in Iraq. In eight cases, abuses by armed groups and police were against children as young as 15. In thirty-nine cases, the victims were able to identify the armed group behind

the attack against them.

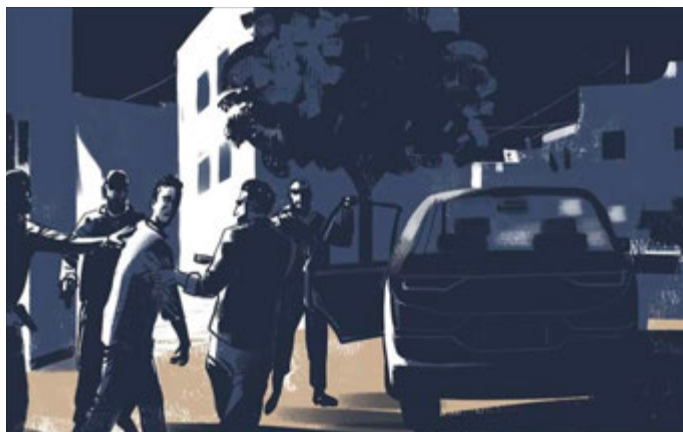
The numbers are most likely much higher. The attackers are known. Yet, as with so many killings and disappearances in Iraq, the perpetrators have not been held accountable.

Many of the people I interviewed were young enough to have just graduated from high school, yet the fear and isolation they described stretched as far as they

could remember. Most had never spoken to anyone about what had happened to them. I found myself on several occasions setting aside my interview questions and just talking to them. I listened to a 27-year-old gay man describe how his boyfriend was tortured in front of him. "Then they shot him five times," he said.

The story of one 21-year-old gay man stayed with me. He survived an attempt to kill him in November 2019, while three masked men stabbed the friend who was with him to death. He told me, gasping for breath, "They kept screaming: 'Faggot! Faggot! You are faggot scum and deserve to die.' One of them stabbed me in the shoulder, and I still don't know how, but I ran for my life."

His own father broke both his knees while beating him with a baton after he found him chatting with a man online. He said his father forces him to work at a family-owned laundromat for 16 hours per day in an underground room he called "a dungeon." His father gives him leftovers from others people's plates, and had previously thrown food in the garbage and told him to find it there.



Or the 31-year-old Iraqi transgender woman who was on her way home from work when six men in a Hummer with tinted windows stopped her next to a garbage dump in Baghdad. "They pulled out a razor blade and a screwdriver and poked and cut me all over, especially my ass, crotch, and thighs," she said. "They sliced me up and poured around five liters of gasoline all over my body and face and set me alight...."

Her neighbors rescued her. Today, scars from her burns stretch from her neck to her feet. "They wanted me dead," she said. "They have constrained my body, and I cannot love or be loved....I even contemplated suicide."

Another transgender woman who had been kidnapped, tortured, and gang-raped in June 2020 by a PMF group, told me that after her abduction she stopped eating, failed her university exams, and attempted suicide. "I feel like the walking dead," she said.

Where does justice begin for these individuals? No Iraqi laws protect LGBT Iraqis from violence. In fact, some provisions of Iraq's Penal Code, like articles 41(1) and 128, empower attackers against them under the pretext of "honor," knowing that the attackers can and most likely will get away with it. All of the people I interviewed said they would not report violence against them to

the authorities because they are terrified that they would be targeted again, dismissed by the police, or detained.

The Iraqi government is responsible for ending the bloodshed and impunity, and it should start by investigating all reports of violence by armed groups or others against all victims including LGBT people and publicly condemning all such violence. The justice system should prosecute and appropriately punish those found responsible.

The government should take all measures to end torture, disappearances, summary killings, and other abuses based on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity, and compensate the families of all victims of unlawful killings and survivors of serious abuse. Justice only begins there.

Rasha Younes is an LGBT rights researcher at Human Rights Watch

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of Rudaw.



March 24, 2022

Sanandaj; Arrest of another 9 citizens during the Nowruz ceremony in the children's park

On Monday, March 21st, 9 citizens named "Abed Khorshidi, Keyvan Zandkarimi, Sahand Barzanji, Arash Shakiba, Khaled Hosseini, Jamshid Farzi, Fardin Peymankar, Kayhan Kakekhani and Keyvan Mahmoudi" were detained by security forces during a Nowruz ceremony in Sanandaj Children's Park.

According to an informed source, the detainees of the Nowruz ceremony in Sanandaj



Children's Park were transferred to the city's central prison.

Batool Azami, 75, Ariana Salimi, 14, were also arrested by se-

curity forces on Monday, March 21st, during the Nowruz ceremony in Sanandaj Children's Park. Next day, Ariana Salimi was released under written commitment and Batool Azami was released with bail from custody.

On Monday, March 21st, security forces and riot police raided the Nowruz celebrations in Sanandaj Children's Park and arrested three organizers, Sohrab Jalali, Jamal Asadi and Fouad Enayati.

À Rennes, les passeurs de migrants condamnés jusqu'à 5 ans de prison

Une vingtaine d'hommes d'origine kurdes d'Irak ont été condamnés à Rennes pour avoir participé à un vaste réseau de passeurs de migrants vers l'Angleterre.

Le procès a duré plus de 10 jours. Face à la juge, ce ne sont plus que quelques hommes qui se lèvent, tour à tour, pour connaître le verdict qui les attend après avoir été, parfois le temps de quelques mois, passeurs de migrants depuis la France vers l'Angleterre. Sur les 24 prévenus d'origine kurdes d'Irak, plus d'une dizaine a dû rester en détention pour cause de Covid. Leurs peines, ils l'apprennent via un écran de visioconférence. Aucun n'a été reconnu coupable de « traite d'êtres humains ».

La majorité de ces hommes est condamnée pour des faits

d'aide à l'entrée, à la circulation ou au séjour irrégulier d'étrangers en bande organisée et pour blanchiment en bande organisée. Ils écotent pour la plupart de peines comprises entre 3 et 5 ans de prison et d'une interdiction définitive du territoire français.

Entre récidives et cumul de peines

Pour trois d'entre eux, les mots de la juge sont un soulagement : ils ont été relaxés. Deux autres hommes vont aussi sortir des geôles, dont un homme de 41 ans, condamné à une peine de 24 mois qu'il a déjà effectué en détention provisoire, dans l'attente du jugement d'aujourd'hui. Mais pour les plus impliqués et les récidivistes, la sanction est tout autre.

Un homme de 27 ans, déjà

condamné en 2017 sous une autre identité par le tribunal de grande instance de Dunkerque pour des faits de même nature, est condamné à 5 ans de prison. Un autre, de dix ans son aîné, précise à la juge qu'il effectue déjà une peine de 5 ans. La juge lui explique qu'il devra la terminer avant d'entamer les 5 autres années de prison qui viennent d'être prononcées contre lui. L'homme place son visage dans ses mains, désespéré.

Un prévenu de 22 ans voit aussi sa peine confondue avec une autre prononcée par le tribunal correctionnel de Tours, en juin 2021, qui le condamnait aussi, sous une autre identité, à 4 ans de prison dont 2 avec sursis.

Jusqu'à 7 ans de prison pour des hommes sous mandat d'arrêt

À Rennes, la justice a également prononcé des peines de 24 mois et jusqu'à 7 ans de prison à l'encontre de sept hommes qui n'ont pas été emprisonnés, mais qui sont désormais sous le coup d'un mandat d'arrêt et d'une interdiction du territoire national.

En décembre 2018, la juridiction de Rennes spécialisée dans la lutte contre la criminalité organisée était saisie d'une vaste enquête face à l'ampleur de l'activité des passeurs dans la Sarthe. Entre les véhicules et techniques pour acheminer des migrants depuis le nord de la France, les squats de fortune camouflés et les installations sauvages dans des camions en direction de l'Angleterre, le modus operandi du réseau envoyé en France avait été décrit avec précision par le tribunal, dès le premier jour d'audience.



Strasbourg, 24 March 2022

Congress highlights “generally degrading situation” of local democracy in Turkey

The 46-nation Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has reported a “generally degrading situation” with regard to local democracy in Turkey.

In its [latest report](#) on Turkey's application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress welcomes the impressive turnout (over 84%) in local elections in 2019 – one of the highest rates

across the Council of Europe, demonstrating a strong interest in local self-government.

However, the Congress expresses particular concerns on a number of issues, including the fact that the government continues to suspend mayors when a criminal investigation is opened against them – based on an overly-broad definition of terrorism – and replace them with non-elected officials.

This seriously undermines the democratic choice of Turkish citizens, according to the Congress, and impedes the proper functioning of local democracy in Turkey.

Among other things, the Congress calls on the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to ask the Turkish authorities to modify the definition of terrorism in the current domestic legislation, in a way not allowing for overly-broad inter-

pretation, to stop suspending mayors without court decisions and to ensure that winning candidates can effectively carry out their mandate.

The Congress also undertakes to strengthen its dialogue with the national authorities, the Turkish delegation to the Congress and the Union of Municipalities of Turkey in order to boost local democracy in the country, in line with the European Charter.

La Turquie joue sa place dans l'OTAN avec la guerre en Ukraine

Alors que se tient à Bruxelles un sommet extraordinaire de l'OTAN ce jeudi 24 mars 2022, la guerre en Ukraine sera-t-elle l'occasion pour la Turquie de reprendre un tournant atlantiste, après deux décennies de relations tendues avec les États-Unis et l'Europe?

