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### **ROJAVA: TURKEY INTENSIFIES ITS MILITARY HARASSMENT OF THE KURDS AND ITS ABUSES IN THE TERRITORIES IT OCCUPIES**

**T**he conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated the economic crisis in Syria. As part of the international aid gets redirected to Ukraine, humanitarian agencies are reaching the limits of their capacity. The UN World Food Programme, which provides food aid to 5.5 million people across the country, has indicated that due to lack of funding it will have to reduce its food baskets from May onwards.

Prices have soared: sunflower oil and wheat have almost doubled, and other products have also risen due to soaring fuel prices. In the regions controlled by Turkey, where the Turkish lira is used, the price of bread has tripled (*Le Monde*).

On the military level, the closure of the Straits by Ankara could in the medium term create difficulties for the Russians and the Syrians for in terms of ammuni-

tion and spare parts supply. Syrian planes and helicopters in particular are old and in poor condition. Moreover, some Russian forces currently deployed in support of the Damascus regime may have to leave for Ukraine. The resulting weakening of the regime could benefit ISIS and Turkey. The Turkish pro-government daily *Hürriyet* claimed in early April that the war in Ukraine, by weakening Moscow's position in

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Syria, could allow Ankara to enter into negotiations with Bashar al-Assad. Two topics are reportedly on the agenda: the Syrian Kurds and Syrian refugees. Syrian officials have strongly denied any discussion in the daily *Al-Watan*, denouncing “scandalous media propaganda in the run-up to the presidential election” and pointing out that no discussion is possible before a complete Turkish military withdrawal from Syrian soil.

By redirecting observers’ attention from Syria to Ukraine, the war could also open up new opportunities for Turkey to act against the Kurds.

Giving an idea of the kind of pressure Russia is exerting on the Kurdish-dominated Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), the newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> that the Russian mediator in Syria had threatened the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with an invasion by pro-Turkish factions of the towns of al-Darbasiyah and Amuda to reach Qamishli. This blackmail was aimed at forcing the SDF to stop encircling regime-held areas in Qamishli and Hasakeh. The SDF withdrew without incident. Conversely, in the second half of the month, the regime continued its blockade of the Kurdish neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsud in Aleppo, which was recently retaken from Ankara’s proxy forces, creating a shortage of food and medicine there (WKI).

Military harassment continued throughout the month, with regular attacks on the strategic east-west M4 highway at both ends, from Ain Issa (north of Raqqa) in the west to Tall Tamr (north-west of Hassaké) in the east. The month began with intense artillery shelling on Ain Issa and surrounding villages, which continued for more than a week, with precarious interruptions, but without causing any casual-

ties. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported the death of a civilian in an artillery attack on a regime checkpoint near the village of Bandar Khan, west of Tell Abyad. On the Tell Tamr side, a Turkish drone wounded a Syrian Military Council commander and a translator in their vehicle while they were accompanying a Russian group to the town’s electricity station, which had been disabled the previous day by Turkish fire. A civilian was also injured near the town. The SOHR reported Turkish artillery fire on 17 villages in the area, mainly directed at civilian targets such as homes, fortunately without casualties. Another drone strike on the 4<sup>th</sup> hit an *Asayish* (Kurdish Security) base in Zarkan near Hasaka, in response to a previous day’s SDF infiltration attempt during which a guided missile was fired at the largest Turkish base in the region, in the village of Al-Dawodiyah, near Ras Al-Ain / Serê Kaniyé. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Turkish drone injured 3 civilians, including a woman, in their home near Hasaka. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, another drone attacked a SDF border guard checkpoint west of Al-Darbasiyah, killing and injuring others.

After a week of relative calm following rocket attacks by regime forces on Turkish bases in late March, Turkish fire also targeted SDF-held villages in northern Aleppo near Minagh. No casualties were reported.

Presumably to prevent further infiltration attempts, the Turks began in the middle of the month to dig trenches between several of their bases in the Zarkan (Tell Tamr) area, provoking protests from local residents, while moving troops and heavy weapons in a way that “gave the impression of an imminent operation” (SOHR). On the 17<sup>th</sup>, a fighter from an Assyrian group affiliated to the

SDF was killed in a Turkish bombing near Tell Tamr, and another fighter and a civilian were injured at a checkpoint by a drone. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, another Turkish strike on an *Asayish* base injured 4 people in Zarkan. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, while Turkish helicopters were flying over the area, more Turkish fire destroyed more than 5 houses near Tell Tamr. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, a Turkish drone struck a Military Council position in Tell Tamr, leaving 3 people seriously injured. The clashes near Zarkan continued almost until the end of the month... On the same day, 3 Kurdish women fighters were killed by a drone in Kobanê, which was bombed again on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is to be noted that the airspace in this area is under Russian control...

On 22 April, the SOHR published a report showing that Turkey, after a quieter month of March, has resumed its drone attacks: 9 of these attacks resulted in 6 deaths and 17 injuries, mostly in Hasaka province. On the same day, violent exchanges of fire took place between the SDF and the Turkish army in the north of Aleppo province: in the morning, rocket fire from areas where SDF and regime forces are deployed targeted the Turkish-controlled area of Marea, killing 3 people in a Turkish armoured vehicle (1 dead and 2 wounded according to other sources). In response, the Turkish army fired more than 50 rockets at AANES-controlled areas in the afternoon, with no casualties. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, fighters from the Manbij Military Council were able to shoot down a Turkish “kamikaze” drone. Two days earlier, a similar drone had injured several Council fighters.

Accusing Turkey of exploiting international events, “especially what is happening in Ukraine”, to “pursue policies hostile to the peoples of the region”, the AANES

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called on the 26<sup>th</sup> for the “*guarantor powers*” of the 2019 ceasefires, the United States and Russia, to prevent Turkish escalation, which risks benefiting ISIS.

Turkish *Jandarma* (gendarmes) have again committed abuses against civilians seeking to flee the war in Syria. Since January, they have murdered 11 Syrians, including 3 children, and injured 20 others. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, according to the SOHR, they tortured to death a father of 4 children on the Idlib border, dumping his body on the Syrian side. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, they beat a group of 4 young men with sticks and electric cables in Darbasiyah.

In addition, the level of the Euphrates has been falling alarmingly since the beginning of April: Turkey, still fighting its “Water War” with the Syrian Kurds, is holding back more and more water in its dams. The SOHR has again warned of an impending environmental and humanitarian disaster.

In their areas of occupation, and in particular in Afrin, the Turkish military and its Syrian auxiliaries continue their abuses aimed at driving out the Kurdish inhabitants in order to carry out their ethnic cleansing. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, the SOHR published a damning report for the month of March, reporting 79 abductions and arbitrary arrests of civilians, including seven women. Seven people were released after paying ransoms. The NGO documented more than 68 other violations, including 37 seizures of houses, shops and land belonging to people displaced by the invasion. Other abuses include 3 houses of IDPs sold by the occupiers, 8 cases of undue taxation of civilians, and 15 cases of cutting down fruit trees totalling over 880 olive trees. The organisation reiterated its call on the international community to intervene immediately to protect

civilians from the systematic violations they are suffering.

Unfortunately, we can expect a similar toll for April, while the *Washington Kurdish Institute* (WKI) has already reported several new kidnappings for ransom at the beginning of the month... The occupiers have also started to consolidate their presence by setting up several “local councils” at their convenience

Jihadist militias working for Ankara continue to show their indiscipline. In the areas occupied since the “Peace Spring” operation, north of Hasaka, intense fighting with automatic weapons has pitted several factions against each other. The incident that triggered this fighting is not without interest: according to the SOHR, it was the death of a militiaman of the “National Army”, eliminated by two commanders of the pro-Turkish military police for having discovered that they were smuggling ISIS jihadists into Turkey in return for payment...

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, a joint military police and Turkish intelligence patrol raided a village in the Jendires district and arrested 3 civilians, including a lawyer accused of having “participated in guard duty” under the Autonomous Administration. There were other reports of molestation of civilians and even torture at checkpoints. A shepherd who came to report the discovery of an explosive device to the militia was accused of planting it and severely mistreated.

In the Sharan district, the Sultan Murad faction has organised the construction of a 360-house residential area for displaced persons from Homs, near a forest that has been completely cut down and the trees sold... Other “National Army” factions are engaged near Bulbul or Jendires in similar projects, all aimed at

accelerating the ongoing anti-Kurdish demographic changes. In general, the new settlements are built on despoiled and destroyed agricultural land, with the owners first forcibly evicted... The houses are then sold to the newcomers. As the stolen land costs nothing, one guesses that the profits are important. Sometimes the militia forcibly seize a house and evict the rightful owners, then divide the house into two or three parts and sell them separately to maximise their profits. In addition, olive trees continue to be cut down by the hundreds (SOHR).

It is in this context that, on 27 April, Turkish President Erdoğan once again threatened to launch yet another military invasion against the Syrian Kurds...

At the same time, ISIS is far from extinct, and even if current events make the jihadist organisation much less prominent in the media, it still poses a persistent danger. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the SOHR documented fifty-nine jihadist attacks since the beginning of 2022 that have left 42 dead: 15 civilians and 27 AANES fighters. This count excludes the attack on Al-Sinaa prison in Hasaka on 20 January, which caused significant casualties.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, the same organisation gave an assessment of ISIS’s activities covering the whole of Syria. Combated simultaneously by the US-led international coalition, the SDF on the ground, Damascus regime forces and its Russian allies, the jihadist organisation has nonetheless been able to assert its presence throughout the country and organise 35 different operations, 23 of which were in the territory controlled by the AANES. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, ISIS announced a terror campaign entitled “The War of Revenge for the Two Sheikhs”, the two leaders killed in early February in US operations. The ISIS attacks left a

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total of 22 dead, including 11 SDF fighters, and 18 wounded civilians and soldiers. In the Syrian desert, despite increasing pressure from Russian airforce, ISIS was able to increase its activities in April, killing 21 pro-regime military and militia personnel in 10 separate attacks, at the cost of 26 of its own members. Since the beginning of 2022, these attacks have killed 191 Damascus forces.

In addition, the SOHR has chosen to focus on the "ISIS hostages", thousands of people kidnapped by the jihadists, such as Father Paolo Daololio, Bishops John Ibrahim and Paul Yazji, Abdullah Al-Khalil, several journalists, including a Briton and a *Sky News* reporter. In addition, hundreds of people were abducted in the regions of Kobanê, Afrin and Deir Ezzor. For the families of these thousands of people who still do

not know the fate of their loved ones, the silence on all sides does not bring any answer, only daily anguish... The SOHR, whose activists are also regularly threatened by the jihadists, has once again renewed its call for international justice: *"We at the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights renew our call to the UN Security Council to refer war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria to the International Criminal Court so that all criminals and murderers of the Syrian people are brought to justice"*.

Despite all the security operations carried out by the Kurdish *Asayish* in Al-Hol camp, new murders are still being committed there by members of ISIS. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the body of a young Iraqi man was found shot with a silencer. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, a Syrian woman was found, also shot dead, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, another Iraqi was seriously

injured. Since the beginning of January, the jihadists have killed 10 people in the camp. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, when General Michael Kurilla, the new commander of US forces in the Middle East, visited al-Hol camp, Kani Ahmed, the local SDF commander, said: *"This camp is like a time bomb. [...] We don't know when it will explode"*. Kurilla then flew by helicopter to Hasaka, some 50 kilometres away, where he visited the Al-Sinaa prison. The American general also met Mazlum Abdi, the main SDF commander, who told the *Washington Post* journalist who came with Kurilla that the SDF *"needs a lot of help"*. According to Abdi, the main American allies on the ground only receive about 20% of their needs, which consist of equipment, but also training (*Washington Post*). According to the SDF, General Kurilla *"pledged to provide more support to secure prisons holding members of ISIS"* (WKI).

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## TURKEY: DEEPENING ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REPRESSION

**B**etween the economic crisis and political repression, the Turks are still suffering. One of the most negative consequences for Turkey of the war in Ukraine is the aggravation of inflation, which was already breaking all records. Soaring oil and agricultural prices have hit an economy that is highly dependent on both Russia and Ukraine (74.8% of wheat consumed in Turkey comes from these two countries). According to official figures published on 3<sup>rd</sup> April by the *Tiik* (Turkish Statistics Office), inflation reached 61% annually for the previous month! This is the highest rate for twenty years. With 99.12% increase in one year, transport is the most affected sector. Even with these extravagant figures, some Turkish economists (and the opposition) accuse the *Tiik* of minimising the increases by more than half... The inflationary spiral is further

exacerbated by the Turkish president's diehard attitude about interest rates. Since the establishment of the presidential regime, Mr Erdoğan has been playing the role of the country's "chief economist", without any counterpower. As an Islamist opposed to interest lending, he imposes very low rates, claiming it improves exports, without taking into account that a large number of raw materials are actually imported. In fact, he is pushing the Turkish lira ever lower and crushing the poorest with suffering. Exports are breaking records, but the country's budget deficit is at an all-time high and the Central Bank has exhausted its foreign exchange reserves. The Turkish lira, which in 2021 had already fallen by 44% against the dollar, has already lost 10% since January...

Bloomberg was pessimistic about the future, stating on the 14<sup>th</sup>: *"Inflation will continue to rise and*

*Turks will become poorer due to a massive loss of purchasing power"* (*Ahval*). A shopkeeper in Mardin, a tourist destination in Turkish Kurdistan, described his situation as follows: *"How do you expect me to get by? People can no longer pay their bills, they are not about to travel and do tourism"...* The Kurdish region, which has long been the poorest in the country, is being hit hard. *"The vicious circle of 'inflation-depreciation-debt' from which the country emerged in the early 2000s is back"* notes *Orient-XXI*. Hence at international level Ankara's serial mending of ties with many of its neighbours, such as Egypt and Israel, and first and foremost with those that can bring it foreign currency: the United Arab Emirates and, most recently, Saudi Arabia, visited on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April by the Turkish President. Vis-à-vis Riyadh, Mr Erdoğan's about-face is total: the transfer of the Khashoggi case to the Saudi judiciary acts as a complete burial of

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an affair that had provoked a near-total Saudi boycott of Turkish imports. It can be said that in this matter, the Turkish President finally had to eat his hat, but in exchange, Turkish imports have restarted... (*Le Monde*).

If internally the war, through its impact on the Turkish economy, risks further aggravating Mr Erdoğan's unpopularity, evident in all opinion polls, internationally it could well offer him opportunities. First of all, in the context of heightened Western-Russian tension, Turkey is once again becoming an indispensable ally on the Alliance's southern flank, and the war in the Black Sea is restoring strategic importance to the Straits (*Orient XXI*). The life sentence on 25<sup>th</sup> April of the Turkish President's *bête noire*, Osman Kavala, shows this: in this new geopolitical position, Mr Erdoğan expects to have a free hand at home to repress as he sees fit. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu confirmed that the UK had lifted the EU-level ban on exports of military equipment to Turkey issued in October 2019 after the Turkish invasion of northern Syria. However, this lifting seems to be the result of the *Brexit* rather than any *détente*... On the American side, Turkey continues to hope for the sale of 40 F-16 fighters, but despite the intense lobbying of the Turkish ambassador in Washington, the war in Ukraine has not made the most ill-disposed senators forget about Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 defence system, and there is little chance that Ankara will get satisfaction... (*Al-Monitor*) Finally, within the very circle of those close to Erdoğan, the war has amplified the rift between pro-NATO and "Eurasians", those nationalist military supporters of an anti-Western Russian alliance...

On the other hand, Turkey is careful not to get too involved against Russia, with which it has many economic ties. Although it closed

the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits at the beginning of March in application of the Montreux Convention, preventing the passage of several Russian ships to the Black Sea, it has not followed the United States or the European Union in their sanctions against Moscow. Economic exchanges continue and Turkish airspace remains open to Russian planes: in 2021, Russian tourists were the first in the country, with 4.6 million visitors... (*Le Monde*) The yachts of the oligarchs are still anchored in Turkish marinas. But if the two leaders share an autocratic vision of power and opposition to the West, Ankara-Moscow relations are not at their best for all that, and the participation of two Turkish *Bayraktar* drones in the Ukrainian attack that sank the cruiser *Moskva* off the coast of Odessa on the 14<sup>th</sup> can do nothing to improve them... "*Defending Kiev without irritating Moscow, the way is narrow*", notes Marie Jégo in *Le Monde*...

Internally, however, the big manoeuvres continue in view of the next presidential and parliamentary elections, all scheduled for June 2023. On 31<sup>st</sup> March, the ruling AKP-MHP alliance passed an amendment to the electoral law lowering the threshold for entering parliament from 10 to 7% of the vote. This provision reflects the government's concern about the recent drop in the MHP's vote estimates, which are now estimated at around 7%... But while it is the one that has attracted the most attention, it is perhaps not the most important provision of the new law. In a statement on 4<sup>th</sup> April denouncing the changes as "only intended to serve the interests of the government", the HDP pointed to a tightening of the conditions imposed on political parties wanting to take part in the consultation. They will have to have held their provincial conventions in 41 provinces at least six months before the vote. The fact that the party had a parliamentary group

before the convention will not be considered sufficient to allow its participation. The law also changes the way parliamentary seats are distributed among alliance members, to the detriment of the opposition. Until now, alliances received proportionally more seats. The new law eliminates alliances from the calculation and considers only each of the parties in isolation, which will give an advantage to the AKP-MHP alliance, consisting of only two large parties, over alliances consisting of more and smaller parties...

The HDP is worried that it will be excluded from the upcoming elections, especially as the judicial harassment against it continues. Earlier this month, the government launched a new case against its former co-chair, Selahattin Demirtaş, imprisoned since November 2016, for messages posted on social networks 9 years ago! For a *tweet* positively mentioning Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan during the peace process with the Turkish government, the prosecutor requested one to five years in prison... (*WKI*)

At the same time, the security forces, whether gendarmes, police or military, continue to use regular and unjustified violence against the Kurds. On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, special police units launched several raids in different parts of Cizre (Býrnak) and the surrounding villages. In Cizre itself, they broke down the door of the local HDP office, which they searched for two hours, before taking nine people into custody, including local branch co-chair Mesut Nart and Esmer Çýkmaz, whose daughter, Yasemin Çýkmaz, had been executed in 2016 in Cizre's basements by security forces. The same afternoon, the HDP regional leadership condemned the particularly violent raids in a press conference during which MP Nuran İmir addressed the

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government, vowing that the HDP would not give in: *"We will continue to be your nightmare"*, she said.

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the HDP was one of the only Turkish political parties to denounce the Turkish army's new invasion of entire regions of Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of fighting the PKK, saying that these attacks, far from solving the country's problems, would *"on the contrary aggravate [its] economic, political and social problems [...]"*. HDP spokeswoman Ebru Günay also denounced CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's support for the Turkish invasion: *"Look at the reaction of the opposition leader. Is this your solution to the Kurdish problem?"*.

At the same time, nearly 80 Kurds and HDP members were arrested, mainly in Diyarbakir, but also in Adana and Van, on suspicion of "terrorism", and the assets of 90 people, mainly HDP officials, were frozen in the framework of the ongoing "Kobane investigation" (WKI).

In another example of violence by the security forces, in Van, 25-year-old Yakup Avan testified that the gendarmes broke into his house on the night of 2 February, beat him and imprisoned him after shooting his horse. The medical report issued by the hospital mentions several broken fingers, broken bones in both wrists and multiple bruises (*Duvar*). On the other hand, at Karaman University, a group of "Grey Wolves", the fascist organisation linked to the MHP, attacked on 1<sup>st</sup> April Kurdish students who were dancing to Kurdish music in their dormitory (*Evrensel*). Not only did the governor of the province take no action against the attackers, preferring to deny any incident, but the rector of the university, Namık Ak, even went to the office of the Grey Wolves of Karaman on the 6<sup>th</sup>! Faced with such impunity, one of the attacked students, traumatised, interrupt-

ed his studies to return to Diyarbakir, where his family filed a complaint (*Stockholm Center for Freedom - SCF*). HDP MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu denounced this situation in parliament.

In another case of anti-Kurdish discrimination, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, a secondary school teacher in Mersin, Hüdaî Morsümbül, was dismissed for speaking Arabic and Kurdish with his students and encouraging them to choose the optional Kurdish language courses. He said he had only informed his students of the rules. He was also criticised for talking about the Islamic leader Saladin in class: his pupils had asked about him after discovering on the Internet that Saladin was a Kurd.

Other violence continues to target Kurdish political prisoners even in their cells. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the family of Ferhan Yılmaz, imprisoned for a year in Silivri, announced that he had been killed two days before his release. According to his brother Hikmet, the prison administration initially claimed a heart attack, but the condition of the body that the family saw in hospital showed tell-tale bruises: *"Blood was flowing from under his eyes, they had stuffed his nose with cotton wools to prevent the blood from coming out"*, Hikmet said, before adding that his brother's internal organs had exploded: *"Two days before my brother, they brought in two other [prisoners] dead. They killed them all together, but they did not take them to the hospital together so that no one would know" ...* Furthermore, several HDP and CHP MPs had been prevented from visiting the prison (*Kurdistan au Féminin*)

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, CHP MP Sezgin Tanrıku, known for his human rights activities, published a report listing violations that occurred in March. According to the report, 281 incidents of torture and ill-treatment took place in the country, including 51 in prisons.

In addition, 23 people were detained for expressing their opinions, including on social media, of whom 3 were subsequently investigated, and the police arrested 813 participants in demonstrations... As for convictions, these affected 7 journalists, 5 people who used their freedom of expression and 7 participants in demonstrations...

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, a bomb attack on a bus carrying prison guards killed one and injured four in Bursa. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu identified the perpetrator on a TV channel two days later as the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), of which he declared: *"[It is] a terrorist organisation linked to the PKK which acts as its subcontractor"* (*AFP*), a way of justifying *a posteriori* the anti-PKK operations recently launched in Iraq...

Finally, the government continues to deny the Armenian genocide of 1915 and to prohibit any commemoration of it. The events are usually remembered on 24<sup>th</sup> April, when the first Armenian intellectuals were arrested. When HDP MP Garo Paylan, himself Armenian, tabled a bill in parliament on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to recognise the genocide (for the seventh time), not only did it meet fierce opposition from the AKP (parliamentary speaker Mustafa Şentop refused to allow it to be discussed), but Paylan was personally threatened the next day by AKP spokesman Ömer Çelik. At the same time, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, who was on an official visit to Uruguay, made the Grey Wolves sign with his hand in front of Armenian diaspora demonstrators, causing a diplomatic incident (WKI). Meanwhile, the Turkish Foreign Ministry condemned US President Joe Biden's recent use of the term "genocide" as *"incompatible with historical facts" ...* (*Bianet*)

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, a planned ceremony at the Armenian cemetery in



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Istanbul was banned by the provincial governor. Garo Paylan regretted this, saying: *"Turkish policy wants us to remain silent. But we won't. We will continue to remember our ancestors"*. Meral Yildiz, a member of the 24<sup>th</sup> April Commemoration Platform, added: *"It is important to face the past because without commemorating 24 April and the Armenian Genocide, there will unfortunately be no end to these pains. What was done first to the Armenians, then to the Kurds and Alevis, is now being tried on Syrian migrants"* (Euronews). In France, the genocide was officially recognised by a law on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2001. In Turkey itself, from the 1990s onwards, Kurdish

local councillors, particularly in Diyarbakir, began a long process of remembrance marked by commemorations and strong symbolic acts, such as the restoration of Armenian monuments, the recognition of the genocide, and even public apologies on behalf of the Kurdish people. In the destruction perpetrated by the Turkish army in 2015-2016, for example on the old town of Diyarbakir, there is a dimension of willingness to destroy the multicultural memory of the region, as the state seized the opportunity to pull down the Surp Giragos Armenian church, restored with the support of the municipality, and the Kurdish-Armenian "Monument of

Common Consciousness", erected just two years before (*The Conversation*).

Will this have any practical effect? A Council of State prosecutor ruled on 28<sup>th</sup> April that Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on Women's Rights by means of a presidential decree was "illegal". Women's associations and several bar associations in the country had argued that since Turkey had ratified the Convention in parliament, it was *"a constitutional obligation that the withdrawal should also be done through the will of parliament"* (Duvar). We will have to wait and see if this is really good news or a non-event...

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## IRAQ:

### PERSISTENT POLITICAL STALEMATE AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE TURKISH INVASION AND THE DETERIORATING INTERNAL SITUATION

**T**he month of April was dominated by the persistence of the political deadlock around the issue of the untraceable Iraqi president and government, while the fragmentation of the Iraqi political landscape has further increased: two of the country's three main communities, Shiites and Kurds, are now divided into two opposing trends. Thus, while the KDP has joined the Sadrist alliance "Salvation of the Homeland", the PUK is leaning towards the "Coordination Framework" of pro-Iranian Shiite parties. And above all, the two Kurdish parties are still opposed on the choice of the president, each defending its candidate.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March, the parliament failed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time to appoint a president, a prerequisite for the formation of the future government. The next day, Moqtada Sadr, accusing his Shiite opposition of "obstructing" his attempts to form a majority government, preferred to hand the problem over to it, giving it 40

days to succeed. He knew full well that, with only 70 seats in the assembly, the "Coordination Framework" has little chance of succeeding: he had itself failed with 74 seats and an alliance with Mohammed Halbousi's Sunni coalition (62 seats) and the KDP (31 seats). The 167 out of 329 seats thus obtained did not reach the two-thirds majority needed to appoint a president (*Al-Monitor*). But Sadr, who still wants to put an end to the "consensus governments" that have ruled Iraq since 2003, has rejected all offers of an alliance between the two blocs.

The pro-Iranian parties chose former Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki to start negotiations with the Iraqi and Kurdish parties. But as the days passed without progress, talk of early elections began in Baghdad (*WKI*). By the end of the month, no progress had been made...

This political stalemate persists as the country faces an unprecedented food crisis in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Rising world

prices have tripled Iraq's grain import bill in 2021-2022, from \$900 million to \$3 billion. This coincides with a severe drought that caused a poor harvest in 2021 for 37% of farmers, forcing the government to increase wheat imports. Iraq's inefficient food distribution programmes have exacerbated these problems. The public food distribution system can only be sustained if oil prices remain high enough to fund it.

Concerning oil, Iraq is paradoxically exposed to fuel shortages, because it refines very little locally and exports crude. The price of fuel varies greatly depending on the region. While Baghdad has subsidised it to keep it low in the centre of the country, prices have doubled in Kurdistan, causing queues at petrol stations there and in neighbouring cities such as Mosul. Politically, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is said to be closer to the West than the one in Baghdad, but it also has links with Russia: the Russian company *Rosneft* has a 60% stake in Kurdistan's main

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oil pipeline. Moreover, unlike Western countries, Russia did not oppose the KRG's independence referendum in September 2017... (*International Crisis Group*).

Western attempts to impose an embargo on Russian oil exports have led to an unprecedented interest in the hydrocarbons of Iraqi Kurdistan. At the same time, Turkey has seen its unique "Eurasian" situation enhanced, making it the obligatory point of passage for all exports to Europe. This point was certainly on the agenda of the discussions between the Turkish President and the Prime Minister of Kurdistan, Masrour Barzani, who was received by the former in Istanbul on the 17<sup>th</sup>... At the end of March, the Kurdish Prime Minister had declared that Iraqi Kurdistan was going to "become a net exporter of gas to the rest of Iraq, Turkey and Europe in the near future and contribute to meeting their energy security needs".

This new economic importance does not only have beneficial effects. Already, on 12<sup>th</sup> March, missile attacks claimed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards had hit Erbil. This attack was generally interpreted as a retaliatory measure against the KDP for its support of Moqtada Sadr against the pro-Iranian Shiite parties. But it could also have "oil" causes: at least one of the missiles hit a villa belonging to Sheik Baz Karim Barzinji, CEO of the Kurdish oil company *Kar*. According to an Iraqi security source quoted by *Reuters*, it was used as a meeting place between the Americans and Israelis about a new gas pipeline through Turkey... If such a project were to see the light of day – there is talk of 2025 – Kurdish oil and gas would be in direct competition with Iranian production... (*Al-Monitor*)

Then on 28<sup>th</sup> March, PDK's

Baghdad office was attacked and burned down by pro-Iranian demonstrators. The Kurdish party finally decided not to rehabilitate the building and to close its offices in the Iraqi capital altogether (*Al-Monitor*). Finally, three weeks after the Iranian strike on Erbil, three *Katyusha* rockets landed on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> near one of the most important refineries in Kurdistan, in Kawergosk (20 km northwest of Erbil). They were fired from the outskirts of Mosul. The attack has not been claimed but it bears the signature of pro-Iranian militias.

The management of Kurdistan's oil remains a point of serious disagreement between Baghdad and Erbil, further dramatised by the Iraqi Supreme Court's decision on 15<sup>th</sup> February to invalidate as "unconstitutional" the Kurdistan oil and gas law adopted in 2007. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a high-level KRG delegation, headed by the Minister of State for Negotiations with the Federal Government, Khalid Shwani, went to Baghdad for discussions on this issue. During the joint press conference following the meeting, Shwani declared this first round of talks "constructive", while Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar Ismail said he had proposed the transfer of the contracts signed by the KRG Ministry of Natural Resources to a federally-owned oil company that could be called the *Kurdistan [Region] Oil Company (KROC)*. The Iraqi Oil Minister added that "the revenues from the sale of oil would be paid into an account in one of the international banks owned by the Ministry of Finance. [This would be a] payment security account, an escrow account, which would guarantee the payment of the revenues to the Kurdish people, in case the Federal Ministry of Finance was late in sending them" (*Rûdaw*). On the 13<sup>th</sup>, after discussing the Baghdad meeting, the KRG in an official statement instructed the

delegation to "continue the discussions, while stressing the importance of defending the constitutional rights of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq" (*NRT*). But on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Abdul Hakeem Khasro, head of the KRG's Coordination and Monitoring Department, said that the KRG refused Baghdad's request "to establish an oil company of its own in the Region". Khasro said that the KRG offered in exchange to create its own company, equivalent to the Iraqi SOMO, which it called "KOMO", presumably for *Kurdistan Organization for Marketing of Oil (Kurdistan-24)*. Negotiations have apparently not progressed any further this month.

At the same time, Turkey continued its military operations in Iraq. Taking advantage of the political stalemate paralysing Baghdad, it has used the presence of the PKK in the north of the country as a pretext to station even more troops there. According to the Turkish website *Ahval News*, Ankara's objective is to create a "security zone" in northern Iraq based on the model of those already set up in Syria, "60 to 70 kilometres deep", where it could settle permanently through military checkpoints and so-called "temporary military bases". Ankara has already set up more than 40 such bases, some of them for years. *Ahval* also notes that a permanent military presence would also allow Ankara to strengthen its control over Kurdistan's hydrocarbon exports to Europe.

Earlier this month, the governor of the Dinarte (Dohuk) sub-district told the Kurdish TV channel *Rûdaw* that recent Turkish air and artillery strikes had forced the evacuation of 24 villages. The secretary of the Duhok Provincial Council, Said Nerwai, told *Rûdaw* that the Turkish bombardments were creating poverty and unemployment by prevent-

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ing the inhabitants of the villages from going to the mountains to gather herbs or graze their animals... Out of 92 villages in the sub-district of Shiladze (Dohuk), only 7 are still inhabited. All the others have been evacuated for fear of Turkish bombing (*Rûdaw*). More widely, during the three decades of the Turkey-PKK conflict, more than 500 villages had to be evacuated in the Kurdistan Region (WKI). The presence of Turkish bases also generates indirect violence, as for example in Bashiqa, near Mosul, targeted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> by seven rockets which did not cause any victims. This is the fourth attack since the beginning of the year against this base, whose presence is regularly denounced by pro-Iranian militias (RFI).

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Turkish aircraft continued their intense bombing near Shiladze (Dohuk). On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the PKK had reported that dozens of Turkish helicopters had targeted the Zap region, where Ankara had tried to land ground troops, while Ankara announced that it had launched a new operation. According to Warshin Salman, mayor of Amedi, the 17<sup>th</sup> "marks the third week of heavy bombing by Turkey on the region". On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ankara announced that it had launched a new anti-PKK offensive in the Zap mountains early in the morning, officially named Operation *Claw Lock*, supported by ATAK helicopters and drones, and focusing on three areas close to the Turkish border. On the night of the 19<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of airborne commandos and Turkish special forces were dropped on the ground and clashes began.

Baghdad immediately denounced a violation of its sovereignty and summoned the Turkish ambassador to deliver a protest note denouncing "unacceptable violations". Iraqi President Barham Saleh, himself a Kurd, called the Turkish opera-

tion "a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and a threat to national security" (AFP). While on the 20<sup>th</sup> the Turkish President declared that the operation was "carried out in close cooperation with the Iraqi central government and the regional administration of northern Iraq", both parties involved denied any cooperation, which led to the Iraqi ambassador in Ankara being summoned in turn...

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Turkish President claimed that the operation had "neutralised" 45 PKK fighters – a term indicating fighters killed or captured. The PKK has claimed responsibility for the death of 127 Turkish soldiers in Dohuk province since the 18<sup>th</sup> (*Rûdaw*).

In the disputed territories, Kurds continue to face discrimination. This is particularly true in Kirkuk, where the acting Arab governor Rakan Al-Jabouri is particularly active in this respect. Earlier this month, it was reported that on 13<sup>th</sup> March, the anniversary of the chemical bombing of Halabja, he cancelled the project prepared in 2013 by former governor Najmeddine Karim to allocate land to the KRG to build houses for the families of the victims of ISIS and the peshmerga killed during the war against the jihadist organisation... On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Kirkuk Court launched an investigation into the members of the Provincial Council who had been taking part in the independence referendum in September 2017. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the publication of the list of students accepted at the military academy provoked the anger of the Kurds: out of 135 students, there were only 6 Kurds! The majority of the 116 Arab Iraqis accepted belong to the Al-Jabouri tribe... At the same time, the Iraqi Ministry of Education launched an investigation into the province's education department over 23 schools, mainly located in Kurdish areas

of the city, which were renovated but have since received no operating equipment. The director of the office, Abed Al-Jabouri, is facing accusations of corruption in other matters...

Another recurrent problem in these territories is the presence of ISIS. The inhabitants of the villages located between the lines of the Kurdish peshmergas and the Iraqi military live in terror of jihadist attacks, and a large number of them, feeling totally abandoned, prefer to leave rather than continually risk their lives... After a slightly calmer period at the end of March, the attacks intensified again this month, particularly in Kirkuk, in the regions of Hawija and Daquq. An Iraqi officer was killed on 22 March in Rashad and an Iraqi soldier injured on 24<sup>th</sup> March in Daquq. In Sargaran, another attack left one Iraqi soldier dead and two wounded, while the inhabitants of the Kurdish village of Al-Mansour (Daquq) managed to repel another attack on their own at the cost of one wounded person.

Further attacks by ISIS took place at the end of the month in Khanaqin, where 3 members of a Sunni militia were killed and 9 injured on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. By the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>, 3 Iraqi soldiers had already been killed in Jalawla and 7 injured. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2 civilians were killed and 3 injured by an IED near the village of Madan. In Tuz Khurmatu, 4 shepherds were abducted, but one was able to escape quickly and the other 3 were later released. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2 members of a pro-Iranian militia were killed at the town's airbase and 3 others were injured. In Mahmoud, 2 Iraqi soldiers were wounded on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and 2 shepherds from the village of Pir Mehdi were abducted.

At the end of the month, the plan to deploy joint Kurdish-Iraqi units

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had still not been implemented. The peshmergas have been transferred to the Iraqi Ministry of Defence five months ago, but the Ministry still refuses to pay them. They have been demonstrating to claim their back pay.

Finally, the situation in Sinjar (*Shengal*) remains tense to say the least, as the Baghdad government continues to try to implement the October 2020 agreement with the KRG to disarm the militias. On 7<sup>th</sup> July, the director of the IDP office in Dohuk reported that 400 Yezidi families had asked to leave their homes again and return to camps in the province because of the lack of

public services and the security situation in Sinjar. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, clashes broke out between the Iraqi army and the Yezidi security force *Ezdixan*, which is close to the PKK. They continued intermittently for several days, with injuries on both sides (*Bas News, WKI*). At the end of the month, the Iraqi army appeared to be concentrating on launching a new attack with tanks and heavy weapons against the PKK-backed YBŞ. Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, facing massive public opposition, suspended his earlier decision to appoint the governor of Nineveh province as interim mayor. Sinjar remains without a

mayor since Mehma Khalil (KDP) won a parliamentary seat in the October 2021 elections.

Concerning economic projects in Kurdistan, the Minister of Construction Dana Abdul Karim has commissioned an economic feasibility study from a Spanish company on an important railway project. In the first phase, it is planned to create a line linking the Ibrahim Khalil border post with Turkey to the Parwezkhan crossing point to Iran, a project whose study, planned before the pandemic, had been delayed by it. In a later phase, the project should link the main cities of Kurdistan.