Cette guerre en Ukraine est l'occasion rêvée d'un revirement stratégique pour le président turc. Vladimir Poutine devenu «infréquentable», Recep Tayyip Erdoğan va reprendre un cap plus atlantiste: c'est en tout cas ce que veulent croire d'anciens diplomates et analystes turcs.

«Recep Tayyip Erdoğan est un politicien hors pair, il en est tout à fait capable», estime le géopolitiste Yörük Işık, tandis que l'ancien ambassadeur turc Selim Kunalalp rappelle que «les voltefaces ne lui sont pas étrangères après tout». Même l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk, Prix Nobel de littérature, évoque cette perspective: «Pour Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, la guerre en Ukraine est une excellente opportunité de prouver à l'OTAN et à l'Occident qu'il est un allié fidèle. Quoiqu'il ne le dise pas assez fort dans les journaux turcs de peur de perdre certains de ses soutiens islamistes, électeurs anti-Occidentaux.»

Or pour qu'il y ait un revirement stratégique atlantiste, il faut que le président turc réancore rhétoriquement, structurellement et militairement son pays dans l'OTAN: l'Alliance est le cœur du réacteur atlantiste. Mais cela heurterait l'opinion publique, qui lui assure son soutien jusqu'à présent.

Le souvenir de la guerre froide

Ces personnalités turques fondent leurs espoirs sur le fait que l'histoire se répète, et qu'une re-bipolarisation, une nouvelle guerre froide, se met en place. «La Turquie va être



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdoğan au siège de l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique Nord (OTAN), à Bruxelles, le 14 juin 2021. | Yves Herman / Pool / AFP

obligée de revenir en arrière, plus particulièrement aux années de l'immédiat après-guerre, et chercher le soutien des États-Unis et de l'Europe», juge Selim Kunalalp. Sinan Ülgen lui, rattaché au think tank Edam, estime que son pays sera de nouveau courtisé en raison de «l'importance géostratégique de la Turquie pour les États-Unis et l'Occident, importance qui augmentera, comme dans les années de la guerre froide».

Après tout, l'ennemi n'est-il pas le même aujourd'hui qu'en 1952, lorsque la Turquie est devenue membre de l'OTAN? «La Russie est de nouveau l'ennemie numéro un comme à l'époque de la guerre froide, encore plus agressive et imprévisible que l'Union soviétique de Staline», confirme Selim Kunalalp.

À une nuance essentielle près, rappelle Gareth Jenkins, chercheur associé au Silk Road Studies Program: «Durant la guerre froide, l'alliance entre la Turquie et les États-Unis reposait sur la peur du communisme, et ce sont les militaires

turcs et américains qui en étaient la colonne vertébrale.» Autrement dit, le communisme constituait un danger intérieur et une préoccupation politique quotidienne communs aux deux armées. Ce n'est plus le cas: le «danger» communiste a disparu et l'influence de l'armée turque s'est effondrée en 2007.

La confiance est rompue dès 2003

De plus, l'entente turco-américaine, au fondement de l'engagement turc dans l'OTAN, est mal en point depuis un bon moment. Malgré une croyance répandue, ce n'est pas l'achat de missiles russes antiaériens S-400 en 2019 qui a porté le coup de boutoir décisif à la relation entre les États-Unis et la Turquie. Selon Gareth Jenkins, il faut remonter à 2003, «lorsque le Parlement d'Ankara a refusé à Washington l'autorisation de passer par la Turquie pour projeter ses forces en Irak, puis lorsque l'armée américaine a intercepté et détenu plusieurs membres des forces spéciales turques à Süleymaniye [en Irak du nord, ndr]».

Les dégâts ont donc eu lieu au début du mandat de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Rien ne s'arrange la décennie suivante, car «les États-Unis et la Turquie se retrouvent engagées dans ce qui constitue quasiment une guerre de proximité au nord de la Syrie», Washington s'y étant allié avec des combattants kurdes autonomistes du PYD et du PKK, lequel est en conflit armé contre Ankara depuis les années 1980. Par la suite, le pouvoir turc développe une rhétorique anti-américaine systématique, accusant Washington d'être derrière la tentative du putsch du 15 juillet 2016. Le coup de maître de Poutine

C'est trois ans plus tard que Vladimir Poutine convainc Recep Tayyip Erdoğan d'acheter et d'installer des S-400 russes sur son territoire. Un coup de maître: «Tout appareil de l'arsenal turc doit être «calibré» sur le radar de détection des batteries S-400, et aussi les F-35, s'ils avaient été livrés. Le système S-400 est donc avant tout un outil d'acquisition d'informations stratégiques», explique Marc Pierini, chercheur associé à Carnegie. Yörük Işık résume: «Ainsi, Poutine domine les Américains, sabote les relations entre les États-Unis et la Turquie, affaiblit l'OTAN, le tout en empêchant le déploiement des F-35 sur le flanc sud de la Russie.»

En effet, «anticipant les sanctions américaines, Vladimir Poutine a réussi à priver la Turquie, c'est-à-dire aussi l'OTAN, de 120 appareils furtifs F-35 de dernière génération qui se-

raient bien utiles aujourd'hui en Mer noire», ajoute Marc Pierini, selon lequel «la Turquie est désormais largement prisonnière de la stratégie militaire russe». D'ailleurs, Ankara ne participe pas au déploiement militaire terrestre auquel procède l'OTAN actuellement, de l'Estonie à la Roumanie, ayant pour objet de rassurer les pays de la zone. Pas trace d'un seul drapeau turc.

Dès lors, quels que soient les gestes apparents d'apaisement de la Turquie (rapprochement avec Israël, la Grèce, l'Arménie, les Émirats arabes unis et l'Arabie Saoudite; dénonciation de l'invasion russe

en Ukraine; vote aux Nations Unies condamnant l'agression et appelant au retrait des troupes russes; fermeture des détroits aux navires russes), la situation de la Turquie vis-à-vis de l'OTAN est figée.

La main tendue d'Erdoğan

Pourtant, assure Yörük Işık, «si l'OTAN décidait d'intervenir en Ukraine, la Turquie prendrait ses responsabilités. Elle se joindrait aux opérations, ce n'est même pas une hypothèse, c'est certain à 100%.» Le problème est que, selon certaines interprétations, la présence des S-400 russes sur le sol turc met l'architecture de

défense de l'Alliance en danger, tandis que dans les couloirs de celle-ci, on voudrait être sûre que la Turquie ne penche trop du côté russe.

«Pour se garantir que la Turquie n'agisse pas trop favorablement à l'égard de la Russie, les États-Unis pourraient faire des concessions à l'égard d'Ankara –approuver la vente de quarante nouveaux F-16, par exemple. Mais Washington ne fera pas plus, considère Gareth Jenkins. Il n'y a aucune chance qu'elle lève les sanctions CAATSA liées à l'achat des S-400 russes, sauf si Recep Tayyip Erdoğan s'en débarrasse –ce qu'il ne fera pas car ce serait

une humiliation politique à quelques mois des élections présidentielles et parlementaires en juin 2023.»

C'est ce qui permet d'éclairer l'information selon laquelle des responsables américains ont récemment suggéré à Ankara, de façon très informelle, de transférer son système anti-aérien S-400 à l'Ukraine, et d'aider du même coup son voisin de la Mer noire bombardé par la Russie. Transfert irréalisable aujourd'hui, car il se heurterait à de nombreux obstacles techniques et politiques. Or du côté de Washington, toute volonté turque de revirement stratégique risque d'être mesurée à cette aune.



March 24, 2022

Security, military and riot forces prevented Nowruz celebrations in the village of Ney in Marivan

Today, Monday, March 21st, security, military and riot forces raided the Nowruz ceremony in the village of "Ney" in Marivan and prevented the ceremony.

According to an informed source, military and riot forces clashed with the people and opened fire on the crowd.

The informed source added: "Several citizens have been injured by the firing of military and riot forces."

After the calling of youth of the village of "Ney" in Marivan to hold the Nowruz ceremony, security forces, the military and the riot forces imposed heavy security conditions on the village.

Recently, the Marivan



Intelligence and IRGC Intelligence agents summoned 61 citizens of the village of Ney to prevent the Nowruz celebrations.

Also at the same time of the New Year, the Special forces and riot police attacked the Nowruz celebrations in the streets of Oshnovieh and

clashed with the people.

Special forces and riot police used tear gas and pellet gun to disperse the crowd.

Erdogan veut exhorter Poutine à être « l'artisan de la paix » en Ukraine

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a indiqué vouloir demander à son homologue russe Vladimir Poutine d'être « l'artisan de la paix » en Ukraine lors d'un échange téléphonique prévu dans les prochains jours, selon des propos rapportés vendredi 25 mars par la presse turque.

Le chef de l'État a affirmé à des journalistes lors de son vol retour du sommet de l'Otan jeudi à Bruxelles qu'il dirait à Vladimir Poutine: «Tu dois désormais être l'artisan de la paix (...) Tu dois faire un geste honorable». Recep Tayyip Erdogan a assuré que la Russie et l'Ukraine étaient d'accord sur quatre points de négociation sur six, dont le renoncement de Kiev à l'Otan, le retrait des obstacles à l'utilisation de la langue russe en Ukraine, le désarmement et les garanties de sécurité. «Mais l'Ukraine est



La Russie et l'Ukraine étaient d'accord sur quatre points de négociation sur six, selon le président turc. GONZALO FUENTES / REUTERS

bien évidemment un État. Il est hors de question (pour Kiev) d'accepter un désarmement complet, mais la partie ukrainienne est prête à faire des compromis», a assuré le président turc, qui a précisé que les discussions étaient plus difficiles sur le statut de la région séparatiste du Donbass (est) et celui de la Crimée, annexée par la Russie en 2014. Le pré-

sident turc doit s'entretenir vendredi avec le président ukrainien Volodymyr Zelensky, selon la presse turque.