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## IRAN: VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS HALTED, ECONOMIC CRISIS WORSENS, ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS IN KURDISTAN CONTINUE

**A**s the economic situation in Iran continues to worsen, more and more Iranians are falling into poverty. In his inaugural speech, the ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi blamed his predecessor for a situation he promised to improve. Eight months later, his promises have remained unfulfilled. At the beginning of April, his government even announced a 25 to 35% increase in transport prices for the 21<sup>st</sup>. Even the pro-regime media, known for playing down the figures, are forced to acknowledge that inflation is “over 40%” and that the unemployment rate is “over 12%”.

A lifting of US sanctions might bring an improvement, but it depends on the success of the Vienna talks on the nuclear programme, which have been suspended since 11<sup>th</sup> March, after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on 5<sup>th</sup> March sought assurances from Washington that sanctions against his country would not impede “*Russia’s free and full cooperation with Iran in the*

*fields of trade, economy, investment, defence and technology*”.

After bilateral talks with Tehran, Russia lowered its demands, but very quickly the resumption of talks came up against another problem: Iran is demanding the removal of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Pasdaran*) from the State Department’s list of terrorist groups, where the Trump administration had put them in 2019. The United States does not seem ready to take such a decision, especially as both Democrats and Republicans in Congress are increasingly opposed to the direction of the negotiations with Tehran...

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, Tehran announced sanctions against 24 US officials, the majority of whom have served in the Trump administration. All are accused of supporting anti-Iranian “*terrorist activities*” (*Reuters*).

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh called for the resumption of talks “*as soon as*

*possible*”, but by the end of the month, nothing had happened. As RFI notes, for weeks now, the agreement has been “*imminent*”, but nothing has happened... The paradox is that a success would suit all parties: Iran needs a lifting of sanctions, and the West, which wants to free itself from Russian hydrocarbons, would welcome the return of Iranian oil to the market...

In the country, demonstrations against the high cost of living are multiplying. In particular, teachers marched by the thousands in more than a hundred towns across 24 provinces, and especially in the towns of Iranian Kurdistan, such as Baneh, Bokan, Ilam, Kamyaran, Kermanschah, Marivan, Sanandaj, Saqqez, or even Sardasht...

The protests are making the regime increasingly nervous, and it has just appointed former *Pasdaran* commander Hassan Askari, known according to the PDKI for his role in the crack-down on the 2019 protests in Kurdish towns, as head of securi-

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ty in the large Kurdish town of Sanandaj.

Despite the worsening poverty, the repressive forces remain merciless to the cross-border porters, the *kolbars*, whom they continue to systematically shoot in the mountains. In its latest monthly report, the KHRN says that in March, at least one *kolbar* was killed and 11 others injured by Iranian border guards. According to the *Hengaw* human rights organisation, at least 52 were killed and 163 injured in 2021. On the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> April, the *Kurdistan Human Rights Network* (KHRN) reported that protests broke out in Paveh (Pawa) shortly after 3 *kolbars* were shot and injured. By this time, at least 4 *kolbars* had already been injured since 1<sup>st</sup> April.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, another porter was killed in an ambush on his group near Nowsud. The *Hengaw* Human Rights Organisation reported that 3 *kolbars* had died and 34 had been injured in only the previous two weeks. Despite the large number of *kolbars* regularly killed by border guards, the authorities have never seriously investigated these killings and seem to be completely uninterested (*Rûdaw*). At the end of the month, several *kolbars* had been killed and almost fifty injured. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) counted at least 17 wounded near Nowsud (Kermanshah) in a single week.

Throughout the month, security forces have arrested many people in Iranian Kurdistan. The Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) estimated the number of arrests of Kurdish activists this month to be at least 120. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the village of Karkhaneh-ye Qand (Piranshahr), 5 youths including a 17 year old girl were arrested and taken to the city for questioning, without a warrant,

according to witnesses. The reason for the arrest is not known (KHRN). Only on the 6<sup>th</sup> it was reported that 7 residents of Nalous had been summoned and interrogated on 30<sup>th</sup> March in Oshnavieh for participating in the Newrouz. They were released after questioning. On 9<sup>th</sup> March in Baneh, 2 brothers were arrested at their workplace and taken to an unknown location. Finally, at the end of the month, the *Pasdaran* intelligence services preventively arrested a large number of activists in anticipation of the May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations. *Etelaat* (Intelligence) agents warned several trade union activists not to participate in International Workers' Day activities. In Baneh, 6 women's and workers' rights activists were arrested and their houses searched. Some items were confiscated from them and 5 of them were taken to the detention centre of the *pasdaran* in Sanandaj. The provincial security office said on 29 September that it had identified and arrested "*the core of the communist terrorist group Komala*". In Saqqez, the well-known militant Osman Ismael was arrested a few days before 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Finally, several Kurdish activists arrested for organising the Newrouz celebrations were released on bail.

The courts also handed down numerous convictions throughout April. In Oshnavieh, on the 4<sup>th</sup> the Criminal Court sentenced 3 Kurdish defendants, the first to 8 years in prison and a fine of 9 million tomans (€2,000) for "*collaboration with an anti-regime party and carrying an illegal weapon*" and the other 2 to 6 months for "*collaboration with an anti-regime party*". On the 5<sup>th</sup>, 2 other defendants were sentenced to 4 and 2 years respectively for the same charge. It was also learned on the 6<sup>th</sup> only of several convictions handed down at the end of March: in separate trials, 2 Oshnavieh residents were each

given 2 years for the same charges on 27<sup>th</sup> March (HRANA). Other residents of Oshnavieh and Naghadeh received sentences of several months imprisonment on April 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, again for "*collaboration with an anti-regime party*" or "*propaganda against the regime in favour of an anti-regime political party*". Other sentences of several months and one year in prison were handed down in Naghadeh and Baneh respectively. In Urmia, the trial of 21 Kurds arrested in 2021 and tried for "*belonging to anti-regime political parties*" started on the 19<sup>th</sup>. In Kamyaran, 4 people were each sentenced to 3 months in prison only for attending the funeral of Kurdish activist Haider Qurbana, executed by the regime in late 2021.

Regarding death sentences, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the death sentence against PKK member Hatem Özdemir was upheld on appeal in Urmia. Özdemir had been seriously wounded and taken prisoner in an ambush by the *Pasdaran* of his guerrilla unit on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019. Another prisoner held in Urmia has also been sentenced to death: Firaz Mousallou had surrendered to the Iranian authorities in 2019 after an amnesty promise. He is to be executed for "*rebellion against God and the State*" and membership of the PKK or PDKI.

According to a joint report published on 28<sup>th</sup> by the two NGOs *Iran Human Rights* (Norway), and *Ensemble contre la peine de mort* (France), the number of executions in Iran increased by 25% in 2021, with at least 333 executions against "only" 267 the previous year. The rate also accelerated after the arrival in power of Ebrahim Raissi, himself accused of crimes against humanity for his participation in the mass executions of prisoners in the 1980s. The report states that more than 80% of the executions have not been officially announced,

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including all that are drug-related. There are 17 women among those executed in 2021, many of them convicted of murdering their husbands, which suggests situations of abuse or domestic violence. The report also draws attention to the disproportionate number of executions of members of Iran's ethnic minorities. Most of the prisoners executed for security reasons belonged to the Arab, Baluchi and Kurdish ethnic minorities. Baluchis accounted for 21% of all executions in 2021, while they are only 2-6% of the population... The only positive news in the report is that public executions have been stopped this year for the first time in 10 years – but there is no certainty that it will be permanent (*Rûdaw*).

Meanwhile, the situation for detainees in Iranian prisons remains dire, and according to the *Human Rights Activist News Agency (HRANA)*, many have gone on hunger strike this month in protest. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, Mehdi Sane-Farshi went on hunger strike in Urmia prison to protest against the increasing pressure on political prisoners and the confiscation

of his belongings in prison. Arrested in August 2020 while he had come from Turkey to visit his mother, he was sentenced in November of the same year to 5 years imprisonment for “collaboration with one of the anti-regime groups and propaganda against the regime”. On the same day, the German-Iranian prisoner Jamshid Sharmahd was finally able to call his family, after 7 months of isolation and daily interrogations. According to his relatives, he is in a deplorable state of health and does not receive his medication in sufficient quantities or on time. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, political prisoner Soheila Hijab, currently detained at the Kermanshah Correctional Centre, announced in an open letter that she had started a hunger strike after being beaten by guards and denied access to her family. Hijab is serving an 18-year prison sentence for “propaganda against the regime”, “illegal assembly”, “inciting public opinion to riot” and “organising illegal political groups”. On the same day, *HRANA* reported that Shaker Behrouz and Nayeb Askari, also in Urmia prison, went on hunger strike on 31<sup>st</sup> March. Behrouz, sentenced to death for the murder

of a member of the *pasdaran* despite an alibi, was protesting against his transfer to the wing for violent common-law prisoners. Askari was protesting against the refusal of the prison authorities to send him to a hospital outside the prison, despite the advice of the prison doctor.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> it was reported that Milad Jafari, a 25-year-old Kurdish man from Kermanshah, who had been imprisoned in Tehran on 7<sup>th</sup> April on “drug-related” charges, had died suspiciously in a police detention centre. Forensics told his family he had fallen during his arrest, but photos seen by his relatives showed bruising on his body and bleeding on his face, leading them to conclude that Jafari had died under torture. They refused to take the body until they received the results of the autopsy (*Kurdistan au Féminin*). On the 20<sup>th</sup> Majid Keshvari, imprisoned in the Central Penitentiary of Greater Tehran, attempted to commit suicide by hanging after being refused surgery and had to be hospitalised. He is mentally ill and had already attempted to commit suicide in the past.

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## OSMAN KAVALA SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN ISTANBUL WITH AN EMPTY INDICTMENT FILE

**A**fter 1,637 days in detention – more than four and a half years – Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala was sentenced on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April in Istanbul to life imprisonment for “attempting to overthrow the government”. His seven co-defendants, accused of supporting him, were sentenced to 18 years in prison for “complicity”. The judges said in their verdict that the accused would not be eligible for any remission. Their decision, made after less than an hour's deliberation, was met with boos in the courtroom.

Osman Kavala's lawyers, who

have consistently argued for acquittal for lack of evidence, have stated their intention to appeal. They recalled that the judges had never even asked the accused “where he was” during the events of which he is accused.

Kavala himself, who followed the hearing by teleconference from his cell in Silivri, a suburb of Istanbul, denounced at the close of the proceedings a “judicial assassination” against his person, the use of “conspiracy theories, put forward for political and ideological reasons”, and above all the influence of President Erdoğan on his trial.

The Contemporary Turkish Lawyers Association (CHD) called on lawyers to participate in a vigil in front of the courthouse to protest against the verdict. For his part, Kemal Kılıçdarođlu, leader of the opposition Kemalist Party (CHP), said: “This government, which has descended on the country like a nightmare, continues to trample on the law”.

Already on the 16<sup>th</sup>, in a premonitory manner, the German Minister of Culture and Media, Claudia Roth, who had come to participate in the *Mediterranean Literature Days*, a literary seminar organised in Bodrum, mentioned

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Kavala in her speech: “Good morning Osman Kavala, good morning my dear friend; we would have liked you to be here today because your place is not in prison. Your place should have been here today...”.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the PEN Club France issued a statement demanding the immediate release of all those convicted in the Gezi trial. At the top of the statement is this short text by the writer Aslı Erdoğan: “Many people use the words freedom, equality and democracy; but very few are willing to devote their time, energy and money to these ideas. Osman Kavala is one of them. He has dedicated his whole life to freedom, equality and democracy. He is the true friend of Kurds and Armenians, of the underprivileged and oppressed, of Arts and artists, of

culture, of land and trees... He has always been and will always be the true friend of the truth. The only people who deserve to be tried in a court of law for what happened in Gezi are the police and the violence with which they killed civilians, including a fourteen- year old, and injured thousands. And of course those, whoever they are, who gave the order to act with such violence”.

PEN’s press release recalls who Kavala is and what its activities have been, in terms that are worth quoting here:

“Highly committed to the defence of cultural and human rights, Osman Kavala had established the Anadolu Kültür cultural centre in the predominantly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir in 2002. With his team, in which the writer Aslı Erdoğan

was also involved, he promoted Kurdish culture as well as Armenian culture. Anadolu Kültür had an impact on the whole of Turkey and worked for the recognition of cultural diversity as a richness.

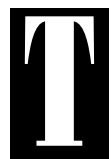
“Osman Kavala was very active in the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

“He also founded several publishing houses, including İliteşim Yayinlari, in the spirit of changing society and defending democracy after the September 1980 coup”.

It is undoubtedly this commitment to “minority” cultures in Turkey that the Erdoğan government has not forgiven Osman Kavala, and this is the real reason for his conviction.

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## RECENT PUBLICATION: : A RESEARCH REPORT ON THE KURDS OF TURKEY



The *Values and Attitudes among Kurds* report of the *Kurdish Studies Center* has just been published.

This is a “general public” version of a field research, which was carried out by *Rawest Research* with the support of the German Heinrich Böll Institute (*Heinrich Böll Stiftung*) in Istanbul. Based on empirical data collected in 11 cities, the report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the values and attitudes of Kurds over the age of 18, and to present the similarities and differences between them and Turkish society. The most general result of the

report is that the Kurds, in addition to the similarities and differences they have with the rest of Turkey, also differ from each other according to factors such as world view, political tendency, migration and sometimes gender. While some results could be expected, such as the fact that more than half of the participants state that they are not very satisfied with their living situation, others are less expected, such as the existence of a still quite strong religiosity among the Kurds supporting the HDP. The report also points to the existence of significant generational differences: the gap between the participants’ level of education and that of their parents is

greater than in the rest of Turkey. Not surprisingly, the majority of the participants in the survey believe that Kurds and Turks are not equal before the State... Finally, “the most frequently expressed demand by the participants concerning the Kurdish issue is [the right to use] their mother tongue. This appears to be the common demand of all Kurds, regardless of their opinions”.

The full report can be downloaded in PDF format by following this link:

<https://tr.boell.org/index.php/en/2022/03/30/values-and-attitudes-among-kurds>



## Femmes interdites de stade: des voix demandent que la Fifa exclue l'Iran du Mondial

Opposants et ONG ont demandé à la Fédération internationale de football (Fifa) de sanctionner l'Iran, voire de lui interdire de participer à la prochaine Coupe du monde au Qatar, après les nouvelles interdictions de stade à l'encontre des femmes mardi dernier.

L'Iran a de nouveau refusé à des femmes l'entrée d'un stade de football pour assister au match remporté 2 à 1 par la sélection iranienne face au Liban dans le cadre des qualifications pour le Mondial-2022, ont rapporté des médias iraniens mercredi.

"Environ 2.000 femmes iraniennes, qui avaient acheté des billets pour le match Iran-Liban, étaient présentes dans le périmètre du stade Imam Reza (à Mashhad, Nord-Est, NDLR), mais n'ont pas pu entrer dans le stade", a indiqué l'agence de presse ISNA.

Des opposants iraniens en exil ont accusé les autorités d'avoir dispersé les femmes qui protestaient en employant des bombes de gaz lacrymogène.

Le groupe United for Navid, créé en hommage au lutteur Navid Afkari, 27 ans, pendu en septembre 2020 malgré un tollé international, a déclaré que l'Iran, qualifié pour le Mondial-2022 depuis fin janvier, devrait être privé de rencontres de football international jusqu'à ce qu'il change sa position.

### - Apartheid -

"Nous demandons formellement à la Fifa de suspendre immédiatement l'Iran et d'interdire sa participation à la Coupe



Une supportrice iranienne pose avec le maillot de son équipe nationale avant le tirage au sort du Mondial à Doha, le 1er avril 2022

du monde 2022 tant que la Fédération iranienne de football violera la charte olympique et les règles de la Fifa", selon un courrier envoyé au secrétaire général de l'instance mondiale de football, Mattias Grafström.

Ce courrier, dont l'AFP a obtenu copie vendredi, affirme que l'Iran s'était engagé auprès de la Fifa à mettre un terme à sa politique "d'apartheid" en autorisant les femmes à assister aux matches.

"L'Iran n'est pas uniquement revenu sur sa parole (...) mais en plus, les femmes sont frappées et menacées", selon la lettre.

L'ONG Human Rights Watch a de son côté demandé à la Fifa que l'Iran mette rapidement un terme à sa pratique "discriminatoire". "Vues les violations répétées commises par les autorités iraniennes, la Fifa doit suivre ses propres recommandations sur la non-discrimination et devrait envisager des pénalités à l'encontre de l'Iran",

mière fois en près de trois ans, lors des éliminatoires de la Coupe du monde entre l'Iran et l'Irak.

Depuis 40 ans, la république islamique interdit généralement aux spectatrices d'assister à des matches de football.

Les religieux, qui jouent un rôle majeur dans la prise de décision, soutiennent que les femmes doivent être protégées de l'atmosphère masculine et de la vue des hommes en tenue de sport, dont le corps est donc partiellement visible.

La Fifa avait ordonné à l'Iran en septembre 2019 d'autoriser l'accès des femmes aux stades sans restriction après la mort d'une supportrice qui s'était immolée par le feu de peur d'être emprisonnée pour avoir tenté d'assister à un match. En 2018, elle avait été arrêtée alors qu'elle tentait d'entrer dans un stade habillée en garçon. Sa mort avait déclenché un tollé.

Le lutteur Navid Afkari, qui avait remporté des compétitions nationales, avait été exécuté pour meurtre commis lors de manifestations deux ans auparavant. Ses aveux lui avaient été arrachés sous la torture, avait-il dénoncé.

En attendant une hypothétique décision de la FIFA, le tirage au sort effectué vendredi à Doha a placé dans le même groupe l'Iran et les Etats-Unis. Les deux pays entretiennent des relations exécrables et tentent notamment de relancer le pacte sur le nucléaire iranien de 2015, dans des négociations en cours depuis plusieurs mois à Vienne.



## Turquie. À Istanbul, Sainte-Sophie renoue avec les prières nocturnes du ramadan

**R**econvertie en mosquée par le président turc en juillet 2020, l'ancienne basilique de Sainte-Sophie va accueillir cette année les premières prières nocturnes du ramadan depuis quatre-vingt-huit ans. Ces prières dites tarawih et considérées comme non obligatoires mais néanmoins encouragées par les figures religieuses sont effectuées chaque soir durant le mois du jeûne de ramadan, qui s'étend cette année du 2 avril au 2 mai.



a basilique Sainte-Sophie, ou Ayasofya, à Istanbul, le 28 juin 2020.  
PHOTO / Murad Sezer / REUTERS

L'année précédente, la pandémie de Covid-19 avait empêché les célébrations à l'intérieur de l'édifice. "Mais cette année, tout a été préparé", se réjouit le quotidien progouvernemental Sabah, qui souligne que le lieu a été décoré pour l'occasion et notamment paré d'une inscrip-

tion lumineuse accrochée entre les minarets proclamant "Il n'y a de Dieu que Dieu".

"Grâce soit rendue à Dieu. Pour la première fois en quatre-vingt-huit ans, la mosquée Sainte-Sophie accueillera les croyants pour les prières de tarawih ce rama-

dan. Je serai témoin, si Dieu le veut, de ce beau moment en dirigeant la première prière de tarawih", s'est réjoui Ali Erbas, chef du Diyanet, la présidence des affaires religieuses, un organisme public qui gère le culte en Turquie, cité par le quotidien Milliyet.

### Attirer les conservateurs

Construite au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle sur les ruines d'une église qui aurait elle-même été édifée à la place d'un ancien temple dédié au culte d'Apollon, la basilique, juchée sur une colline qui domine la mer de Marmara à l'embouchure de la Corne d'Or et du Bosphore, est un des monuments symboliques de la ville.

Convertie en mosquée après la prise de Constantinople par les Ottomans en 1453, elle avait été transformée en musée en 1934 par Mustafa Kemal, le fondateur de la République turque, avant d'être reconverte en mosquée par Erdogan dans une tentative de se concilier l'opinion d'une partie des conservateurs et des nationalistes turcs.

**LE FIGARO**

4 avril 2022

Par Anne Cheyvialle

## L'inflation turque bat un nouveau record à 61 %

Aggravée ces dernières semaines par la guerre en Ukraine, les prix n'en finissent plus de s'envoler en Turquie.

**L**a hausse des prix n'en finit pas de s'envoler en Turquie, aggravée ces dernières semaines par la guerre en Ukraine, qui fait flamber les cours du pétrole et des matières premières agricoles. Le taux d'inflation a battu un nouveau record en mars, atteignant 61,4 % sur un an, selon des statistiques officielles publiées lundi, après avoir atteint 54,4 % un mois plus tôt. L'office statistique fait état d'une hausse de plus de 99 % du prix des transports en un an et de plus de 70 % dans l'alimentaire.

L'économie, très dépendante des importations pour son approvisionnement énergétique et alimentaire, l'est en particulier vis-à-vis de la Russie et de l'Ukraine. Plus de 60 % des achats de céréales viennent du grenier de la mer Noire. Une proportion qui atteint 74,8 % pour le blé, dont 10,6 % d'Ukraine.

La spirale inflationniste est aussi alimentée depuis plusieurs mois par la dépréciation de la monnaie, consécutive d'une politique jusqu'au-boutiste du président

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui refuse catégoriquement de relever les taux d'intérêt pour soutenir coûte que coûte la fragile croissance dans la perspective de l'élection présidentielle, prévue en juin 2023. La livre, qui a perdu 44 % de sa valeur en 2021, est encore plus sous tension depuis le déclenchement du conflit, accusant une baisse supplémentaire de 6 %.

Des économistes turcs et étrangers accusent l'office national des statistiques (Tüik) de sous-

estimer de plus de la moitié l'ampleur des hausses de prix. Le président turc multiplie les mesures pour tenter de soutenir le pouvoir d'achat des ménages. Après avoir octroyé des hausses de salaires en début d'année, il a abaissé en février le taux de TVA de 8 % à 1 % sur les produits alimentaires de première nécessité. Et, la semaine dernière, il a annoncé un nouveau coup de pouce sur la TVA, avec une réduction de 18 % à 8 % sur les produits d'hygiène et la restauration.

## Report: oil production, profits stable in Iraqi Kurdistan

There have been a series of notable energy developments in Iraq recently.

The American consultancy firm Deloitte has released its quarterly assessment of the oil sector in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Kurdistan Region's oil fields yielded a net of more than 37 million barrels of oil in the fourth quarter of 2021. The barrels sold at an average price of \$68.43 a barrel, according to Deloitte's report.

The report is dated March 17, but the Kurdistan Regional Government released it yesterday.

These figures are similar to the third quarter of 2021. The Kurdistan Region produced more than



A worker is seen at an oil refinery near the village of Taq Taq, in the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, May 31, 2009. - Safin Hamed/AFP via Getty Image

38 million barrels of oil during that time frame at an average price of \$62.87 a barrel, according to Deloitte.

This was not the only promising news for the Kurdistan Region's oil sector recently. This week, Gulf Keystone Petroleum an-

nounced that its profits for 2021 nearly tripled to \$301.4 million. Gulf Keystone Petroleum operates the Shaikan field in the Kurdistan Region.

In federal Iraq, the state-owned Iraqi Drilling Company signed this week a cooperation agreement with Azerbaijan's state energy firm SOCAR. The three-year deal stipulates that the two entities will work together on oil drilling. The Iraqi Drilling Company has been seeking international help to speed up its drilling activity and implement modern technology, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil said in a press release.



April 4, 2022

## US-led coalition reaffirms continued cooperation with Kurdish-led SDF against ISIS

The United States-led coalition once again reaffirmed on Monday its security cooperation with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against ISIS.

"Since 2014, @Coalition & the #SDF have been strong partners," tweeted the coalition's official account. "Ensuring the lasting defeat of Daesh (ISIS) is our common goal."

"We remain committed to security cooperation & partnership with the SDF to help



US coalition soldier kicks a ball with local children in northeast Syria (Photo: CJTFOIR official Twitter page)

communities in NE Syria rebuild & flourish," it added.

The coalition routinely reaffirms its support of the SDF

and northeast Syria against ISIS.

On Saturday, the official account shared pictures of coalition troops and northeast Syrian children along with a tweet that read: "A glimpse of hope and happiness!"

"Thank you to our #SDF partners as they continue to build a sound and happy new life for the people of NE Syria; free of Daesh influence." ■



4 avril 2022

## Au Kurdistan irakien, les attaques de roquettes et de missiles se multiplient

**L**e Kurdistan irakien est au cœur des tensions régionales. Les forces turques installées sur son territoire ont été ciblées deux fois au cours de la semaine dernière. Quelques jours plus tôt, les Gardiens de la révolution iraniens revendiquaient un tir de missile sur Erbil, contre ce qu'ils définissent comme un centre d'intérêt israélien.

Sept roquettes sont arrivées aux alentours de la base turque de Bachîqa, située au Kurdistan irakien, sans faire de victime. C'est la quatrième attaque contre cette base depuis le début de l'année. Elle n'a pas été revendiquée mais les milices chiites pro-iraniennes appellent régulièrement au départ des troupes d'Ankara du territoire irakien.



Un homme inspecte sa maison après une attaque nocturne à Erbil, la capitale de la région autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak, le 13 mars 2022. AFP - SAFIN HAMED

Des forces turques sont installées au Kurdistan depuis la guerre contre l'organisation État islamique. Officiellement venues former les peshmergas kurdes, elles ne sont jamais reparties.

Ankara est très proche du parti au pouvoir, le PDK. Le Kurdistan irakien a toujours été une zone d'influence disputée entre les deux grands voisins turc et irakien.

Le 12 mars dernier, une autre attaque a touché la maison du PDG d'une entreprise pétrolière et gazière à Erbil. Un tir de missile cette fois, revendiqué par les Gardiens de la révolution iraniens. Selon une source sécuritaire irakienne citée par l'agence de presse Reuters, la maison de cet homme aurait été utilisée pour organiser une réunion entre Américains et Israéliens au sujet d'un nouveau gazoduc passant par la Turquie.

En début de semaine dernière, le Premier ministre kurde irakien a affirmé que la région pourrait alléger la crise énergétique européenne en devenant un exportateur net de gaz dans un avenir proche.



April 4, 2022

## Suspected Turkish drone targets Asayish base in Hasaka, injuring at least three

**A** suspected Turkish drone targeted one of the bases of the Internal Security Forces (Asayish) in Hasaka province, northeast Syria (Rojava) late Monday, injuring civilians and three members of the force, according to the Asayish and local media.

Hawar News Agency (ANHA), a media outlet affiliated to the Rojava administration, reported that a Turkish drone hit an Asayish base in Zirgan town in Hasaka province, injuring two "citizens."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that three Asayish



Asayish logo. Graphic: Rudaw

members were injured in what it called a Turkish drone attack. Later, the Asayish said in a statement that many civilians

and three of its members were injured and "great material damage" was caused as a result of the attack.

The attack comes hours after the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) media office said in a tweet that a Turkish drone attacked and injured a member of the the Syriac Military Council and his translator in Tal Tamir town. Orom Maroge was "escorting the Russian side heading to the Tal Tamr power station," it added.

Turkey regularly bombards Kurdish forces in Rojava for their alleged ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - the Kurdish armed group which has fought the Turkish army for decades.





April 4, 2022

# Turkish inflation hits fresh record at 61.1 percent

Turkey's inflation has soared to a new record, official data showed Monday, as analysts see an impact from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unorthodox interest rate policy.

Exacerbating a cost of living crisis, consumer prices accelerated to 61.14 percent at an annual rate, up from 54.4 percent in February, according to the statistics agency.

The weakening lira and runaway inflation have become major sources of public discontent in Turkey as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan faces an election next year.

Turkey has recorded double digit inflation since early 2017 but the latest figure is the highest since the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002.

The currency was stable following the latest inflation data, trading at 14.7 lira against the dollar and 16.2 lira against euro.

The war in Turkey's Black Sea neighbourhood has had a major impact on the country as Russia is a key supplier of energy while Ukraine ships wheat. Turkish tourism industry also mainly relies on Russian tourists.

On Friday, S&P global rating agency kept a negative outlook on Turkey and cut its credit rating.

"The fallout of the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, includ-



The rising cost of living has become a major source of public discontent in Turkey as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan faces an election next year Ozan KOSE AFP/File

ing rising food and energy prices, will further weaken Turkey's already tenuous balance of payments and exacerbate inflation," it said.

The biggest price increases in March were in transportation and food prices, according to the statistics agency.

### -'Be patient'-

While countries around the world are facing rising inflation as energy prices have soared while economies emerge Covid restrictions, Turkey's problems have also been affected by Erdogan's unorthodox economic approach.

The Turkish leader rejects the idea that inflation should be fought by hiking the main interest rate, which he believes causes prices to grow even higher -- the exact opposite of conventional economic think-

ing. Turkish central bank "policies are just not working in countering inflation," said Timothy Ash, emerging markets strategist at BlueBay Asset Management.

"Indeed, I think the overwhelming consensus is that the unorthodox policy settings of the CBRT (central bank) are a major cause of inflation," he said in a note to clients.

"The war in Ukraine is just making things that much worse."

On Saturday, Erdogan said increase in food and energy prices triggered by the war in Ukraine "is affecting us too."

"We are fighting against those who are charging unreasonably high prices," he said.

"There are problems we need to address ... I ask you to be

patient and trust us," in reference to people squeezed by the biting inflation.

In January, Erdogan changed the head of the state statistics agency.

Turkish media reported that he was unhappy with the inflation figures it published while the opposition believes that the official figures grossly underestimate the reality.

Jason Tuvey, senior emerging markets economist at the London-based Capital Economics, said inflation was likely to rise further over the coming months and stay close to the current high rates for much of this year.

"But there is still little sign that the central bank and, crucially, President Erdogan are about to shift tack and hike interest rates," he said.



April 5, 2022  
By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Kurdish opposition blames Turkey's ruling parties for changing electoral law

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) blamed the alliance between Turkey's far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) for changing the electoral law in a statement on Monday.

"As a response to its declining popular support and legitimacy, and just one year before the presidential and parliamentary elections, the AKP-MHP alliance has passed new electoral law amendments in the Turkish parliament, bringing in regulations calculated to keep them in power," Feleknaş Uca and Hişyar Özsoy, co-spokespersons of the HDP's Foreign Affairs Commission, said in the statement.

According to the HDP, on Mar. 31, 2022, Turkey's parliament approved electoral law amendments that would manipulate the election in favor of the ruling AKP-MHP. The amendments will reportedly come into effect next year.

"The new law decreases the threshold that must be passed to enter parliament from ten percent to seven percent. Importantly, it also changes the way that parliamentary seats are allocated among members of an alliance - at the expense of the opposition," the HDP said.

"It is obvious that the AKP-MHP alliance changes the election law according to its own needs. These changes will not bring a democratic and fair election," the HDP officials

concluded. "Rather, they will block the representation of various social dynamics in parliament and further undermine the will of voters as reflected in the ballot boxes."

The next national elections in Turkey are expected to be held by 2023.

The AKP has lost support due to the deteriorating economic situation in Turkey. However, it's still unclear if the divided Turkish opposition could challenge the AKP's alliance with the MHP.

It might be difficult for the HDP to form alliances with Turkish right-wing parties such as the Republican People's Party (CHP) or the right-wing İYİ party since they follow different ideological principles.

The leader of Turkey's right-wing opposition İYİ Party Chair Meral Akşener, recently said she wouldn't sit together with the HDP, T24 reported.

Nevertheless, during the March 2019 municipal elections in Turkey, the HDP, in a gesture with the CHP, did not field candidates in cities west of Turkey with sizable Kurdish populations, namely Istanbul, where the party has over one million votes, the capital Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Mersin, and Antalya.

That move helped the CHP win in most of these cities as part of an uneasy de facto alliance. However, it's far from clear if this de facto alliance will continue in the future.



April 5, 2022

## Kurdish man claims he was severely beaten by gendarmes in eastern Turkey

A Kurdish man in Turkey's eastern Van province has claimed he was severely beaten by Turkish gendarmes, the Duvar news website reported.

Yakup Avan, 25, said the officers raided his home on the night of April 2, beat him and then detained him. Avan also claimed the officers also shot and killed his horse.

Avan was taken to the hospital for a health check, where the doctor found several broken fingers, broken bones in both his wrists and bruises on se-

veral parts of his body. He was later taken to the gendarmerie station for questioning.

Avan's uncle Mehmet Avan said he witnessed the incident and expressed outrage that his nephew was mistreated. "Beating my nephew until his bones broke and then killing an innocent animal is inhumane," he said.

Avan's lawyer Samet Aksoy also criticized the gendarmes, saying nothing gave them the right to physically harm his client. "Whatever my client was accused of, it does not mean

they can mistreat him," he said. After questioning Avan appeared in court and was arrested for alleged involvement in migrant smuggling. His lawyer said they would be filing a complaint against the gendarmes.

Ill-treatment and torture have become widespread and systematic in Turkey. Lack of condemnation from higher officials and a readiness to cover up allegations rather than investigate them have resulted in widespread impunity for the security forces.

Two Iranian smugglers were allegedly subjected to abuse and torture at an army post on the Iranian border in Van last year.

The two men, Hasan Kecelanlu and Behnam Semedi, were held at a police station in a border village where they were allegedly beaten, attacked with knives and tortured with cold water. Kecelanlu died, allegedly as a result of the torture, and Semedi was put in intensive care.

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April 5, 2022

# Kurdistan's Weekly Brief April 5, 2022

## Iraq

The Iranian-backed political bloc known as the "Coordination Framework" seems to have no chance of forming a new government after almost three weeks into the forty day deadline set by the Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr, leader of the largest coalition.

On March 31st, al-Sadr gave Iranian-backed parties forty days to form the government after he accused them of "hindering" his attempts to form a majority government known as "save the country." The Coordination Framework's total seats are less than 70, and despite alliances with small coalitions, it cannot form the government. Yazidi lawmaker Mehma Khalil of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) expects the largest coalition to form the new cabinet by the end of May. Meanwhile, rerun elections remain a possibility.

In the early hours of Monday, Turkey launched a new invasion into the Kurdistan Region, ostensibly targeting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) presence. The fresh invasion includes air and ground forces and likely aims to expand existing Turkish military zones of occupation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), a Brussels-based coalition of organizations and individuals representing all parts of Kurdistan and the diaspora, issued a press release stating that "War against the Kurds will not prevent Erdogan's downfall," highlighting President Erdogan's hostile policies toward the Kurds across all parts of Kurdistan and calling for an end to the silence on Turkish military aggression against South

Kurdistan. At the same time, the Iraqi army attacked the PKK-backed Ezdixan (Yazidi) Security forces in the Snuny subdistrict. Initial reports highlighted casualties on both sides. The security of Yazidi areas remains unstable amid political and economic crises since the Genocide the Yazidis at the hands of ISIS (Da'ehs) terrorists. Baghdad has also built a 200km wall on the Iraqi-Syrian border, in a move considered to restrict PKK's influence in the region. Disagreement appeared among the Kurdish parties over holding elections on its set date of October 1, 2022. The KDP and its partners have insisted on holding the parliamentary election in the Region while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and four major opposition parties amended elections laws, including changing the one electoral for each province to multiple constituencies.

## Turkey

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) denounced the new Turkish invasion of Iraq Kurdistan under the pretext of fighting the PKK. "These attacks will not solve any problems of Turkey as they have done so far; on the contrary, it will deepen Turkey's economic, political and social problems as it has been experienced for 40 years," read the HDP statement. Further, the HDP spokesperson Ebru Günay bashed the opposition leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, for supporting the Turkish invasion, she said: "Look at the opposition leader's reaction. Is this your solution to the Kurdish problem?" Simultaneously, Turkish authorities arrested nearly 80 Kurds and HDP members, mostly in Diyarbakir (Amed) and others in Adana and Van, for "terrorism" related accusa-

tions. The authorities also froze the assets of 90 people, mainly HDP politicians, as part of the ongoing "Kobani Investigations."

## Iran

According to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), Iranian authorities have placed Hassan Askari as the new commander of security forces in Sanandaj (Sena). Previously, Askari was the commander of the Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in the Kurdish cities of Sena and Bijar. The KDPI accused the new commander of playing a "leading role" in crushing anti-government protests in the fall of 2019 in the Kurdish cities. Separately, the Revolutionary Court in Urmia began trials against thirteen Kurds arrested in 2021 and are facing charges of "membership" of political parties and "anti-state" work. Moreover, three Kurdish men were sentenced to prison, including five months each for Ahed Mawlawi and Hussein Khaliani for "propaganda" for a Kurdish party in Naqadeh and a year in prison for a civilian activist, Hoshiar Shabani in Baneh. Further, Iranian security forces arrested four Kurdish activists in Bokan and Sardasht. Lastly, according to the Hengaw organization for Human Rights, a prominent labor activist, Mortaza Saedi, remains unknown since his disappearance in Tehran last week. Though unconfirmed, authorities have been the main suspect in his arrest. In another bloody week, at least seventeen Kurdish border porters (kolbar) were wounded in a week by the Iranian border guards near Nowsud of the Kermanshah province. Most of the injured kolbars suffered severe injuries.