Refuse de s'aligner

Alliée de Kiev et membre de l'Otan, la Turquie s'efforce depuis le début du conflit en Ukraine de faciliter une média-

tion entre Moscou et Kiev, mais a refusé de s'aligner sur les sanctions occidentales visant la Russie. Les dirigeants de l'Otan ont approuvé jeudi la création de nouveaux groupes tactiques en Roumanie, Hongrie, Bulgarie et Slovaquie, ainsi que le renforcement des quatre déjà constitués en Pologne et dans les trois pays baltes. Le président américain Joe Biden a aussi promis une «réponse» si la Russie, comme le redoutent Ukrainiens et Occidentaux, utilise des armes chimiques.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan a par ailleurs salué les efforts mis en œuvre par le président français Emmanuel Macron, avec qui il a connu de vives tensions ces dernières années, affirmant qu'il est «l'un des dirigeants qui joue le rôle le plus actif au sein de l'Otan en ce moment».

At least 298 people, including 74 children, detained during Diyarbakır Newroz

The Diyarbakır Bar Association Women's Rights Center and Diyarbakır Network for Struggle Against Violence have made a statement about the violations of rights during the Diyarbakır Newroz on March 21.

Okan Alptekin from the Diyarbakır Bar Association's LGBTI+ Rights Commission has said that women were subjected to a thorough search at

search points and not allowed in the site due to their national clothes.

Noting that the people who wanted to enter the Newroz site were attacked by the police, Alptekin has listed the following violations:

Law enforcement officers intervened against the people who wanted to enter the Newroz site with rubber bullets,

pressurized water and pepper gas.

A stampede occurred during the interventions and some people were wounded.

Following the disproportionate intervention of the law enforcement, at least 298 people, including 74 children, were detained for arbitrary reasons.

Women and LGBTI+s were

subjected to discrimination while entering the site. Unlawful practices and attacks targeting the LGBTI+s continued inside the Newroz site as well.

The LGBTI+s who entered the site with rainbow and trans flags were attacked by a group with knives; the assaulters attempted to lynch one person. There were attempts to burn the rainbow flags.



March 25, 2022
By Julian Bechocha

Jaafar al-Sadr: Sadrist candidate for Iraq's prime minister post

Sayed Mohammed Jaafar Baqir al-Sadr was nominated by the Save the Homeland Alliance for the position of prime minister on Wednesday, as the Iraqi parliament is set to elect a president on Saturday, however his victory is yet to be guaranteed.

Jaafar is backed by his cousin, influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose party won the most votes of the October parliamentary elections. He previously served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, before being elected as a member of parliament in 2010 for the State of Law Coalition led by Nouri al-Maliki, whereupon he resigned a few months later. He is currently Iraq's ambassador to the United Kingdom.

The son of revered Shiite leader Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr, Jaafar has been described as moderate and unaffiliated with any political parties. He is thought of as someone who believes that Iraq should maintain balanced relations with the United States and its neighbors.

According to Sheikh Saad al-Hasnawi, a member of Muqtada al-Sadr's political office, the nominee "has never been party to the existing rivalries. He is not associated with any political party, nor is



Jaafar al-Sadr's father, Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr. Photo: Rudaw/Screenshot

he the head of any party or faction."

"Other than the support of the nation, he does not have anything," he added.

Muqtada al-Sadr, head of the Sadrist Movement, has repeatedly stated that he wants a "national majority government", however this idea is opposed by the Coordination Framework, who persist in attempts to form a government based on political consensus.

Iraq has had a national consensus government for years, which has allowed Iran to outsize its influence in Iraq and according to many, encouraged corruption and hindered

development in the country.

While the Coordination Framework has not rejected Jaafar's nomination, they are still boycotting Saturday's parliamentary session to elect the

president. Should the parliament fail to meet the required two thirds quorum required to elect a president, the nomination will be remain on hold until quorum is met in future session.

The Coordination Framework is a pro-Iran Shiite parliamentary faction affiliated to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, or Hashd al-Shaabi in Arabic) who claim to have over 100 MPs.

"Iraq's issues are very tough and profound. The issues are not tied to one certain side. The scene as a whole is problematic. If Sayed Jaafar will be able to control the situation and carry his responsibilities with all the political blocs, this is going to be good," said Jawad Ghazzali, an MP from the State of Law Coalition, while warning of issues if he fails to bring order.

Iraq held snap elections on October 10. The vote was called in response to mass protests in the country beginning in October 2019, caused by widespread dissatisfaction with Iraq's politicians and endemic corruption in the country.



March 25, 2022

Kurdish Film Festival kicks off in Istanbul with a classic film on Yazidis

The second Kurdish Film Festival kicked off in Istanbul on Thursday following years of suspension due to coronavirus-related restrictions. The event began with a classic film on Yazidis by an Armenian director.

The first edition of the festival was held in Istanbul in 2019 but the organisers failed to hold it the following years due to the spread of coronavirus and related restrictions. The second edition began on Thursday in the same city, lasting until March 29.

The festival is screening 27 Kurdish films, short films, documentaries which mostly focus on women, nature and human



The program of the Kurdish Film Festival for the first day of the event, featuring a scene from «Yazidi Kurds» film. Photo: handout.

rights. The event began with the screening of Yazidi Kurds, a silent film produced by Armenian director Amasi Martirosyan in 1933. It was the first

time this film was screened in Turkey, which is about the establishment of a collective farm in a Kurdish village in Soviet Union.

The festival hall was packed with people, with many wearing Kurdish traditional clothes. Almost all members of the festival committee were wearing these clothes.

Turkish authorities banned Kurds from wearing their traditional clothing during the first day of Kurdish New Year, Newroz, in Diyarbakir (Amed) on March 21.

The festival was organised by Mesopotamia Cultural Centre.

The films have been produced in Kurdish areas of Iran and Turkey and the Kurdistan Region.



March 26, 2022

By Laure Al Khoury

Iraq fails again to elect new president

Iraqi lawmakers failed again on Saturday to elect a new president for the country due to a lack of quorum in parliament, keeping the country mired in political paralysis.

Parliament had issued a final list of 40 candidates for the post, a largely ceremonial role that by convention is reserved for a member of Iraq's Kurdish minority.

The contest pits Barham Saleh, the incumbent and member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, against Rebar Ahmed of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the PUK's rival. But a lack of a quorum –



This picture taken on March 26, 2022 shows a view of the exterior of Iraq's Council of Representatives, the country's unicameral legislature, in the capital Baghdad's heavily fortified "Green Zone". © Ahmad al-Rubaye, AFP

set at two-thirds of the house's 329 members – held up the vote for the second time since February, deepening war-

scarred Iraq's political uncertainty. Only 202 lawmakers showed up for the latest vote, a parlia-

mentary official told AFP on condition of anonymity, and a new session had to be scheduled for Wednesday.

The postponement exacerbates Iraq's political problems because it is the task of the president to formally name a prime minister, who must be backed by an absolute majority in parliament.

On February 13, Iraq's supreme court ruled out a presidential bid by KDP-backed veteran politician Hoshiyar Zebari, after a complaint filed against him over years-old, untried corruption charges.

Iraqi politics were thrown into turmoil following last October's general election, which was marred by record-low turnout, post-vote threats and violence, and a months-long delay until the final results were confirmed.

Intense negotiations among political groups have since failed to form a majority parliamentary coalition to agree on a new prime minister to succeed Mustafa al-Kadhemi. The largest political bloc, led

by firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, had backed Zebari for the presidency and has now thrown its weight behind Ahmed.

A first vote in parliament on February 7 failed to materialise as it was widely boycotted amid the Zebari legal wrangle. Saturday's failed session underscored the sharp divide in Iraqi politics between Sadr, the general election's big winner, and the powerful Coordination

Framework, which had called for a boycott.

The Coordination Framework includes the pro-Iran Fatah Alliance – the political arm of the Shiite-led former paramilitary group Hashed al-Shaabi.

With the support of Sunni and Kurdish parties, Sadr wants the post of prime minister to go to his cousin Jaafar Sadr, Iraq's ambassador to Britain, once the question of the four-year

presidency has been settled.

Ahead of Saturday's debacle, political analyst Ihsan al-Shammari had said that, even if the vote had gone ahead as planned, the presidency would "not be decided from the first round".

The candidate who wins the largest number of votes must secure a two-thirds majority in the second round of votes in parliament to win the presidency.



27 mars 2022
Par Hugo Septier avec AFP

Irak: construction d'un mur à la frontière syrienne contre les jihadistes

L'Irak partage une frontière de plus de 600 km de long avec son voisin syrien.

600km de frontière à protéger. L'Irak annoncé construire un mur en béton sur une partie de sa frontière avec la Syrie pour empêcher l'infiltration de jihadistes du groupe Daesh, apprend-on ce dimanche auprès d'une source militaire irakienne et de l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Un premier segment "d'une dizaine de kilomètres et d'une hauteur de 3,5 m a été érigé dans le gouvernorat de Ninive", dans la zone de Sinjar, dans le nord-ouest de l'Irak, a indiqué à l'AFP un officier irakien de haut rang qui a requis l'anonymat.

Bagdad compte ainsi "mettre un coup d'arrêt à l'infiltration de membres de l'Etat islamique" sur son territoire, a précisé cette source.

"Première étape"



Des soldats irakiens - Image d'illustration - AHMAD AL-RUBAYE © 2019 AFP

Selon un haut gradé de l'armée irakienne, il s'agit d'une "première étape", sans toutefois expliquer quelle serait la longueur totale du mur une fois terminé.

De son côté, l'OSDH a indiqué que ce premier pan se trouvait au niveau de la ville syrienne d'Al-Chaddadi, au sud d'Hasaké.

C'est à Hassaké, zone aux mains des Kurdes, que des combattants de Daesh avaient

attaqué la prison de Ghwayran en janvier pour libérer leurs frères d'armes qui y étaient incarcérés.

Les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), dominées par les Kurdes, ont repris le contrôle de la prison après six jours de combats, au prix de centaines de morts.

Elles ont aussi affirmé que les prisonniers évadés ont été rattrapés. Mais d'après l'OSDH, certains auraient réussi à s'échapper pour de bon.

D'autres seraient passés en Turquie voisine. Cellules de Daesh encore actives

L'Irak a, lui, proclamé fin 2017 sa "victoire" contre Daesh, organisation jihadiste qui tenait de larges pans du territoire irakien depuis 2014.

Mais quatre ans plus tard, les forces armées continuent d'affronter sporadiquement des cellules de Daesh, notamment dans des zones rurales et montagneuses situées entre la périphérie nord de Bagdad et la région autonome du Kurdistan.

Daesh "maintient une présence largement clandestine en Irak et en Syrie et mène une insurrection soutenue de part et d'autre de la frontière entre les deux pays", estimait un rapport de l'ONU l'an dernier.

Dans ces deux pays, l'organisation jihadiste conserverait "en tout 10.000 combattants actifs", d'après ce document.

Pourquoi la Turquie se tourne-t-elle vers l'Afrique?

Recep Tayyip Erdogan renforce méthodiquement son influence sur le continent africain depuis deux décennies.

Bien qu'écourtée fin février par la crise ukrainienne, la nouvelle tournée africaine de Recep Tayyip Erdogan met en lumière les ambitions d'Ankara. En l'espace de deux décennies, la Turquie a démultiplié tous azimuts les liens diplomatiques, culturels et commerciaux avec l'Afrique. Plus récemment, elle s'est imposée comme un partenaire militaire stratégique, en assurant par la même occasion des débouchés à ses drones de combat.

Comment la Turquie est-elle parvenue à s'imposer en Afrique ?

Jamais président turc n'aura été aussi proactif en Afrique. À moins d'un an et demi du futur scrutin, et rattrapé par une récession qui frappe son pays de plein fouet, Recep Tayyip Erdogan renforce méthodiquement son influence sur le continent. « Nous continuerons de promouvoir nos relations avec les pays africains sur la base de la fraternité et de la solidarité », se targuait-il, lundi dernier, à peine les pieds posés en République démocratique du Congo, ses valises remplies de 100 000 doses de vaccins - dans l'attente du 1,1 million promis -, et avant de mettre le cap sur le Sénégal. Actualité ukrainienne oblige, son voyage en Guinée-Bissau (sa troisième destination figurant au calendrier) a été reporté à une date ultérieure. Mais la presse turque y annonce déjà l'ouverture d'une nouvelle ambassade turque, la 44e du continent (contre seulement 12

au début du millénaire, le nombre d'ambassades africaines à Ankara étant également passé de 10 à 37).

Cette nouvelle tournée est d'autant plus remarquée que la dernière ne remonte qu'au mois d'octobre dernier : Erdogan s'était alors rendu en Angola, au Nigeria et au Togo. Deux mois plus tard, les 17 et 18 décembre 2021, il accueillait à Istanbul le troisième sommet Turquie-Afrique, autour du thème « le partenariat renforcé pour un développement et une prospérité mutuels ». Les répercussions de ce rapprochement sont flagrantes : avec 61 destinations aujourd'hui desservies, Turkish Airlines s'est imposée comme l'une des principales compagnies aériennes en Afrique.

Quelles sont les motivations d'Ankara ?

Cette mutation stratégique, initiée dès 1998 par le lancement d'un « plan d'action pour une ouverture à l'Afrique » est d'abord la conséquence des évolutions géopolitiques. « Avec la fin de la guerre froide et la fin d'un monde bipolaire, la Turquie, alors quasiment uniquement liée aux pays occidentaux - et à Israël en ce qui concerne le Moyen-Orient - a commencé à s'intéresser à son environnement proche, les Balkans, le Caucase, le Proche-Orient. Elle s'est également mise à prendre pied sur d'autres continents, en particulier l'Afrique subsaharienne », remarque Jean Marcou, titulaire de la chaire Méditerranée-

Moyen-Orient de Sciences Po Grenoble.

En 2003, l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP (le Parti de la justice et du développement) a accéléré cette tendance, avec une volonté affichée de réactiver les liens islamo-culturels remontant à l'Empire ottoman, tout en élargissant sa sphère d'influence traditionnelle. Pour preuve, la démultiplication des bureaux du Tika (l'agence de coopération et d'aide au développement) qui s'élèvent aujourd'hui à 22 à travers le continent africain. Ou encore l'activisme croissant d'organismes publics tels que la Présidence des affaires religieuses (la Diyanet), les instituts Yunus Emre (équivalents turcs des Instituts français) et d'associations humanitaires telles que le Croissant-Rouge turc ou la fondation IHH.

La Turquie participe à la construction de nouvelles mosquées comme au Mali, mais aussi dans des pays à majorité chrétienne, tel que le Ghana - où la « mosquée du peuple », inaugurée en 2017, fait écho à l'architecture des mosquées ottomanes d'Istanbul. Sans compter d'autres projets d'envvergure comme la réhabilitation de l'ancien port ottoman de Souakin au Soudan. Quant à l'éducation, longtemps soustraite par les établissements du mouvement de Fethullah Gülen - tombé en disgrâce depuis la tentative de coup d'État de 2016, imputé au prédicateur turc en exil -, elle est progressivement reprise en main par la fondation Maarif. Ce soft

power, qui cherche à nourrir l'image d'une Turquie « bienveillante » vise aussi à remplir le vide laissé par la France. « Le président turc veut capitaliser sur ses actions en Afrique, en se démarquant à la fois des anciens colonisateurs qui ne chercheraient qu'à maintenir leur domination par d'autres voies et des superpuissances commerciales comme la Chine dont le tropisme africain ne serait motivé que par l'appât du gain », poursuit Jean Marcou.

Un soft power qui n'est pourtant pas dénué d'ambitions commerciales ?

« L'ouverture à l'Afrique initiée par le président Erdogan a changé le sort du continent. Les visites effectuées par le président aux quatre coins de l'Afrique ouvrent de nouvelles opportunités aux investisseurs turcs », fanfaronnait récemment le quotidien progouvernemental Sabah en citant, parmi tant d'exemples, « l'immense stade d'une capacité de 50 000 places construit par des entrepreneurs turcs et achevé en un temps record de dix-sept mois à Dakar, au Sénégal ». En vingt ans, le volume des échanges commerciaux avec le continent africain est passé de moins de 5 milliards à plus de 25 milliards de dollars : une aubaine à l'heure où le reis turc fait face à une crise économique sans précédent depuis qu'il est au pouvoir.

Mais la presse indépendante ne manque pas de rappeler que ce sont les milieux d'affaires proches d'Erdogan qui

ont la mainmise sur tous ces gros chantiers. « Quand on parle de politique africaine de la Turquie, il s'agit avant tout de la politique africaine de l'AKP, surtout depuis le putsch raté de 2016. Il existe en effet un lien étroit entre le monde des affaires, en particulier celui lié au secteur de la défense, en pleine expansion, et les membres rapprochés du cercle d'Erdogan », relève Federico Dinelli, chercheur en relations internationales à l'université de Gêne et auteur du livre *Turkey in Africa* (I.B. Tauris, 2021).

Le hard power, nouvel outil de l'influence turque ?

L'implication militaire de la Turquie, qui dispose depuis 2017 d'une base en Somalie, est en train de passer à la vitesse supérieure avec une démultiplication des contrats d'armements et des accords militaires de coopération. « En l'espace de ces deux-trois dernières années, la Turquie a nommé 18 attachés militaires dans différents pays africains. Ces derniers usent de leur in-



À moins d'un an et demi du futur scrutin, et rattrapé par une récession qui frappe son pays de plein fouet, Recep Tayyip Erdogan renforce méthodiquement son influence en Afrique. Murad Sezer/REUTERS

fluence en stratégie sécuritaire et sont très actifs en termes de formation et de lobbying en faveur de l'industrie militaire turque », observe le chercheur Federico Donelli.

À la pointe de cette nouvelle offensive stratégique : la commercialisation de drones « made in Turkey » par la société Bayraktar, dirigée par un des gendres du président. Utilisés depuis 2016 pour combattre la guérilla kurde du PKK, ces petits engins sans pilotes ont plus récemment fait parler d'eux en

Libye et en Azerbaïdjan, où ils ont contribué à inverser le rapport de force sur le terrain. « Partout où je vais en Afrique, tout le monde me parle des drones », se félicitait Recep Tayyip Erdogan après sa première tournée africaine de l'automne dernier.