## Syria

On Wednesday, General Michael Kurilla, the new commander of the U.S. Central Command visited Syria and visited Syria and met with Mazloun Abdi, commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). According to the SDF, General Kurilla "pledged to provide more support to secure the prisons containing ISIS elements." The US General met with General Mazloun after visiting al-Hol camp, which holds Da'esh terrorists and their families, a significant threat to the region.

According to Sharq al-Awsat, Russia has threatened to unleash Turkey on the Kurds if they reject Moscow's conditions to end the tensions. The Russians demand ending the Kurdish siege of the Assad regime forces in some areas of Qamishli. Kurds fear Turkey is exploiting the Russian invasion of Ukraine by launching a new invasion of Kurdish towns in Syria.

However, in an interview with the pro-Kurdish Hawar News, senior Kurdish politician, Aldar Khalil vowed "resistance" in the face of a new Turkish invasion. "We are facing an enemy with a plan who wants to launch an attack and eliminate the opposite party. Resistance is the solution to stand in their face" said Khalil.

Moreover, the SDF announced the death of one of its Christian members due to Turkish bombardment on Tal Tamer on Sunday night, rejecting Turkish reports of thirteen deaths among the SDF. Turkey also re-launched its "water war," by cutting off a significant amount of Euphrates water supplies to parts of northeastern Syria.



## « En Iran, le zoroastrisme est le symbole du libre choix et de la grandeur préislamique »

Grâce à Nietzsche, nous connaissons le nom de Zarathoustra, mais savons-nous qui il était vraiment ? Était-il une divinité, un prophète, un personnage historique ? Et qu'en est-il de la religion qui porte son nom ? Le point avec le professeur Michael Stausberg, qui vient de consacrer un livre à ce sujet.

La religion à laquelle Zarathoustra a donné naissance est l'une des plus anciennes du monde. Elle est encore pratiquée de nos jours, surtout en Iran et en Inde. En perdurant dans les marges malgré l'essor des monothéismes abrahamiques, le zoroastrisme permet à certaines minorités de se singulariser spirituellement. Pour cause : le message de Zarathoustra est souvent interprété comme encourageant la liberté de choix en opposition à un certain dogmatisme religieux. Cela explique la force de séduction du zoroastrisme et l'intérêt qu'il suscite chez les curieux et les chercheurs.

Professeur de sciences religieuses à l'université de Bergen, en Norvège, Michael Stausberg met à la disposition du lecteur les connaissances les plus récentes sur le zoroastrisme, son histoire, son corpus, sa philosophie et ses rites, dans son ouvrage *Zarathoustra et sa religion* (Les Belles Lettres, 162 pages, 19 euros).

Le nom de Zarathoustra est surtout familier du grand public grâce à Nietzsche et à son livre « Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra » (1883). Pourquoi le philosophe a-t-il choisi cette figure afin d'incarner sa pensée ? Sa lecture est-elle fidèle à l'idée que les zoroastriens se font de leur « prophète » ?

Michael Stausberg : Même si Nietzsche était un philologue professionnel, il ne s'est guère



Prêtres zoroastriens (dont une femme) d'Iran portant des vases de charbon afin d'allumer un feu lors de la fête annuelle zoroastrienne de Sadeh, le 30 janvier 2015, est de Téhéran. Le feu symbolise la défaite des forces du mal. ATTA KENARE / AFP

soucié, dans ses œuvres philosophiques, de l'exactitude historique à propos de Zarathoustra. Pendant des siècles, Zarathoustra a frappé l'imagination des philosophes européens. Il était notamment associé à l'astrologie et à la magie. Pline l'Ancien (23-79) et saint Augustin (354-430) ont rapporté que Zarathoustra était le seul être humain qui avait ri à la naissance.

Je pense que c'est un motif qui a frappé Nietzsche. Rappelez-vous la place centrale qu'occupe le rire dans son Zarathoustra. De plus, Zarathoustra était lié aux idées de lumière et d'obscurité, de bien et de mal. Or, repenser la moralité était un programme-clé de la nouvelle philosophie de Nietzsche !

Y a-t-il eu un Zarathoustra historique ? Existe-t-il des controverses dans ce domaine comparables à celles concernant Jésus ?

Il existe des sources textuelles très anciennes, les Gathas, qui dépeignent un certain Zarathoustra au I<sup>er</sup> millénaire avant notre ère. Il est possible qu'il ait été une sorte de poète rituel d'inspiration divine. Si la comparaison avec Jésus peut sembler trompeuse, la discussion sur le Jésus historique a conduit certains chercheurs à imaginer quelque chose comme une vie ou une biographie de Zarathoustra.

« Pline l'Ancien et saint Augustin ont rapporté que Zarathoustra était le seul être humain qui avait ri à la naissance »  
Des sources zoroastriennes

postérieures, datant pour certaines de la période islamique, fournissent des récits sur sa vie. En plus de sa naissance et de son enfance miraculeuses, deux événements ressortent des récits zoroastriens : ses rencontres avec des entités divines et le recrutement de son principal bienfaiteur, qui est parfois présenté comme un roi. Que sait-on exactement du contexte dans lequel le zoroastrisme a émergé ? Quel est l'état de la documentation historique à ce sujet ?

Nous disposons des sources textuelles anciennes de l'Avesta, en particulier des cinq poèmes connus sous le nom de Gathas, c'est-à-dire les chants ou les hymnes. Mais ils sont comme des capsules temporelles qui nous ont été envoyées d'un territoire pour la plus grande partie inconnu. Si les textes donnent un aperçu des circonstances économiques et politiques, ils ne fournissent pas suffisamment d'informations pour les rattacher avec certitude à un lieu d'origine précis.

Les éléments indiquent une région assez vaste située quelque part entre l'Iran oriental, les steppes du sud de la Russie et l'Asie centrale. Les textes avestiques font écho aux premiers textes védiques du Rig-Veda. L'Avesta et le Veda indien partagent par ailleurs de nombreux concepts, idées, métaphores, etc. Pourtant, les deux systèmes religieux ont suivi chacun leur

propre voie au cours de siècles de migrations et d'implantations dans des environnements différents.

Il est communément admis – mais il s'agit là de spéculation – que les textes avestiques sont plus récents que le corpus rigvédique, beaucoup plus vaste, qui a probablement été composé dans la seconde moitié du IIe millénaire avant notre ère. A un moment donné de l'histoire, le centre de gravité s'est déplacé vers le plateau iranien, de sorte que le zoroastrisme a fini par être identifié comme une religion iranienne, même si les zoroastriens ont continué à prospérer en Asie centrale. En France, Jean Kellens et Frantz Grenet ont fait des recherches révolutionnaires, respectivement sur les textes anciens de l'Avesta et le zoroastrisme d'Asie centrale. Le dieu du zoroastrisme n'est pas Zarathoustra lui-même mais Ahura Mazda (« Maître sage » ou « Maître de sagesse »). Que symbolise-t-il pour les croyants et quels sont ses attributs ?

Dans le zoroastrisme, la source de la connaissance et de la parole est effectivement Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd en moyen persan). Le rôle et le privilège de Zarathoustra étaient de le faire parler, lui et les autres êtres divins. En ce sens, Zarathoustra était le véhicule de la révélation par le biais de la fabrication de mots et de l'exécution d'actions.

Dans les textes, Ahura Mazda apparaît comme l'acteur divin le plus central. A l'instar de Zarathoustra, il est dépeint comme une figure masculine. Omniscient et tout-puissant, il est représenté comme généreux, solidaire, bienveillant et créatif, dans la mesure où il ordonne le monde. Cette caractéristique l'a fait apparaître plus tard comme un dieu créateur – cette création ne comportant aucune dimension maléfique. Le zoroastrisme repose sur deux principes : Ahura Mazda (qui a tout créé et est à l'origine de tout ce qui est bon et lumi-



Prêtre zoroastrien d'Iran allumant un feu lors de la fête annuelle zoroastrienne de Sadeh, 30 janvier 2015, est de Téhéran. Le feu symbolise la défaite des forces du mal. BEHROUZ MEHRI / AFP

neux) et Ahriman (l'esprit immonde, le destructeur). Cependant, les adeptes ne considèrent pas leur religion comme un dualisme mais un monothéisme. Pourquoi ?

Dans les sources zoroastriennes, l'idée de deux principes de base est fondamentale. Dans certains traités apologétiques, l'idée de n'avoir qu'un seul principe est réfutée, parce qu'elle contaminerait et compromettrait la bonté de Dieu. Le concept de monothéisme, cependant, est devenu le modèle dominant de légitimité religieuse dans les contextes islamiques et chrétiens au sein desquels les zoroastriens se sont retrouvés. Ici, si vous vouliez avoir une religion, vous deviez être monothéiste. Et dans un sens, cette étiquette correspond tout à fait à l'architecture de la pensée zoroastrienne. Après tout, on ne vénère pas Ahriman.

« Si l'on donne de l'espace aux troupes d'Ahriman dans ses pensées, ses paroles et ses actions, on contribue à la réalité d'Ahriman »

De fait, on vénère Ahura Mazda ainsi que les autres divinités qui l'accompagnent pour renforcer le dieu, contribuer à l'affaiblissement et à la destruction finale d'Ahriman, des démons, du mauvais comportement et de l'impureté. Finalement, l'espoir est qu'Ahura Mazda, les divinités et toutes les forces du bien l'emportent.

Pour y parvenir, chacun doit apporter sa contribution. Si l'on donne de l'espace aux troupes d'Ahriman dans ses pensées, ses paroles et ses actions, on contribue à la réalité d'Ahriman. De cette façon, chaque individu est un champ de bataille cosmique. On peut donc parler à la fois de monothéisme et de dualisme.

Le zoroastrisme vénère en réalité plusieurs dieux qui correspondent à des éléments...

En effet, nous pouvons également ajouter une troisième et une quatrième étiquette au zoroastrisme, à savoir le polythéisme et le panthéisme. Car le monde divin dans le zoroastrisme est à la fois singulier et pluriel. En plus d'Ahura Mazda, il existe d'autres divinités masculines et féminines qui agissent de manière indépendante et coordonnée. Et le divin, à l'instar du démoniaque, imprègne le monde naturel, les êtres humains et les animaux. Le feu, l'eau et la terre, en particulier, sont des éléments ayant une forte présence divine. Le feu est un symbole fort pour cette religion ; on prie et on effectue des rituels face au feu ou au soleil. Il faut également veiller à protéger ces éléments contre toute souillure potentielle, par exemple en évitant de jeter des débris dans l'eau ou le feu. Le polluant le plus puissant est la matière morte, en particulier le cadavre d'un croyant zoroastrien de sexe masculin. D'où l'injonction de ne pas brûler les ca-

davres dans le feu et de ne pas enterrer un cadavre dans la terre, du moins pas sans une protection appropriée.

Le zoroastrisme est souvent considéré comme plaçant la liberté de choix au centre de son éthique. En quoi est-ce révolutionnaire pour l'époque ? Mais quelle est la différence entre cette liberté de choix et ce que les modernes appellent plus tard « l'autonomie » ?

C'est une question difficile. Il y a effectivement eu une interprétation puissante du message de Zarathoustra orientée sur la liberté de choix, comme une sorte de projet révolutionnaire de libération de l'hétéronomie sacerdotale et du culte sacrificiel sanglant.

Cette interprétation, construite autour de l'impératif de s'efforcer d'atteindre la triade des bonnes pensées, des bonnes paroles et des bonnes actions, me semble d'une modernité suspecte. Elle jouit d'une grande popularité, non seulement chez de nombreux zoroastriens pour qui c'est un sujet de grande fierté, mais aussi chez les Iraniens qui ont beaucoup souffert de la tyrannie, d'abord des shahs puis des mollahs.

Dans certains discours, l'islam est présenté comme une religion centrée sur la loi, qui exige une obéissance aveugle et a donc tendance à opprimer les gens. En revanche, Zarathoustra apparaît comme un prophète de la libération par le choix individuel.

**« Le polluant le plus puissant est la matière morte, en particulier le cadavre d'un croyant zoroastrien de sexe masculin »**

D'un point de vue historique, les choses se présentent différemment. Les sources zoroastriennes indiquent clairement que la liberté de choix est une chose risquée et qu'il faut veiller à faire les bons choix. Pour cela, il faut des conseils et des règles. Les choix qui sont faits librement ne sont pas forcés-



ment bons, et l'on doit subir les conséquences des mauvais.

Même si les autorités zoroastriennes encourageaient leurs adeptes à utiliser leur esprit critique, elles produisaient dans le même temps toutes sortes de règles et de règlements, parfois jusque dans les moindres détails – tant en matière de pratique rituelle que de réglementation de la vie quotidienne. Et cesser d'être zoroastrien n'était certainement pas un choix libre.

Si le zoroastrisme est l'une des plus anciennes religions du monde, seules quelques centaines de milliers de personnes le pratiquent encore aujourd'hui. Comment expliquer qu'il ait survécu à travers les siècles, alors qu'il n'est ni prosélyte ni guerrier ?

Cette religion ne se serait pas répandue si elle n'avait pas été prosélyte à un moment donné. Les textes zoroastriens n'hésitent pas à dire que la révélation qu'elle prétend apporter concerne toute l'humanité.

Bien qu'au cours du dernier millénaire, les zoroastriens n'aient pas été en mesure d'organiser une guerre, certains textes évoquent une propagation guerrière de la religion. Même si les zoroastriens sont considérés comme des citoyens pacifiques, des luttes intestines et des conflits se produisent dans les communautés zoroastriennes comme partout ailleurs.

« Si les autorités zoroastriennes encourageaient leurs adeptes à utiliser leur esprit critique, elles produisaient dans le même temps toutes sortes de règles »

Le zoroastrisme a principalement survécu sous la forme de communautés ethniques. J'entends par là des groupes pour lesquels la religion était le prin-

cipal marqueur d'identité publique parmi d'autres – notamment la langue, les récits, les vêtements, la nourriture. Sans oublier que ces groupes étaient pour la plupart endogames. Ainsi, on naissait pour devenir zoroastrien, et ce n'était pas vraiment une question de choix. Les parents avaient le devoir de faire de leurs enfants de bons zoroastriens.

L'idée de choix se reflète toutefois dans un rituel où les jeunes zoroastriens affirment leur allégeance à la religion en étant dotés de vêtements spéciaux. A partir du jour de ce rituel d'affirmation, ou initiation, les enfants zoroastriens devaient assumer la responsabilité de leurs propres actions et accomplir leurs prières et rituels de manière régulière.

Les deux pays qui comptent les plus grandes communautés zoroastriennes sont l'Iran et l'Inde. Quelles sont les spécificités de chaque pays en termes de croyance et de culte ?

Pendant de nombreux siècles, il n'y a eu que des interactions occasionnelles entre les deux communautés. Cela a commencé à changer à partir de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, lorsque les zoroastriens iraniens ont cherché refuge en Inde. Depuis le milieu du XIXe siècle, les zoroastriens indiens ont envoyé des émissaires en Iran pour aider leurs coreligionnaires. Ce fut l'un des nombreux facteurs de changement dans les communautés zoroastriennes iraniennes.

Comme en Inde, la période moderne a été marquée par une urbanisation massive. La plupart des zoroastriens d'Iran vivent à Téhéran, la plupart des zoroastriens indiens à Mumbai. Les villages ont été désertés et, dans les deux pays, l'agriculture a perdu son

importance en tant que forme prédominante et souhaitée d'activité économique. En Iran, ce phénomène a aussi été causé par des défis écologiques comme la désertification. Les relations entre les sexes se sont modernisées mais, dans les deux pays, très peu de femmes ont occupé des postes de direction.

Lire le reportage : En Iran, sur les traces de l'Empire perse

En Inde, les Parsis, comme on appelle les zoroastriens dans le sous-continent, ont connu une période de déclin démographique massif. La crise écologique, à savoir l'extinction des vautours, a mis à mal le fonctionnement du système funéraire traditionnel (tour du silence ou dakhma, dans laquelle le corps du défunt entre en putréfaction en hauteur). Parallèlement à la baisse générale de la population, le recrutement des prêtres a diminué. Il en reste très peu pour accomplir des cérémonies complexes et reconnues comme experts en théologie.

Pourtant, la plupart des Parsis s'en sortent bien sur le plan économique et bénéficient d'aides telles que des logements subventionnés ou des soins médicaux. L'entrée des temples reste interdite aux non-zoroastriens. Peut-on parler d'un renouveau du zoroastrisme aujourd'hui en Iran ?

En Iran, au milieu du XIXe siècle, la population était certes très faible, mais les chiffres ont augmenté jusqu'à la chute du shah. Le zoroastrisme iranien s'est modernisé : de nombreuses cérémonies et règles de pureté ont été abandonnées ou simplifiées, y compris le culte dans les temples.

Contrairement à l'Inde, il existe de nombreux petits sanc-

tuaires religieux et quelques lieux de pèlerinage. Les structures funéraires ont été remplacées par des cimetières, avec certaines modifications pour éviter la pollution de la terre. Alors que les Parsis conservent le sacerdoce héréditaire, ce n'est pas le cas chez les Iraniens. Il y a même maintenant des femmes prêtres.

« Les zoroastriens revendiquent spécifiquement l'identité iranienne, en tant qu'héritiers vivants des habitants préislamiques du pays »

En Iran, les zoroastriens revendiquent spécifiquement l'identité iranienne, en tant qu'héritiers vivants des habitants préislamiques du pays. Le zoroastrisme est lié aux discours nationalistes modernes, qui sont souvent anti-arabes et, par voie de conséquence, anti-islamiques. Ainsi, le zoroastrisme, symbole de la grandeur préislamique, et l'idéologie du libre choix sont considérés comme des alternatives à l'islam. S'il est interdit et dangereux de se convertir officiellement au zoroastrisme, de nombreux Iraniens se disent zoroastriens quand on leur pose la question.

A l'instar de tous les Iraniens, les zoroastriens souffrent de la stagnation économique et politique, de la discrimination et du manque de libertés. C'est pourquoi de nombreux jeunes ont quitté le pays.

Cependant, outre l'Iran et l'Inde, on trouve aujourd'hui des communautés zoroastriennes plus importantes en Amérique du Nord, en Europe et en Australie, y compris des personnes qui s'y sont converties. Des infrastructures religieuses et sociales ont été mises en place, mais il existe peu de recherches sur les jeunes générations de zoroastriens de la diaspora.

## Iran-linked militias torch KDP office, after IRGC strike on Erbil

Tension is mounting between Iran-linked armed factions and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq after repeated attacks on the largest Kurdish party office in the capital and threats

**F**lickering orange flames could be seen against the night sky shortly after midnight on March 28 through the mass of yelling men who had rushed to the main office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the Iraqi capital.

On April 3, several rockets struck the Bashiqa base, which hosts Turkish forces and is located in Iraq's northern Nineveh province near the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, for the second time in less than a week.

Both attacks were either claimed or presumed to be done by Iraqi armed factions linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

By the early morning hours of March 28, the angry mob of supporters of Iran-linked groups had done so much damage to both the KDP office in Baghdad and public trust in the ability of the security forces to prevent such violence that the KDP decided simply to demolish the office and suspend its activities in the Iraqi capital.

The KDP is the most prominent political party in the autonomous region in the northern part of the country, with the largest number of lawmakers of any Kurdish party in both the central government's parliament in Baghdad and the regional one in Erbil.

The office was ransacked and possibly looted in the March 28 attack. Cellphone footage from the rioters showed men rifling



Iraqi demonstrators, supporters of the pro-Iranian Hashed al Shaabi, tear up a portrait of Masoud Barzani, former leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, as they burn and ransack the party's headquarters in the capital Baghdad on Oct. 17, 2020. - AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP via Getty Images

through papers and taking some with them.

A man who climbed onto the roof of the office during the attack was reportedly seen waving a Kataib Hezbollah flag.

Kataib Hezbollah has three brigades within the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) but largely operates outside of Iraqi government control. Some of its members have been suspected of involvement in a number of serious attacks on or threats to government officials, including an assassination attempt on the prime minister in November 2021.

Most analysts say the group is linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It is part of the Shiite "muqawama," Iran-linked resistance factions, and was designated a terrorist group by the United States in 2009.

The March 28 attack was neither the first on that KDP of-

fice nor a surprise after months of threats against and attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in general and the KDP in particular.

At least a dozen ballistic missiles had been shot at outlying areas of the regional capital Erbil in the early morning hours of March 13. The attack was by the IRGC, which claimed it had hit a "strategic center" for Israeli spies.

The Baghdad office of the KDP had previously been attacked and set on fire in October 2020. It was located in an area with offices of various militia factions and a multitude of billboards extolling the virtues of their "martyrs" and leaders, visible from the windows of trendy cafes and pricey restaurants.

The Sabereen News Telegram channel, mostly seen as a mouthpiece for Iraq's muqawama factions, called March 27 for all such factions to at-

tack the KDP office after a tweet deemed offensive the Shiite religious leaders by a Kurdish former parliamentary candidate.

Sabereen News first appeared in January 2020, only a week after a US drone strike killed IRGC leader Qasem Soleimani and militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis on Jan. 3, 2020. Armed factions linked to the IRGC had immediately vowed revenge for the attack and billboards around the capital repeat the message.

Less than a week before the 2020 drone strike, US airstrikes on Kataib Hezbollah positions in Iraq and Syria on Dec. 29, 2019, killed at least 25, followed by an attack by militia supporters on the US Embassy two days later.

Three days after the latest IRGC missile attack on Erbil, the militia Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN) threatened the KDP in its first-ever Kurdish-language video published on March 16.

According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the video claims that the "Kurdish nation's anger toward the ruling oligarchy became clearer than ever last year" and that Soleimani and Muhandis had helped the Peshmerga while HHN had "always defended the Kurdish people's legitimate rights" and "treats the people of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah the same as the people of Basra and Nasiriyah."

Basra and Nasiriyah are two of the largest cities in Iraq's Shiite-dominated south. Though anti-Iran slogans are often chanted at demonstrations — especially during the late 2019 protests in which hundreds were killed, forcing the prime minister at the time to resign — Iran-linked militias draw many of their fighters from these areas, in part due to high unemployment rates and few opportunities for youths.

Al-Monitor reported in January amid a string of attacks on KRG forces, "The Iran-linked 'muqawama' (resistance) factions are also unhappy about

the close ties between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Turkey, in part linked to these factions' increasingly close relations with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the Sinjar region in northwestern Iraq."

Prior to the latest attacks on the base housing Turkish forces in the Nineveh province, over 15 rockets were reportedly shot at the same base following an increase in collaboration between Turkey and the Iraqi military that in January led to the arrest of several fighters from a local Yazidi armed group, the Sinjar Resis-

tance Units (YBS), supported by the PKK, from whom they have received training, weaponry and ideological instruction.

Turkey — which alongside the United States and EU has designated the PKK a terrorist organization — has conducted numerous attacks on what it has said are PKK targets inside northern Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region.

KDP officials have in the past few years increasingly spoken out against the PKK presence, while IRGC factions have in-

creased their collaboration with the group.

The YBS remain allied with the PKK but have become part of the Iraqi government-salaried and Shiite-led PMU, some factions of which are also part of the muqawama.

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy noted in a March 21 brief analysis that last month's HHN Kurdish-language video claimed that the KDP-led government in Erbil "bets on the wrong horse" and that it "used to be Saddam's ally but did not learn the lesson from history."

Le Monde

06 avril 2022  
Par Marie Jégo

## En Turquie, la bourde de trop d'un fidèle allié d'Erdogan

L'homme d'affaires Ethem Sancak, ancien maoïste habitué des imprécations anti-OTAN, a été poussé à la démission après avoir déclaré que l'AKP, le parti du président, était arrivé au pouvoir « avec le soutien des Etats-Unis »

**S**olidaire de l'OTAN dans la guerre lancée par le Kremlin contre l'Ukraine, soucieux aussi de ménager ses bonnes relations avec Vladimir Poutine, le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, marche sur des œufs dans sa nouvelle gestuelle diplomatique. Son retour en grâce auprès de l'Alliance atlantique ne fait pas que des heureux au sein de son Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, islam-conservateur).

Son plus fidèle allié, l'homme d'affaires Ethem Sancak, n'a pas supporté la perspective d'un rapprochement avec les alliés traditionnels de la Turquie. Depuis le début de l'agression russe contre l'Ukraine, cet entrepreneur atypique n'a pas cessé de critiquer l'OTAN et les Etats-Unis tandis qu'il encensait les actions du grand voisin du Nord. Ancien maoïste acquis à la

cause des « Eurasiens », à savoir les nationalistes souverainistes turcs partisans d'une alliance avec la Russie et la Chine contre l'Occident, M. Sancak est un membre éminent de l'AKP qui a ses entrées au palais et n'hésite pas à se décrire comme « le soldat » de M. Erdogan.

### Imprécations antiatlantistes

Actionnaire de l'entreprise de chars BMC, fort d'un gros empire médiatique, Ethem Sancak, 64 ans, dont la richesse est estimée à 50 millions de dollars (45 millions d'euros), a toujours pu compter sur le soutien du président. N'est-il pas le plus fidèle d'entre les fidèles, « à sacrifier » sa mère, son père, sa femme et ses enfants pour le « reis », le chef suprême ? Ses imprécations antiatlantistes, malvenues, car prononcées au moment même

où Ankara tentait de regagner les faveurs de l'OTAN, seraient largement passées inaperçues, si elles n'avaient pas été suivies d'une grosse bourde. Convié à une conférence organisée par l'université de Marmara, le 31 mars à Istanbul, M. Sancak a déclaré que l'AKP, le parti présidentiel dont il est membre, « était arrivé au pouvoir avec le soutien des Etats-Unis ».

Consternation dans les rangs islam-conservateurs. Pourquoi l'homme d'affaires, membre éminent du parti, se met-il à salir le président, son bienfaiteur ? Avait-il oublié ses faveurs, notamment l'attribution à BMC, en 2019, de la plus grande usine de maintenance de chars de Turquie, située dans la région de Sakarya ? A l'époque, la transaction avait été critiquée par l'opposition et par les ouvriers de l'usine pour son manque de transparence.

Mais rien n'était trop beau pour BMC, chargée de produire le char Altay de nouvelle génération, le fleuron de l'industrie de défense en plein essor. Sinon que la production du nouveau char a dû être retardée, les fournisseurs européens ayant refusé de fournir le moteur après l'intervention militaire turque lancée à l'automne 2019 contre les combattants kurdes de Syrie.

### Démission de l'AKP

Plus remarquée que les déboires du char Altay, la bévée de M. Sancak a créé une onde de choc. Dans un pays friand de théories du complot, elle a suscité l'émoi de la classe politique. Le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, opposition) s'en est inquiété, au point de réclamer une enquête afin de déterminer si M. Erdogan était oui ou non un agent à la solde de Washington.



Pour l'AKP, c'était la phrase de trop. Obligée de réagir, la branche stambouliote du parti a convoqué M. Sancak à un conseil de discipline afin de procéder à son « exclusion définitive ». Mais la procédure n'a finalement pas été engagée ; désireux d'éviter l'opprobre, le fauteur de troubles a choisi de démissionner du parti, vendredi 1er avril. Il restera malgré tout « fidèle à la cause de Recep Tayyip Erdogan », a-t-il expliqué dans une interview publiée le même jour dans le quotidien en ligne Yeniçağ.

Qu'a-t-il voulu dire en parlant du soutien accordé par les Etats-Unis à M. Erdogan lors de son arrivée au pouvoir, en 2002 ? « Je n'ai rien dit de tel », a-t-il assuré. Sa langue aura fourché. Il aura été submergé par sa faconde anti-OTAN, dont il s'était déjà servi quelques semaines plus tôt à Moscou, où il était en visite, à la tête d'une délégation du Parti Vatan, la matrice des Eurasiens turcs.

Jouant à l'expert en politique étrangère, l'homme d'affaires, barbe soigneusement taillée, visage sévère, a donné, le 4



Le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, lors d'une réunion du parti de la justice et du développement AKP, à Ankara, en décembre 2021. ADEM ALTAN / AFP

mars, une interview à la chaîne de télévision russe RBK dans laquelle il fustige l'OTAN, « la principale force criminelle dans le dossier russo-ukrainien ». L'Alliance, a-t-il affirmé, est une « honte pour la Turquie » ainsi qu'« un cancer, une tumeur qui vient du passé », impliquée, qui plus est, dans « tous les coups d'Etat » survenus sur le sol turc, y compris dans celui de 2016 qui a failli renverser M. Erdogan.

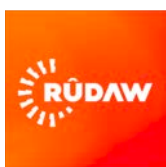
### Défendre Kiev sans irriter Moscou

Quant aux drones Bayraktar TB 2 que la Turquie a fournis à l'Ukraine avant le conflit, « nous ne savions pas qu'ils seraient utilisés de cette manière lorsque nous les avons vendus », s'est-il justifié. Moins chers que leurs concurrents américains et chinois, les Bayraktar TB 2 ont prouvé leur efficacité en Syrie, en Libye, dans le

Haut-Karabakh, faisant la fierté des autorités turques et celle de l'entreprise privée Baykar qui les produit. Des contrats ont été signés avec une dizaine de pays acheteurs, dont l'Ukraine, qui a reçu une vingtaine de drones avant le début du conflit.

Entre Moscou et Ankara, le sujet est sensible. Depuis le début de la guerre, l'ambassade d'Ukraine à Ankara ne manque pas une occasion de publier sur les réseaux sociaux des vidéos montrant les drones turcs en train de frapper des cibles militaires russes.

Un tel tapage n'a pas l'heur de plaire à Vladimir Poutine, que le président Erdogan veut convaincre d'arrêter la guerre. Défendre Kiev sans irriter Moscou, la voie est étroite. D'ores et déjà, la guerre a créé une scission dans l'entourage proche du numéro un turc. Entre les Eurasiens, qui ont pris fait et cause pour la Russie, et la famille Bayraktar, le fabricant des drones du même nom, qui est devenue le meilleur soutien du gouvernement pro-occidental ukrainien.



April 7, 2022

## Kolbar injured in shooting, sparking protests in Paveh

Protests broke out after another Kurdish kolbar was wounded by shots fired by Iranian border guards, increasing tension between civilians and security forces in the Kurdish region (Rojhelat) in western Iran, a rights group said on Wednesday night.

Hours after the Iranian border guards directed dozens of shots at three kolbars, another was injured by direct fire from the forces in Hane Garmle village in the Kurdish city of Paveh, the

Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported.

Hours-long protests erupted between the villagers and the forces as they clashed following the shooting, with the police and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) entering the area to disperse the crowd, the rights group added.

Kolbars are semi-legal porters who transport untaxed goods across the Kurdistan Region-Iran border and sometimes the Iran-Turkey border. They are

constantly targeted by Iranian border guards and are sometimes victims of natural disasters. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces.

At least four kolbars have been wounded by border guards since Friday.

Despite the large number of killings of kolbars by the border guards, authorities have failed to launch any meaningful investiga-

tion into the killings or to hold anyone accountable.

In its latest monthly report on the human rights situation in Iran, KHRN said at least one kolbar was killed and 11 others were injured following a shooting by the Iranian border guards in March.

Earlier in March, the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur Javid Rehman described the situation of human rights in Iran as "bleak" and "characterized by the most egregious violations and continued impunity."



April 7, 2022  
By Goran Sabah Ghafour

## A Kurdish town once named ‘Eggplant’

**B**ardaqaqaman suffered dearly under the former Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. The regime created the small town between Kirkuk and Sulaimani and named it “Eggplant”.

“Saddam’s regime brought Kurdish people here to make them suffer,” said Ali Bazanyi, a local historian in Erbil. “This name was just to insult, belittle, and mock Kurdish people.”

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) later renamed the town Bardaqaqaman, which literally means “Rock of the Hero”. It is now within the district of Bazyan, 35 kilometers west of Sulaimani city on the highway to Kirkuk.

«Rock of the Hero refers to the victory and bravery of the army of the King of Kurdistan Sheikh Mahmoud,” noted Bazyani. “The king’s soldiers defended Kurdistan behind a huge rock in this area in a bloody battle against their enemies.”

Bardaqaqaman (“Rock of the Hero”) in the Kurdistan Region contains a monument honoring the heroism of Sheikh Mahmoud’s army (Photo: Goran Sabah Ghafour) The KRG has developed this small town into a tourist area, building a big park and a monument, which includes carved pictures depicting the bravery of Sheikh Mahmoud’s army.

The battle was on June 19, 1919, against the invading British Army. After that battle, the King of Kurdistan was injured, arrested, and banished to India. The battle’s name was Bardaqaqaman.

“Bardaqaqaman is a symbol of heroism and pride in Kurdish

history,” said Akram Khalid, a town resident. “The Kurdish fighters have so many such victories in history, which makes us a strong nation in the world.”

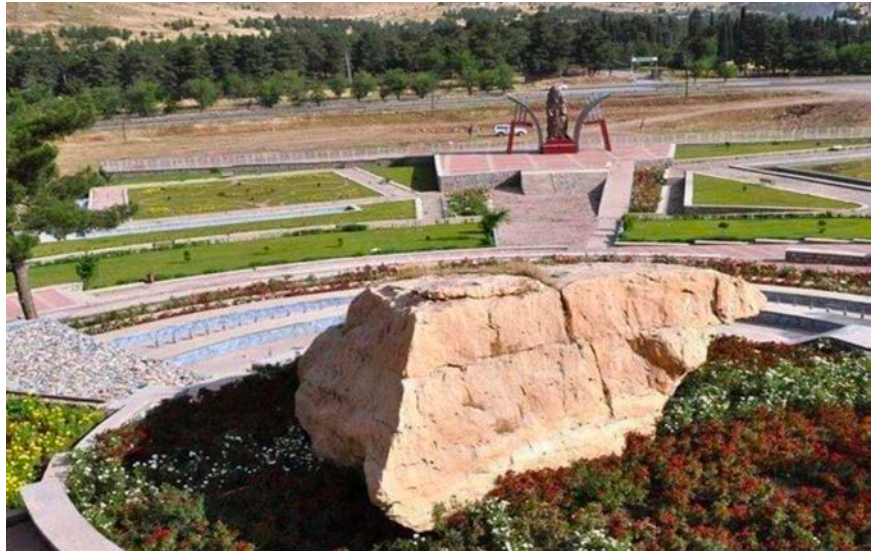
The park, historical stone, and the carved wall depicting the soldiers that fought there over 100 years ago have turned this small Kurdish town into an ideal place for local and international tourists.

“When I look at the pictures carved on the wall, I understand how they fought with few weapons and ammunition,” said Azzam Duleimi, a tourist from Baghdad. “This place is hidden from the world, and I

only knew about it by chance when I returned from Sulaimani to Erbil.”

Local residents think that the government can still do more to promote their small town.

“If the government promotes this place, it will be a number one historical site,” said Shad Rahim, a Bardaqaqaman resident. “I hope that the government could invest more in our town. It is good for the government, us, and the tourists.”



Bardaqaqaman (“Rock of the Hero”) in the Kurdistan Region contains a monument honoring the heroism of Sheikh Mahmoud’s army (Photo: Goran Sabah Ghafour)



Bardaqaqaman (“Rock of the Hero”) in the Kurdistan Region contains a monument honoring the heroism of Sheikh Mahmoud’s army (Photo: Goran Sabah Ghafour)



## « Les Nuits de la peste », d'Orhan Pamuk : l'agonie de l'Empire ottoman

Une fresque somptueuse signée du Prix Nobel 2006, qui évoque le basculement d'un monde. Rencontre.

**A**vant d'être un écrivain salué en 2006 par le Nobel de littérature, Orhan Pamuk avait rêvé, jeune, de devenir peintre. Ayant renoncé à cette voie – il estimait ne pas avoir assez de talent –, il n'en a pas moins conservé un magnifique coup de crayon, comme en témoigne son nouveau roman, *Les Nuits de la peste*, dont il a méticuleusement dessiné les personnages. Dans cette somme foisonnante se côtoient des princesses sensuelles, des savants luttant contre l'infection, des pachas ambitieux, des islamistes exaltés et de jeunes officiers progressistes, le tout sur fond de décadence ottomane. Avec, à la tête de l'Empire, le sinistre Abdülhamid II (1842-1918), surnommé le « Sultan rouge » pour sa sanguinaire répression de toute opposition libérale ainsi qu'envers les Arméniens et les autres minorités chrétiennes. Orhan Pamuk, avec tout autant de soin, a dessiné les somptueux paysages de Mingher. La démesure paranoïaque d'Abdülhamid II

Pour évoquer la fin d'un monde, dont une épidémie de peste est le révélateur, Orhan Pamuk a choisi d'inventer cet endroit, l'île de Mingher. « Je ne voulais pas être prisonnier d'un lieu réel et de détails historiques trop précis », explique l'écrivain au « Monde des livres ». Il a voulu « raconter, en ces temps de nostalgies néo-ottomanes en Turquie, ce que fut la réalité de l'agonie de cet empire, sans le glorifier ni le calomnier, et en même temps disséquer la naissance d'un nationalisme républicain



Istanbul, vers 1900. Photo colorisée à la main. CULVER / AURIMAGES

laïc ». Son portrait du commandant Kâmil, qui prend le pouvoir à Mingher et proclame l'indépendance, « vivant la grande révolution qu'il apportait à son pays comme un bonheur très personnel », rappelle un peu trop celui de Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), le fondateur de la République turque. Ce qui lui a valu une plainte en justice de la part de nationalistes kémalistes, qui n'a pas abouti.