Après avoir fait partie des premiers à passer commande, le Maroc a reçu sa première livraison il y a quelques mois. D'autres pays, comme l'Angola et la Tunisie envisagent d'en acquérir, tandis que l'Algérie, le

Rwanda, le Nigeria et le Niger ont exprimé leur intérêt. « Si les drones turcs attirent autant, c'est aussi que la vente de ce matériel militaire à moindre coût est assortie de conditions souples, ce qui n'est généralement pas le cas avec les Occidentaux, demandeurs de contrepartie en matière de droits humains et de processus démocratique », estime Federico Donelli.

Mais les capitales occidentales veillent au grain. À l'été 2021, elles auraient fait pression sur la Turquie pour qu'elle cesse ses premières livraisons de drones à l'Éthiopie, confrontée à la rébellion du Tigré. La vente d'engins Bayraktar au Nigeria semble également retardée par les sanctions américaines imposées en décembre à l'attribution de tout nouveau permis d'exportation d'armes à la SBB (structure étatique qui chapote les compagnies du secteur de la défense) en représailles à l'acquisition par la Turquie de missiles S-400 russes.

Le régime turc veut enfermer le journalisme kurde entre quatre murs

Pour faire leur travail d'informer, autrefois, les journalistes kurdes du Kurdistan du nord prenaient le risque de perdre leur vie. Aujourd'hui, ils perdent leur liberté et sont emprisonnés en masse par le régime turc pour qui un bon journaliste kurde est un journaliste emprisonné. Mais les journalistes kurdes s'organisent et continuent à nous informer malgré les risques encourus.

L'Association des journalistes

Dicle-Firat fait le bilan du terrain journalistique en Turquie et au Bakûr

L'Association des journalistes Dicle Firat lancera le documentaire « Le journalisme dans le tunnel de la peur » et le reportage « Le journalisme entre quatre murs », la semaine prochaine. Le documentaire et le reportage seront disponibles sur le site internet et les plateformes numériques de l'association le lundi 28 mars.

Dans le documentaire « Jour-

nalisme dans le tunnel de la peur », les journalistes décrivent l'oppression à laquelle ils sont confrontés pour avoir fait leur travail en Turquie. Des témoins ont parlé des obstacles à la liberté de pensée, d'expression, de l'empire de la peur créé et de la répression à laquelle ils sont confrontés.

Dans le rapport écrit, « Le journalisme entre quatre murs », des journalistes arrêtés et emprisonnés pour avoir exprimé leurs opinions parlent de la

réalité de la Turquie dans le rapport. Les raisons pour lesquelles ils ont été arrêtés, les problèmes qu'ils ont rencontrés dans les prisons et plus encore sont traités en détail dans le contenu du rapport. Le rapport a également fait l'objet d'une brochure destinée à être remise à diverses institutions et organisations.

Le reportage et le documentaire seront présentés demain, lundi, lors de la conférence de presse qui se tiendra à 12 heures.

A Diyarbakir, en Turquie, les Kurdes dans la grisaille

Les prochaines élections présidentielle et législatives ne sont prévues que pour juin 2023, mais l'opposition s'emploie à installer une atmosphère de campagne en Turquie en vue d'une échéance où le vote kurde s'avérera stratégique pour les partis en lice.

L'homme qui s'exprime sur la scène érigée sur une grande place de Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, est un vétéran du mouvement kurde. Et il veut encore y croire. « Ce pouvoir est sur le départ ! Il va finir par tomber, mais nous, nous serons toujours là ! », s'exclame Ahmet Türk. Une clameur s'élève de la foule en réponse, et d'innombrables drapeaux rouge, jaune et vert s'agitent en cadence. Des centaines de milliers de personnes se sont déplacées en ce 21 mars pour célébrer Newroz, le Nouvel An kurde.

Une altercation entre manifestants et forces de l'ordre laisse un instant craindre un débordement, mais quelques brèves consignes données en kurde au microphone suffisent à convaincre les plus hardis de retourner docilement derrière les grilles de sécurité. La musique démarre et les danses traditionnelles reprennent immédiatement leurs droits sur la place. Ces quelques heures d'insouciance sont une bouffée d'oxygène dans un contexte politique particulièrement morose pour le Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, pro-kurde) majoritaire dans la région. Après avoir obtenu des succès électoraux historiques et une domination sans partage sur le sud-est kurde de la Turquie, le HDP ne s'est jamais relevé de l'effondrement, en 2015, du processus de paix entre Ankara et la guérilla kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, le PKK, en guerre contre l'Etat turc depuis 1984. Le conflit armé sans merci qui avait repris dans les villes kurdes entre les militants du PKK et les forces de sécurité turques, de l'été 2015 au printemps 2016, a eu des conséquences désastreuses dans l'opinion et a considérablement affaibli

le mouvement, qui subit toujours la répression d'Ankara.

Avec six députés, dont son leader charismatique, Selahattin Demirtas, sept maires et plusieurs milliers de militants derrière les barreaux, le HDP n'est plus que l'ombre de lui-même. Le 21 juin 2021, la Cour constitutionnelle a validé une procédure judiciaire qui pourrait mener à la dissolution du parti, accusé par la coalition au pouvoir d'être « la vitrine politique » du PKK. Mutilé par les autorités, le HDP, comme l'ensemble du mouvement kurde, a aussi perdu beaucoup de crédit auprès de sa base.

Un vote stratégique

« La guerre des villes de 2015 est l'une des principales raisons de la colère des gens contre le mouvement kurde », décrypte Vahap Coskun, professeur de droit à l'université Dicle, de Diyarbakir. « Au sein de la population, l'idée est désormais ancrée que la solution ne viendra pas de la violence, assure-t-il. Et puis, cela fait quarante ans que cette guerre dure, et la population est épuisée. » L'armée turque avait fini par vaincre les forces du PKK : le bilan des combats, entre juillet 2015 et mars 2016, faisait état de près de 3 600 morts du côté de l'organisation, 355 morts du côté des forces armées turques et de près de 300 civils, d'après le site d'information DW Türkçe.

Comme de nombreuses figures intellectuelles de Diyarbakir, M. Coskun travaille inlassablement à la résolution de la question kurde. « Politiquement, la prise en compte des revendications pourrait contribuer à la résolution du "problème kurde", mais cela serait également

bénéfique pour la démocratisation de la Turquie dans son ensemble ! », affirme l'universitaire.

Les prochaines élections présidentielle et législatives ne sont prévues que pour juin 2023, mais l'opposition s'emploie depuis plusieurs mois à installer une atmosphère de campagne dans le pays en vue d'une échéance où le vote kurde se révélera de nouveau stratégique pour les partis en lice. Bien que sa formation n'ait pas d'ancrage historique dans les régions kurdes, contrairement au Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, leader du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP), s'est rendu à Diyarbakir le 10 mars, pour une série de rencontres très médiatisées. D'après l'institut de sondages Rawest, le principal parti d'opposition est crédité de 7,9 % des intentions de vote à Diyarbakir, quatre fois le score obtenu dans la région lors des élections législatives de 2018.

« Une démobilisation politique »

Alors que les candidats pressentis de la coalition au pouvoir et ceux de l'opposition sont au coude-à-coude dans les enquêtes d'opinion à l'échelle nationale, l'électorat du HDP s'impose de nouveau comme faiseur de rois. La démographie des régions du Sud-Est replace régulièrement le vote kurde au centre du jeu politique, mais les stratégies développées par les partis ne vont pas toujours dans le sens d'une recherche de solutions concrètes.

A l'automne, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu avait lancé un slogan de réconciliation sociale (« Helallesme »), invitation à effectuer un travail de

mémoire sur les violations des droits humains commises tout au long de l'histoire de la République, et notamment à l'égard des populations kurdes. Les leaders du HDP n'étaient pourtant pas conviés à la réunion du 28 février, qui a rassemblé six partis d'opposition en vue de l'élargissement de la coalition républicaine. Le CHP est d'ailleurs régulièrement critiqué pour son manque de courage sur le dossier kurde. Il cumule un double handicap : sa base électorale souverainiste et son alliance avec les nationalistes du İyi Parti (Le Bon Parti).

Mais que veulent désormais les Kurdes ? Si les régions du Sud-Est sont loin d'être politiquement homogènes, certaines revendications, comme le droit à l'éducation en langue maternelle, continuent d'être largement relayées. D'autres concepts idéologiquement chargés ont désormais été bannis du vocabulaire : celui d'« autogestion » a ainsi été troqué contre celui de « démocratie locale ». « Très honnêtement, aujourd'hui, je ne saurais pas dire quelles sont exactement les revendications du parti », admet Mehmet, pourtant militant de longue date. Pour lui, la publication, en septembre 2021, de la feuille de route du HDP tant attendue, a été une déception. « La situation des jeunes est catastrophique, se désole Serif, 22 ans, étudiant à la faculté des beaux-arts. Dans mon entourage, les jeunes sont soit en prison, soit dans la guérilla, soit à l'étranger... soit morts. Je constate une réelle démobilisation politique, et la situation économique est tellement grave que tout le monde cherche avant tout des solutions pour survivre avant de discuter politique. »

Selahattin Demirtas : « La Turquie est entrée dans une sorte de régime autoritaire électif »

L'ancien coprésident du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, prokurde) est incarcéré depuis 2016. Son parti tente de constituer un bloc de gauche.

Avocat de formation et ancien coprésident du HDP, Selahattin Demirtas est incarcéré depuis le 4 novembre 2016, accusé notamment de « terrorisme ». Leader du mouvement kurde légal, il est l'un des principaux artisans des succès électoraux du HDP depuis sa création en 2012. Il est maintenu en détention en dépit d'une décision de la Cour constitutionnelle turque et de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, qui demandent sa libération. Il a répondu aux questions du Monde par l'intermédiaire de ses avocats.

Pouvez-vous nous rappeler le contexte de votre arrestation ? Que vous reproche exactement le pouvoir ?

Au cours des cinq dernières années, la Turquie a connu plusieurs moments de rupture. Tout a commencé quand le HDP a franchi le seuil électoral de 10 % lors des élections du 7 juin 2015 pour entrer au Parlement avec 13 % des voix. Après cette date, l'AKP et le parti ultranationaliste et raciste MHP ont formé une alliance fondée sur l'hostilité aux Kurdes. De nombreuses villes kurdes ont été détruites par des opérations militaires de grande ampleur, et c'est dans ce contexte que l'AKP a consolidé sa majorité lors des nouvelles élections du 1er novembre 2015. Ensuite, les maires élus de 102 municipalités du HDP ont été démis de leurs fonctions. Des préfets et sous-préfets ont été nommés à leur place, puis notre immunité parlementaire a été levée. Le 4 novembre 2016, j'ai été enlevé à mon domicile en pleine nuit par des policiers caoulés, comme dix autres collègues députés. Des centaines d'enquêtes et de poursuites, toujours en cours, ont été intentées contre nous. Trente-huit condamnations à perpétuité et des di-



Un portrait de l'ancien coprésident du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, prokurde), Selahattin Demirtas, sur une camionnette, à Istanbul, le 28 mai 2015. MURAD SEZER / REUTERS

zaines de milliers d'années de prison sont requises. A la suite de l'élection présidentielle de 2018, Erdogan est devenu le premier président autoritaire de Turquie, et a pris le contrôle total de l'Etat. Une action de dissolution a été intentée contre le HDP devant la Cour constitutionnelle en 2021. Ainsi, la Turquie est entrée dans une sorte de régime autoritaire électif.

Tous les regards sont tournés vers les élections de 2023. Six partis d'opposition se sont associés, sans intégrer le HDP. Quelles en sont les causes ?

A l'exception du HDP, même les partis les plus démocratiques de Turquie sont incapables d'élaborer une politique allant au-delà de l'idéologie officielle de l'Etat, fondée sur la négation du peuple kurde. De ce fait, ils préfèrent exclure le HDP de leur alliance dénuée de sens. Le HDP tente de constituer un bloc de gauche. Malgré le manque de vision d'une solution efficace et significative au problème kurde de la part des autres partis d'opposition, nous poursuivons la recherche de collaborations étendues dans les mois à venir.

Kemal Kiliçdaroglu, le chef du principal parti d'opposition, s'est rendu la semaine dernière à Diyarbakir. Selon les sondages, son parti, le CHP progresse dans les régions kurdes, notamment en raison de son discours de réconciliation. Comment comprenez-vous cette évolution ?

J'ai pu suivre la visite de M. Kiliçdaroglu à Diyarbakir, dans les limites des conditions de détention. Tous les responsables politiques ont naturellement le droit de se rendre dans n'importe quelle ville. Toutefois, Diyarbakir est une ville particulière en termes d'identité politique. Chaque dirigeant qui se rend à Diyarbakir est censé exprimer une position concrète sur la question kurde, mais ce n'est pas le cas de M. Kiliçdaroglu. Je ne suis cependant pas indifférent au discours de réconciliation porté par le CHP. Pour le moment, il s'agit d'une démonstration de bonne volonté. Seulement, si ce parti et ses alliés arrivent au pouvoir, il faudra être cohérent et de nombreuses mesures devront être prises sur le plan judiciaire, administratif et politique. Des processus devront être mis en place, tels que l'établissement d'une

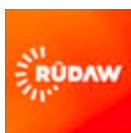
commission pour la vérité et la réconciliation au Parlement, des réparations pour les victimes des crimes liés à la répression du mouvement kurde... Des mesures devront être prises pour prévenir de telles violations à l'avenir, et des institutions devront être créées à cet effet.

Comment pensez-vous que l'AKP et Recep Tayyip Erdogan vont se positionner sur la question kurde en vue des prochaines échéances électorales ?

L'AKP est suffisamment agile et pragmatique pour produire toutes sortes de nouvelles idées dans l'objectif d'obtenir les votes kurdes. Cependant, les Kurdes ne sont pas un peuple aussi naïf et inconscient. C'est un peuple qui fait preuve d'une conscience politique et d'une expérience suffisante pour faire la distinction entre ce qui relève de l'artificiel et du sérieux. Attendons de voir.

La ligne politique du HDP a-t-elle évolué depuis votre incarcération ? Le HDP a été créé dans l'objectif de rassembler la population de la Turquie dans son ensemble, au-delà des rangs de la politique kurde. Y est-il parvenu ?

Ce qui a changé n'est pas la ligne politique du HDP, mais les conditions et le climat qui règnent en Turquie. C'est un régime anti-kurde, anti-HDP, autoritaire et fascisant qui est actuellement au pouvoir. Le HDP subit de très fortes pressions et des tentatives de criminalisation. Une très grande partie de la presse impose un embargo contre le HDP et diffuse même une propagande à son encontre. Il est très difficile pour le HDP de s'exprimer et de se développer dans un tel environnement. Malgré tout, le HDP continue de revendiquer le statut de parti pour toute la Turquie et n'envisage pas d'y renoncer.



March 28, 2022

Afrin school shooting leaves ten children wounded

Several children sustained injuries after Turkish-backed forces opened fire on a local school in northwest Syria's Afrin, reported media outlets on Sunday.

Ten children were wounded after "a group of mercenaries belonging to the Turkish occupying forces named al-Hamazat opened machine gun fires on a school in occupied Afrin's Mirkan village," said Hawar News Agency (ANHA).

The shooting came after the Turkish-backed forces failed to catch one of the school's teachers whom they were pursuing, according to ANHA, "carelessly" shooting at the school.

A local source on Sunday also confirmed the reasoning behind the attack to North Press Agency (NPA).



Afrin school shooting leaves ten children wounded

"The reason behind the attack of the members on the school was to assault a Kurdish teacher, who's a resident of the Ruta village in that same region, as the teacher had punished a son of one of the members of the faction," NPA quoted the source as saying.

The Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies launched Oper-

ation Olive Branch on January 20, 2018, in Afrin. Ankara seized control of the city from the People's Protection Units (YPG) on March 24.

Thousands of Kurds have been arrested and kidnapped while hundreds of others were killed since Ankara seized control of the city.

The Turkish-backed groups have been widely accused of human rights violations against Afrin's locals, including kidnap, looting, and extortion.

A graphic video of a civilian being tortured by Turkish-backed forces in Afrin circulated on social media in September.

In August 2018, Amnesty International reported that "Afrin residents are enduring widespread human rights violations, mostly at the hands of Syrian armed groups equipped and armed by Turkey."

In its annual report for 2019, Amnesty documented a "wide range of abuses" against Afrin's civilians at the hands of Turkish-backed groups, including the arbitrary detention of more than 50 locals.

Le Monde

29 mars 2022
Par Ghazal Golshiri

Istanbul, la bulle d'oxygène des Iraniens, asphyxiés par les sanctions et la répression du régime islamique

Les habitants de la République islamique, avides de divertissements, affluent en masse dans la cité du Bosphore.

Pendant vingt ans, Banou (les prénoms ont été modifiés pour des raisons de sécurité) a rêvé d'assister à un concert de Goo-goo, la plus grande chanteuse iranienne vivante, exilée aux Etats-Unis depuis plus de

deux décennies. Quand elle a appris que la diva de la variété iranienne se produirait le 25 mars à Istanbul, pendant les vacances du Nouvel An (No-rouz), qui coïncide avec l'arrivée du printemps, la photographe de 38 ans a aussitôt décidé de s'y rendre.