Le vrai personnage historique du livre est Abdülhamid II. Dans toute sa démesure paranoïaque, ce sultan et calife régna pendant trente-trois ans avec un pouvoir toujours plus absolu. « Il aimait l'opéra, parlait le français et était très occidentalisé, mais il fut aussi l'inventeur du panislamisme afin de gagner la sympathie des autres Etats ou peuples musulmans du monde. Et s'il ne les convertissait pas ouvertement à la cause anti-occidentale, du moins était-ce un avertissement envoyé aux puissances qui la représen-

taient. Il avait inventé le panislamisme politique, cent cinquante ans avant [le président turc] Recep Tayyip Erdogan », note Orhan Pamuk, fasciné par le sultan, qui, comme il le raconte dans le roman, adorait Sherlock Holmes au point d'inviter Conan Doyle dans son palais, puis de se récuser, au dernier moment... craignant qu'il ne l'espionne. « Les dernières années de l'Empire ottoman furent l'histoire d'une dépossession fulgurante. Tous les territoires, les îles, les provinces figurant sur les cartes furent perdus l'un après l'autre », rappelle Pamuk.

Trois romans en un

*Les Nuits de la peste* mêle trois romans en un. Il y a d'abord un polar en costume d'époque, dans la veine de *Mort sur le Nil*, d'Agatha Christie (1937), autour du mystérieux meurtre de Bonkowski Pacha, le savant et médecin préféré du sultan, qui, en route pour l'Asie, s'arrête dans l'île de Mingher pour affronter l'épidémie. Un

deuxième roman, plus politique, et qui n'est pas sans rappeler *Le Guépard*, de Tomasi de Lampedusa (Seuil, 1959), raconte le basculement d'un monde où, selon la phrase célèbre, « tout doit changer pour que rien ne change ». A Mingher, l'après-épidémie se transforme en révolution. Mais, dans cette île quelque peu paradisiaque, ce qui fut une tragédie sanglante à l'échelle de l'Empire ottoman prend des accents d'opérette.

Enfin, un troisième livre dans le livre traite de la peste. « J'avais lu le roman d'Albert Camus [Gallimard, 1947] à l'âge de 19 ans et il m'avait fasciné, tout comme ensuite le *Journal de l'année de la peste*, de Daniel Defoe [1722]. Depuis quarante ans, je suis passionné par le sujet et notamment par les réactions politiques et sociales qu'entraînent les pandémies », explique encore Pamuk. Dès 2016, il s'était lancé dans l'écriture de ce roman. Le Covid-19 l'a rattrapé et, paradoxalement, incité à couper nombre de passages devenus redondants avec l'actualité. Orhan Pamuk n'a réussi qu'en partie son pari : « Ecrire à la fois un roman historique et une histoire en forme de roman. » Pourtant, malgré ses imperfections – notamment des longueurs dont Pamuk n'est guère coutumier –, cette fresque aux résonances très contemporaines a le mérite d'exister quand l'agonie du monde ottoman, magnifique sujet s'il en est, est si peu traitée dans la littérature turque.



Washington Kurdish Institute  
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April 7, 2022

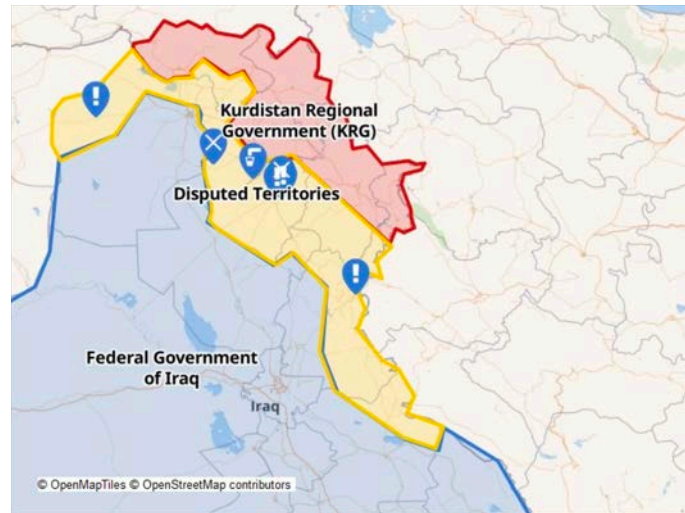
## Kirkuk Minute April 7, 2022

### Kirkuk

Kirkuk's acting governor Rakan al Jabouri annulled the 2013 plan by former governor Najmaldin Karim to designate nearly thirteen acres of land for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to build homes for the families of Peshmerga that were martyred during the ISIS (Da'esh) war, and families of genocide victims. In a memo, al Jabouri advised the Kurdistan Martyrs and Anfal Affairs department in Kirkuk to apply for benefits from the federal Martyrs Foundation. However, the Iraqi Martyrs Foundation does not contribute benefits to those part of the KRG's Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. Al Jabouri's decision was undertaken on the anniversary of the Halabja Genocide, March 16th, rising anger among the Kurds.

The Kirkuk court launched an investigation, demanding Kirkuk Provincial Council provide the names of council members that participated in the Kurdistan Independence Referendum in September of 2017. The court failed to recognize the fact that Provincial Councils across the country have been dissolved by its very own government, since 2019.

Contracted teachers in Kirkuk held a protest in front of the education department, demanding three months of back pay. The late wages



are related to Iraq's repeated failure to form a new government, resulting in delays in contractors' wages. Separately, Kirkuk's criminal court sentenced the former head of the electricity department Yalcheen Mehdi Rashed and six other employees to six months in prison for "waste of public money."

According to the latest export report by the State Organization for Marketing of Oil (SOMO), Kirkuk oil exports suffered a decline of more than a million barrels for the second month in a row. Kirkuk exported 1,448,935 oil barrels via the Cihan pipeline, grossing 168,337,268 USD in March. The decline in exports of Kirkuk oil was a result of a pause in exports to Jordan, which are set to resume this month. However, Iraq recorded the highest record for oil exports in March.

Amid continuous division between the nationalist and Is-

lamist wings, the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front disputes progressed to social media exchange between its leaders. On his social media accounts, the pro-Muslim Brotherhood, the current leader of the Turkmen Front, Hassan Turan, said, "Political work is talent, intelligence, understanding, and practice. Whoever lacks these qualities will not be an effective collegial politician—his achievements remain within the scope of hollow statements, tweets that do more harm than good" targeting Arshad Salihi, an ultra-nationalist member of Iraqi Parliament and former party leader. Previously, Salihi repeatedly said, "The Turkmen fate" is in the hands of "hollow men," indirectly criticizing Turan's leadership.

### Khanaqin

The head of the Department of Migration and Displaced Persons in Khanaqin, Ali Gazi Aga, said that 10,000

displaced families remain in the town. Fifteen percent are from al Anbar and Saladin province, while 85% are from Diyala's Jalawla, Sadeia, and Meqdadia. Aga also added that many families had received benefits from the department to return but remained in the town. The lack of essential services and security issues by both Da'esh and Iranian-backed militias prevent families from returning.

### Makhmour

The commander of the Kurdish volunteer forces against Da'esh, Gazi Faisal, said the Kurdish population in the Qaraj subdistrict has vanished while it was nearly 70%. Faisal blamed drought and lack of support by Kurdish authorities, leading many Kurds to sell their homes and lands under market prices, bought by Arab settlers supported by the Iraqi security forces and the federal government.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

According to the Director of Duhok's Migration and Displaced Person's Department, 400 Yazidi families have requested to return to displaced camps from Shingal due to a lack of primary services and deteriorated security situation. The official said the families have again registered to be transferred to the camp, preferring it over living in their homes.



## Will renewed interest in Iraqi Kurdish gas fuel Turkey-Iran rivalry?

Western capitals are seeking alternative natural gas resources to reduce their dependence on Russia, which creates a possible opportunity for Iraqi Kurdish gas exports.

**P**otential projects to carry Iraqi Kurdistan natural gas to Europe via Turkey, in order to reduce dependency on Russia, might also increase rivalry between Turkey and Iran.

Citing Turkish and Iraqi officials, Reuters reported Mar. 28 that a potential plan to carry Iraqi Kurdish gas through Turkey with the help of Israel was one reason for Iran's missile attack on Erbil on March 13.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps made no mention of that factor in its statement on the attack, which came after the killing of IRGC operatives near the Syrian capital Damascus in an Israeli airstrike in early March. The attack targeted Israeli intelligence presence in Erbil, the IRGC said.

But at least one missile struck a villa owned by Sheik Baz Karim Barzinji, CEO of the Iraqi Kurdish oil company KAR, which owns 40% of Kurdistan's oil export pipeline. Russia's oil giant Rosneft is the biggest shareholder.

KAR reached an agreement with the Erbil administration in December to build a pipeline from the Khor Mor field in southern Kirkuk to carry gas to Erbil and from there to Dohuk. The conduit is intended to serve domestic needs, but once it reaches Dohuk, the remaining distance to the Turkish border would be only 35 kilometers (22 miles). Under an energy cooperation deal between Ankara and Iraqi Kurdistan in 2013, Turkey has already finished the pipeline



A gas flare burns in a field close to the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk, 225 kms from Baghdad on Nov. 2, 2009. - MARWAN IBRAHIM/AFP via Getty Image

linking its border with northern Iraq to a conduit which carries Azeri gas to Europe.

"I am not in a position of government to talk about marketing the gas of the Kurdistan region," Barzinji told Reuters. He added that current production meets only 50% of the local need and that gas would not be exported if local consumption is not met — casting doubts over statements by Erbil that the region could start to export its gas as soon as 2025.

Erbil has amped up its efforts to boost its energy ties with regional actors amid escalating tensions between Russia and the Western capitals over Ukraine. Iraqi Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Feb. 2. Ali Hama Salih, the head of the energy commis-

sion in Kurdistan's parliament, said Feb. 9 that the gas link to Turkey would become operational in 2025. KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani discussed Kurdistan's "huge gas potential" with Qatar Energy Minister Saad Al-Kaabi during his visit to Doha on Feb. 16.

The Iraqi Federal Supreme Court struck down Iraqi Kurdistan's oil and gas law Feb. 16, but has hardly slowed down Erbil's efforts. Most recently, Masrour Barzani announced Mar 28 that Iraqi Kurdistan would "become a net exporter of gas to the rest of Iraq, Turkey and Europe in the near future and help meet their energy security needs," speaking at Atlantic Council's Global Energy Forum in Dubai.

While echoing previous assertions that Israel has no involvement in the plans, Barzani also admitted that Iraqi Kurdistan's

expanding energy ties were not in line with Iranian interests. The prime minister also said that in addition to missile attacks, some Iraqi institutions were manipulated into opposing the Iraqi Kurdistan region in an apparent reference to the court ruling.

In a similar vein, Erdogan said Turkey was gearing up for new energy projects. On his way back from Brussels, where he met with various NATO leaders, he told reporters, "God willing, through our meetings new avenues will be opened for Turkey in the energy field." That hints at possible markets for Iraqi Kurdish and Eastern Mediterranean gas following normalization of ties with Israel.

According to Iraqi Kurdish journalist Rebwar Kerim Wali, who closely follows Iraqi Kurdish politics, the Iranian strikes



were a retaliation against Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant political force in Iraqi Kurdistan, for supporting Tehran's political rivals in Baghdad over coalition talks.

"Kurdistan's oil is exported to Afghanistan via Iran. Natural gas should not be seen as a strategic threat to Iran," Wali told Al-Monitor, adding that Tehran has no problem with Erbil making money through its oil and gas. According to Wali, Iraqi Kurdistan cannot export gas for at least five years due to production capacities and infrastructure constraints.

Wali also said Barzani has ignored repeated signals from the Iranian side to dissuade him from supporting Sadrist. "But Barzani persisted. The attack is the outcome of this persistence. It has nothing to do with natural gas."

The journalist added that Iran was endorsing an alternative gas route to carry Iraqi gas through Jordan, bypassing Turkey, but the plan failed to receive a green light from Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.

Aside from Iranian anger, Ankara has other disagreements

with Baghdad to resolve before a potential gas project with Iraqi Kurdistan. These include a dispute over water resources; Turkish military bases in Iraq and ongoing military operations against the outlawed Kurdish militants in the Iraqi territory; and a controversial deal to sell Iraqi Kurdish oil bypassing the central government. The missile attack on the Turkish military in Bashiqa near Mosul in February, indicates the growing ire in Baghdad, particularly among pro-Iranian circles, over Turkey's efforts to increase its foothold in the country.

Bagdad lodged an arbitration case against Turkey's state pipeline operator in 2014 over Kurdistan's unilateral oil exports to Turkey under the 2013 deal. The arbitration tribunal is expected to order Turkey to pay up to \$25 billion in compensation to Iraq. A deal on gas would likely result in a similar case.

In sum, a Sadr-led coalition in Bagdad can indeed diminish Tehran's influence over potential projects between Turkey and Iraq. But Ankara still has to find a middle ground between Erbil and Bagdad to advance its gas and oil cooperation with Iraqi Kurdistan.



April 9, 2022

## Fascist group attacks students for dancing halay to Kurdish music in southern Turkey

**M**embers of the fascist group Greywolves attacked a group of university students who performed the traditional halay folk dance to a piece of Kurdish music in Turkey's southern province of Karaman.

The attack occurred at the premises of Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University on April 1, daily Evrensel reported on April 10.

Assailants who described themselves as "Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Ülkücüleri" (Greywolves) reportedly locked the Kurdish students in a depot and beat them up. They seized the students' mobile phones and made them write "We apologize to the Turkish public due to our immoral behavior" on their social media accounts.

One of the beaten students has reportedly left Karaman

and gone back to his hometown due to the trauma inflicted by the attack.

The attack was brought to the agenda of parliament by Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu. In an address to the General Assembly of parliament, Gergerlioğlu said the incident shows that the Kurdish issue has not been resolved in the country.

"When it comes to speaking, they say, 'We have solved the Kurdish problem in the country.' But look, a young man left his university and went back to Diyarbakır because he danced halay to a Kurdish song. Has the Kurdish problem been solved in the country; is this possible? This explicitly shows that the issue has not been resolved," Gergerlioğlu said.

The MP also showed a social

media post shared by the Greywolves members reading: "Welcome to the university where those who betray the country cannot hold a pen."

The Diyarbakır Bar Association also released a statement on April 7 that they will follow up on the issue for an "effective investigation process to be conducted."

In its statement titled "We condemn the racist attack against Kurdish identity and language," the bar said that "discriminatory policies" and "the widely used polarizing language" are behind these attacks. "We remind judiciary authorities that an effective investigation needs to be conducted for such attacks not to occur again," it said.

The Karaman Governor's Office announced that an investigation was launched after the

parents of one of the beaten students filed a complaint to Presidency's Communication Centre (CİMER). The governor's office also claimed that "no incident or problem" had occurred on the university premises.

"After the halay images of the students were shared on social media, a group of 10-15 people, who were not dormitory students, came to in front of the dormitory at about 12 a.m. After the dormitory manager and dormitory security staff notified the police, the group was dispersed by the police without an incident. As it can be seen clearly, no incident or problem occurred at the dormitory," it said.

Meanwhile, the university's rector Prof. Dr. Namık Ak on April 6 visited the Ülkü Ocakları (Greywolves) branch of Karaman.



April 9, 2022

## L'Iran impose des sanctions à l'encontre de 24 personnalités américaines

L'Iran a annoncé samedi avoir imposé des sanctions contre 24 ressortissants américains, dont l'ancien chef d'état-major de l'armée de terre George William Casey et Rudolf Giuliani, avocat de l'ancien président Donald Trump, alors que les pourparlers relatifs à l'accord de 2015 sur le nucléaire iranien sont suspendus depuis plus d'un mois.

La majorité des personnes visées, officiers, responsables politiques, dirigeants d'entreprise, étaient en fonctions sous le mandat de Donald Trump, qui avait annoncé en mai 2018 le retrait des Etats-Unis de l'accord de Vienne et le rétablis-



L'Iran a annoncé samedi avoir imposé des sanctions contre 24 ressortissants américains, dont l'ancien chef d'état-major de l'armée de terre George William Casey et Rudolf Giuliani, avocat de l'ancien président Donald Trump, alors que les pourparlers relatifs à l'accord de 2015 sur le nucléaire iranien sont suspendus depuis plus d'un mois. /Photo d'illustration prise le 27 janvier 2022 / REUTERS / Dado Ruvic

ment des sanctions économiques à l'encontre de l'Iran. Dans un communiqué relayé par les médias nationaux, le ministère iranien des Affaires étrangères précise que les personnes sanctionnées ont soutenu "des groupes terroristes et des actes terroristes" contre l'Iran et des "actes répressifs" d'Israël contre des Palestiniens.

Après onze mois de négociations indirectes pour sauvegarder le Plan d'action global commun, nom officiel de l'accord de Vienne, l'Iran et les Etats-Unis se renvoient désormais la responsabilité d'une relance du pacte.

duvaR.english  
Turkey's own independent source

April 9, 2022

## Top Turkish court finds violation of rights in former HDP MP's imprisonment

Turkey's Constitutional Court ruled that officials' refusal to release former HDP MP Leyla Güven in 2018 despite her re-election as a member of parliament had violated her rights.

Turkey's Constitutional Court (AYM) has ruled that the state had violated the rights of former Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP Leyla Güven by refusing to release her after she was re-elected as a deputy in the 2018 elections.

On June 24, 2018, shortly after Güven was re-elected as a deputy, the Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office issued a new arrest order for her. Leyla

Güven's daughter Sabiha Temizkan announced the AYM's decision on Twitter. She said that Güven continued to be imprisoned during her deputyship in the new parliamentary term for a period of seven months, and this was ruled as a violation of her rights by the top court.

Güven was detained in 2018 following critical remarks about Turkey's military operation in the predominantly Kurdish

town of Afrin in northern Syria. She had labeled the military operation against a Syrian Kurdish armed group as "an invasion".

While in detention she went on hunger strike over the prison conditions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan.

After nearly 80 days on hunger strike, a court ordered her release in January 2019 "under

judicial control."

It was only on July 10, 2019 that Güven was able to take an oath in parliament.

When her sentence was upheld on terrorism charges, her parliamentary immunity was lifted.

In 2020, she was handed 22 years and three months in prison on three separate terrorism charges.

## Turkish court acquits academic who posted 'Long Live Kurdistan' tweet

A court in Turkey's eastern province of Elazığ has acquitted a Kurdish academic who was standing trial for writing "Long live Kurdistan" in a social media post.

The Elazığ 2nd Heavy Penal Court said that Hifzullah Kutum's tweet did not constitute a crime and was within the freedom of speech, according to reporting by DW Turkish.

Prosecutors were demanding that Kutum, a research assistant at Firat University, receive a jail term of up to five years over charges of "making terrorism propaganda."



Kutum evaluated the court's ruling to DW Turkish, saying that this investigation shows how "miserable" the state of the judiciary is in the country. He said that the Turkish Republic has official ties with the Kurdistan Regional Govern-

ment (KRG).

He said that people in Turkey are raised with the mentality to insult and destroy other races.

Kutum's lawyer Mehdi Özdemir also spoke about the ruling to

DW Turkish, saying that the launch of such an investigation in the first place is a "legal monstrosity." "It is pleasing for all of us that this legal monstrosity has been finalized with an acquittal decision," he said.

Kutum was detained on Nov. 5, 2021 over the relevant tweet. The next day, he was sent to jail and released pending trial on Nov. 10. In the meantime, the rector's office of Firat University suspended him from his position.

The research assistant will apply to the judiciary for the university administration to reinstate him to his position.

## Teacher expelled for speaking Kurdish in Turkey

A teacher was expelled from a Turkish school in southern Mersin province, for speaking Kurdish and Arabic with his students, Iraqi Kurdish news outlet Kurdistan 24 reported on Sunday.

Twenty-three-year-old Hüdai Morsümbül is also facing investigation for encouraging the students to register for elective courses in Kurdish, it said.

Kurdish (Kurmanji and Zazaki) language, has been offered as an elective subject in Turkish primary and secondary schools since 2012, as part of reforms introduced by then-Prime Mi-



nister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party to ease tensions with the Kurdish minority, who account for approximately 15 percent of the country's population.

"I emphasised that students and parents should be infor-

med during the elective course registration process as per regulations," Morsümbül, who denied any wrongdoing, told the news outlet.

Kurdish language has faced periodical and ad-hoc bans in Turkey over the past few de-

acades during a war between the Turkish military and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an outlawed and armed group seeking autonomy for Turkey's Kurds.

In February, Turkish police detained four street musicians performing a Kurdish song in Istanbul's historic Istiklal Avenue, the famous street running off Taksim Square.

In October 2020, the governor of Istanbul banned the Kurdish theatrical play "Beru," shortly before its first performance. It had been performed for three years both in Turkey and abroad.



## Students dancing to Kurdish folk songs beaten by far-right group in Turkey's Karaman province

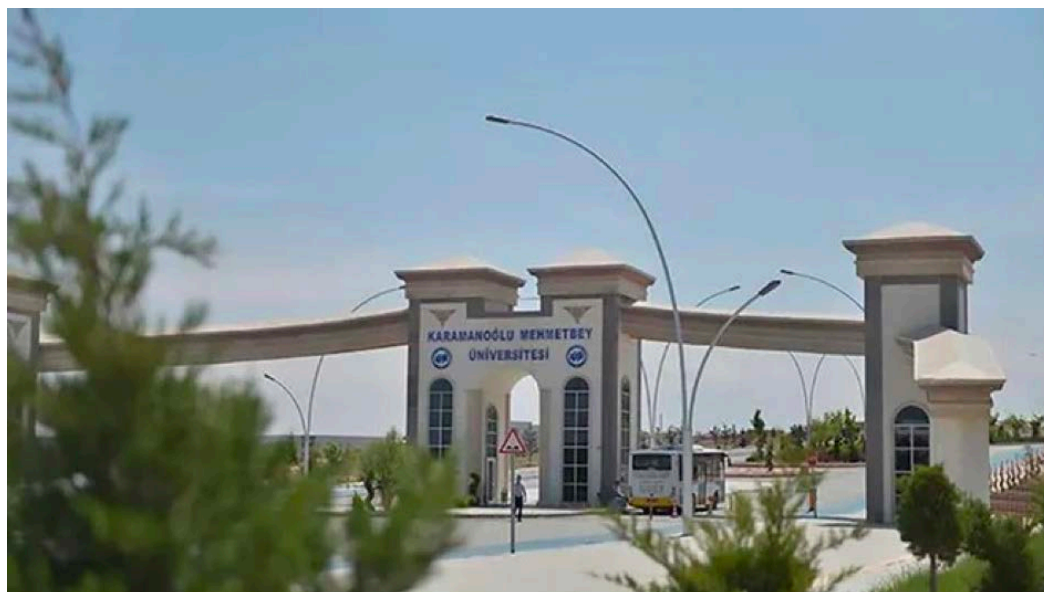
**A** group of university students in Turkey's southern Karaman province were attacked by the far-right ultranationalist Grey Wolves for dancing to Kurdish music, the Evrensel daily reported.

The students were dancing in the university dorm when the Grey Wolves group allegedly forced them inside a small room and beat them. The group also confiscated the students' telephones and wrote, "We apologize to the Turkish public for our immoral behavior," on their social media accounts.

Kurds in Turkey are often pressured not to speak their native language. Authorities frequently claim that people speaking in Kurdish are actually chanting slogans in support of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been leading an armed insurgency against Turkey's security forces since the '80s in a campaign that has claimed the lives of some 40,000 people.

Prohibitions against the use of Kurdish in Turkey go back many years. Kurdish language, clothing, folklore and names had been banned in 1937. The words "Kurds," "Kurdistan" and "Kurdish" were among those officially prohibited. After a military coup in 1980, speaking Kurdish was officially forbidden even in private life.

Traumatized by the attack,



one of the students quit university and returned to his hometown of Diyarbakır in southeastern Turkey. The student's parents filed a complaint against the perpetrators.

The incident took place on April 1 but was made public last Thursday after Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputy Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu discussed it in the Turkish Parliament.

Gergerlioğlu said Kurds faced many problems in Turkey and that the latest incident clearly showed these problems were far from being solved. "A young man had to quit his studies and go back to his hometown just because he was dancing to a Kurdish folk song. How can this be possible?" he asked.

The Diyarbakır Bar Association issued a statement on their Twitter account saying they condemned the attack on the students. "Authorities need to conduct an effective investigation into the incident," they said. "This was clearly a hate crime that targeted Kurdish people and their culture. Those politicians who use polarizing language are to blame for such incidents."

The statement criticized the judiciary, saying they protected perpetrators of hate crime by granting them impunity.

The Karaman Governor's Office issued a statement saying no such incident had occurred on the university premises. However, they did acknowledge that a group of 15 people had gathered in front of the dormitory but had been dispersed by the police.

In a controversial move Karaman University Rector Namık Ak visited the Grey Wolves' Karaman office.

The Grey Wolves are linked to the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), an ally of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Earlier last year, the European Parliament called on the European Union and its member states to examine the possibility of adding the Grey Wolves to the EU terrorist list.

In its 2019-2020 report prepared by Turkey rapporteur Nacho Sanchez Amor, the EP voiced concerns about the group, saying it was expanding to worrying levels not only in Turkey but also in EU countries.

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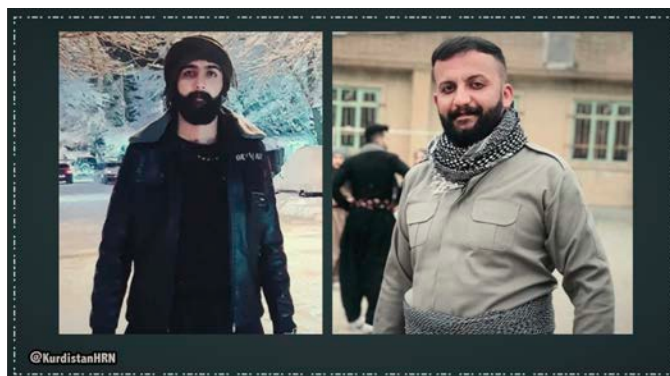
April 11, 2022

## Security forces arrest two brothers in Iran's Baneh

Iranian security forces have arrested two brothers named Ramin Rishi and Rebin Rishi in Baneh, Kurdistan province, at their workplace on 9 April.

They took the brothers to an undisclosed location.

Security forces refused to show an arrest warrant while detaining the two Kurdish civilians.



April 11, 2022

## Turkey: Detained former Kurdish political prisoner faces deportation risk

**T**urkish police have detained on 7 April a former Kurdish woman political prisoner, who holds Iranian citizenship, in Kayseri, central Turkey, and have transferred her to the city's centre for the deportation of asylum seekers.

Fatemeh Davand left Iran in January 2022 and has been living in Turkey as a political asylum-seeker ever since.

"I was detained by the police for no reason in a shopping mall in the city of Kayseri. After they took me to a police station and took my fingerprints, they transferred me to the central camp for the deportation of asylum-seekers outside the city of Kayseri", said Davand in an interview with the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).

The former political prisoner

added that the authorities had not yet explained the reason for her detention and transfer to this centre. However, given the location of her transfer, there is a serious risk that she could be deported to Iran.

Fatemeh Davand, a Kurdish civilian from Bukan, West Azerbaijan province, was detained by security forces in Bukan during a public protest rally in November 2019.

She was subjected to mental torture and pressure for 13 days in the detention centre of the Ministry of Intelligence in Orumiyeh, West Azerbaijan province, to make forced confessions.

A video of Davand's forced confessions was broadcasted in the media of the Islamic Republic of Iran a few days after her detention.

After completing the interrogation period in the detention centre of the intelligence ministry, she was transferred to the Women's Ward of Orumiyeh Central Prison.

The political prisoner was released on 25 March 2020, on a bail of 1 billion Tomans – nearly 40,000 USD.

In May 2020, Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Mahabad sentenced her to five years in prison on charges of "acting against national security." It was later commuted to three years and nine months in prison.

She was also tried in another case in February 2021 at Branch 103 of the 2nd Criminal Court of Bukan on charges of "disrupting public order and peace by participating in riots" and "removing the hijab."

In this court, which was presided over by Judge Mahdi Taghizadeh, she was acquitted of the charge of removing the hijab but was sentenced to five months imprisonment and 30 lashes for the other accusation.

Davand was transferred to Orumiyeh Central Prison on 6 August 2020 to serve her prison sentence.

She was released from prison in November 2021 after her application for parole was accepted, and left Iran for Turkey in January 2022.

Davand was one of the witnesses to the International Aban Tribunal, which was held in November 2021 in London at the initiative of human rights organisations.

## Descente policière dans les locaux du HDP à Cizre

La police turque a mené des raids lundi matin dans les locaux de la branche du HDP de Cizre, ainsi que dans les maisons de plusieurs membres du parti.

Les unités spéciales de la police turque ont fait une descente dans le bâtiment de la branche du Parti démocratique des Peuples (HDP) de Cizre, aux premières heures de la matinée, lundi.

Les policiers ont cassé les portes du bâtiment du parti et

piétiné le tapis de prière avec leurs bottes, ont rapporté des sources locales. Les locaux ont été fouillés pendant deux heures. Parallèlement, des perquisitions ont été effectuées dans les quartiers de Cudi, Dağkapı, Nur, et dans le village de Dirseklî.

Parmi les 9 personnes placées en garde à vue à l'issue du raid, figurent Mesut Nart, co-président de la branche locale du HDP et Esmer Çıkmaz (50 ans), cadre locale du HDP, dont la fille, Yasemin Çıkmaz, a été exécutée en 2016 dans les sous-sols de

Cizre par les forces de sécurité turques.

« Nous continuerons d'être votre cauchemar »

La direction régionale du HDP a condamné l'opération de police au cours d'une conférence de presse tenue en début d'après-midi, avec la participation des députés HDP Nuran İmir et Hasan Özgüneş et de plusieurs représentants de la société civile.

« Le raid de la police sur notre bureau de district est le résultat

de la haine envers les Kurdes. Ni vos politiques, ni vos persécutions ne peuvent nous arrêter. Je m'adresse ici au président : Notre bureau de district a été endommagé pendant les raids. Qui sont ces personnes ? Des agents des forces de l'ordre ou des membres de l'État islamique ? Notre lutte se poursuivra jusqu'à ce que le gouvernement AKP [Parti de la Justice et du Développement au pouvoir en Turquie] soit vaincu dans la région. Nous continuerons à être votre cauchemar », a déclaré la députée kurde Nuran İmir.



April 11, 2022

## Bodies of Kurds drowned in Greek waters to return home

The bodies of several Kurdish migrants are set to return to the Kurdistan Region months after they drowned in Greek waters while attempting to reach Europe in search of a better life, a refugee foundation said on Monday.

The bodies of five Kurds, including two children, will arrive at Erbil International Airport at 4:05 pm on Tuesday, the representative of Summit (Lutka) Foundation for Refugees and Displaced Affairs for Greece, Hussein Hama Saleh announced.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on Monday afternoon also confirmed the return of the bodies.

"After cooperating with the interior ministry and performing the legal procedures and DNA identification for the victims and upon

the orders of Kurdistan Region Prime Minister [Masrour Barzani], the Department of Foreign Relations tomorrow [Tuesday] will return the bodies of five victims who have been identified," read a KRG statement.

One of the children is two-year-old and the other is aged six, according to Lutka. Alongside them, the body of a woman and two men will also be returned home.

At least three separate migrants' boats capsized in the Aegean Sea late last year, with about 30 people, including Kurds, dying in the water between December 22 and 25. The details of the incidents and the total number of migrants the boat carried remain unclear.

An 11-year-old boy who lost his entire family in the Aegean Sea was returned to his hometown of

Koya In March.

Dozens of mourning families received the bodies of their loved ones in Erbil in February. Their repatriation followed a directive issued by PM Barzani.

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

Tens of thousands of mostly young Kurds left the Kurdistan Region for Europe last year in search of a better life, using people's smuggling routes. A number of these migrants died in freezing temperatures on the Belarus-Poland border and others drowned in the sea, suf-

fering a catastrophic fate.

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

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

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

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



April 11, 2022

## Erbil, Baghdad to hold first round of talks on Kurdish oil

**E**rbil and Baghdad on Monday will hold the first round of talks regarding the Kurdistan Region's oil and energy sector weeks after the Iraqi top court ruled the Kurdish oil and gas to be unconstitutional.

A high-ranking delegation representing the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is expected to meet with Iraqi officials in Baghdad to "discuss the executive procedures" and to "agree on a new and a standard mechanism" for managing the Region's oil, read a statement from the Iraqi oil ministry on Monday.

The ministry noted that it has held "intensive and special meetings and workshops with local and international experts," assigning consultants to review all contracts concluded between the KRG and international companies.

In mid-February, the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court ruled against the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas law that regulates the oil sector in the Region, putting its industry in jeopardy. The ruling was widely condemned by Kur-



Graphic: Rudaw

dish officials. The KRG passed its oil and gas law in 2007, enabling it to administer and develop its own oil and gas resources.

The top court's decision found the law to be "unconstitutional," and therefore struck down the legal basis for the independence of the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas sector. The decision came amid ongoing political tension and an ongoing government formation process as the country has failed to elect a president six months after the elections.

The KRG, at the time, responded to the decision saying the court's ruling in unconstitutional and unjust.

Erbil has since expressed its readiness to discuss the matter with Baghdad.

The KRG's delegation, which arrived in the Iraqi capital on Sunday, consists of government figures and officials from the natural resources ministry, along with three ministers, the statement noted, without disclosing names.

The talks aim to serve the public interest and to contribute to strengthening and supporting the national economy and the integration of the national oil industry, the Iraqi oil ministry noted in its statement.

Disputes rose between Baghdad and Erbil in early 2014, when Baghdad cut the Region's share of the federal budget, setting into motion a series of crises that the KRG still suffers from. By March 2014, the KRG started exporting its oil abroad in an attempt to secure the salaries of its employees.

KRG's Deputy PM Qubad Talabani on Saturday said the court's decree against the Kurdish oil is an opportunity to settle the issue of oil with Baghdad.

The Iraqi and Kurdish governments were once again brought around the table in 2021 when Iraq was drafting its budget law. Both sides agreed that the KRG would continue its oil sales, and in return would hand the revenue of 250,000 barrels of oil to Baghdad daily.



April 11, 2022  
ERBIL, Kurdistan Region

## HDP members arrested in police raid in Sirnak

**S**everal members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were detained in a police raid at the party's office in Sirnak province in the Kurdish region

(Bakur) of eastern Turkey on Monday, said media outlets and officials from the bloc. The police raided HDP's office in Sirnak's Cizre town in the early hours of the day, arrest-

ing at least five party members, including HDP's district co-chair Mesut Nart, and district manager Yasamine Cikmaz, the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya Agency.

The reason for their detention is yet to be known, it added.

HDP's Sirnak deputy Nuran Imir expressed her anger regarding the incident on , saying



the doors of the office were broken, the windows were smashed and the office belongings were scattered on the floor.

The pro-Kurdish party's offices are often attacked in Turkey. An assailant HDP's Istanbul office with a knife and a gun in December.

The party's Marmaris office was by gunmen in July.

The daughter of an HDP member, whose photo was thrown to the floor in the recent attack, was in another offense



HDP office in Cizre town, Sirnak province in the Kurdistan region (Bakur) of eastern Turkey on April 11, 2022. Photo: Nuran Imir/Facbook; Graphic Rudaw

on the party's Izmir office in June.

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. Members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) have called for the party's closure.

Hundreds of its members and supporters are under investigation or in jail, including Selahattin Demirtas, the HDP's former leader, along with his co-chair Figen Yuksekdag.

"We will not bow down to your despicable attacks," wrote Imir.

## Kurdistan au féminin

12 avril 2022

La Kurdistan a ouvert le regard féminin

# Un prisonnier kurde tué à deux jours de sa libération

**L**e prisonnier politique kurde, Ferhan Yılmaz est mort à deux jours de sa libération dans la prison de Silivri. Sa famille déclare que Ferhan a été tué en prison à cause de la torture et des mauvais traitements. Il y aurait plusieurs autres prisonniers morts dans les mêmes circonstances dans la prison de Silivri.