Banou vit toujours avec ses parents dans la ville de Karadj, à quarante kilomètres de Téhéran, car son métier ne lui per-

met pas de subvenir à ses besoins seule. Pour payer le vol, quatre nuits d'hôtel et le billet du concert, soit une somme de huit millions de tomans (273 euros), équivalent à un mois de salaire d'un enseignant en fin de carrière, l'Iranienne a vendu quelques bijoux en or. « La monnaie iranienne ne vaut plus rien, mais je me suis débrouillée, explique la jeune femme. Le concert de Goo-

goosh, il faut le faire une fois dans sa vie, quand même. » Depuis la révolution iranienne de 1979, qui a mis fin à la dynastie des Pahlavi et donné naissance à la République islamique d'Iran, la Turquie attire chaque année des millions d'Iraniens. Ils trouvent dans ce pays voisin, où ils sont exemptés de visa, une bulle d'oxygène. Ils s'y rendent en famille ou entre amis, pour faire la

fête, habillés comme ils le veulent, contrairement à leur pays d'origine, où le voile est obligatoire pour les femmes. Ils viennent boire de l'alcool, interdit en Iran, et faire du shopping dans les boutiques de marque turques ou étrangères, de plus en plus introuvables dans leur pays, du fait des sanctions internationales

En ce 25 mars, sous le soleil agréable du début du printemps, quelques heures avant le concert de Googoosh, Banou arpente l'avenue Istiklal avec son amie d'enfance Anousheh, qui vit depuis quelques mois dans une ville proche d'Antalya. Née d'un père ouvrier et d'une mère fonctionnaire, Banou a travaillé dès l'âge de 17 ans, d'abord comme secrétaire, ensuite comme esthéticienne et agent publicitaire, avant de devenir photographe pour les cérémonies et les fêtes. « Il y a treize ans, j'ai réussi à acheter une voiture avec mes écono-



Lors du concert de Googoosh, à Istanbul, le 25 mars 2022. KURŞAT BAYHAN POUR « LE MONDE »

mie », se souvient la jeune femme. Ses amies parties protester lui ont dit que les forces de l'ordre effectuaient des tirs à balles réelles. « Encore six mois plus tard, la présence policière dans les rues, très lourde, donnait l'impression que la ville avait été occupée », explique Banou, entre deux messages envoyés à l'agence de voyages qui lui a vendu son package. « A quelle heure le concert commence-t-il exacte-

ment ? » demande-t-elle à l'agence, soucieuse de ne pas en rater une minute.

Les deux amies quittent leur hôtel, situé non loin de la place Taksim, trois heures avant le début du spectacle, organisé dans une salle à l'extrémité est de la ville. Dans les voitures du métro, les Iraniens sont nombreux. Banou et Anousheh sont parmi les premiers arrivés. A côté d'elles, un couple d'une soixantaine d'années attend patiemment. « Quand ma femme était jeune, elle se vantait de ressembler à Googoosh », explique avec malice Morteza, qui habite la ville portuaire de Bandar-e Abbas, située dans le sud de l'Iran.

Son épouse, contrairement à la majorité des femmes dans l'assistance, porte un foulard, à l'iranienne, qui laisse apparaître quelques mèches. « Je suis habituée à être comme ça », explique-t-elle. Morteza, père de six enfants, possède un atelier de fabrication de meubles de cuisine, un des secteurs de l'industrie iranienne qui a fleuri en raison des sanctions contre Téhéran, rendant très chère, voire impossible, l'importation d'un grand nombre de produits. « Nos affaires marchent très bien. Nous avons payé sans problème les 60 millions de tomans [soit 2 000 euros] pour notre voyage, Dieu merci ! » glisse Morteza avec fierté.

Dans la salle, aucune boisson alcoolisée n'est en vente, mais, à en juger par leur haleine, certains spectateurs n'ont pas seulement bu de l'eau avant de venir. Le spectacle commence, avec une demi-heure de retard, par un clip qui retrace la vie de Googoosh, Faegheh Atashin de son vrai nom. A chaque fois qu'apparaît l'image de Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, le dernier roi d'Iran, la salle se met à applaudir, confirmant la nostalgie de certains Iraniens pour l'ancien régime, sous lequel la musique et la fête étaient autorisées, en parallèle de la censure et de l'emprisonnement des opposants.

« Impossible de se projeter »

Alors que la majorité des chanteurs de sa génération ont quitté le pays après la révolution, Googoosh, aux Etats-Unis à l'époque, décida de retourner dans son pays. Elle fut alors interrogée plusieurs fois par le pouvoir islamique et passa même un mois en prison. Finalement, elle fut relâchée après avoir accepté de ne plus exercer aucune activité artistique. Réduite au silence pendant plus de vingt ans, elle obtint enfin la permission de sortir du pays en 2000. La chanteuse, qui vit pour et par la scène, se produisit devant ses fans au Canada et entreprit une tournée mondiale. Depuis, elle ne s'est jamais arrêtée.

La chanteuse iranienne Googoosh, à Istanbul, le 25 mars 2022.

Lorsque Googoosh apparaît enfin sur scène, la salle se dresse d'un coup. La chanteuse interprète l'un de ses anciens tubes, Ecoute-moi, mon compagnon de voyage. Sur les trois écrans derrière elle est diffusé le clip original du morceau, tourné avant la révolution. La star de 72 ans reproduit avec énergie les mêmes gestes, la même chorégraphie. « Vous êtes tous très jeunes. Mais cela fait quarante-trois ans que je n'existe pas dans notre patrie. Vous n'étiez même pas nés quand j'y chantais », lance-t-elle au public, vêtue d'une longue robe scintillante à pois. « Que [des Iraniens] se déplacent pour moi, malgré le coût élevé que représente un tel voyage, m'est très précieux », avait confié la chanteuse, rencontrée dans sa loge, un peu avant de monter sur scène.

Le concert se termine un peu avant minuit. Banou et Anousheh rentrent place Taksim en taxi. Banou retournera en Iran après la fin des vacances, le 2 avril, sans savoir quand elle pourra s'offrir une nouvelle escapade à l'étranger. « En Iran, glisse-t-elle, il est impossible de se projeter et de faire des plans pour l'avenir. »



Au concert de Googoosh, à Istanbul, le 25 mars 2022. KURŞAT BAYHAN POUR « LE MONDE »

mies. Aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus possible, se désole Banou. Le pouvoir d'achat ne cesse de diminuer. »

Le dernier Chah acclamé

La répression exercée par les autorités s'ajoute aux problèmes économiques. Lorsque ont éclaté des manifestations de masse, en novembre 2019, à la suite de l'augmentation des prix du carburant, Banou, la jambe fracturée dans un plâtre, suivait les infos via les chaînes par satellite, interdites en Iran. « Je pleurais de ne pas pouvoir descendre dans la

ment ? » demande-t-elle à l'agence, soucieuse de ne pas en rater une minute.

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Entre OTAN, Russie et Ukraine, Erdogan se positionne en faiseur de paix

Champion des tours de passe-passe diplomatiques, le président turc a su tirer parti de l'invasion russe de l'Ukraine pour redorer son blason auprès de ses alliés occidentaux et se positionner en médiateur, sans pour autant remettre en cause son partenariat stratégique avec Moscou.

Pris dans un difficile exercice d'équilibre entre la Russie, son principal fournisseur d'énergie, l'Ukraine, son meilleur partenaire pour l'industrie de défense, et enfin la coalition anti-Poutine dirigée par l'OTAN, le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a réussi à s'imposer en faiseur de paix.

Inquiet de la tournure prise par le conflit qui menace les intérêts immédiats de son pays, notamment en mer Noire, le numéro un turc met tout son poids dans la balance pour mettre fin à la guerre, encourageant les négociations formelles et informelles.

On l'a vu, mardi 29 mars, à Istanbul, accueillir des délégations ukrainienne et russe aux pourparlers censés mettre fin à la guerre. Fort de ses bonnes relations avec les présidents russe, Vladimir Poutine, et ukrainien, Volodymyr Zelensky, M. Erdogan a vocacion à désamorcer le conflit.

Ce positionnement vaut à son pays, le pilier oriental de l'Alliance atlantique, un formidable retour en grâce auprès de ses partenaires traditionnels, trop contents de croire à nouveau en la fiabilité du partenaire turc, qui avait été remise en question en 2019, au moment de l'acquisition des missiles antiaériens russes S-400.

Courtisé comme jamais, le « Grand Turc » a récemment reçu la visite de pas moins de quatre dirigeants de l'Union européenne et de l'OTAN – le secrétaire général de l'Alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, le chancelier allemand, Olaf Scholz, le premier ministre néer-

landais, Mark Rutte, le premier ministre grec, Kyriakos Mitsotakis –, sans compter celle du président israélien, Isaac Herzog.

Changement de ton

En marge du sommet de l'OTAN, jeudi 24 mars, à Bruxelles, il a repris langue avec son homologue français, Emmanuel Macron, chez qui il avait pourtant cru déceler, en octobre 2020, un problème de « santé mentale », quelques mois après un grave incident naval survenu entre des navires turc et français en Méditerranée. Après s'être entretenus en tête à tête, les deux chefs d'Etat ont pris acte de leur volonté de « travailler ensemble » en vue de parvenir à un cessez-le-feu en Ukraine, a fait savoir le président Macron, lors de sa conférence de presse.

Les « opérations humanitaires communes » envisagées un temps à Marioupol, la ville martyre du sud-est de l'Ukraine, assiégée et bombardée par l'armée russe, n'ont toutefois pas pu avoir lieu, Vladimir Poutine n'ayant pas autorisé la création de couloirs humanitaires pour les quelque 170 000 civils qui y sont pris au piège. La ville, convoitée par Moscou, qui veut faire la jonction entre le Donbass prorusse et la Crimée russifiée, est en grande partie détruite.

« Des cadavres gisent sur les routes, sur les trottoirs. Les corps – ceux des soldats russes et des citoyens ukrainiens – traînent, et personne ne les enlève. Nous leur avons demandé [de nous laisser] les évacuer. Nous n'avons pas obtenu le droit de sortir ni les cadavres ni les blessés, personne », a expliqué Vo-

lodymyr Zelensky, dans une interview donnée dimanche à des médias russes indépendants.

L'opération commune prévue entre la France, la Turquie et la Grèce pour sauver les civils de Marioupol a échoué, mais le ton a changé entre Ankara et ses alliés. On est loin des altercations passées quand, en octobre 2021, M. Erdogan avait menacé d'expulser dix ambassadeurs occidentaux en poste à Ankara, dont sept étaient issus de pays membres de l'Alliance. Revenu à de meilleurs sentiments, le voilà qui fait à présent l'éloge de son homologue français, « l'un des dirigeants les plus actifs au sein de l'OTAN en ce moment ».