Selon les informations fournies à la famille par l'administration pénitentiaire de la prison de Silivri où Ferhan était détenu depuis environ un an, ce dernier aurait eu une crise cardiaque 2 jours avant sa libération. Mais pour la famille, il s'agit d'un énième meurtre de prisonniers politiques kurdes qu'on veut maquiller en accident ou en maladie ou encore en suicide. Déclarations contradictoires de l'administration pénitentiaire Le frère de Ferhan Yılmaz, Hikmet Yılmaz, a déclaré que l'administration pénitentiaire leur ont téléphoné : « On nous

a dit qu'il était d'abord tombé malade et avait eu une crise cardiaque. Nous sommes allés à Istanbul en avion avec mon père et quelques membres de ma famille. Quand nous y sommes allés, ils avaient emmené mon frère à l'hôpital d'État de Silivri. Mon frère était à l'hôpital avec des contusions. Du sang coulait de sous ses yeux, ils lui avaient bourré le nez avec des boules de coton pour empêcher le sang de sortir. Nous avons de nouveau appelé la prison pour dire qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une crise cardiaque, nous leur avons dit qu'ils nous mentaient. Alors, on nous a dit cette fois, que les prisonniers ont pris des médicaments et se sont rebellés. Ils ont fait des déclarations différentes à chaque fois. »

Organes internes explosés Un médecin de l'hôpital leur aurait dit que quand on a amené Ferhan à l'hôpital, il était déjà mort. Hikmet Yılmaz

a déclaré que les organes internes de son frère avaient explosé : « il ne s'agit pas d'une crise cardiaque, mais les médecins ne nous ont rien dit officiellement. Deux jours avant mon frère, ils ont ramené deux autres [prisonniers] morts. Ils les ont tous tués ensemble, mais ils ne les ont pas emmenés ensemble à l'hôpital pour que personne ne le sache. » Il avait demandé de l'argent à sa mère

Hikmet Yılmaz a déclaré que son frère (Ferhan Yılmaz), qui devait être libéré dans deux jours, avait parlé à sa mère trois jours avant sa mort et que sa mère lui avait envoyé de l'argent : « Ma mère a envoyé l'argent (...). L'argent avait disparu mais ils ne l'avaient pas crédité sur son compte. Le lendemain, il a rappelé ma mère et m'a dit que l'argent n'était toujours pas arrivé. (...) » Hikmet Yılmaz a déclaré avoir reçu des informations des dé-

putés du CHP et du HDP à ce sujet, et que les députés leur ont dit : « Ils ne nous laissent pas entrer en prison, nous estimons que le nombre de morts est trop élevé. » Alors que la famille a été informée que le rapport d'autopsie de Ferhan Yılmaz serait publié 6 mois plus tard, le corps de Yılmaz a été amené à Batman par un bus alloué par la municipalité métropolitaine d'Istanbul et enterré dans le village d'Örmegözü.

### Concernant le passé de la famille de Yılmaz

Le 24 février 1994, 9 Kurdes ont été tués et 17 ont été grièvement blessés dans le village de Tanzê, à Batman / Sason, lors d'une attaque au mortier depuis l'avant-poste militaire du village de Cacasê. Après le massacre, l'armée turque a vidé le village et la plupart des familles kurdes se sont installées à Istanbul.





12 avril 2022

## Turkish lira's slump helps industrialists boost output, hits consumers

**T**urkey's industrial output expanded at the fastest pace in six months, led by manufacturers, after a slump in the value of the lira drove exports.

Retail sales growth eased after the cost of imports climbed.

Industrial output expanded by a monthly 4.4 percent in February, the Turkish Statistical Institute reported on Tuesday. On an annual basis, it rose by 13.3 percent.

The Turkish government is seeking to boost manufacturing and exports in an economic programme focused on

keeping interest rates deeply negative when compared with inflation. Interest rates on commercial loans stood at an average of 20.95 percent at the start of April, according to central bank data, compared with March consumer price inflation of 61.1 percent.

Exports by Turkish companies are setting monthly records, helped by cheap government-backed loans for exporters and a recent slump in the value of the lira. Still, the country's current account deficit is widening sharply due to demand for imported goods and materials and a surge in the price of commodities including oil and

natural gas.

A jump in the cost of imported goods is hitting consumer demand. Retail sales at constant prices rose by an annual 6.2 percent in February, the statistics institute said in a separate statement on Tuesday. That was the slowest increase in 12 months. Sales increased 0.5 percent compared with January, when they had shrunk by 1.2 percent month-on-month.

Many Turkish consumers are seeing their spending power decline, paring demand for goods and services, after the lira slumped against the dollar,

pushing up the cost of televisions, cars and other popular products, and inflation spiked. Turkey's March inflation rate was the highest in two decades and followed price increases of an annual 54.4 percent in February. The lira dropped by 44 percent last year and has lost a further 10 percent of its value this year.

The slowdown in retail sales was led by food, drinks, tobacco, electronic goods, furniture and automotive fuel, the data showed.

The lira was trading little changed at 14.68 per dollar on Tuesday.



April 12, 2022

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Turkish-backed forces shell Ain Issa for the sixth day in a row

The SOHR report said Turkish forces fired heavy artillery shells near Ain Issa.

**T**urkish-backed forces continued to bombard areas near Ain Issa with heavy artillery for the sixth day in a row, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported on Monday.

The SOHR report said Turkish forces fired heavy artillery shells at the village of Ma'lak, Khaldiyah, Al-Hoshan, Al-Dabs, Estarahat Sakr, and the M4 highway between Aleppo and Al-Hasakah near Ain Issa.

No casualties have been reported yet.

After Turkey conducted a cross-border attack against



Turkish-backed forces continue to shell Ain Issa (Photo: Hawar News Agency)

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria in October 2019, Russia and the US reached separate ceasefire agreements with Ankara, allowing Turkish troops to control the area between Tal Abyad and Serekaniye.

Despite these agreements, Turkish-backed groups and the Turkish army have continued to target SDF-held areas.

April 13, 2022

## Lawsuit filed against leading feminist organization, seeking its closure

**A** lawsuit has been filed to shut down Turkey's prominent "We Will Stop Femicide Platform" (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu).

The platform, which campaigns for ending femicide in Turkey and frequently criticizes the Turkish government for inadequate laws to combat violence against women, said the lawsuit was filed by the Istanbul Public Prosecutor's Office. The prosecutor's office is accusing the platform of "acting against the law and morality." The group keeps a record of all reported murders of women at



the hands of violent men. Its latest data showed at least 24 femicide in Turkey last month. "We do not see this lawsuit

filed against our We Will Stop Femicide Platform an attack only against our struggle. We know this attack is one against

the entire democratic public opinion," the group said in a statement.

"The efforts by the government, which has withdrawn its signature from the Istanbul Convention at the cost of leaving women and LGBTIQ+ individuals alone against violence, to intimidate those fighting are not independent from the many injustices in the country," it added.

The platform frequently calls on the Turkish government to reinstate the Istanbul Convention, a Council of Europe treaty obligating signatories to stop violence against women.

April 14, 2022

## Ahad Moloodi and Hossein Khelyani Sentenced to Imprisonment by the Revolutionary Court of Naqadeh

**R**ecently, the Revolutionary Court of Naqadeh sentenced Ahad Moloodi and Hossein Khelyani to five months in prison.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists, quoting Kurdpa News Outlet, Ahad Moloodi and Hossein Khelyani, the residents of two villages in Naqadeh County



located in West Azerbaijan Province were sentenced to five months imprisonment. In this report, an informed source stated that the citizens have been charged with "propaganda against the regime in favor of an anti-regime political party." On January 4, 2022, these individuals were arrested by security forces and released on bail six days later from a detention center in Naqdeh.

## La Turquie de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan s'enfonce dans l'inconnu

Alors que de nombreux Turcs peinent à subvenir à leurs besoins, ils observent de près le contexte international brûlant, notamment en Ukraine. Avec en ligne de mire les élections présidentielle et législatives prévues dans un peu plus d'un an, qui pourraient voir Recep Tayyip Erdoğan en grande difficulté.

**C**omment voulez-vous que je m'en sorte ? Les gens n'arrivent plus à payer leur facture, ils ne sont pas près de voyager et de faire du tourisme ». Burhan, 47 ans, est commerçant dans la petite ville de Mardin, située dans le sud-est de la Turquie à majorité kurde, tout près de la frontière syrienne. L'homme se montre particulièrement prolix quand il s'agit d'évoquer ses conditions de vie. « Tout le monde est très affecté. Nous sommes obligés de faire des choix, y compris pour la nourriture. Et plus les mois passent, plus notre situation est difficile », explique-t-il.

Haut lieu touristique, cette petite ville taillée à flanc de colline est particulièrement touchée par la crise. Un rapide coup d'œil à l'envolée des prix des produits de première nécessité permet de se faire une idée des difficultés de la population : plus 54 % pour le pain, plus 80 % pour l'huile, 120 % pour l'électricité et 25 % pour le gaz naturel, selon des données officielles publiées en janvier. La majorité de la population s'est vu contrainte de réduire drastiquement ses dépenses non essentielles.

### Une économie en crise

Les foyers les plus modestes sont évidemment les plus durement touchés. Et si l'augmentation spectaculaire du salaire minimum décrétée en début d'année par le président turc a été plutôt bien accueillie — il est passé de 2 825 à 4 250 livres turques (environ 250



Ankara, 17 février 2022. Des habitants font la queue pour acheter de l'huile d'olive vendue à bas prix par l'Office des produits agricoles  
Adem Altan/AFP

euros) —, cette mesure n'a pas suffi à améliorer significativement les conditions de vie d'une population à bout de souffle.

La crise affecte tous les secteurs de la société : à Diyarbakir, à une cinquantaine de kilomètres de Mardin, une jeune femme explique avoir été contrainte de repousser sine die son mariage, faute de pouvoir le financer. Le gérant d'un commerce vestimentaire explique, pour sa part, avoir divisé son chiffre d'affaires par deux depuis 2018, et avoir très peur de l'avenir.

Si les régions du sud-est, considérées comme les plus pauvres, sont touchées de plein fouet, l'ensemble du territoire turc fait face à une situation périlleuse. Mehmet, la trentaine, a dû se résigner à

quitter Ankara après la perte de son emploi : « Je n'étais plus en mesure de payer mon loyer, j'ai été contraint de retourner vivre chez mes parents. Depuis, impossible de trouver un nouveau travail », raconte-t-il, désabusé.

Faute de perspectives et étranglée par la crise économique libanaise, Jana D., 25 ans, a quitté son pays il y a un an afin de s'installer à Istanbul. Pour elle, comme pour les milliers de Libanais qui ont émigré en Turquie, l'histoire se répète : « La situation se dégrade très rapidement. Je n'arrive pas à trouver de logement, beaucoup de gens ont les pires difficultés à payer leur loyer ou à se nourrir. Évidemment, ça reste mieux qu'au Liban, puisque nous avons de l'électricité, de l'essence ou des transports publics, mais je ne suis pas

optimiste pour le futur », s'inquiète-t-elle. Et il y a de quoi : dans la mégapole stambouliote, les statistiques officielles de l'Agence de développement indiquent que, désormais, plus de 62 % des familles consacrent la majorité de leurs dépenses aux produits de première nécessité.

Un « capitalisme autoritaire » Comment la situation a-t-elle pu se dégrader aussi rapidement ? « Si l'on devait donner un point de départ, cela pourrait être l'augmentation des taxes sur l'acier et l'aluminium turc décrétée par Donald Trump en 2018, qui entendait protester contre la détention du pasteur évangélique Brunson en Turquie. Dans les faits, cela a entraîné une forte dépréciation de la livre turque. Nous sommes alors dans un contexte qui n'est pas neutre, peu après la présidentialisation du régime », en-



chaîne Deniz Unal, économiste au Centre d'études prospectives et d'information internationales (Cepii).

En effet, depuis la tentative de coup d'État en 2016, la Turquie est entrée dans un régime d'exception : une période marquée par une restriction des libertés, mais également par une mise sous tutelle des autorités de régulation autonomes. Cet état de fait sera entériné en 2017 par un référendum permettant de modifier la Constitution et à la présidentialisation du régime politique. Dans un climat de renforcement de l'autoritarisme à l'intérieur et de troubles à l'international, l'économie turque entame alors sa descente aux enfers. « Comme dans les autres domaines, une mauvaise gestion due à la désinstitutionnalisation a affecté la gouvernance économique et le pays s'est enlisé la crise », poursuit Deniz Unal, qui n'hésite pas à parler, comme plusieurs spécialistes, de « national-capitalisme autoritaire » pour décrire la politique économique du président Erdoğan.

Dès lors, la gouvernance économique s'est écartée d'un cadre rationnel pour suivre les ordres du président turc, devenu « économiste en chef » du pays. À titre d'exemple, depuis 2018, la Banque centrale de la République de Turquie (BCRT) obéit directement à ses seules directives. Suivant la volonté présidentielle, le maintien du taux d'intérêt directeur de la BCRT largement en dessous de l'inflation afin de favoriser la croissance grâce aux crédits accordés par les banques publiques a creusé les déficits courants et publics financés par la dette. Le cercle vicieux « inflation-dépréciation-endettement » dont le pays était sorti au début des années 2000 est de retour, et aucune des démarches entreprises depuis n'est venu l'enrayer. Conséquence, les investisseurs étrangers sont de plus en plus réticents à l'idée de venir s'installer en Turquie, tandis que la dépréciation continue de favoriser la dollarisation de l'écono-

mie.

### Les réfugiés syriens « boucs émissaires »

À un plus d'un an des élections législatives et présidentielle — prévues en juin 2023 —, la situation vire au casse-tête pour le président turc, dont la base électorale est très sensible à la santé économique du pays. Dans un tel contexte, les tensions sont allées crescendo. Les quelque 3,6 millions de réfugiés syriens sont les premiers à avoir fait les frais du climat d'ultranationalisme en cours. En août 2021, à Ankara, plusieurs centaines d'hommes armés de bâtons ont saccagé des commerces tenus par des réfugiés, jugés responsables de la crise par les assaillants. Le 16 novembre dernier à Izmir, trois travailleurs syriens étaient brûlés vifs par un ancien paramilitaire alors qu'ils dormaient sur leur lieu de travail.

Loin d'appeler au calme, le pouvoir s'est lancé dans un plan de retour « volontaire » des réfugiés. Une dynamique qui inquiète la plateforme d'ONG belges CNCD-11.11.11 : « La chute de la livre turque, l'inflation, la paupérisation et la concurrence pour l'emploi créent une atmosphère hostile aux réfugiés syriens », a ainsi alerté sa directrice, Els Hertogen. Le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) d'Erdoğan est aussi sous la pression constante de certains partis d'opposition — particulièrement le Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, kémaliste) et l'Iyi parti (Bon parti, nationaliste laïque) —, qui lui reprochent d'avoir laissé trop de réfugiés s'installer dans le pays. Doublié sur sa droite comme sa gauche, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan semble désireux de faire évoluer sa politique en la matière afin de ne pas voir sa base électorale s'éroder un peu plus.

Sur une pente glissante, et alors que tous les sondages d'opinion le montrent en grande difficulté, le président Erdogan semble mettre toutes ses forces dans la bataille afin d'in-

verser la tendance avant les prochaines élections. À l'intérieur du pays pour commencer, où il semble bien décidé à faire le vide autour de lui. Le Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, gauche, d'obédience kurde), devenu troisième force politique du pays en 2018 avec 6 millions de voix, est toujours sous le coup d'un bannissement pur et simple de la vie politique. Le 17 mars 2021, un acte d'accusation de 609 pages demandant l'interdiction du parti était remis à la Cour constitutionnelle turque par le procureur général de la Cour de cassation. En cause, les liens présumés entre le HDP et le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), labellisé « organisation terroriste » par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les États-Unis.

En coulisses, le parti, déjà affaibli par l'emprisonnement d'au moins 5 000 de ses membres, craint que la procédure ne débouche sur son interdiction quelques semaines avant les prochaines élections, afin qu'il ne puisse pas se réorganiser à temps. Et c'est bien un enjeu majeur pour Erdoğan : l'AKP étant la seconde force politique dans de nombreuses villes à majorité kurde et les électeurs du HDP, dans leur immense majorité, n'ayant l'intention de voter pour aucun autre parti, celui du président turc raflerait ces régions.

Les sympathisants du HDP ont bien compris l'enjeu : le 21 mars 2022, à l'occasion du Nouvel An kurde, Newroz, près d'un million de personnes se sont rassemblées à Diyarbakir. Cette fête traditionnelle a viré à la démonstration de soutien au HDP, où les grandes figures du parti n'ont pas manqué de fustiger le caractère autoritaire du président turc autant que son naufrage économique. Pour la première fois depuis des années, les forces de l'ordre ont attaqué des participants aussi bien dans la manifestation qu'à l'extérieur, preuve des crispations croissantes au sommet de l'État.

Mais c'est à l'international que la riposte du président est la plus spectaculaire. Il cherche simultanément à améliorer ses relations avec Israël, l'Égypte, ou encore les Émirats arabes unis. Il est à noter que le chef de l'État turc a réalisé sa première visite officielle depuis dix ans à Abou Dhabi, un voyage de deux jours marqué par la signature de treize accords de coopération et mémorandums d'entente (MoU). Toujours dans l'optique d'attirer les capitaux des pays du Golfe, la Turquie a décidé de « clore et de transférer » en Arabie saoudite le dossier de l'assassinat de Jamal Khashoggi, le journaliste et opposant saoudien tué et démembré à l'intérieur du consulat saoudien d'Istanbul en 2018. Ce revirement s'accompagne en outre d'une volonté de rapprochement avec l'Union européenne, après des années de froid. Cette activité diplomatique trahit un besoin de financement urgent : dilapidées, les réserves de change sont désormais en négatif. Médiation entre l'Ukraine et la Russie

L'offensive russe va-t-elle encore un peu plus fragiliser le raïs turc en difficulté ? Pas si sûr. Dépendant à la fois des deux pays belligérants — notamment en gaz et en blé —, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan semble voir en cette guerre une réelle opportunité politique et entend bien se positionner comme un médiateur de choix. « Erdoğan essaie de se positionner entre les deux camps de manière relativement équilibrée. Cette position peut contribuer à le placer au centre du jeu géopolitique. Et s'il arrive à gagner la bienveillance des Occidentaux afin d'obtenir des liquidités, il pourrait revenir en force sur le plan domestique », explique Deniz Unal. Et si ce n'était pas le cas, le chef d'État peut disposer, à la faveur de la déstabilisation mondiale que provoque l'invasion russe, d'un nouveau levier afin de promulguer des mesures d'exception supplémentaires. La partie ne fait que commencer.

# Un tribunal iranien confirme la condamnation à mort d'un combattant kurde

**L**a condamnation à mort du combattant kurde des HPG Hatem Özdemir a été confirmée par la justice iranienne.

Fait prisonnier par l'Iran en 2019, le combattant des Forces de Défense du Peuple (HPG, branche armée du PKK) Hatem Özdemir avait été condamné à la peine de mort en première instance. La peine prononcée contre le combattant détenu dans une prison de la ville kurde d'Urmiye vient d'être confirmée par la justice iranienne.

Özdemir est accusé de « rébel-



Hatem Özdemir, combattant kurde des HPG condamné à la peine de mort par la justice iranienne. Il est détenu actuellement dans la prison d'Urmiye

lion contre l'État » et d'appartenance au Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Selon le Réseau des droits de

l'Homme du Kurdistan, il a été capturé le 2 juillet 2019, lorsque qu'une unité des HPG a été prise en embuscade par

la « Garde révolutionnaire » (Pasdaran). Özdemir avait alors été grièvement blessé par un obus de mortier. La condamnation d'Özdemir porte à deux le nombre de Kurdes condamnés à mort au cours du mois de mars. Le second est Firaz Mousallou, qui s'est rendu aux autorités iraniennes en 2019 après une promesse d'amnistie. Il doit être exécuté pour « rébellion contre Dieu et l'État » et appartenance au PKK ou au Parti démocratique du Kurdistan d'Iran (PDKI). Il se trouve également dans la prison d'Urmiye.

## Kurdistan au féminin 14 avril 2022

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

# La police iranienne tue un jeune Kurde sous la torture

**M**ilad Jafari, un jeune Kurde de 25 ans arrêté par la police iranienne pour des accusations « liées à la drogue » à Téhéran le 7 avril, est mort de façon suspecte dans un centre de détention de la police.

La famille de Milad Jafari, originaires de Kermanshah, a déclaré que leur fils était mort à cause de la torture.

« Milad Jafari a été violemment arrêté par des agents du Département des enquêtes crimi-



nelles le 7 avril, en même temps qu'un ami nommé Omid, au carrefour d'Afsarieh à Téhéran. Quelques jours

plus tard, après des demandes répétées de la famille, le département de médecine légale de Kahrizak a appelé la famille

et leur a demandé de s'y rendre et de recevoir le corps », a déclaré un proche du jeune homme à l'ONG Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).

La source a ajouté qu'au département de médecine légale, des photos du corps de Jafari ont été montrées à son père, et on lui a dit que le jeune homme avait perdu la vie pour diverses raisons telles que « suicide » et « chute d'une hauteur » pendant son arrestation.



April 14, 2022

## Arbitrary arrests Regime security services arrest eight medical staff, including woman, for "serving during faction control of eastern Ghouta"

Civil sources have informed SOHR that regime security services of the Military Intelligence Division have carried out a large-scale raid campaign in Kfarbatna and Jisreen in Eastern Ghouta, arresting eight members of medical staff for "working in a field hospital in the two towns during the control of Eastern Ghouta by the opposition factions," including a nurse at Al-Sal and Al-Fateh hospitals in Kfarbatna town, along with others who worked in the two hospitals in Kfarbatna and the medical



centre in Jisreen town. The reasons and motives behind their arrest remain unknown.

According to Syrian Observatory sources, since the beginning of 2022, areas in Eastern Ghouta have witnessed large-

scale security campaigns by the regime services, carrying out raids in search of wanted persons and buried weapons in Marj farms, the central sector, and Douma.

In March 2022, SOHR documented the arrest of 17 people, including two women, on different charges, the most prominent of which are "evading the mandatory and reserve conscription in the regime army," "communicating with foreign bodies," and "cybercrimes."



April 14, 2022

## Kurdistan Region commemorates 34th anniversary of Anfal in Garmiyan

Feyli Kurds were the first victims taken to that camp in the early 1980s. Many Iraqi opposition figures to the regime were also imprisoned there.

In the late 1980s, thousands of Kurdish civilians were displaced from their villages at the hands of the former Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein and taken to notorious prison camps before they were massacred.

The Anfal Campaign resulted in the killings of at least 180,000 civilians, including women and children, by the former Iraqi regime. Only a small fraction of the mass graves, primarily located in the southern Iraqi provinces, have been unearthed over 30 years later.



A woman is praying at the gravesite of an Anfal victim in the Kurdistan Region's Chamchamal district, April 14, 2022. (Photo: Dana Hama Gharib/Kurdistan 24)

Every year on Apr. 14, people across the Kurdistan Region commemorate the Anfal genocide. On that day in 1988, the

Anfal genocide began in Garmiyan. That mass-murder campaign largely took place in the rural areas of Kalar and Chamchamal towns.

Thousands of civilians from the Garmiyan area were taken to Topzawa military base and prison camp in Kirkuk province in large military trucks. The women and children were systematically segregated from the male inmates before being taken to Nogra Salman camp in Samawa in the harsh southern desert of Iraq near the border with Saudi Arabia.

Feyli Kurds were the first victims taken to that camp in the



early 1980s. Many Iraqi opposition figures to the regime were also imprisoned there. The camp's notorious name is still associated with some of the worst atrocities committed by the former Iraqi regime. Survivors, victims' relatives, and

activists visited the camp on Thursday to commemorate the tragedy. Last October, the Iraqi government attempted to restore the Topzawa camp in Kirkuk as an active military base again. However, it was prevented from

doing so following a strong backlash from activists and residents in the area. Per the Iraqi 2005 constitution, the Iraqi state is obligated to compensate the victims and survivors of the genocides and atrocities of the former regime.

Kurdish officials have repeatedly called on the Iraqi federal government to fulfill this responsibility. According to officials in the autonomous region, survivors of the crimes have not yet been compensated in any way.



April 16, 2022  
By Fuad Haghghi

## Kurdish woman at risk of deportation to Iran could face years in jail: family

**A** former Kurdish political prisoner who was detained three days ago in Turkey despite being registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a refugee, could face years in prison if she is deported back to Iran where she endured two years of imprisonment for participating in anti-government protest in November 2019.

Fatemeh Davand whose images circulated around the world in November 2019 as she stood on roof of a car in her hometown of Bukan in the Kurdish region encouraging people to protest against the government, fled Iran five months ago after she was freed conditionally.

"My wife is a political prisoner and she spent two years in prison ... she has been in Turkey for three to four months ... three days ago she was detained in Kayseri and the authorities handed her to the immigration authorities and after establishing her identity, she was freed," Loghman Yousefi, her husband told Rudaw's Fouad Haqiqi on Saturday. "Yesterday she was called to go to Nevsehir city to collect her UN refugee card."

When Davand arrived there, a police officer made some inappropriate remark to which Da-



vand responded, according to her husband. "Then they arrested her and took her to a deportation camp in Kayseri city."

Now the family fear that if she is returned to Iran, she could even face the initial charge of Moharebeh, enmity against God, for which the punishment is death penalty.

Davand has two sons aged 9 and 15 and a daughter aged 13. "My children are depressed and they are worried about what is going to happen to their mother," Yousefi told Rudaw English on Saturday. "She may have to spend the original jail term and a new case could be opened against her."

Davand was detained on the evening of November 17, 2019 in the city of Saqez by agents of the ministry of intelligence as millions of Iranians protested against a crippling increase in price of petrol.

The government increased the price of petrol overnight unex-

pectedly angering millions of Iranians who were already suffering under the US-imposed crippling sanctions.

Over ten thousand people were detained including Davand and somewhere between 300 to 1500 were gunned down by the Iranian security forces across the country. The mother of three was charged with enmity against God at the 1st Branch of Mahabad revolutionary court amongst other charges. The charge was changed to plotting against the national security.

She was sentenced to 5 years and on day and after she did not appeal the decision, the judge reduced the sentence to three years and nine months. Additionally, she was sentenced to five months and 30 lashes for disrupting the public order in Bukan and appearing without headscarf. Davand spent nearly two years in prison and she was freed last November. She then took the perilous journey across the land border into Turkey il-

legally, leaving behind her husband and her three children.

Once in Turkey, she registered with the UNHCR to avoid being labelled as an illegal immigrant which would have put her at the risk of deportation. She even testified via videolink before a people's tribunal in London known as Iran Atrocities (Aban) Tribunal, which is a reference to the Iranian month of Aban during which the protesters were gunned down in 2019.

Davand was called before the tribunal as witness number 437 where she described how she was treated inside prison and forced to make televised confessions under duress.

Her 15 year old son Arya who travelled to Turkey to see her mother was detained on return to Iran in early March and charged with propaganda against the state.

"She was one of the leading protesters in bloody November protest. Her life will be in a serious danger," Masih Alinjead, a prominent Iranian-American journalist and human rights activist tweeted.

"Please help us to be heard; her life would be in a serious danger."

## German culture minister: Osman Kavala's place is not in jail

During a literature seminar held in the Turkish resort town of Bodrum, German Culture and Media Minister Claudia Roth has mentioned philanthropist Osman Kavala's name, saying "his place is not in jail."

German Culture and Media Minister Claudia Roth has participated in a literature seminar organized by the Livaneli Foundation and Bodrum Municipality in Bodrum.

The opening ceremony of the two-day long event named "Mediterranean Literature Days" was held on April 15 and saw the participation of Bo-

drum Mayor Ahmet Aras, musician and author Zülfü Livaneli, German Minister Roth, former Greek Prime Minister Yorgo Papandreu and several writers.

Roth took the stage during the seminar, mentioning jailed philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala during her speech. "Hello Osman Kavala, hello my dear friend; we would very much want you to be here

today because your place is not in jail. Your place should have been here today," Roth said.

The German minister also said that Turkey "means a lot for her." "I have had the opportunity to meet with your wonderful writers like Nazım Hikmet, Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Pamuk. I feel great happiness to be at the lands where cul-

ture, philosophy and art exist," she said.

Kavala was arrested in 2017 on charges that he helped to plan the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey. He was cleared of these charges in February 2020 but immediately arrested on charges that he orchestrated the July 2016 coup attempt. Kavala has been held in pre-trial detention for over four years without a conviction.



April 17, 2022

## Turkish warplanes heavily bombard Kurdish villages in northern Duhok

Turkish warplanes on Sunday continued to heavily bombard areas in northern Duhok province under the pretext of targeting Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters, sparking fear among locals and children whose sound was heard in the background of a series of videos sent to Rudaw of jets flying over the area.

At least six Turkish warplanes bombarded suspected PKK bases and fighters in Kurazhar Mountain near the town of Shiladze, locals told Rudaw while sending videos of the jets flying over the town.

The PKK early Monday claimed that "tens" of Turkish helicopters targeted the PKK entrenched Zap area as Ankara attempts "to land its troops there," re-

ported media affiliated to the armed group Roj News, adding that the helicopters are flying from bases within the Kurdistan Region.

Turkish state media on Monday said Turkey "launched a fresh cross-border operation along with air, special forces elements" against PKK hideouts in the Kurdistan Region.

In a number of submitted videos to Rudaw, children can be heard playing in the background, their joyous voices mixing with the sound of warplanes.

Earlier in the day, Ankara targeted Deraluk, Shiladze, and Kani Masi sub-district, Amedi's mayor Warshin Salman told Rudaw's Nasir Ali, who noted that Sunday "marks the third week of Turkey's heavy bombardment on the area."

Turkey has escalated its offenses on the Kurdistan Region, as it nears to mark its one-year anniversary since the announcement of the twin operations Claw-Lightning and Claw-Thunderbolt in Duhok.

There have been no reports of casualties in the recent bombings, which also come after Kurdistan Region's Prime Minister Masrour Barzani met with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on Friday.

However, Salman noted that the extent of damages caused by the bombardments have not been estimated as the villages being targeted have been evacuated due to fear of Turkish shelling.

Turkey bombarded Sararo vil-

lage in Kani Masi early Friday. The shelling left a hole in Radwan Ahmed's house, who had abandoned the site a year ago due to Turkey's operations and was only visiting to see the damage.

Turkey bombarded Hirore village in the same region on Thursday, damaging some houses and vehicles.

Ankara launched the twin operations against the PKK, an armed group fighting for greater rights for Kurds in Turkey, which Ankara considers a terrorist organization

More than 500 villages have been emptied in the Kurdistan Region over three decades of the Turkey-PKK conflict.





April 17, 2022

## Turkey to host Iraqi Kurdish PM as West looks for alternates to Russian gas

**T**urkey, which has become a frequent destination of foreign dignitaries amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, hosted another surprise guest today. Amberin Zaman broke the news that Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Masrour Barzani was visiting Turkey today. Barzani met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul. As Zaman reported, the visit, which marks Barzani's second official trip to Turkey since taking office, came ahead of the premier's scheduled trip to the United Kingdom and an expected new Turkish offensive against outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants inside Iraq's Kurdistan region.

In a statement released after the meeting, Barzani noted that the two "discussed the situation of Iraq, the area and the relations between Kurdistan and Turkey and we focused on expanding the opportunities for the sake of security and stability of the area."

Along with bilateral and regional issues, Barzani and Erdogan likely discussed potential plans to carry Iraqi Kurdish gas to Europe via Turkey as Western capitals are scrambling to reduce Europe's dependency on Russian natural gas.

Both Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan have been raising their profiles for potential gas projects amid the European quest for alternative resources and routes. Last month, Prime Minister Barzani announced that Iraqi Kurdistan would "become a net exporter of gas to the rest of Iraq, Turkey and Europe in the near future and help meet their energy security needs."

Lying at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey stands as a unique energy corridor to carry Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources to Europe. As Fehim Tastekin previously reported in *Al-Monitor*, Erdogan's announcement of soon upcoming "good news" in the energy field was likely "hinting

at possible markets for Iraqi Kurdish and Eastern Mediterranean gas" amid efforts to normalize diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel.

Citing Ankara sources, Nazlan Ertan reported that Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is expected to visit Israel at the end of April or in the first half of May. Turkey's Energy Minister, Mehmet Donmez is also expected to visit Israel to "discuss how the two countries can cooperate, either bilaterally or via out-of-the-box multilateral cooperation, to create alternative sources of energy for European markets," Ertan reported.

Yet, as the adage goes, don't count your chickens before they hatch. As David O'Byrne reported in *Al-Monitor* previously, there was no "magic tap" that the EU could turn on. Several political and infrastructural obstacles remain before potential projects to carry Eastern Mediterranean or Caspian gas to Europe via Turkey.

In addition to efforts to boost regional energy cooperation, Ankara has also amped up its efforts to mend ties with its former regional rivals. Speaking to *Al-Monitor*, Ankara diplomats described the efforts as a "five-pronged diplomatic drive" toward its former opponents, namely the United Arab Emirates, Armenia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel, Ertan reported.

Erdogan is expected to travel to Saudi Arabia during Ramadan and he is scheduled to travel to the United Arab Emirates in February, as Andrew Wilks reported.

Speaking of fowls: We couldn't let the week pass without mentioning "Bahtiyar," a rooster after which the Turks from all walks of life mourn for. The country is bidding farewell to the globally renowned rooster, Bahtiyar, who achieved global fame by duly squawking until he passes out. Bahtiyar died on Wednesday due to respiratory problems, his owner Okan Gokbudak confirmed to Turkish media.



April 18, 2022

## 51 prisoners subjected to torture, 5 died last month in Turkey: Report

**M**ain opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Sezgin Tanrikulu has released a report on the rights violations in Turkey for the month of March. According to the report, 281 incidents of torture and bad treatment occurred in the country in March, 51 of which happened in prisons, online

news outlet T24 reported. Some 118 workers died on the job, while 25 women died in femicides and five people died in prisons last month, according to the report titled "March 2022 Human Rights Violations Report."

Some 23 people were detained for expressing their opinions,

including on social media. Of these 23 people, investigations were launched against three people. A total of five people were found guilty by courts for using their right to freedom of expression.

According to the report, three journalists were attacked in the country last month, three jour-

nalists were detained and seven journalists received prison terms over their works. The police intervened against 43 demonstrations last month, detaining 813 people for participating in them. Seven people were found guilty by courts for using their right to participate in demonstrations.

## La Turquie lance une nouvelle offensive contre le PKK en Irak

Ankara mène de façon régulière des raids contre les positions de ce groupe kurde, qu'il qualifie de « terroriste ».

**L**a Turquie a annoncé, lundi 18 avril, avoir lancé une nouvelle offensive aérienne et terrestre contre les rebelles kurdes turcs établis dans le nord de l'Irak. Le ministre de la défense, Hulusi Akar, a déclaré que des unités de commandos, des drones et des hélicoptères d'attaque avaient lancé l'offensive contre les repaires du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans trois régions proches de la frontière turque.

« Un grand nombre de terroristes ont été neutralisés », a-t-il déclaré, assurant que l'opération allait gagner en ampleur « dans les heures et les jours à venir ». Le ministre n'a pas précisé combien de mili-

itaires étaient impliqués dans l'offensive qui, selon ses dires, a été déclenchée dimanche soir.

Un porte-parole du PKK, qui n'a pas souhaité être identifié, a évoqué d'« intenses combats entre l'armée turque et le HPG [Forces de défense du peuple] », l'aile militaire du parti. « L'armée d'occupation [nom donné à l'armée turque par le PKK], qui a essayé de débarquer des troupes par hélicoptères, a également tenté une avancée terrestre », a-t-il assuré.

Visite du premier ministre du Kurdistan irakien

La Turquie mène de façon régulière des raids contre les positions du PKK, qualifié de «

terroriste » par Ankara et ses alliés occidentaux, qui dispose de bases et de camps d'entraînement dans la région du Sinjar ainsi que dans les zones montagneuses du Kurdistan irakien.

Cette opération militaire précise était destinée à déjouer une attaque de grande envergure du PKK contre la Turquie, selon le ministère de la défense turc. Mais les médias locaux évoquent une telle opération depuis des semaines.

L'offensive a été lancée deux jours après une visite en Turquie du premier ministre du Kurdistan d'Irak, Masrour Barzani, ce qui laisse entendre qu'il aurait été mis au courant

des intentions d'Ankara. M. Barzani avait déclaré, à l'issue de ses entretiens avec le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qu'il était favorable à « l'élargissement de la coopération en vue de promouvoir la sécurité et la stabilité » dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien entretient une relation compliquée avec les rebelles du PKK, dont la présence entrave les relations commerciales avec la Turquie. Les offensives de l'armée turque ont par ailleurs accentué les tensions entre Ankara et le gouvernement central irakien, à Bagdad, qui accuse la Turquie de ne pas respecter l'intégrité territoriale du pays.

## Les drones Bayraktar, utilisés lors de la guerre en Ukraine, pomme de discorde entre la Russie et la Turquie

**L**es appareils fabriqués par une société turque auraient joué un rôle dans l'attaque du croiseur russe « Moskva », qui a coulé jeudi en mer Noire.

Les livraisons par la Turquie de drones armés Bayraktar TB2 à l'armée ukrainienne qui les utilise avec une efficacité redoutable contre les colonnes blindées russes et vante leurs prouesses sur les réseaux sociaux, constitue depuis plusieurs semaines une pomme de discorde entre Moscou et

Ankara. Capables de voler pendant vingt-quatre heures à plus de 18 000 pieds dans un rayon d'action estimé à 150 kilomètres, dotés de plusieurs missiles, ces engins d'attaque avaient déjà fait leurs preuves en Syrie, en Libye et lors de la guerre entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan pour le contrôle de la région du Haut-Karabakh, à l'automne 2020.

L'Ukraine en avait acquis une vingtaine avant la guerre et une dizaine de plus a pu lui

être livrée après l'invasion russe, ce qui a achevé d'irriter le président Poutine. « Les Russes avaient l'habitude de se plaindre et ils se plaignent en ce moment », a confié un haut fonctionnaire d'Ankara à l'agence Reuters le 8 avril.

Le récent naufrage du Moskva, le navire amiral de la flotte russe en mer Noire, a probablement encore avivé les griefs de Moscou. Des drones TB2 auraient joué un rôle dans la disparition du croiseur, qui a sombré au large d'Odessa le

14 avril, après avoir été semé-t-il touché par deux missiles ukrainiens.

Selon des médias turcs et ukrainiens, peu avant la frappe, deux TB2 auraient survolé le navire, à des fins de renseignement, de brouillage, ou bien pour servir de leurre. C'est en partie grâce à l'action de ces appareils que les militaires ukrainiens ont pu tirer avec succès deux missiles sur le navire pourtant équipé d'un puissant radar et d'un système

antimissile. Moscou affirme que son croiseur a coulé à la suite d'un incendie accidentel, mais sans convaincre.

#### « Vulnérabilité des systèmes russes »

« La guerre en Ukraine a révélé la vulnérabilité des défenses aériennes russes face aux drones de fabrication turque, en particulier les TB2 », souligne Can Kasapoglu, un expert militaire averti, sur le site du think tank Hudson Institute le 15 avril. On ne compte plus les systèmes russes anti-aériens SAM qui ont été détruits en Ukraine par des TB2. D'autres systèmes, tels que les Tor-M2 et les Pantsir, que la Russie affirme pourtant avoir modernisé de façon à intercepter les drones, n'ont pas davantage résisté.

« La vulnérabilité des systèmes russes a été documentée à plusieurs reprises et dans diverses situations – en Syrie, au Haut-Karabakh, en Libye et maintenant en Ukraine. Si l'armée russe ne peut pas faire face aux drones sur son champ de bataille le plus important sur le plan géopolitique, cela signifie que ses systèmes de défense aérienne ne sont pas à la hauteur », estime M. Kasapoglu.

Le problème risque de s'aggraver. « Sur un marché international des drones armés en plein essor, le nombre de fournisseurs et de produits augmente rapidement. Les chances que l'industrie d'armement russe suive le rythme sont donc extrêmement faibles. »

En avril 2021, Sergueï Lavrov, le ministre russe des affaires étrangères, avait déjà accusé Ankara d'encourager « les sentiments militaristes » des Ukrainiens en leur fournissant ces drones relativement bon marché (4,6 millions d'euros). « Tout le monde en veut »

Le plus souvent, les Turcs rétorquent que la vente des TB2 est du ressort exclusif de Baykar, la société privée qui les fabrique et sur laquelle le gouvernement n'a aucune prise malgré les apparences. Car l'homme qui les a conçus et leur a donné son nom, Selçuk Bayraktar, est aussi le gendre du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

« Il s'agit de produits achetés par l'Ukraine à une entreprise

turque privée. Les entreprises privées de l'industrie de la défense peuvent conclure de tels accords avec des pays. Il ne s'agit pas d'une aide de la Turquie. De plus, l'Ukraine n'est pas le seul pays à acheter le Bayraktar TB2. Tout le monde en veut », a déclaré au début du mois de mars le vice-ministre turc des affaires étrangères, Yavuz Selim Kiran.

La Turquie, qui coopère étroitement avec la Russie dans les domaines de l'énergie, du commerce et de la défense, n'a pas l'intention de renoncer à son partenariat avec l'Ukraine, aux côtés de laquelle elle s'est rangée dès les premiers jours du conflit, qualifiant l'invasion russe d'« inacceptable ».

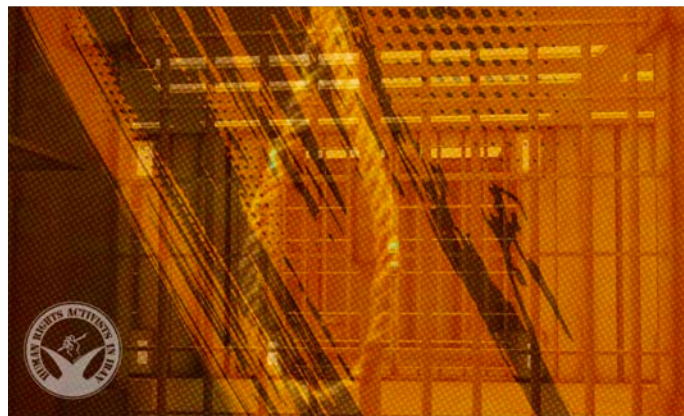
**HRANA**  
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS NEWS AGENCY

April 20, 2022

## Inmate Majid Keshvari Committed Suicide for Lack of Medical Care in the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary

On Tuesday, April 19, 2022, at the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary, an inmate committed suicide after he was denied adequate medical treatment. Following the attempt, he was hospitalized in a hospital outside the prison. This inmate, who suffers from mental health problems, had attempted suicide several times before.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists, feeling desperate for not receiving medical treatment, the inmate identified as Majid Kesh-



vari committed failed suicide attempt in the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary.

An informed source told HRANA, "It has been a long time since Mr. Keshvari is in need of surgery and the prison health

providers had recommended his dispatch urgently to a hospital outside the prison. Instead, the prison officials sent him to a psychiatric ward and then sent him back to prison, ignoring care for his health issues.

Keshvari then attempted to hang himself in protest against this unfair treatment and was hospitalized. There is still no news about his latest condition."

Reportedly, Keshvari had attempted to commit suicide on another occasion as well



## « Russie-Turquie, un défi à l'Occident ? » : de meilleurs ennemis à partenaires très particuliers

L'ouvrage explore les relations fluctuantes des deux anciens empires, dont les relations actuelles restent fortes, malgré la guerre en Ukraine.

Longtemps ces deux empires, le russe et l'ottoman, ont été les meilleurs ennemis s'affrontant lors de treize guerres entre le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et le début du XX<sup>e</sup>. Le pouvoir des tsars et celui des sultans furent ensuite balayés peu ou prou au même moment. Les bolcheviques ne cachaient pas une certaine fascination, par ailleurs réciproque, pour Mustafa Kemal et sa révolution, qui défiait les puissances occidentales, abolissait le califat, changeait l'alphabet et en partie la langue, interdisait le voile et le fez.

Avec la guerre froide, Ankara et Moscou se retrouvèrent à nouveau dans deux camps opposés : Staline lorgnait sur les détroits et la Turquie décidait d'adhérer à l'OTAN en devenant le pilier du flanc sud-est de l'Alliance. Le jeu s'est rouvert avec l'effondrement de l'URSS en 1991 qui alimenta un temps les ambitions turques dans le Caucase et en Asie centrale.

C'est à l'aune de ce long passé d'affrontements, de rivalités régionales multiformes mais aussi d'intenses brassages culturels et économiques qu'il faut comprendre l'entente affichée depuis 2016 par Vladimir Poutine et Recep Tayyip Erdogan. « Il semble utile de s'interroger sur les facteurs et les motivations de la résistance de cette relation russo-turque à toutes les crises qui la traversent, résistance que semble exprimer une volonté des deux Etats de la protéger », explique Isabelle Facon, directrice adjointe de la Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, en introduction d'un livre collectif sur les complexes relations russo-turques et le défi qu'elles représentent pour l'Occident. Si, comme il est fréquent dans de tels ouvrages, les contri-



« Russie Turquie, un défi à l'Occident ? » sous la direction d'Isabelle Facon, Passés composés, 224 pages 18 euros.

butions sont de valeur inégale, il réunit quelques-uns des meilleurs spécialistes du sujet pour analyser cette nouvelle donne.

Une même conception du pouvoir L'homme fort du Kremlin et son homologue ankariote ont en commun une vision autocratique du pouvoir et une volonté de rendre à leur pays respectif sa place dans l'arène internationale au nom de ce que fut sa prestigieuse histoire. Dans cette stratégie, ils sont à la fois des partenaires, des rivaux et des adversaires avec des pratiques similaires de guerre hybride et d'affrontements par mercenaires interposés. Ankara et

Moscou sont ainsi dans des camps opposés en Libye comme en Syrie, ce qui ne les empêche de coopérer pour des accords de paix en tentant de mettre sur la touche les Occidentaux. « On reste néanmoins sceptique à Washington comme à Bruxelles quant à la solidité de ce rapprochement que fragilisent tant la concurrence des intérêts respectifs des deux pays que le désir d'autonomie des Turcs », relève Dorothee Schmid, chercheuse à l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI).

L'ouvrage a été composé avant l'invasion russe de l'Ukraine qui a

incité la Turquie à revenir vers l'Union européenne et l'OTAN, qu'elle n'avait d'ailleurs jamais quittée. Mais Ankara n'en continue pas moins de faire entendre sa différence. En effet, la Turquie livre des drones à l'Ukraine, bloque les passages dans les détroits aux navires des belligérants, tout en se refusant à appliquer les sanctions, ce qui lui permet de se poser en médiatrice. On Tuesday, April 19, 2022, at the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary, an inmate committed suicide after he was denied adequate medical treatment. Following the attempt, he was hospitalized in a hospital outside the prison. This inmate, who suffers from mental health problems, had attempted suicide several times before.

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## Freedom of belief in Turkey: Women repressed by both secular and pious segments of society

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Freedom of Belief Initiative have released the Freedom of Religion or Belief Monitoring Report in Turkey.

The report includes the legal, judicial and administrative processes concerning freedom of religion or belief in Turkey between April 2019 and December 2021.

Written by Dr. Mine Yıldırım, the report says Turkey's long-standing issues regarding the freedom of religion or belief are still awaiting solutions.

Also, she wrote, deep systemic inequalities regarding the freedom of religion or belief became more visible during the Covid-19 pandemic.

People from various religious groups, atheist and deist groups, relevant civil society organizations and rights defenders from various parts of the country were interviewed for the report.

In addition, the section titled "Women and freedom of religion or belief," which was prepared by interviewing women of various re-



"We are closed due to Ramadan"

ligions or beliefs, from different age groups and professions, discusses the issue through the lens of gender.

### Violations against atheists

Another remarkable finding in the report is regarding the violations faced by atheists, deists and agnostics in the workplace, family and education system:

"Atheist, deist and agnostic parents and students don't have the right to be exempted from compulsory Religious Culture and Ethical Knowledge classes. Those who criticize a religion, especially Islam

... face the risk of being prosecuted under the Turkish Penal Code (TCK)." Places of worship

Places of worship of Alevi, Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestants are still not officially recognized and the state authorities ignore ECtHR judgments about this, the report stressed. Inequality in education and religious services

No resources allocated for the education of clerics other than Sunni Muslim ones, and religious groups such as the Alevi community, the Rum Orthodox Patriar-

chate, the Armenian Patriarchate and the Protestant community cannot give education to their clerics, notes the report.

### Women's double lives

Women face great obstacles when exercising their human rights, including the freedom of religion or belief, says the report.

Women continue to be vulnerable, especially at home, are oppressed by the secular and religious sections of society, and often feel obliged to live a double life, according to the report. In addition, the representation rate of women in religious institutions is extremely low.

### Seized properties

The impact of the past loss of properties belonging to a wide variety of religious or belief communities was also addressed in the report. "For non-Muslim communities, the process of returning the unjustly seized community foundation property has not been completed." In addition, it was emphasized that many religious buildings are at risk of destruction. (HA/VK)



21 april, 2022  
By Jabar Dastbaz

## From a school wrestling prospect to a kolbar

Taking one last puff of his cigarette, 30-year-old Payam Rawshani reminisces about his school days as an unbeatable athletic prospect and his dreams of competing in an international tournament, as he prepares to take the treacherous path of the mountains, transporting packages as a kolbar.

Kolbar pathways are occasionally closed for various reasons, giving the kolbars a chance to wind

down and spend some time with family and friends.

Hailing from the Mariwan County in Iran's western Kurdistan (Rojhelat), Rawshani sits down with his friends in a teashop in the town of Kani Dinar, smoking cigarettes and sipping tea while they talk about the issues and challenges they face. Kolbars transport untaxed goods across the Kurdistan Region-Iran border and sometimes the Iran-Turkey

border. They are constantly targeted by Iranian border guards and are sometimes victims of natural disasters.

Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's disenfranchised Kurdish provinces. "I was born to a family of seven. I was doing well in school, and I also had great body strength. My teachers recommended I try wrestling," Rawshani

told Rudaw. "No one could beat me. My coaches had a lot of faith in me. It got to a point where I dreamt of winning international competitions. I was a well-known athlete in Mariwan."

Rawshani cites his family's poverty and the lack of financial sponsors for his inability to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional wrestler, stating "I knew that in a life of poverty, you cannot succeed in any field."

## Will Erdogan sustain balance between West, Russia as Ukraine war drags on?

"It is the only game in town," a Turkish ambassador said in a self-aggrandizing fashion at an international conference recently.

Turkey secured the first and only face-to-face meeting between Ukrainian and Russian foreign ministers since the start of the war and hosted a round of negotiation between Ukrainian and Russian delegations. Although the two meetings in Istanbul did not bear any fruitful results, it is true that there is no other option for direct negotiations.

Russian President Vladimir Putin seemingly has no interest in ending the war at this stage. So failure in achieving a ceasefire through negotiations has nothing to do with Turkey.

But the prospect of a very long war brings up the question of how long Turkey can sustain its balancing act between Russia and Ukraine — and how long can Turkey get away without implementing sanctions against Russia?

Turkey's ongoing balancing act is the consequence of both necessity and choice. Since the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the Russian military intervention in Ukraine, Ankara has adopted a principled, pro-Kyiv position. Turkey has not recognized the Crimea's annexation or the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Amid escalating tensions between Moscow and western capitals, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Kyiv three weeks before the Russian invasion and signed military cooperation and trade agreements with his Ukrainian



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gives a speech during a party parliamentary group meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara on April 20, 2022. - ADEM ALTAN/AFP via Getty Images

counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. However, Turkey also depends on Russia for energy and agricultural products, mainly grains and sunflower oil. Tourism in Turkey also depends significantly on Russian visitors.

Russia is constructing Turkey's first nuclear power plant at a cost of \$20 billion. Turkey meets some 45% of its natural gas and 17% of its oil demand from Russia. Ankara reiterated several times that it wasn't planning to comply with the sanctions imposed against Russia.

Turkey's position is the inevitable outcome of Erdogan's adopted policy of strategic autonomy — a fancy explanation for its Eurasianist foreign policy, which gained momentum after 2016 and can be defined as a gradual drift away from the West.

Turkey remained neutral during World War II under President Ismet Inonu, who masterfully balanced between the Allies and the Axis. This historical background and Kemal Ataturk's dictum "Peace

at Home, Peace in the World," serves well for Erdogan as it mutes the opposition at home.

Nonetheless, it is far from certain that Erdogan's position could be sustainable in a prolonged war. There will be no room for neutrality if a country like Turkey belongs to the Western security alliance at a time when even the perennial neutral countries like Sweden and Finland consider joining NATO.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's warning about the consequences of undermining the sanctions on Russia was addressed mainly to China but it also concerns Turkey. Yellen made those remarks at the Atlantic Council meeting a week before the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Thus, Turkey will eventually have to choose between Russia and the West. Given the strong Eurasianist element within the Turkish power structure and the prevailing pro-Russian mood in the pro-government circles, it is far from certain that Turkey would

end up on the side of its formal Western allies.

During the initial stage of the war, Turkey hosted a spate of foreign dignitaries, from the secretary-general of NATO to the new German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Ankara was commended for implementing the provisions of the Montreux Convention and denying the passage of warships from the Turkish Straits into the Black Sea.

The sinking of the flagship missile cruiser Moskva has attested to the importance of the Turkish Montreux decision. There are three similar vessels in the Russian arsenal, but Moscow cannot bring them to the Black Sea. The war inadvertently enhanced Turkey's critical geopolitics.

On March 26, issue, the British periodical *The Spectator* had a cartoon of Erdogan as a sultan on its cover, with the headline: "Turkey's dilemma." In the cover story, Owen Matthews wrote, "Erdogan is in a great hurry to patch up the conflict between two of its most important trading partners — perhaps too much in a hurry for Washington's taste. ... Erdogan will be backing a solution that faces Putin's face. That will put him on a collision course with his NATO allies"

If the West and NATO remain united, Turkey's non-compliance with the Western sanctions regime against aggressive Russia will be unsustainable. But if cracks appear within the Western alliance, Erdogan can keep up with his Eurasianist deviation presented as strategic autonomy.

## La Turquie convoque un diplomate irakien pour défendre son opération militaire

La Turquie a convoqué jeudi un diplomate irakien pour lui faire part de son "désarroi" concernant les déclarations de Bagdad contre l'opération militaire turque menée depuis dimanche soir dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Le chargé d'affaire de l'ambassade de l'Irak a été convoqué pour lui faire part de notre désarroi concernant les déclarations des autorités irakiennes à propos de l'opération Griffes-Verrou et les allégations sans fondement formulées dans ce contexte", a affirmé le ministère turc des Affaires étrangères. "Une note expliquant notre point de vue lui a été remise", a ajouté le ministère dans ce même communiqué.

La Turquie avait annoncé lundi

avoir lancé une nouvelle offensive aérienne et terrestre contre les rebelles kurdes turcs basés dans le nord de l'Irak.

Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait affirmé mercredi que les autorités irakiennes et le gouvernement du Kurdistan irakien soutenaient cette offensive, mais les parties concernées l'avaient démenti. Réagissant mercredi soir, la diplomatie irakienne avait dénoncé "de pures allégations".

Dans un langage prudent évitant de mentionner une protestation d'Ankara envers Bagdad, le ministère a ajouté que "les demandes insistantes" de la Turquie pour que les autorités irakiennes "mettent

fin à la présence de l'organisation terroriste" sur leur sol n'avaient pas été satisfaites.

Précisant être "prête à coopérer de manière proche avec l'Irak pour lutter contre l'organisation terroriste", la Turquie a ajouté qu'elle continuerait "à prendre les mesures nécessaires" dans le cadre de son "droit de légitime défense tant que l'organisation terroriste continuerait de représenter une menace pour sa sécurité depuis le territoire irakien".

L'offensive turque lancée dans la nuit de dimanche à lundi à grands renforts d'unités de commandos et d'hélicoptères d'attaque se concentre sur trois régions proches de la frontière

turque contre des positions du PKK, un groupe qualifié de "terroriste" par Ankara et ses alliés occidentaux.

Les raids turcs contre le PKK sont récurrents dans le nord de l'Irak, particulièrement dans la région autonome du Kurdistan d'Irak, où le PKK dispose de bases et de camps d'entraînement.

Ces opérations militaires valent à l'ambassadeur turc en poste à Bagdad d'être régulièrement convoqué au ministère irakien des Affaires étrangères, car elles compliquent les relations entre le gouvernement central irakien et Ankara, l'un des premiers partenaires commerciaux de l'Irak.



April 22, 2022  
By Chenar Chalak

## Kurdish leaders commemorate Kurdish journalism day

The Kurdistan Region's President Nechirvan Barzani and Prime Minister Masrour Barzani released separate statements on Friday congratulating Kurdish journalists and stressing the need for free media and responsible journalism, on the 124th anniversary of the publication of the first Kurdish newspaper.

Friday marks the anniversary of the publication of the first edition of "Kurdistan," the first Kurdish-language newspaper in history. Issued in Cairo, Egypt by renowned literary figure Miqdad Medhat Baderkhan in 1898, the issue was written in the Kurmanji dialect. A total of 31 issues of the newspaper were published in the span of four years. The Kurdistan Region's president paid tribute to all those who have contributed to the Region's journalism mission over the years, specifi-

cally remembering those who have "sacrificed their lives in pursuit of truth and a free press in the country."

President Barzani reaffirmed his government's commitment to the values of democracy and freedom of expression, while also highlighting the importance of ethical and responsible journalism.

"On this occasion, we reaffirm our unyielding commitment to supporting democracy, liberties, free media and freedom of expression, human rights and the rule of law. These values are the cornerstones of any free and advanced society, for which the people of Kurdistan have fought and made sacrifices," the president said.

In a separate statement, the Kurdistan Region's prime minister

lauded the role of journalism in the community, stating that the media had an "important and sacred message," and emphasizing the need for responsible and accurate journalism.

"The Kurdistan Region needs professional and responsible journalism that participates effectively and positively in the process of political, economic, social and cultural change for the Kurdistan community... in a responsible manner that serves the community and its highest national goals," PM Barzani's statement read.

The PM added that he believed the Region has provided a healthy environment for journalists to conduct their work and express their messages freely, imploring journalists not to be intimidated by any parties or individuals, and to always put

the needs of the Region above everything else.

The Kurdistan Region's parliament designated April 22 as the official day for Kurdish journalism in April 2021, 123 years after the publication of the first issue of Medhat's newspaper.

Freedom of the press in the Kurdistan Region has been critically questioned by local and international media watchdogs, following rights violations including the imprisonment of journalists known for their anti-establishment writing, under charges including "endangering the national security of the Kurdistan Region."

In 2021, Reporters without Borders (RSF) slammed Iraq and the Kurdistan Region for a lack of press freedom and the growing dangers faced by journalists.



## Le mouvement kurde et le travail de mémoire du génocide arménien encore menacés par l'État turc

Ce 24 avril 2022, la majorité des Français avaient les yeux rivés sur l'élection présidentielle. Les années précédentes, c'était pourtant bien la mémoire du peuple arménien massacré qui retenait toute l'attention.

Le 24 avril – une date choisie en référence à la rafle d'intellectuels arméniens de 1915 – est en effet devenu officiellement depuis 2019 une journée de commémoration du génocide arménien, que la France reconnaît dans la loi depuis 2001.

Cette année-là, le Premier ministre Édouard Philippe avait assuré que « la France entend contribuer à faire reconnaître le génocide arménien comme un crime contre l'humanité, contre la civilisation ».

Un génocide toujours nié par l'État turc

Lorsqu'un événement malheureux survient au Kurdistan de Turquie, il est coutume de s'exclamer, comme on invoquerait la fatalité : « Cent ans de malédiction ! » L'origine de ce dicton populaire et le fantôme qu'elle évoque ne font aucun doute. Il se réfère au génocide des Arméniens, déclenché dans l'Empire ottoman en avril 1915 par le Comité Union et Progrès.

Dans les régions kurdes, les chrétiens (près d'un tiers de la population, Arméniens et Assyriens) furent massacrés et déportés avec la participation de collaborateurs locaux, au nom d'une fraternité turco-kurde conçue sous la bannière de l'islam.



Sur la place Sishane, la foule brandit les portraits d'intellectuels arméniens déportés 104 ans plus tôt. Istanbul, le 24 avril 2019. Bulent Kilic/AFP

Ce crime fondateur fait l'objet d'un négationnisme farouche en Turquie. Les élites de l'État-turc, depuis sa naissance en 1923, ont fait de ce déni un socle de l'histoire officielle, et lourdement criminalisé les voix et mémoires dissidentes. Diffusé depuis le sommet de l'État, le discours négationniste, enseigné à l'école, a tôt infusé l'ensemble de la société, dont une partie a hérité des biens arméniens confisqués et accaparés.

Génocide arménien : « L'État turc n'arrive pas à assumer son histoire » – France 24.

Pourtant, dans la capitale politico-culturelle du Kurdistan de Turquie, Diyarbakır, en 2015, des milliers de personnes ont œuvré à la commémoration du centenaire du génocide, point culminant du réveil de mémoire, dont le Kurdistan des deux décennies précédentes avait été le berceau. L'articulation publique de cette contre-mémoire s'inscrit dans un mouvement plus large d'éveil de la société civile.

La contestation du récit national turc

Dès les années 1990, de nombreux groupes sociaux en Turquie (femmes, mouvement LGBTI+, « minorités » religieuses et ethniques du pays) s'élèvent contre un récit officiel qui les a occultés, invisibilisés, criminalisés. Ils revendiquent une histoire propre, qui diffère de la glorieuse, linéaire et très nationaliste histoire imposée par les vainqueurs. Des bribes et fragments de mémoire diffus, jusqu'alors confinés dans la sphère privée, se rencontrent désormais sur la scène publique. Ces prises de parole se font écho les unes aux autres, se stimulent, et parfois se découvrent une relative communauté de destin, celle d'une oppression et d'une violence étatique récurrentes.

C'est ainsi notamment que le passé des Arméniens et celui des Kurdes s'unissent sur un même registre « victimo-mémorial ». En région kurde, des habitants « se souviennent » de cette mise en garde attri-

buée à des Arméniens sur le chemin de la déportation à leurs voisins kurdes : « Nous sommes le petit-déjeuner, vous serez le dîner ! »

Beaucoup plus proche dans le temps, les soldats turcs faisant la guerre aux combattants du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), – qu'a lancé sur le sol turc une guérilla de décolonisation – dans la terrible décennie 1990 ne s'évertuaient-ils pas à les traiter de « bâtards d'Arméniens », la sinistre inscription conquérante et raciste.

La tentative de faire émerger une conscience publique du génocide

Avec l'apaisement relatif du conflit et les nouvelles dynamiques sociales, les années 2000 sont propices à la remémoration et au questionnement. Il apparaît que la langue maternelle des Kurdes (longtemps interdite), leur toponymie (turcisée mais toujours en usage), les récits de leur histoire orale et, plus silencieusement, leurs paysages, charrient irrémédiablement la mémoire de ce génocide. N'est-il pas temps, alors, de se confronter à ce passé, de se détourner de la voie des nationalismes excluants qui ont ensanglanté la région ? Pour qu'advienne le terme des « cent ans de malédiction » ne faut-il pas se confronter au passé ?

Entraînée par les prises de parole profanes issues de la société civile et par un très fort désir de retour à la paix, l'émergence de la mémoire refoulée de 1915 fut aussi favorisée par la mue idéologique



du mouvement kurde, qui dominait alors très largement la politique locale. En s'éloignant d'un prisme kurdocentré, fort d'un projet politique d'émancipation misant sur la résolution pacifique des conflits et la cohabitation des différences, celui-ci accompagna le déploiement du travail de mémoire qui s'opère dans le champ social. Ce travail de mémoire, pleinement embrassé par les municipalités kurdes, a débouché sur des actes symboliques très forts notamment à Diyarbakir (restauration de monuments arméniens, changement de nom de rues, monuments d'hommage, etc.).

### Les Arméniens commémorent le génocide de 1915 – Le Monde.

Entre 1999 (accession du mouvement prokurde légal à la tête de la mairie de Diyarbakir) et 2015, divers acteurs se sont mobilisés pour la réhabilitation du passé multiculturel de la région et la reconnaissance du génocide de 1915. Cela s'est traduit par une multitude d'initiatives, de la recherche académique au champ littéraire, de l'organisation de rencontres, discussions et festivals à des entreprises architecturales, commémoratives et muséales, jusqu'aux excuses publiques au nom du peuple kurde. La commémoration qui eut lieu en 2015, en présence de figures de proue du mouvement kurde (comme la mairesse de la ville Gültan Kışanak et le co-président du Parti démocratique des peuples Selahattin Demirtaş, tous deux actuellement derrière les barreaux), a constitué l'apogée de ce long cheminement.

Le retour en force négationniste

Las ! Entre 2015 et 2021, après l'échec du processus de paix initié en 2013, une nouvelle offensive de l'État turc a conduit au presque anéantissement des efforts et réalisations de ce processus mémoriel polymorphe. L'« ouverture kurde » promise par



Des manifestants nationalistes turcs tiennent un drapeau turc géant en criant contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), le 9 juin 2014, à Istanbul. Ozan Kose/AFP

Erdoğan à l'aube de son second mandat a été maigre et de courte durée : quelques avancées symboliques, mais surtout des pourparlers de paix historiques, dont les espoirs ont été balayés dès 2015 par un retour à l'option belliciste et répressive. Depuis la reprise de la guerre contre le mouvement kurde, la violence étatique, militaire et judiciaire s'est à nouveau abattue massivement, non seulement dans les régions kurdes, mais aussi contre tous les acteurs de la société civile qui osaient élever une voix critique en Turquie. Au Kurdistan, les autorités locales élues ont été remplacées par des kayyum (administrateurs) nommés par le gouvernement, parfaite incarnation du despotisme étatique.

À la suite de cette offensive de l'État, on assista également au



Les Arméniens commémorent le génocide de 1915 – Le Monde.

retour en force d'un discours kurde de déni de responsabilité vis-à-vis du génocide de

1915. Il ne faut pas oublier, en effet, l'existence de voix kurdes depuis le début hostiles à ce processus de reconnaissance.

Cette hostilité s'ancrait dans des perspectives diverses. Les uns pensaient qu'à travers la « repentance », les Kurdes s'affaiblissaient et endossaient à tort le « crime du maître » (l'État turc est pour eux le seul coupable). D'autres, partisans d'un Kurdistan kurdo-kurde, ne voulaient pas entendre parler d'un passé kurdo-arménien susceptible d'entacher l'homogénéité et les revendications territoriales d'un nationalisme kurde classique. D'autres enfin, islamistes radicaux, s'approprièrent sans réserve la part de la propagande étatique consistant à dénoncer le mouvement kurde dans son ensemble comme un mouvement

au service des intérêts arméniens et occidentaux.

La mémoire du génocide, ennemie de l'État turc

Si ces voix avaient été de fait marginalisées et discrètes durant la montée en puissance du mouvement de réhabilitation de la mémoire arménienne, elles se sont exprimées sans retenue après l'offensive gouvernementale belliqueuse et mémoricide de 2015.

Au cours de celle-ci, le quartier historique de Sur à Diyarbakir, qui accueillait notamment l'église arménienne Surp Giragos restaurée avec l'appui politique et économique de la municipalité et le « Monument de la conscience commune » érigé deux ans auparavant, a été rasé en deux temps : par l'armée lors des affrontements des « guerres urbaines » de 2015, puis par la politique d'expropriation-reconstruction qui a suivi. Ce dernier exemple est emblématique de la permanence du désir d'annihilation de tout retour des traces de l'ancienne présence arménienne qui obsède les autorités turques depuis plus d'un siècle.

La brutalité du mémoricide et le retour du cycle infernal de la guerre et de la répression ont coupé court à l'extraordinaire travail de mémoire accompli sur le long chemin de la reconnaissance. Ce processus fut d'autant plus singulier et profond qu'il s'est déroulé dans un État-nation négationniste, au sein d'un groupe subalterne (Kurdes) dont les acteurs ont la particularité d'être aussi, pour partie, les descendants de pérateurs directs du génocide aux côtés du groupe dominant au pouvoir un siècle auparavant.

Il mérite d'être salué et raconté notamment car il fait apparaître combien la reconnaissance du génocide des Arméniens, la lutte pour les droits des Kurdes, et la possibilité démocratique en Turquie restent intimement et irrémédiablement interreliées.

## Armenian MP of Turkey threatened by government after bill for genocide recognition

**W**hile President Erdoğan extended condolences to the Armenian patriarch of Turkey, MP Paylan was threatened with legal action.

- MP Paylan was threatened by the ruling AKP's spokesperson because of the bill he submitted for the recognition of the genocide

- President Erdoğan extended condolences to the patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey

- Protested by Armenians in Uruguay, Turkey's foreign minister displayed the ultranationalist "Grey Wolf" sign

- Foreign Ministry denounced US President Biden's statement marking the Genocide Remembrance Day

Garo Paylan, an ethnic Armenian MP of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), submitted a bill on Friday (April 22) for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Parliamentary Speaker Mustafa Şentop returned the bill a day later because it was "against the provisions of the parliament's bylaw."

Later yesterday, the spokesperson of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), Ömer Çelik, released a strongly worded statement about Paylan's bill on his Twitter account.

"This is an immoral proposal. No one can slander our nation that it committed genocide. Someone under the roof of the Supreme Assembly is immoral," he wrote.



Çelik claimed that the bill was intended to "sabotage" the ongoing normalization efforts between Turkey and Armenia.

He said they would take legal action regarding the bill and added, "We condemn the so-called genocide lobby and the sabotage network behind it."

In response to Çelik's statement, Paylan noted that he had been submitting similar law proposals for the past seven years.

"I only update years. I haven't been lynched like this for seven years. Because such issues could be talked about in Turkey," he was quoted as saying by BBC Turkish.

Paylan also noted that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan extends condolences for Armenians on April 24 every year. Erdoğan's message Sending a message to Sahak

Maşalyan, the patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey, the president extended condolences for the Armenians who lost their lives in 1915.

"You have gathered under the roof of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate today to commemorate the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives in the harsh conditions the First World War imposed," he said in the message. "I once again commemorate the Ottoman Armenians who passed away with respect and convey my sincere condolences to their surviving relatives."

Response to Biden's statement

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned US President Biden for describing the 1915 events as a "genocide."

"Statements that are incompatible with historical facts and international law regarding the events of 1915 are not valid.

This includes the unfortunate statement made by US President Biden today, which is the repetition of the mistake he had made in 2021," it said.

"One-sided and selective approaches that serve no purpose other than to draw enmity from history are morally problematic and politically ill-intentioned."

Last year, Biden became the first US president to recognize the genocide. "Grey Wolf" sign

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu was protested by Armenians in Uruguay, where he paid an official visit.

In response to the protesters, he displayed the Grey Wolf sign, an ultranationalist symbol, while he was leaving Turkey's embassy in Montevideo. (RT/VK)

## La Turquie interdit la commémoration du génocide arménien

**D**ans le cimetière arménien d'Istanbul, c'est l'une des rares commémorations du génocide arménien. Au moment où Ankara et Erevan tentent de normaliser leurs relations, le pouvoir turc interdit les manifestations autour de ce drame, réfutant, et interdisant le terme de génocide.

Perpétré en 1915 par les troupes ottomanes, le génocide est commémoré le 24 avril, date des premières arrestations d'intellectuels arméniens.

"Le bureau du gouverneur a malheureusement interdit la commémoration prévue ce soir, regrette Garo Paylan, député du Parti démocratique des peuples. Ce n'est pas nous qui avons changé, c'est la politique intérieure de la Tur-



Commémoration du génocide en Arménie - Tous droits réservés  
KAREN MINASYAN/AFP

quie qui a changé. La politique turque veut que nous gardions le silence. Mais nous ne le ferons pas. Nous continuerons à nous souvenir de nos ancêtres."

"Il est important d'affronter le passé car sans commémoration du 24 avril et du génocide arménien, ajoute Meral Yildiz, membre de la plateforme de

commémoration du 24 avril, il n'y aura malheureusement pas de fin à ces douleurs. Ce qui a été fait d'abord aux Arméniens, puis aux Kurdes et aux Alévis, est maintenant tenté à l'égard des migrants syriens."

Le génocide arménien a commencé à être commémoré par les intellectuels turcs à partir de 2005, rejoints ensuite

par des centaines de Turcs qui marquent leur distance vis-à-vis de la position officielle.

"Il n'y a absolument pas eu de génocide", a martelé cette semaine le directeur de la communication de la présidence turque, Fahrettin Altun, qui a dénoncé des accusations "nulles et non avenues" contre la Turquie.

La provocation du chef de la diplomatie

Face à des manifestants arméniens hostiles à sa visite à Montevideo (Uruguay) samedi, le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères Mevlut Cavusoglu a lui répondu par un long sourire, avant d'effectuer le signe de ralliement des "Loups Gris", un mouvement ultranationaliste turc associé dans le passé à de nombreux assassinats politiques.



April 25, 2022

## Masoud Barzani congratulates France's Macron on electoral victory

**T**he Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) President Masoud Barzani congratulated French President Emmanuel Macron on his reelection early Monday.

"I wish the people of France all the best," Barzani tweeted. "My sincere hope is that the staunch friendship between

the peoples of Kurdistan and France will remain strong." Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani also congratulated Macron on his reelection.

The Kurdistan Region and France have long enjoyed close political and economic ties spanning decades. Macron paid an official visit to

the Kurdistan Region last year, where he was warmly welcomed by the Kurdish leadership, including Masoud Barzani.

Macron previously received Masoud Barzani at Elysée, the French presidential palace, when he was president of the Kurdistan Region.

Macron secured at least 58.6 percent of the votes in the second round of the election against his far-right rival Marie Le Pen, who won 41.4 percent.

The reelected French leader received numerous congratulatory messages from France's European and Middle Eastern allies.