Le positionnement turc dans la crise ukrainienne est, selon M. Macron, « un élément positif dans un contexte lourd », l'occasion de tirer au clair la relation avec l'OTAN, d'aplanir les contentieux existant en Libye, en Méditerranée, au Proche-Orient et au Moyen-Orient.

Institutions dépassées

Pour autant, il serait naïf de croire qu'Ankara a réintégré le giron occidental. « Si la Turquie a vivement dénoncé l'invasion russe, notamment à l'ONU, elle n'en a pas pour autant tiré des conclusions définitives concernant les deux dossiers centraux de sa relation avec Moscou : les S-400 et la centrale nucléaire d'Akkuyu [conçue et gérée à 100 % par Rosatom, le géant du nucléaire russe, non soumis aux sanctions] », explique Yohanan Benhaim, spécialiste de la politique étrangère turque et cofondateur de Noria Research. « Ankara et

Moscou considèrent comme dépassées les institutions de l'ordre international issues de 1945, tout comme les mécanismes de sécurité collective hérités de la guerre froide », rappelle le chercheur.

Ankara n'a aucune intention d'adhérer aux sanctions. « Nous achetons aujourd'hui environ la moitié de notre gaz à la Russie. En outre, nous construisons la centrale nucléaire d'Akkuyu avec la Russie. Nous ne pouvons pas mettre cela de côté non plus. Quand j'ai dit ça à Macron, il a dit : "Vous avez raison" », a expliqué M. Erdogan, à son retour de Bruxelles.

L'espace aérien turc est ouvert à la Russie, les ports de la Méditerranée et de l'Égée sont offerts aux oligarques russes aux abois. Deux yachts appartenant au milliardaire proche du Kremlin Roman Abramovitch mouillent, en ce moment, au large de Bodrum et de Marmaris, sur la mer Égée, et celui de l'ancien président Dmitri Medvedev est amarré à Istanbul. On ne compte plus les jets privés de l'élite russe parqués sur les aéroports turcs pour échapper aux sanctions.

Interrogé sur l'accueil réservé par Ankara aux oligarques proches du Kremlin, Mevlüt Çavusoglu, le ministre des affaires étrangères turc, a déclaré que ces derniers pouvaient « faire des affaires en Turquie » tant que leurs activités s'avéraient « conformes à la loi et au droit international ». De quoi renflouer l'économie turque, en manque de devises et d'investissements, à quinze mois d'une échéance cruciale pour le président Erdogan : l'élection présidentielle de juin 2023.

ROJAVA. Une explosion fait 5 victimes dans le canton de Shehba

Une explosion survenue ce matin a fait 5 victimes dans un immeuble du district d'Ehdas, dans le canton kurde de Shehba, dans le nord du Rojava. 10 personnes ont également été blessés lors de l'explosion.

Selon les premières informations, les équipes de la municipalité se sont précipitées sur les lieux et ont récupéré au moins 5 personnes sous les décombres, tandis que les opérations de recherche sont toujours en cours. Le correspondant de l'ANHA



dans le district a pu documenter l'identité de 10 blessés, qui ont été exhumés sous les décombres et transportés à l'hô-

pital d'Avrin dans le canton d'al-Shahba. Le nombre de morts est susceptible d'augmenter au milieu

des recherches continues par les équipes municipales qui se sont rendues sur les lieux immédiatement après l'explosion, et il n'y a pas encore eu de rapports de décès de cause inconnue.

On ne sait pas encore les causes de l'explosion qui a causé de graves dégâts humains et matériels dans un immeuble du quartier al-Ahdath du canton d'al-Shahba, entraînant de graves dégâts humains et matériels, selon les premières informations. (ANHA)



March 30, 2022
By Laurie Mylroie

US sanctions Iran for missile attacks on Erbil, Saudi Aramco

The US Treasury Department announced on Wednesday that it was imposing sanctions on Iran for its unprovoked missile assault earlier this month on the Kurdistan Region capital Erbil, as well as a subsequent missile attack by the Houthis, which Tehran backs in Yemen, on a major Saudi oil target.

The sanctions announced on Wednesday were issued in response to "Iran's missile attack on Erbil, Iraq on March 13 and the Iranian enabled Houthis missile attack against a Saudi Aramco facility on March 25," a statement from the US Treasury Department explained. Iranian Strikes Linked to Energy Production? The Treasury Department made

clear that the Houthis' March 25 attack on Saudi targets was related to energy production, as it specifically named the target: a Saudi Aramco facility.

But the same might well be said about Iran's March 13 attack on Erbil: it was related to energy production in the Kurdistan Region.

The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Masrour Barzani, suggested as much in remarks that he made on Tuesday while speaking on a panel at the World Government Summit in Dubai.

"As we are discovering more oil and gas fields, and we are trying to develop those areas,

this is something that may not be in the interest of the Iranians," Barzani stated in response to a question about Iran's missile attack on Erbil.

The missiles targeted the home of Baz Karim Barzinji, head of the KAR Group—the most important energy firm in the Kurdistan Region.

In addition, on March 10, the Houthis launched a drone attack on an oil refinery in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, which started a small fire and caused the refinery's production to dip temporarily.

Ten days later, on March 20, the Houthis attacked an Aramco distribution facility in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea port city of Jeddah, causing another fire. The repeated strikes by Iran,

or its proxies, on oil facilities or individuals linked to oil production invite the question: Is Iran trying to cut oil production in the region?

If so, that invites an entire series of questions, which merit thoughtful consideration.

What is Iran's motive in striking oil facilities? Does it relate to an expectation in Tehran that it will soon conclude a renewal of the 2015 nuclear deal and regain the ability to export its own oil freely? Is Tehran seeking to reduce others' oil production to create room on the international market for its own production without causing oil prices to fall?

If so, is Tehran targeting Middle Eastern oil facilities entirely for

its own reasons? Or is it acting in concert with Moscow, with which it is allied? After all, Russia is using its energy exports, mainly to Europe, as leverage to counter economic sanctions imposed that have been imposed on it for its invasion of Ukraine.

Indeed, in his address on Tuesday to the World Government Summit, Barzani explained how decisions made in Baghdad—where Tehran exerts considerable influence—serve that objective. Specifically, he cited last month's ruling by Iraq's Federal Supreme Court, which, if recognized, would deny the

KRG the right to export oil and gas under its own authority (the KRG has declared the ruling unconstitutional; contrary to federalism; and otherwise illegal).

Barzani also noted that the Iranian missile strike aimed to influence the formation of a new Iraqi government—which has been long delayed, as elections were held on October 10, nearly six months ago.

An alliance among the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Shi'ite Sadrists, and the Taqadum (Progress) Party, led by the Sunni Speaker of Parliament, Mohammed al-Halbousi, has the seats to form a government.

But the pro-Iranian parties, known collectively as the Shi'ite Coordination Framework, are demanding that they be included in the government and be given ministries as well! US Sanctions on Iran's Ballistic Missile Program

The new US sanctions announced on Wednesday include one individual and four companies.

Mohammad Ali Hosseini is the individual whom the US sanctioned. The 53-year old Iranian is linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as well as Parchin Chemical

Industries, the Treasury Department explained.

Already in 2007 and 2008, Parchin Chemicals was designated by the UN Security Council, the European Union, and the US.

Two Iranian companies, Jestar Sanat Delijan and Sayehban Sepehr Delijan, which are linked to Hosseini, were also designated on Wednesday. In addition, P. B. Sadr Construction Company, which is tied to Parchin Chemicals, was sanctioned, as was Sina Composite Delijan, which is linked to the IRGC.



March 31, 2022

Turkish parliament passes law reducing required votes threshold to 7%

Turkey's parliament on Thursday passed a law lowering the minimum required votes for a party to enter parliament to 7% from 10%, in a move that could reduce the likelihood of early elections this year.

President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party and its nationalist MHP allies had presented the draft election law, which included regulations on parliamentary seat distribution in alliances between parties, to parliament on March 14. [read more](#)

The bill was widely expected to become law given the ruling alliance's majority. It is set to take effect in about a year, suggesting Erdogan - whose opinion polls have touched their lowest in years - could hold off calling an early election. Register now for FREE unlimited access to Reuters.com



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan makes a speech during the opening session of Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) in Antalya, Turkey March 11, 2022. Murat Cetinmuhurdar/Presidential Press Office/Handout via REUTERS

Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held in June 2023 and the AKP and MHP have repeatedly said they would be held at that time.

However, before the bill was in-

roduced, some analysts had said Erdogan might want an earlier vote before a possible further slide in the polls, amid economic turmoil and soaring inflation caused by his push for low interest rates late last year

and, more recently, the conflict in Ukraine. [read more](#)

Seeking to topple the long-ruling Erdogan, six opposition parties have formed an alliance and announced a sweeping new governance plan to be implemented if elected. [read more](#)

Analysts have said lowering the threshold was aimed to divide the opposition and earn more seats for the governing parties by luring smaller parties to defect from the opposition alliance.

Support for the AKP has dipped to around 31% from its 42.6% in the 2018 election, according to recent polls that also show MHP support falling to around 7% from 11.1%. Together they hold 333 seats in the 600-seat parliament.