## Le mécène Osman Kavala, bête noire d'Erdogan, condamné à perpétuité

Accusé d'avoir tenté de renverser le gouvernement, Osman Kavala a été condamné lundi à Istanbul à la prison à vie sans possibilité de remise de peine. Berlin demande la «libération immédiate» du mécène

Le mécène turc Osman Kavala, détenu depuis quatre ans et demi, a été condamné lundi à Istanbul à la perpétuité après les plaidoiries de la défense qui avait réclamé son acquittement pour manque de preuves et dénoncé l'acharnement du pouvoir.

Osman Kavala, accusé d'avoir tenté de renverser le gouvernement du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ne pourra bénéficier d'aucune remise de peine, ont précisé les juges dont le verdict, énoncé après moins d'une heure de délibéré, a été accueilli par des huées dans la salle du tribunal et les pleurs de ses proches.

Il a été seulement acquitté de l'accusation d'espionnage. Ses avocats ont fait part de leur intention de faire appel.

### Washington «profondément troublé et déçu»

«Nous nous attendons à ce qu'Osman Kavala soit libéré immédiatement», a déclaré la ministre allemande des Affaires étrangères Annalena Baerbock dans un communiqué, dénonçant un arrêt «en contradiction flagrante avec les normes de l'Etat de droit».

«Le verdict reconfirme le caractère autoritaire du système actuel [...]. Il y a peu ou pas de perspective européenne pour la Turquie actuelle», ont réagi deux députés européens, Nacho Sánchez Amor et Sergey Lagodinsky, dans un communiqué commun. Les Etats-Unis se sont dits



Le mécène turc Osman Kavala (photo non datée). — © HANDOUT / AFP

«profondément troublés et déçus» par cette condamnation qu'ils jugent «injuste et contraire au respect des droits humains, des libertés fondamentales et de l'Etat de droit». Ils appellent les autorités turques à libérer Osman Kavala ainsi que «toutes les autres personnes incarcérées de manière arbitraire», a appelé le porte-parole du département d'Etat, Ned Price.

La représentante de Human Rights Watch Emma Sinclair-Webb, présente au tribunal, a dénoncé sur Twitter le «pire dénouement possible» – «Horrible, cruel et diabolique». Le directeur Europe d'Amnesty International, Nils Muiznieks, a fustigé dans un communiqué une «parodie de justice» qui «défie le bon sens».

L'association turque des juristes contemporains (CHD) a appelé les avocats à participer à une veille mardi devant le palais de justice pour protester contre le verdict. «Ce gouvernement, qui s'est abattu sur le pays comme un cauchemar, continue de piétiner le droit», a

réagi de son côté le chef du principal parti turc de l'opposition, Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

événements et (les ont) déconnectés de la réalité», avait-il lancé avant que les juges ne se retirent.

Figure de la société civile turque, Osman Kavala, 64 ans, était accusé d'avoir cherché à renverser le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan via le financement des manifestations anti-gouvernementales dites «mouvement de Gezi» en 2013 et lors du coup d'Etat raté de juillet 2016.

C'est depuis la prison de haute sécurité de Silivri, en lisière d'Istanbul, par visioconférence et vêtu comme à l'accoutumée d'une chemise blanche impeccable, qu'il a suivi lundi les plaidoiries et entendu l'énoncé du verdict, épilogue d'un feuilleton



Des manifestants, y compris des avocats et des députés de l'opposition, réagissent après le verdict devant le tribunal d'Istanbul, le 25 avril 2022. © OZAN KOSE / AFP

un «assassinat judiciaire» contre sa personne: «Les théories du complot, avancées pour des raisons politiques et idéologiques, ont empêché une analyse impartiale des

judiciaire renvoyé de mois en mois. Les trois avocats de l'homme d'affaires, éditeur et philanthrope, ont notamment fait valoir que jamais les juges ne lui ont demandé «où il se



trouvait» lors des faits qui lui étaient reprochés.

«Il n'y a pas eu de procès: vous n'avez pas posé une seule question à Osman Kavala», a lancé Me Tolga Aytöre. «Pas même: Etes-vous allé au parc Geai? », épice centre des manifestations de 2013 qui avaient essaimé dans le pays. «Lâchez vos téléphones»

De même, le dernier défenseur à s'exprimer, Ilkan Koyuncu, a rappelé que «Kavala est accusé d'avoir joué un rôle dans la tentative de putsch en 2016, mais personne ne lui a demandé où il était la nuit du coup».

Pendant les plaidoiries, la représentante du Pen Club, association de défense de la liberté d'expression, Caroline Stockford, a demandé aux juges de «lâcher leur téléphone» pour écouter la défense, laissant entendre qu'ils

recevaient leurs ordres sur écran.

Face à la cour vendredi, Osman Kavala avait dénoncé l'influence du président Erdogan sur son procès. Ses sept co-accusés – qui comparaisaient libres – ont écopé d'une peine de dix-huit ans de prison, accusés de lui avoir apporté leur soutien.

Les militants des droits humains avaient espéré une libération qui enverrait un signal positif, alors que la Turquie essaie de faciliter les pourparlers entre l'Ukraine et la Russie. D'autant que le président Erdogan recevait simultanément à Ankara le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Antonio Guterres. Comme à chaque audience, une dizaine de diplomates occidentaux étaient présents pour témoigner de leur soutien à celui qui est devenu la bête noire du régime Erdogan.

Surnommé le «milliardaire rouge» par ses détracteurs, Osman Kavala, né à Paris, avait été arrêté en octobre 2017.

### Une crise diplomatique en automne dernier

Acquitté en février 2020 pour les charges liées aux manifestations de 2013, l'éditeur avait été arrêté quelques heures plus tard – avant même de pouvoir rentrer chez lui – puis renvoyé en prison, cette fois accusé d'avoir cherché à «renverser le gouvernement» lors du putsch raté de juillet 2016, ainsi que d'espionnage.

Son acquittement avait ensuite été invalidé par la justice turque, mais la reconduction régulière de sa détention en a fait le héros de l'opposition au président Erdogan.

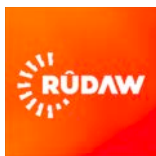
«Avoir passé quatre ans et demi de ma vie en prison ne

pourra jamais être compensé. La seule chose qui pourra me consoler sera d'avoir contribué à révéler les graves erreurs de la justice turque», avait-il prévenu vendredi.

L'affaire Kavala a déclenché à l'automne une crise diplomatique, Ankara menaçant d'expulser une dizaine d'ambassadeurs occidentaux, dont celui des Etats-Unis, qui avaient réclamé sa libération.

En février, la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a lancé une «procédure en manquement» contre la Turquie.

Le mois dernier, les procureurs avaient réclamé sa condamnation pour «tentative de renversement» du gouvernement, soit une peine de prison à vie sans possibilité de libération anticipée.



April 25, 2022  
By Aland Qaradaxi

## Villagers suffer because of Turkey's operation, bombardment of their area

Locals of Duhok province's Shiladze town struggle to bring herbal products to the markets because of the war between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkey.

The Turkish army's bombardment has forbidden the citizens to get profits from their herbal products this year.

This has led to a surge in the price of herbs by around 300 percent.

"There is not a single day that they do not bombard us. People are afraid to go to these areas because there is a slight chance you come back from there. We received 400 to 500 kilos of mushrooms last year and the year before, but this year, we only received 60 kilos of mushrooms," Omed Hashim, herb seller told Rudaw.

Hundreds of people in the mountainous areas of Duhok make a living from selling herbs.

Khame Khazim has been selling herbs in the market for about 25 years. She had been paying for all of her household expenses by selling spring herbs.

This year, Khazim has not made any decent income to pay her expenses.

"We do not dare go to the border areas because of the fight. We are afraid to go there. The sound of guns and artillery continues and we do not want to go there," Khazim told Rudaw.

The Secretary of the Duhok Provincial Council, Said Nerwai, told Rudaw that "poverty and unemployment rate was an issue because of the Turkish

bombardment." "The continued bombardment of the Turkish army has had a major impact on the area in general and the lives of citizens in particular," he added.

According to people who sell herbal products, they used to bring a large portion of spring herbs to the mountainous areas, but this year, they were only able to bring between 300 and 500 kilos of herbs into the market.

Turkey announced a new phase of a series of military operations against the PKK in Duhok province on Monday. Dubbed Operation Claw-Lock, the air and ground campaign heavily focuses on mountainous areas on Turkey's borders with the Kurdistan Region.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed on Friday that

45 PKK fighters have been "neutralized" in the framework of his country's latest offensive.

Turkish officials use the term "neutralize" to imply surrenders, killings, or capturing.

The PKK has claimed the death of 127 Turkish soldiers in Duhok since Monday.

Seven out of 92 villages are left inhabited for now. The rest have been abandoned because of the conflict between both the PKK and Turkey over the past decades, according to data from the Shiladze administration authorities.

More than 500 villages have been emptied in the Kurdistan Region over three decades of the Turkey-PKK conflict.

## Turquie : accusé d'avoir comploté contre le gouvernement, le mécène Osman Kavala condamné à la prison à vie

**S**es sept coaccusés, accusés de lui avoir apporté leur soutien, ont été condamnés à dix-huit ans de prison. Les Etats-Unis se sont dits « profondément troublés et déçus ». Détenu depuis 1 637 jours – plus de quatre ans et demi –, il n'avait eu de cesse de clamer son innocence, en vain. Le mécène turc Osman Kavala a été condamné lundi 25 avril à Istanbul à la perpétuité. Ses avocats, qui avait réclamé durant le procès son acquittement pour manque de preuves, ont fait part de leur intention de faire appel.

Les sept coaccusés de M. Kavala, accusés de lui avoir apporté leur soutien, ont été condamnés à dix-huit ans de prison.

Le philanthrope, accusé d'avoir tenté de renverser le gouvernement du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan en 2016, ne pourra bénéficier d'aucune remise de peine, ont précisé les juges, dont le verdict, énoncé après moins d'une heure de délibéré, a été accueilli par des huées dans la salle du tribunal. Il a été seulement acquitté de l'accusation d'espionnage.

L'Association des juristes contemporains turques (CHD) a appelé les avocats à participer à une veille mardi devant le palais de justice pour protester contre le verdict. « Ce gouvernement, qui s'est abattu sur le pays comme un cauchemar, continue de piétiner le droit », a réagi de son côté le chef du principal parti turc de l'opposition, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu.

### « Assassinat judiciaire »

Figure de la société civile turque, M. Kavala, 64 ans, était accusé d'avoir cherché à renverser le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan par le financement des manifestations antigouvernementales dites « mouvement de Gezi », en 2013, et lors du coup d'Etat raté de juillet 2016. C'est depuis la prison de haute sécurité de Silivri, en lisière d'Istanbul, par visioconférence et vêtu comme à l'accoutumée d'une chemise blanche impeccable, qu'il a suivi lundi les plaidoiries et entendu l'énoncé du verdict, épilogue d'un feuilleton judiciaire renvoyé de mois en mois.

Face à la cour vendredi, Osman Kavala a également dénoncé l'influence du président Erdogan sur son procès. Il a dénoncé, à la clôture des débats, un « assassinat judiciaire » contre sa personne : « Les théories du complot, avancées pour des raisons politiques et idéologiques, ont empêché une analyse impartiale des événements et [les ont] déconnectés de la réalité », a-t-il lancé avant que les juges se retirent.

Durant l'audience, les trois avocats de l'homme d'affaires, éditeur et philanthrope, ont notamment fait valoir que jamais les juges ne lui ont demandé « où il se trouvait » lors des faits qui lui étaient reprochés. Pendant les plaidoiries, la représentante du Pen Club, association de défense de la liberté d'expression, Caroline Stockford, a demandé aux juges de « lâcher leur téléphone » pour écouter la défense, laissant entendre qu'ils recevaient leurs ordres sur écran.

**Crise diplomatique**  
Cette nouvelle décision judiciaire n'a d'ailleurs pas manqué de faire réagir hors des frontières turques. Les Etats-Unis se sont dits « profondément troublés et déçus » par sa condamnation, en appelant à sa remise en liberté et en exhortant « le gouvernement à cesser les poursuites motivées par la politique ».

Lundi soir, la ministre des affaires étrangères allemande, Annalena Baerbock, a demandé la « libération immédiate » d'Osman Kavala, dénonçant un arrêt « en contradiction flagrante avec les normes de l'Etat de droit ». Cette condamnation « [témoigne] d'une sévérité maximale et ignor[e] la décision de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme », a dénoncé le chef de la diplomatie européenne, Josep Borrell, sur Twitter. « Le respect des droits fondamentaux et libertés est aujourd'hui plus important que jamais », a-t-il ajouté.

La représentante de Human Rights Watch, Emma Sinclair-Webb, présente au tribunal, a dénoncé sur Twitter le « pire dénouement possible », « horrible, cruel et diabolique ». Le directeur Europe d'Amnesty International, Nils Muiznieks, a fustigé, pour sa part, une « parodie de justice » qui « défie le bon sens ».

Les militants des droits humains avaient espéré une libération, qui enverrait un signal positif, alors que la Turquie essaie de faciliter les pourparlers entre l'Ukraine et la Russie. D'autant que le président, Erdogan, recevait simultanément à Ankara le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Antonio Guterres. Comme à chaque audience, une dizaine de diplomates occidentaux étaient présents pour témoigner de leur soutien à celui qui est devenu la bête noire du régime Erdogan.

L'affaire Kavala a déclenché en octobre 2021 une crise diplomatique. Ankara avait menacé d'expulser une dizaine d'ambassadeurs occidentaux, dont celui des Etats-Unis, qui

avaient réclamé sa libération – sans finalement mettre à exécution sa menace.

En février 2022, la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a lancé une « procédure en manquement » contre la Turquie. Le mois dernier, les procureurs turcs ont réclamé la condamnation de M. Kavala pour « tentative de renversement » du gouvernement, soit une peine de prison à vie sans possibilité de libération anticipée.

### Emprisonné quelques heures après avoir été acquitté

urnommé le « milliardaire rouge » par ses détracteurs, Osman Kavala, né à Paris, avait été arrêté en octobre 2017. Acquitté en février 2020 pour les charges liées aux manifestations de 2013, l'éditeur avait été arrêté quelques heures plus tard – avant même de pouvoir rentrer chez lui – puis renvoyé en prison, cette fois accusé d'avoir cherché à « renverser le gouvernement » lors du putsch raté de juillet 2016, ainsi que d'espionnage. Son acquittement avait, ensuite, été invalidé par la justice turque, mais la reconduction régulière de sa détention en a fait le héros de l'opposition au président Erdogan.

« Avoir passé quatre ans et demi de ma vie en prison ne pourra jamais être compensé. La seule chose qui pourra me consoler sera d'avoir contribué à révéler les graves erreurs de la justice turque », a-t-il déclaré vendredi. En décembre 2020, la Cour constitutionnelle turque avait d'ailleurs décidé que cette très longue détention provisoire ne constituait pas une violation à son droit à la liberté et à la sécurité.



25 avril 2022

# En Turquie, le mécène Osman Kavala bête noire d'Erdoğan condamné à la prison à vie

Symbole de la répression pratiquée par le régime de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, le milliardaire est accusé d'avoir cherché à renverser le gouvernement.

Quatre ans et demi de détention provisoire, et un verdict brutal au bout du tunnel. Le mécène turc Osman Kavala a été condamné ce lundi à Istanbul à la prison à vie sans possibilité de remise de peine. Figure de la société civile turque, le milliardaire de 64 ans est accusé, entre autres, d'avoir cherché à renverser le gouvernement en finançant les manifestations antigouvernementales dites «mouvement de Gezi» en 2013 et en participant à la tentative de putsch contre le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan en 2016. Il a toujours nié les charges qui pesaient contre lui. Ses avocats ont réclamé son acquittement pour manque de preuves et dénoncé l'acharnement du pouvoir.

«Il n'y a pas eu de procès : vous n'avez pas posé une seule question à Osman Kavala», a lancé l'un d'eux, Me Tolga Aytöre. «Pas même : «Êtes-vous allé au parc Gezi ?»». Un autre avocat a rappelé que «Kavala est accusé d'avoir joué un rôle dans la tentative de putsch en 2016, mais personne ne lui a demandé où il était la nuit du coup d'Etat». Pendant les plaidoiries, la représentante du Pen Club, association de défense de la liberté d'expression, Caroline Stockford, a demandé aux juges de «lâcher leur téléphone» pour écouter la défense, laissant entendre qu'ils recevaient leurs ordres sur écran.



Osman Kavala à Istanbul. (Photo/AFP)

## «Assassinat judiciaire»

Par avance, à la clôture des débats, Osman Kavala avait dénoncé un «assassinat judiciaire» contre sa personne. «Les théories du complot, avancées pour des raisons politiques et idéologiques, ont empêché une analyse impartiale des événements et les ont déconnectés de la réalité», avait-il lancé avant que les juges ne se retirent. Comme à chaque audience, une dizaine de diplomates occidentaux étaient présents pour témoigner de leur soutien au natif de Paris. Le verdict a été annoncé après moins d'une heure de délibéré. Il a été accueilli par des huées dans la salle du tribunal.

Longtemps méconnu de l'opinion publique turque, l'homme d'affaires était sorti de l'ombre lors de son arrestation en oc-

tobre 2017. Il avait été acquitté en février 2020 pour les charges liées aux manifestations de 2013 puis avait été arrêté dans la foulée, avant même d'avoir le temps de rentrer chez lui. Cette fois, il était mis en cause pour son action lors du putsch raté de juillet 2016, et accusé aussi d'espionnage. Son acquittement avait ensuite été invalidé par la justice turque, mais la reconduction régulière de sa détention en a fait le héros de l'opposition au président Erdoğan.

Au fil des ans, la presse pro gouvernementale l'a surnommé «le milliardaire rouge», le comparant au riche homme d'affaires américain d'origine hongroise George Soros, bête noire de plusieurs dirigeants de régimes autoritaires dans le monde. Recep

Tayyip Erdoğan lui-même l'a plusieurs fois accusé d'être «le représentant en Turquie» de Soros et de «financer les terroristes», sans jamais en apporter la preuve.

## Crise diplomatique

Connu pour son soutien aux projets culturels portant notamment sur les droits des minorités, la question kurde et la réconciliation arméno-turque, Osman Kavala s'est consacré à l'édition, l'art et la culture. Il a inauguré en 1982 la maison d'édition İletişim, devenue l'une des plus prestigieuses du pays. Il est aussi le père de la fondation Anadolu Kültür, qui vise à permettre à la société turque de débattre des sujets difficiles, dont le génocide arménien, par le biais des projets culturels.

L'affaire Kavala a déclenché à l'automne une crise diplomatique, Ankara menaçant d'expulser une dizaine d'ambassadeurs occidentaux, dont celui des États-Unis, qui avaient réclamé sa libération. En février, la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a lancé une «procédure en manquement» contre la Turquie. Le mois dernier, les procureurs avaient réclamé sa condamnation pour «tentative de renversement» du gouvernement, soit une peine de prison à vie sans possibilité de libération anticipée.

# Osman Kavala, homme d'affaires et mécène, condamné à la prison à vie au terme d'une parodie de justice en Turquie

Il paie son effort de médiation lors du mouvement de protestation contre le pouvoir en 2013. Par cette condamnation, le pays s'expose à des sanctions européennes.

**E**n détention provisoire depuis quatre ans et demi, l'homme d'affaires et mécène turc Osman Kavala a été condamné par un tribunal d'Istanbul, lundi 25 avril, à la détention à perpétuité sans possibilité de remise de peine.

Sept autres prévenus, l'architecte Mücella Yapici, la documentariste Çigdem Mater, le militant des droits civique Ali Hakan Altınay, la réalisatrice Mine Özerden, l'avocat Can Atalay, l'universitaire Tayfun Kahraman et le fondateur de nombreuses ONG turques Yigit Ali Emekçi, ont été condamnés à dix-huit ans de prison chacun, pour complicité du même chef d'accusation. Les sept intellectuels, qui comparaissaient libres, ont été arrêtés à l'issue de l'audience.

Après moins d'une heure de délibéré, les juges de la 13e cour pénale ont reconnu les prévenus coupables d'avoir tenté de « renverser le gouvernement de la République de Turquie » en ayant fomenté les manifestations antigouvernementales du parc Gezi, à Istanbul, au printemps 2013.

Durement réprimé, au prix de huit morts, ce mouvement pacifique et spontané, surtout porté par la jeunesse, fut le premier grand élan de protestation contre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, alors premier ministre. A l'époque, M. Kavala, connu pour ses activités culturelles et caritatives, avait tenté de jouer

les médiateurs entre les manifestants et les autorités.

## Acharnement des autorités

On peine à croire que c'est cette médiation qui, quatre ans plus tard, lui a valu d'être arrêté puis incarcéré à la prison de haute sécurité de Silivri, à la périphérie d'Istanbul. Et l'acharnement des autorités à son égard n'a jamais faibli. De toute sa détention, le mécène n'a vu aucun magistrat instructeur, uniquement des officiers de police.

Les procureurs ont mis près de deux années à établir l'acte d'accusation, un document cousu de fil blanc, où les billets d'avion de M. Kavala sont considérés comme des preuves à charge, tandis que des témoins anonymes assurent de son implication dans une révolte populaire présentée comme ourdie de l'étranger. Autant d'accusations niées par le philanthrope. Intervenant lundi en visioconférence de sa prison, il a dénoncé un « assassinat judiciaire » fondé sur des « théories du complot ».

Acquitté, faute de preuves, en février 2020, l'homme avait été arrêté quelques heures plus tard sans avoir pu quitter l'enceinte de sa prison, tandis que les trois magistrats qui avaient prononcé son acquittement – Galip Mehmet Perk, Ahmet Tarik Çiftçioglu et Talip Ergen – étaient visés par des sanctions disciplinaires.

Cette fois-ci, le juge Murat Bircan, un ancien candidat du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, islamo-conservateur, au pouvoir) aux législatives de 2018, ne risquait pas de manquer de loyauté.

Le verdict du « procès de Gezi » expose Ankara à la réprobation internationale. « Il reconferme le caractère autoritaire du système actuel (...). Il y a peu ou pas de perspective européenne pour la Turquie actuelle », ont réagi deux députés européens, l'Espagnol Nacho Sanchez Amor et l'Allemand Sergey Lagodinsky, dans un communiqué commun. Le directeur pour l'Europe d'Amnesty International, Nils Muiznieks, a fustigé, pour sa part, une « parodie de justice » qui « défie le bon sens ».

## Bouc émissaire préféré d'Erdogan

La Turquie se retrouve à la merci de sanctions. Le Conseil de l'Europe vient, en effet, de lancer une procédure d'infraction contre elle en raison de son refus de se conformer, depuis 2019, à un arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) ordonnant la libération d'Osman Kavala. Les juges de Strasbourg avaient estimé que son maintien en détention prolongée, sans jugement, trahissait une volonté de le « réduire au silence » et « avec lui tous les défenseurs des droits de l'homme ».

En refusant d'exécuter l'arrêt de la CEDH, le gouvernement turc, signataire de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, manque à ses obligations internationales. Pour avoir tenté de le rappeler, dix ambassadeurs occidentaux, dont ceux de la France, de l'Allemagne et des Etats-Unis, ont été menacés d'expulsion par le président Erdogan, à l'automne 2021.

Le numéro un turc, qui s'est constitué partie civile au « procès de Gezi », n'a jamais fait mystère de sa volonté de punir le mécène, son bouc émissaire préféré. « Certains essaient de travestir la vérité en le présentant comme un bon citoyen. Mais l'identité de ce personnage, surnommé "le Soros de Turquie", a été démasquée », déclarait-il aux militants de son parti, le 24 octobre 2017, soit six jours après l'arrestation de M. Kavala et alors qu'aucune charge n'avait encore été formulée contre lui.

Son allusion au milliardaire et philanthrope américain George Soros, qui, d'après lui, est à l'origine d'insurrections organisées dans de nombreux pays, en dit long sur sa peur d'être renversé par un soulèvement populaire. Une peur qui se fait plus pressante au fur et à mesure qu'approche l'échéance de la présidentielle, prévue pour juin 2023.



## Turquie : Le défenseur des droits humains Osman Kavala a été condamné à la prison à vie

(Istanbul, le 26 avril 2022) –

La condamnation par un tribunal turc du défenseur des droits humains Osman Kavala et de ses sept coaccusés est une choquante parodie de justice, a déclaré Human Rights Watch aujourd'hui.

Le 25 avril, la 13e Cour d'assises d'Istanbul a condamné Kavala à la prison à vie sans possibilité de libération conditionnelle pour « tentative de renversement du gouvernement » ; chacun des sept autres accusés a été condamné à 18 ans de prison pour « complicité ». Les accusations font référence à leurs rôles présumés dans les manifestations de masse de 2013 qui ont commencé dans le parc Gezi d'Istanbul.

« La condamnation d'Osman Kavala et de sept autres personnes à l'issue d'un simulacre de procès où des affirmations farfelues et des théories du complot ont remplacé tout ce qui ressemblait à des preuves est une viola-

tion flagrante de leurs droits, et prouve que les tribunaux turcs suivent les instructions de la présidence Erdogan », a déclaré Kenneth Roth, directeur exécutif de Human Rights Watch. « La guerre en Ukraine ne devrait pas inciter les alliés internationaux de la Turquie à fermer les yeux sur la grave crise de l'État de droit et des droits humains dans ce pays, illustrée par ce verdict et ces condamnations. »

Les sept coaccusés de Kavala, dont le tribunal a ordonné l'arrestation immédiate, sont Múcella Yapıcı (architecte), Can Atalay (avocat), Tayfun Kahraman (urbaniste et universitaire), Çiğdem Mater (cinéaste), Mine Özerden (défenseuse des droits humains), Hakan Altınay (éducateur), et Yiğit Ekmekçi (fondateur d'une université et homme d'affaires).

Kavala a déjà passé quatre ans et demi en détention sur la base d'accusations infondées de tentative de ren-

versement du gouvernement et de l'ordre constitutionnel, ainsi que d'espionnage. Il était accusé d'avoir organisé et financé les manifestations du parc Gezi, et participé à la tentative de coup d'État du 15 juillet 2016 contre le gouvernement du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Le 25 avril, le tribunal l'a acquitté de l'accusation d'espionnage, mais a prolongé sa détention en raison de sa condamnation pour tentative de renversement du gouvernement. Les avocats ont décidé de faire appel de toutes les condamnations visant les accusés.

En décembre 2019, la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) avait jugé que la Turquie avait utilisé la détention de Kavala à des fins politiques, violant ses droits, y compris son droit à la liberté, et agissant de mauvaise foi. L'arrêt de la Cour concernant Kavala, comme tous les arrêts de la CEDH, est juridiquement contraignant, mais les autorités turques ont ignoré la décision du tribunal de Strasbourg.

Les autorités turques ont également ignoré la décision adoptée en décembre 2021 par le Comité des Ministres du Conseil de l'Europe (constitué de 47 États membres), appelant à la libération d'Osman Kavala et au plein rétablissement de ses droits. Le 2 février 2022, le Comité des Ministres a adopté une résolution intérimaire recommandant l'ouverture d'une procédure d'infraction visant la Turquie, pour non-respect de l'arrêt de la CEDH.

Les partenaires internationaux de la Turquie devraient veiller à ce que la condamnation injuste de Kavala et des autres accusés dans l'affaire Gezi ait des conséquences politiques. En particulier, le projet d'« agenda positif », proposé par l'Union européenne pour ses rapports avec la Turquie, est entièrement incompatible avec le refus de la Turquie de libérer Kavala conformément à l'arrêt de la CEDH.

## Turkey: Life Sentence for Rights Defender Osman Kavala

**Kavala, 7 Co-Defendants Convicted; Outrageous Miscarriage of Justice**

(Istanbul) – The conviction on April 25, 2022 of the human rights defender Osman Kavala and his seven co-defendants is a shocking miscarriage of justice, Human Rights Watch said today.

The Istanbul 13th Assize Court sentenced Kavala to life in prison without parole on charges of attempting to overthrow the government and the seven others to 18 years on charges of aiding and abetting. The charges refer to their alleged leading roles in mass protests in 2013 that began in Istanbul's Gezi Park.

"The conviction of Osman Kavala and the seven others in a sham trial where wild assertions and conspiracy theories stood in for anything resembling evidence is a gross violation of human rights and ample proof that Turkey's courts operate under instructions from the Erdogan presidency," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "The war in Ukraine should not allow Turkey's international allies to turn a blind eye to the severe crisis for the rule of law and human rights at home exemplified in this latest verdict and sentences."

Kavala's seven co-defendants, whom the court ordered arrested immedi-

ately, are Múcella Yapıcı, an architect; Can Atalay, a lawyer; Tayfun Kahraman, a city planner and academic; Çiğdem Mater, a filmmaker; Mine Özerden, a rights defender; Hakan Altınay, an educator; and Yiğit Ekmekçi, founder of a university and a businessman.

Kavala has already spent four-and-a-half years in detention on baseless charges of attempting to overthrow the government and the constitutional order and espionage for allegedly organizing and financing the Gezi Park protests and involvement in the July 15, 2016 coup attempt against the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On April 25, the court acquitted him on the espionage charge and prolonged his detention based on his conviction on the charge of attempting to overthrow the government. Lawyers are appealing all defendants' convictions and detentions.

In December 2019 the European Court of Human Rights found that Turkey had used detention for political ends, violating Kavala's rights, including his right to liberty, and acting in bad faith. The Kavala judgment, like all European Court of Human Rights judgments, is legally binding, yet the Turkish authorities ignored the Strasbourg court's ruling. It also ignored the call for his release and full restoration

of his rights by the Committee of Ministers, which represents the Council of Europe's 47 member states. In response, the Committee of Ministers voted on February 2 to begin infringement proceedings against Turkey for noncompliance with the European Court's ruling, an important move to support human rights protection in Turkey and uphold the international human rights framework.

The Turkish courts and prosecutors have engaged in a series of tactics to circumvent the authority of the European Court and the Council of Europe, using domestic court decisions to prolong Kavala's detention and extend the life of baseless prosecutions. The courts have issued sham release orders, initiated multiple criminal proceedings against Kavala on the same facts, and separated and re-joined case files accusing him of bogus offenses. The convictions against Kavala and the seven others are the culmination of this process at the lower court level.

Turkey's international partners should ensure that the unjust conviction of Kavala and the other defendants in the Gezi case has political consequences. In particular, the European Union's proposed "positive agenda" with Turkey is wholly incompatible with Tur-

key's failure to release Kavala in line with the European Court's judgment, and made infinitely worse by the convictions, draconian sentencing, and detention orders for Kavala and his co-defendants.

The European Commission and EU member states should urgently review their engagement with Turkey and condition the opening of talks on the Customs Union modernization, requested by Ankara; to the release of Kavala and any of the others detained; repeal of the Gezi verdict; implementation of judgments from the European Court of Human Rights; and tangible progress on improving Turkey's human rights record and ensuring the independence of its judiciary.

"The convictions should be read as Turkey's defiant answer to the Council of Europe, which in February took the unprecedented step of triggering infringement proceedings against Turkey over its refusal to comply with the European Court's judgment calling for Kavala's release," Roth said. "The European Court of Human Rights is due to rule again on the Kavala case and the convictions will surely expedite the infringement procedure against Turkey and deepen the crisis in the country's relations with the Council of Europe."

April 27, 2022  
By Sierwan Najmaldin Karim

## Erdogan launches new ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kurds

**A**midst the chaos in the world, Turkey's double game is rewarding to commit more atrocities against Kurds in Syria and Iraq.

On April 27, once again, President Erdogan renewed threats to launch a fresh military invasion against the Syrian Kurds, while concurrently pressing ahead with yet another large-scale military campaign against the Kurds in Iraq. While Turkey works to expand its zones of occupation in Iraq, the Turkish Armed Forces and their jihadist proxy militias in Syria continue to attack the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), institutions of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), and Kurdish civilians in Syria. Turkey's daily bombardment of Syria since their 2019 invasion has killed 60 civilians, including nine children, so far in 2022. Moreover, the war crimes perpetrated by Turkish proxies in Afrin have increased dramatically.

Turkey's three invasions of Syrian Kurdistan have contributed greatly to bloodshed and instability in Syria, and the resulting refugee crisis since 2011. Meanwhile, Turkey and its authoritarian President Recep Tayyip Erdogan turned a blind eye to the activities of Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists as they launched attacks on the Kurds who continue to fight the terror group on behalf of the world. Turkey's ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Kurds of Syria has already resulted in forcible changes to the country's demographics, with significant displacement seen during and after Turkey's invasion and occupation of Afrin in 2018 and the subsequent invasion and occupation of the northern areas of Serê Kaniyê (Ras al-Ayn) and Tel Abyad in 2019. The Kurdish-led SDF, who were backed by the United States and acted as the primary ground force in the war against



ISIS in Syria, suffered immense losses during these invasions, and were required to divert significant resources from efforts to combat ISIS as a result of this Turkish military aggression. During these invasions, Turkey was heavily dependent on thousands of ISIS-like jihadists militias who were branded members of the "Syrian opposition," and unleashed these forces on Kurdish civilians, destabilizing the only region in the embattled country that enjoyed peace and democratic, multi-ethnic self-governance.

Turkey also launched several military incursions into Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of fighting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Since 2015, the Turkish military has killed at least 96 civilians and wounded 101 civilians across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, displacing hundreds from their villages. Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has repeatedly opposed Turkish incursions, recently releasing strongly worded statements on the matter and summoning the Turkish ambassador. The recent Iraqi statement also refuted Erdogan's claims that the Iraqi federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) were assisting with Turkey's ongoing invasion. Economic relations aside, Erdogan's hostility toward the Kurds of Iraq and the KRG is well established – Despite economic cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Erdogan was the first world leader to

oppose the Kurdistan independence referendum in 2017, cooperating with both Baghdad and Tehran to impose a harsh embargo against the Kurds.

Erdogan continues attacking the Kurds wherever they are. In Turkey, there are plans to shut down the second-largest opposition party, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Additionally, Kurdish lawyers, politicians, singers, youth, female activists, and students are detained and jailed daily. A dangerous rise in hate crimes by ultra-nationalists against the Kurds, stoked by the rhetoric of Erdogan and his allies, has also taken place in recent years.

Turkey's attacks on Syrian Kurds strengthen ISIS terrorists, other jihadist groups, the Assad regime, and increase Iranian influence and Russian domination in Syria. Turkey's attacks on Iraqi Kurdistan destabilize the safest and most developed part of Iraq and weaken one of the United States' most reliable partners since 1991. The more Kurds are targeted and subjugated in Turkey, the further Turkey moves from democratic values on which the United States was built and the role of a strategy ally for the United States and NATO in the region. The HDP has been the only party in Turkey that is serious about democratizing Turkey and safeguarding the rights of all citizens, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion, work-

ing tirelessly despite the challenges posed by both ruling and opposition parties.

Erdogan's new plans to invade Syrian Kurdistan are a true test of the Biden Administration's stance on human rights, the battle against ISIS, and protection of allies. In 2019, Biden criticized President Trump for "abandoning Kurdish allies," resulting in a chaotic situation where the US lost a significant influence in the region. Turkey is taking advantage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, playing a game where they sells Turkish drones to Ukrainians and, at the same time, receive Russian oligarchs with wide-open arms. Moreover, Turkey has yet to implement sanctions imposed on Russia by NATO and European nations. The international community, mainly the US, should not repeat the mistakes of 2018 and 2019, allowing Turkey to further damage and destabilize Syria and empower America's adversaries including ISIS by invading Syrian Kurdistan. The U.S. must also halt Turkey's repeated attacks on Iraqi Kurdistan, as these attacks bring bloodshed to peaceful and stable areas of Iraq and weaken the United States' historic allies in the country. Iraq is destabilized by continued Turkish attacks, similar to Iranian attacks throughout the country. However, it seems Iraq's sovereignty only matters when Iran launches cross border attacks, not Turkey. Encouraged by recent history, Erdogan believes the world will continue to turn a blind eye to Turkey's attacks on Kurds. The Biden Administration has a chance to stop him and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past by protecting the Kurd people who want nothing more than to live in peace in a free and democratic society.

Sierwan Najmaldin Karim is the president of the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI).

## Women's Rights Activist Nooshin Keshavarznia Arrested in Tehran

**O**n Monday, April 25, 2022, the security forces arrested women's rights activist and social researcher Nooshin Keshavarznia and transferred her to an unidentified location.

According to HRANA, the news agency of Human Rights Activists, on Monday, the security forces arrested women's rights activist Nooshin Keshavarznia in



Tehran. Before the arrest, she had been summoned

by an unknown security institution.

The reasons for this arrest and her whereabouts are still unknown.

Nooshin Keshavarznia is a women's rights activist and social researcher who in recent years has focused on the issues related to harassment and violence against women.

## Turkey's exit from Istanbul Convention 'unlawful,' says Council of State prosecutor

**A** prosecutor from the Council of State, Turkey's highest administrative court, has demanded the cancellation of a presidential decree that pulled the country out of the Istanbul Convention last year.

The prosecutor presented their final opinion ("esas hakkındaki görüş") during a hearing of the case overseen at the Council of State's 10th Chamber on April 28. The top administrative court is expected to its ruling with regards to the case in one month. The ruling will be released in a written format.

On March 20, 2021, Turkey's Official Gazette announced a presidential decision to withdraw from the convention,

which is specifically designed to tackle systematic and widespread violence against women. In return, women organizations, politicians and bar associations filed over 200 applications amounting to 10 cases at the Council of State, demanding that the relevant presidential decree be canceled.

A hearing of the case took place on April 28, which saw the attendance of several lawyers representing many of the bar associations throughout Turkey.

Also, representatives of several women organizations gathered in front of the Council of State in the morning hours, releasing a press statement.

The Women's Platform for Equality (EŞİK) said that the trial will show "whether it is the law of those who see themselves above judiciary or whether it is the superiority of law that will persist" in the end.

EŞİK said that if the Council of State rejects their application, then they will take their case to the Constitutional Court and then to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

The head of the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB) Eriņç Saękan made a defense on behalf of Ankara Bar Association, saying that the relevant presidential decree is "unlawful." He said that Turkey had ratified the convention in parliament, which is why "it is a

Constitutional obligation that the withdrawal also takes place with the will of parliament."

Lawyer Seher Duygu Çildoęan from Ankara Bar Association said that since Turkey pulled out of the convention, the country's LGBTI+ community has faced more attacks. "By saying 'A fraction of society used the convention as a means to normalize homosexuality,' the state showed LGBTI+ individuals as targets," she said.

After many more people submitted their defenses, the Council of State prosecutor said in their final opinion that the relevant presidential decree is "unlawful" and demanded that it be canceled.



## Ankara's reluctance to join sanctions against Russia

**M**ost Turks, according to the latest surveys of public opinion, view the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a challenge to Turkey's national security and want the government to remain neutral in this conflict.

Such a cautious position is the product of Turkey's financial ties with Russia, and its fragile economic situation.

This interdependence explains president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's reluctance to subscribe to US and EU-backed Russia sanctions and is seeing support from Turkish society. There is, nevertheless, a darker side to this policy.

As it happened during the period when sanctions were initially levied against Iran, prior to the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, international pressure over Iran was regarded as a window of opportunity by politicians and bureaucrats in Turkey.

Indeed, the Iranian regime's need for survival required mechanisms that would bypass legal and transparent international processes, and many in Turkey saw an opportunity to be a key country in this process, getting rich along the way.

December of 2013 marked a threshold in the history of modern Turkey.

Public prosecutors and police chiefs linked to the Gulen movement initiated a graft probe revealing illegal ties between cabinet members and Reza Zerrab, an Iranian businessman facilitating the transfer of money from Turkish to Iranian banks. Zerrab was laundering Iran's oil

and natural gas money through shell company transaction account in Halkbank, owned by the Turkish state, alongside a complex network of businesses, banks, and front companies, in a case that came to be known as "the biggest sanctions evasion scheme in recent history".

In order to ensure continued operations, he was bribing cabinet members who would help him secure the operation from the intervention of the Turkish police.

The indictment later argued that Egemen Bağış, minister for EU affairs, Muammer Gülen, minister of the interior, and Zafer Çağlayan, minister of economy, all received bribes from Zerrab.

The graft probe was a milestone on Turkey's path to autocracy.

Erdoğan, prime minister in 2013, called the indictment a "judicial coup" plotted by the Gulen movement, aimed at subverting his government. This was an unexpected confrontation considering that Erdoğan and Gülen had been political allies against the secular army's tutelage after Erdoğan's AKP came to power in 2002.

### Erdoğan vs Gulen

It is safe to argue that cooperation between Erdoğan and Gulen catalysed the Gulenists to fully infiltrate Turkish state bureaucracy and function as a replacement for the secularist army and judiciary.

Nevertheless, these two factions had problems with sharing the power. Erdoğan believed that the graft probe was instrumentalised by the Gulen movement to overthrow the elected government. In the following years, Erdoğan

managed to survive on popular support he received, gradually cleansing the bureaucracy from Gulenists. Especially after the failed coup allegedly attempted by Gulenist soldiers in July 2016, Erdoğan has now established his full authority over the judiciary, leaving no autonomous institutions.

Such an autocratic turn has paved the ways for the AKP members to violate legal restrictions as long as they remain loyal to Erdoğan. Should sanctions imposed by the west on Iran continue, it should be expected, as was the case with Zerrab in 2013, that senior corrupt government members will see an opportunity to help Iran continue to do business by evading sanctions.

The extent to which corruption of this sort is prevalent can be seen from Sedat Peker, a well-known mafia leader and close ally of the Erdoğan government in the post failed-coup era, who released a widely-viewed series of confessions on YouTube.

In these, he accused Turkish cabinet members of being involved in drug smuggling, arms smuggling, gambling and corruption.

These confessions have demonstrated how judicial control over the executive body has completely disappeared in Turkey, underscoring the risk of sanctions related to the JCPOA evasion running through Ankara. Public prosecutors and judges are either corrupt, or have close ties with politicians — making it more likely than not, that such illegal activity could continue unimpeded.

This concerning picture implies

that members of the government would be inclined to facilitate sanctions evasion for their own financial gain in the absence of autonomous bureaucratic institutions and an independent judiciary.

It is not surprising that we can pinpoint a correlation between the AKP ministers' cooperation with Zerrab to launder Iranian money and the military's decline in the Turkish politics. Less oversight from third party organisations traditionally more critical of the government allows corruption to run amok.

Similarly, the rise of Turkey's one man rule after the failed coup has enabled cabinet members to conduct illegal activities without concern regarding oversight by state institutions and the judiciary, so long as they maintain allegiance to Turkey's strongman.

All of this, coupled with the Turkish economy's severe decline, is why the international sanctions imposed are regarded as an opportunity for corrupt elites who perceive sanctions as a bargaining chip to make more money.

Any comprehensive sanctions regime must consider the sanctions-evasion route that runs through Ankara.

Past experience shows that ignoring this runs the risk of effectively neutralising any significant financial impact of the sanctions regime currently in place against Iran, not to mention the message it sends to other sanctioned regimes, such as Russia, alongside corrupt politicians and businessmen who see a financial opportunity in strengthening rogue regimes at the expense of Western interests.



## PEN France: la condamnation d'Osman Kavala est une très grave atteinte aux droits humains et à la démocratie

**L**undi, un tribunal turc a condamné le philanthrope Osman Kavala à la prison à vie aggravée dans le cadre du très critiqué « procès Gezi » d'Istanbul. À moins qu'un Cours d'appel n'infirme le verdict, Osman Kavala passera le reste de sa vie en prison.

Pour le club PEN France, la condamnation de Kavala et ses coaccusés, « est une très grave atteinte aux droits humains et à la démocratie. » Le club PEN France exige la libération de tous les condamnés du procès Gezi dans le communiqué suivant:

« Beaucoup de gens utilisent les mots liberté, égalité et démocratie ; mais bien peu sont prêts à consacrer leur temps, leur énergie et leur argent à ces idées. Osman Kavala est l'un d'eux. Il a dédié sa vie entière à la liberté, l'égalité et la démocratie. Il est le véritable ami des Kurdes et des Arméniens, des défavorisés et des opprimés, des Arts et des artistes, de la culture, de la terre et des arbres... Il a toujours été et restera toujours le véritable ami de la vérité.

Les seules personnes qui méritent d'être jugées dans un tribunal pour ce qui s'est passé à Gezi, ce sont les policiers et la violence avec laquelle ils ont tué des civils, dont un jeune de quatorze ans, et en ont blessé des milliers. Et bien sûr ceux, quels qu'ils soient, qui ont



donné l'ordre d'agir avec une telle violence. »

Aslı Erdoğan, le 26 avril 2022  
Traduit par Cécile Oumhani

Le PEN Club français dénonce avec la plus grande vigueur le verdict injuste prononcé à Istanbul contre Osman Kavala, condamné lundi 25 avril 2022 à la prison à vie.

Il dénonce aussi le verdict prononcé le même jour contre ses sept coaccusés, Mucella Yapici, Can Atalay, Çiğdem Mater, Tayfun Kahraman, Hakan Altınay, Yigit Ekmeçi et Mine Özerdem, condamnés à une peine de dix-huit ans de prison et mis en état d'arrestation. Il leur était reproché d'avoir apporté leur soutien à Osman Kavala.

Le PEN Club français exige la libération immédiate d'Osman

Kavala et de ses sept coaccusés.

Il dénonce ce qui est une très grave atteinte aux droits humains et à la démocratie.

Très engagé dans la défense des droits à la culture et des droits humains, Osman Kavala avait créé en 2002 le centre culturel Anadolu Kültür dans la ville majoritairement kurde de Diyarbakir. Avec son équipe, où l'écrivaine Asli Erdogan s'était aussi engagée, il mettait en avant la culture kurde ainsi que la culture arménienne. Anadolu Kültür rayonnait sur l'ensemble de la Turquie et œuvrait pour que la diversité culturelle soit reconnue comme une richesse.

Osman Kavala a beaucoup agi pour la reconnaissance du génocide arménien.

Il a également fondé plusieurs

maisons d'édition, dont Ilitesim Yayinlari, dans un esprit de changement de la société et de défense de la démocratie après le coup d'état de septembre 1980.

Osman Kavala a été arrêté le 18 octobre 2017, plus d'un an après le coup d'état manqué de juillet 2016. Il était accusé d'avoir cherché à renverser le gouvernement en s'impliquant dans les manifestations du parc de Gezi en 2013. Acquitté le 18 février 2020, il était réarrêté aussitôt et réincarcéré à la prison de Silivri. En janvier 2021, l'acquittement était annulé par un tribunal d'Istanbul.

En 2019, la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme avait dénoncé son arrestation et son emprisonnement et appelé la Turquie à la libération d'Osman Kavala.

## Cigdem Mater Sentenced to 18 Years Prison in Gezi Park Trial

**T**urkish producer Cigdem Mater, known on the festival circuit for backing arthouse titles such as the 2013 Venice competition drama “Sivas,” has been arrested and sentenced to 18 years in prison on trumped-up charges, along with other activists, in connection with the 2013 Gezi Park anti-government protests.

Mater, who is also a journalist, was incarcerated on Monday in Istanbul at the conclusion of a trial during which Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala, who was already in custody, was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of “attempting to overthrow the government” of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan by allegedly financing the protests.

Mater and six other activists are accused by the Turkish court of supporting Kavala and being behind the protests that were prompted by construction of a mall in an Istanbul park. The protests snowballed and grew into nationwide anti-government unrest. Mater is also specifically accused of trying to raise financing for a



Courtesy Nadir Operli

documentary about the Gezi Park movement that was never made. The Istanbul court ordered Mater and the other activists who were not in custody to be immediately arrested, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Mater was arrested on Monday and sent to Istanbul’s Bakirkoy women’s prison after the verdict was announced.

Kavala, Mater and all other defendants have repeatedly denied the accusations. They are expected to appeal the verdict. Mater came to Turkey from Germany in February to attend the trial in Istanbul.

The verdict, which has been vehemently slammed by European and U.S. diplomats, is expected to further strain Turkey’s ties with Western countries. Europe’s top human rights body, the Council of Europe, has initiated infringement procedures against Turkey for refusing to abide by a 2019 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that called for Kavala’s release on grounds that his rights had been violated.

Amnesty International called the ruling a “devastating blow” for human rights, saying that the court’s decision “defies all logic.”

The human rights group PEN America is calling it a “dark moment for Turkey.”

News of Mater’s arrest is also starting to reverberate in the international film community. Turkish producer Nadir Operli, who is a member of the European Film Academy, has launched an appeal for “solidarity with Cigdem Mater and all co-defendants, and protest this unlawful trial,” he said in an email.

Several other members of the Turkish and international film community are speaking out on social media in an effort to drum up international support, including the team of 2015 female empowerment drama “Toz Bezi” (“Dust Cloth”) by Ahu Ozturk, about two Kurdish cleaning women working in Istanbul’s outskirts, which won prizes at Turkish festivals.

Mater, besides being a co-producer on Kaan Mujdeci’s “Sivas” and “Dust Cloth,” is an associate producer of Seren Yuce’s “Cogunluk” (“Majority”) and worked as a line producer on international projects shot in Turkey including Ai Weiwei’s “Human Flow.”



April 28, 2022

## IRGC intelligence detains activists ahead of Labour Day

**T**he Intelligence Organisation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) arrested seven labour and women’s rights activists in Baneh, Kurdistan province, on 26 April.

The names of these activists are Nishtiman Rahmati, Parvin Abdollahpour, Hassan Ezzati,

Saeid Mohammadi, Omar Soleimani, Fateh Majidi, and Afshin Rahimi.

Reportedly, the IRGC forces also raided the homes of these civilians and confiscated some of their personal belongings. Nishtiman Rahmati was released after several hours

while the rest of the activists were transferred to the Shahramfar Detention Center of the Intelligence Organisation of the IRGC in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province.

In the past few years, security forces summoned and interrogated the labour and

women’s rights activists Parvin Abdollahpour and Nishtiman Rahmati, the member of the board of directors of the Baneh Construction Workers’ Union Hassan Ezzati, and labour activists and former political prisoners Saeid Mohammadi and Omar Soleimani, on several occasions.

## La guerre en Ukraine aggrave le marasme économique en Syrie

La réorientation d'une partie de l'aide internationale vers l'Europe avive la crise dans la région d'Idlib, où résident des millions de déplacés.

**L**e montant des factures impayées qu'Abou Khaled a accumulées chez les commerçants du camp de déplacés d'Al-Karama, dans la province syrienne d'Idlib, s'est envolé. Dans l'enclave rebelle sous tutelle turque, les prix ont quasi doublé depuis le début de la guerre en Ukraine : non seulement ceux du blé et de l'huile de tournesol, mais aussi ceux de tous les produits de consommation, affectés par la hausse du prix des carburants. Avec six enfants à charge, et sans aucun revenu, Abou Khaled accumule déjà près de 9 000 livres turques (550 euros) de dette. « C'est un désastre. Je ne pourrai jamais rembourser », dit-il au téléphone.

L'association locale qui distribue les paniers de vivres du Programme alimentaire mondial (PAM) a retiré Abou Khaled de la liste de ses bénéficiaires il y a trois mois, sans aucune explication, comme pour cent quarante autres familles de la section du camp où il vit. Il n'y a aucun emploi à pourvoir à des kilomètres à la ronde. Et, comme pour les 2,8 millions de déplacés vivant dans les camps surpeuplés du Nord-Ouest syrien, l'espoir de rentrer un jour chez lui – à Hama, dans le centre de la Syrie – s'est évanoui après onze ans de guerre.

Dans le sillage du conflit russo-ukrainien, la crise économique qui sévit en Syrie s'est exacerbée, et les capacités d'intervention des organismes humanitaires sont mises à l'épreuve. L'impasse dans laquelle se trouve la crise syrienne, la pandémie de Covid-19 et la succession d'ur-

gences humanitaires à travers le monde avaient déjà érodé le soutien des donateurs étrangers. Une partie des subsides internationaux est désormais réorientée vers l'Ukraine. « La Syrie est désormais hors des radars des donateurs, alerte Hisham Dirani, directeur de l'ONG syrienne Banafsaj. L'aide alimentaire se tarit alors qu'il y a 4,1 millions de personnes en insécurité alimentaire dans le Nord-Ouest syrien, et qu'il n'y a quasi plus d'argent pour l'éducation et la santé. »

### Des paniers plus réduits

Le PAM – qui fournit une aide alimentaire à 1,35 million de personnes dans le Nord-Ouest syrien, et 5,5 millions au total en Syrie – a annoncé qu'elle devra réduire la taille de ses paniers à partir de mai. « La hausse des prix alimentaires mondiaux a entraîné une augmentation des coûts de l'aide alimentaire du PAM de 51 % depuis 2019, et ce montant va s'accroître au fur et à mesure de l'impact de la guerre en Ukraine », explique Abeer Etefa, la porte-parole du PAM pour le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord, qui ajoute que « les besoins dépassent désormais significativement les financements disponibles ».

« Le PAM a réduit plusieurs fois déjà la taille de ses paniers en 2021, mais cette réduction-là sera la plus significative, car elle intervient à un moment où les gens sont encore plus dépendants de l'aide, du fait de l'inflation galopante », précise M. Dirani. Faute de dons suffisants de ses bailleurs étran-

gers, son ONG ne pourra pas non plus augmenter, pour les ajuster à la hausse des prix, le montant des bons mensuels de 60 dollars qu'elle distribue à des milliers de familles.

Lire aussi Article réservé à nos abonnés La guerre en Ukraine rappelle « les méthodes que l'on a subies à Alep », témoignent des Syriens

Avant même la guerre en Ukraine, les prix des denrées alimentaires en Syrie avaient augmenté de 86 % en janvier, par rapport à janvier 2021, selon l'ONG américaine Mercy Corps. Dans la province d'Idlib, dépendante de la Turquie pour ses approvisionnements et qui a adopté la livre turque comme monnaie, la situation s'est nettement détériorée cet hiver. La crise économique qui a frappé Ankara, en novembre 2021, marquée par une dévaluation de près de moitié de la livre turque, a entraîné une hausse du prix des carburants et des produits alimentaires, notamment du pain, à Idlib.

### « Le prix du pain a triplé »

La crise ukrainienne a occasionné une nouvelle flambée des prix et des inquiétudes sur les approvisionnements. Selon des sources locales, citées par Mercy Corps, les réserves de blé sont presque vides dans la province d'Idlib. Elles ne pourront couvrir les besoins en pain que pour un à six mois. « Il y a une inquiétude sur la production alimentaire locale, notamment de blé. Du fait du conflit qui se poursuit et du manque de pluies, il n'y aura pas plus de 33 000 tonnes récoltées en 2022 », contre 700 000 tonnes avant la sécheresse de 2021,

explique Kieren Barnes, responsable Syrie chez Mercy Corps. La province est dépendante des importations turques, or la Turquie importe 78 % de son blé d'Ukraine et de Russie.

« Il n'y a pas encore de pénurie dans la province, mais le prix du pain a triplé. Avec son salaire, un ouvrier ne peut plus acheter qu'un paquet de pain par jour, contre trois auparavant », explique M. Dirani. Le directeur de Banafsaj dit observer que de plus en plus de déplacés quittent les villes pour retourner dans les camps. « Les déplacés sont face à un dilemme : hors du camp, ils ont de meilleures chances de trouver un emploi, mais ils ont aussi plus de dépenses – le loyer, les courses et les salaires n'ont pas été revalorisés », poursuit-il.

Alors que la crise promet de s'aggraver, les humanitaires appellent à revoir les modalités d'assistance dans cette région. « Oui, il faut de la distribution de nourriture et d'argent, mais aussi un soutien plus durable aux projets agricoles et à la production locale, sinon on risque d'être toujours dans la même situation dans dix ans », insiste M. Barnes. Les donateurs ont été jusqu'à présent frileux à y investir dans des projets de stabilisation, du fait de la présence turque et de la mainmise de l'organisation islamiste Hayat Tahrir Al-Cham sur les instances locales d'Idlib. « Les ONG ont la capacité de mener des projets hors de ces ingérences », assure M. Dirani.





April 28, 2022

## Iran executions see 'alarming rise' in 2021: report

**E**xecutions in Iran rose by 25 percent in 2021, a report by two leading NGOs said Thursday, expressing alarm over a surge in the numbers executed for drug offences and also the hanging of at least 17 women.

The rate of executions in Iran also accelerated after the June election of hardline former judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi to the presidency, said the report by Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) and France's Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM).

The report urged world powers negotiating with Iran on reviving the deal on its nuclear programme to put use of capital punishment in the Islamic republic -- which executes more people annually than any nation other than China -- at the centre of the talks.

At least 333 people were executed in 2021, a 25-percent increase compared to 267 in 2020, said the report, based on official media but also sources inside Iran.

Meanwhile, at least 126 executions were for drug-related charges, five times higher than 2020's figure of 25.

This marked a major reversal of a trend of a decline in drug-related executions since Iran in 2017 adopted amendments to its anti-narcotics law in the face of international pressure.

Over 80 percent of executions



Phile photo : AFP

were not officially announced, including all those for drug-related offences, it said.

The report "reveals an increase in the number of executions, an alarming rise in the implementation of death sentences for drug offences and an ongoing lack of transparency", the NGOs said.

- 'Less scrutiny' -

IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam expressed concern that there was "less scrutiny" on Iran's rights record as powers focused on bringing the nuclear negotiations to a positive conclusion.

"There will be no sustainable (deal)... unless the situation of human rights in general and the death penalty in particular, are central parts of the negotiations," he said.

The report said at least 17 women were executed in 2021,

compared to 9 in 2020. Twelve were sentenced for murder and five on drug-related charges.

There has been growing concern over the numbers of women executed on charges of murdering a husband or relative who activists believe may have been abusive.

It noted the case of one woman, Zahra Esmaili, who shot her husband dead in 2017. It said she was executed in February 2021 and may have had a heart attack before being hanged after watching others suffer the same fate before her.

In another case, Maryam Karimi was convicted for the murder of her husband and was hanged in March 2021, with her daughter personally carrying out the execution by kicking away the stool as is allowed under Iranian law.

- 'Tool of repression' -

The report also expressed concern that the execution of ethnic minorities also continued to rise in 2021, accounting for a disproportionately large number of those hanged.

Prisoners from the Baluch minority accounted for 21 percent of all executions in 2021, although they only represent 2-6 percent of Iran's population, it said.

Most prisoners executed for security-related charges belonged to the ethnic Arab, Baluch and Kurdish minorities, it added.

"We are alarmed at the disproportionate number of ethnic minority executions as evidenced in this report," said ECPM Director Raphael Chenuil-Hazan.

In one welcome development, the report said that there were no public executions in Iran in 2021 for the first time in a decade but expressed concern they could start again.

"A society routinely exposed to such organised violence has accepted the death penalty as a legal solution, and the death penalty has consequently become a tool of repression in the government's hands," the Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulouf, whose films on the impact of the death penalty in Iran have won international prizes, wrote in a preface to the report.





April 28, 2022

## ECHR ruling on jailed philanthropist Kavala no longer applies, says Erdoğan

**T**urkish President Tayyip Erdoğan on Thursday said that a ruling by Europe's top court for the release of businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala was no longer applicable after he was sentenced to life in prison this week on charges of attempting to overthrow the government.

In December 2019, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Kavala's detention took place in the absence of sufficient evidence that he had committed an offense. The court urged the Turkish government put an end to the applicant's detention and to secure his immediate release.

"The ECHR has no job here anymore... because he was convicted," T24 news site cited Erdoğan as telling reporters at an Ankara airport before leaving on a trip to Saudi Arabia.

"The ECHR will look at it but say he was convicted and take this issue off the table," Erdoğan added. "Everyone, domestic and international alike, must respect the decision the Turkish judiciary has reached."

An Istanbul court on Monday convicted Kavala to life in prison without parole on Monday for seeking to overthrow



the Turkish government by financing the Gezi Park protests of 2013. It also sentenced seven other defendants to 18 years in prison each for aiding and abetting the attempt.

On Wednesday, Erdoğan said the Turkish court's ruling to sentence Kavala for life was a lesson in the law and justice for those with similar intentions.

"This man was the behind-the-scenes coordinator of the Gezi events, and our judiciary made its final decision on him," Erdoğan said during an iftar meal in Istanbul on Wednesday, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

"There is law in this country, there is a judiciary in this country, and this judiciary has made and will make this decision in line with what it believes and knows, so that the right will prevail," Erdoğan said. He accused Kavala of being Turkey's version of Hungarian American busi-

nessman George Soros.

He said the Turkish judiciary has proven its independence by not giving in to the "black-mail" of groups outside Turkey and those who act as their spokespersons.

Countries including the United States, France and Germany have slammed the court's ruling, calling for Kavala's immediate release.

"The dirty language of some groups, which smells like a threat, will not be able to overshadow the importance of this historical decision for our country and Turkey's future," Erdoğan said.

Kavala had spent four and a half years behind bars without a conviction ahead of Monday's hearing.

In February, the Council of Europe (CoE) started infringement proceedings as part of a disciplinary procedure over his continued imprisonment, meaning Turkey could

be suspended from the organisation. In response, Erdoğan said Ankara would not respect the CoE decisions.

Erdoğan on Wednesday accused Europe of hypocrisy over the Kavala verdict, saying European nations of allowing protests by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on its streets. The PKK is an armed group that has fought for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey for almost four decades. It is recognised as a terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union.

"You don't tell them (PKK supporters) anything, but you express disapproval about our decisions," Duvar cited Erdoğan as saying. "You either comply with it or not. This justice ruling will be implemented. From a Turkey where rights and freedoms were prohibited, we have reached a self-confident Turkey where everyone can freely express their opinion provided it does not praise terrorism and advocate violence."

"The Turkish judiciary is not after image but justice and legality that guarantee the survival of the country," Erdoğan added.

## Turkey's exit from Istanbul Convention 'unlawful,' says Council of State prosecutor

**T**urkey's top administrative court yesterday (April 28) heard 10 cases filed against the country's exit from the Istanbul Convention, a Council of Europe treaty on combating violence against women.

Submitting its opinion, the prosecutor's office stated that withdrawing from the convention by a presidential decision was unlawful as it was ratified by the parliament.

The parliament had not annulled the law regarding the ratification of the convention and had not passed a new law regarding the termination of the convention, thus, the president's action was not lawful as per the principle of parallelism of authority and proceedings, the prosecutor's office concluded.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued a decree on March 21, 2021 for the country's withdrawal from the convention. Women's groups have protested the decision and taken legal action against it.

Ahead of yesterday's hearing, police did not allow some women to enter the Council of State building, battering and using tear gas against them.

The hearing was heard at the Council's 550-person conference hall, with the attendance of hundreds of lawyers and women's rights defenders from all across the country. "A historical case"

Attorney Şenal Sarihan, the chair of the October 29 Women's Association, took the floor first, saying that "this is a historical case."

"I am a long-time lawyer, but



Photo: Tuba Torun/Twitter

no hearing was like this. You should see the women sitting here standing. You should hear them all screaming. You should see them saying, 'This law is of vital importance.'

"In 2021, 280 women were murdered. In two months, 90 women were murdered. What we are protecting is our right to life. If we can't protect our right to life, the other rights have no value.

"Please, give a decision of annulment and don't delay it too long. Because four women are murdered every day."

Oya Aydın Göktaş, an attorney with the association, noted that the case was not about deciding whether the withdrawal from the convention was appropriate but whether it was in accordance with the Constitution.

"Our voice was heard from all over the world. No international convention has reached this many people. We have a slogan explaining this convention: 'The Istanbul Convention is ours, we are not giving up on it.' Because the convention was born in this land."

### **Women were battered by the police**

While Göktaş was speaking,

other lawyers interrupted her, saying that women outside the hall were being battered by the police and they should be let in.

"If we let everyone in, the hall will collapse," the presiding judge responded.

After women lawyers began to get out to "bring our friends here," the presiding judge agreed to let in representatives from 50 associations. All women waiting outside entered the hall, women lawyers said. Why it is against the Constitution

Continuing her statement, Göktaş said the Constitution does not authorize the president to withdraw from an international convention and does not specify how the country should pull out of a convention. "However, there are very fundamental premises. One of the most important of them is article 90 of the Constitution. There are two important points in this article for our case.

"First, the Constitution distinguishes conventions on fundamental rights and freedoms from others. It states that it will not be claimed that they are unconstitutional. And the Istanbul Convention is a very important human rights treaty

"The second point is that an international convention came into force in accordance with the procedures and it has the power of law. How can we say that the executive organ is authorized to annul a law? No one can exercise a power not arising from the Constitution." The president's decree also violated article 13 of the Constitution about the restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms, the lawyer said.

She further noted that Law No. 6284 is still in effect and directly refers to the convention.

"The president's decision also changed Law No. 6284. This is unconstitutional. I sincerely believe that today your delegation will decide that the president's decision alone is a baseless usurpation of authority."

Eriç Sağan, the chair of the Union of Bar Associations of Turkey (TBB), gave a statement as part of the case filed by the Ankara Bar Association.

He also pointed out that the president's decree was against the Constitution.

"If the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention is accepted, it means we can withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights by an overnight decision by the president.

"Even if it is not thought to be null, it should be considered that it is unconstitutional." The prosecutor's opinion sAnnouncing its opinion after the statements of the lawyers, the prosecution stated that the president's decree was not lawful and should be annulled.

The women greeted the decision with applause. The case was adjourned.

The Council of Europe (CoE) "Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence", also known as "Istanbul Convention", is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women be-

cause they are women. It is the obligation of the state to fully address it in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators.

As of March 2019, it has been signed by 45 countries and the

European Union (EU). On March 12, 2012, Turkey became the first country to ratify the Convention, followed by 33 other countries from 2013 to 2019 (Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany,

Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland). The Convention came into force on 1 August 2014.



April 29, 2022

## Erdogan visits Saudi Arabia hoping for new era in ties

**T**urkish President Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Saudi Arabia on Thursday in the first high-level visit in years which he hopes will herald a new era of relations after intense efforts to repair strained ties.

Erdogan met with King Salman in an official ceremony in the al-Salam palace in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, the Turkish presidency said in a statement.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, attended the ceremony before having a one-on-one meeting with Erdogan, Ankara's communication office said on Twitter.

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Erdogan's visit, which his office said was at the invitation of the Saudi king, marks the culmination of a months-long drive to mend ties that included dropping a trial over the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul in 2018.

Analysts and officials say Saudi funding could help Turkey alleviate its economic woes, including soaring inflation, ahead of tough elections

for Erdogan next year. read more

Bilateral relations were badly strained after Khashoggi was killed and dismembered by a Saudi hit squad at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in 2018. At the time, Erdogan accused the "highest levels" of the Saudi government of giving the orders, but Ankara has since markedly softened its tone.

In a policy reversal, Turkey this month halted and transferred its own trial of the Saudi suspects in the killing to Saudi Arabia in a move condemned by human rights groups. read more

Speaking to reporters before departing for Jeddah, Erdogan said Thursday's visit was "the manifestation of our common will" to improve ties and strengthen political, military and cultural relations.

He added it would be mutually beneficial to boost cooperation in areas including health, energy, food security, defence industry, and finance.

"With common efforts, I believe we will carry our ties even

beyond where they were in the past," he said.

In conciliatory remarks that stand in sharp contrast to the war of words in the aftermath of the Khashoggi murder, Erdogan cited the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan as a fitting time for the visit, saying it was the month of "replenishing and strengthening brotherly ties." Ankara hopes the visit will fully end an unofficial Saudi boycott of Turkish imports, imposed in 2020 amid the Khashoggi standoff. The boycott cut Turkish imports to the kingdom by 98%.

A senior Turkish official said there was a "very positive" atmosphere ahead of the trip, adding: "The groundwork is ready so that we can act in unison on trade, investments and regional issues once again."

The visit comes as Turkey grapples with the economic fallout from the war between its Black Sea neighbours Ukraine and Russia.

Turkey's economy has been ailing for years and a lira crisis erupted in late 2021 due to an unorthodox monetary policy

backed by Erdogan that sent inflation soaring above 60%.

Turkey wants Saudi Arabia to join an existing currency swap network currently worth \$28 billion that already involves China, South Korea, Qatar and the UAE. It also eyes investments and contracts similar to those inked with Abu Dhabi, officials say.

Erdogan's trip is part of a wider charm offensive to mend Turkey's strained ties across the region, including with Egypt, Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Diplomats and analysts say the overtures are needed to help relieve economic and political pressures after Turkey's policies in Syria, Libya and elsewhere in recent years left it increasingly isolated.

"Erdogan is pragmatic and a political animal, and his polls may not hold up for a year unless he can boost jobs," said a Western diplomat. "So he is partly seeking deals and funding in Saudi, and a swap line for perhaps \$10-\$20 billion would be something worthwhile."



# Recep Tayyip Erdogan en visite à Riyad pour enterrer l'affaire Khashoggi

En difficulté économique, la Turquie veut renouer les liens avec l'Arabie saoudite, après des années de froid.

En préparation depuis des mois, la visite en Arabie saoudite du président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, jeudi 28 et vendredi 29 avril, vise à recoller les morceaux de la relation abîmée entre les deux puissances sunnites rivales, depuis l'assassinat du journaliste et opposant saoudien Jamal Khashoggi dans les locaux du consulat du royaume, à Istanbul, en 2018.

Invité par le roi Salman, avec lequel il a partagé le repas d'iftar (rupture du jeûne) jeudi soir, M. Erdogan a rencontré dans la foulée le prince héritier Mohammed Ben Salman, avec lequel les relations s'étaient considérablement refroidies ces dernières années en raison de l'affaire Khashoggi.

Critique du prince, notamment dans les colonnes du Washington Post, Jamal Khashoggi a été vu pour la dernière fois alors qu'il pénétrait dans les locaux du consulat de son pays à Istanbul, le 2 octobre 2018, pour y effectuer une démarche administrative. Il n'en est jamais ressorti et son corps n'a jamais été retrouvé.

Selon plusieurs services secrets étrangers, dont les services turcs, qui apparemment avaient un système d'écoute au consulat saoudien, il a été tué puis démembré dans l'enceinte du consulat par une équipe de quinze personnes venues tout spécialement du royaume à cet effet.

A l'époque, la presse turque



Le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le roi saoudien Salman, à Djedda, en Arabie saoudite, le 28 avril 2022. SPA / AFP

avait multiplié les révélations sordides, depuis la description de la scie à os ayant servi à démembrer le corps du journaliste jusqu'à sa possible dissolution à l'acide dans la baignoire du consul. M. Erdogan avait fait de cet « assassinat politique » son cheval de bataille, répétant à l'envi que l'ordre de tuer le journaliste était venu « des plus hautes sphères du gouvernement saoudien ».

## Transfert du dossier Khashoggi à la justice saoudienne

Ces révélations avaient plongé la monarchie saoudienne dans l'une des pires crises diplomatiques de son histoire, le prince héritier Ben Salman étant présenté comme le principal commanditaire du meurtre, à Ankara comme à Washington.

Quatre ans plus tard, la Turquie brûle d'enterrer la hache

de guerre. S'adressant aux médias avant son départ pour la ville côtière de Djedda, jeudi soir, le président Erdogan a eu des mots on ne peut plus conciliants envers le royaume, citant la fin du mois sacré de ramadan comme le moment le plus approprié pour sa visite. Celle-ci est censée « reconstituer et renforcer les liens fraternels ». « Grâce à nos efforts communs, je crois que nous porterons nos relations au-delà de ce qu'elles étaient par le passé », a-t-il déclaré.

Son séjour en Arabie saoudite, le premier depuis cinq ans, marque l'aboutissement d'un travail diplomatique de plusieurs mois. Annoncée à plusieurs reprises par la partie turque, en janvier, puis en février, la visite avait dû être repoussée, officiellement pour des raisons de calendrier, en réalité pour répondre aux requêtes du royaume.

Riyad a notamment exigé de la justice turque l'abandon des poursuites judiciaires et des mandats d'arrêts émis contre vingt-six de ses sujets, jugés par contumace en Turquie depuis 2020 pour leur participation présumée au meurtre.

Le 31 mars, le procureur du tribunal d'Istanbul, devant lequel se tenait le procès des vingt-six, a demandé la clôture du dossier et son transfert à la justice saoudienne, expliquant que les décisions de la Cour ne pouvaient être exécutées car les accusés étaient « des ressortissants étrangers ».

## Le « boycott non officiel » des produits turcs

L'abandon des poursuites avait été préalablement réclamé via une lettre écrite par un procureur saoudien et transmise à Ankara le 13 mars. La décision de clore l'affaire a été condamnée par les défenseurs des droits de l'homme et par la fiancée de Jamal Khashoggi, Hatice Cengiz, qui a fait appel.

Grâce à ce revirement à 180 degrés, Ankara compte tourner la page. Avant tout, il est urgent d'en finir avec l'embargo imposé par le royaume sur les produits turcs. Les exportations vers l'Arabie saoudite, un marché clé pour Ankara, ont brusquement chuté fin 2020, à cause d'un « boycott non officiel » selon l'expression employée par les exportateurs turcs.

La chute a été drastique. Les exportations se sont élevées à



un peu plus de 190 millions de dollars (180 millions d'euros) en 2021, contre environ 3 milliards d'euros en 2019. L'embargo n'a pas épargné les séries télévisées turques à l'eau de rose, jadis prisées des Saoudiens, qui venaient nombreux en touristes à Istanbul pour voir les lieux des tournages, et ne viennent plus beaucoup désormais.

La visite du président turc confirme la recomposition géopolitique en cours au Proche-Orient depuis la levée de l'embargo infligé au Qatar par ses voisins du Golfe, début 2021. La logique des blocs qui caractérisait la région depuis les « printemps arabes » de 2011, avec d'un côté l'axe saoudo-émirati, fer de lance de la contre-révolution, et, de

l'autre, l'axe turco-qatari, sponsor des Frères musulmans, n'a plus lieu d'être.

### Diplomatie du mégaphone

Il s'agit d'une étape supplémentaire dans la vaste offensive de charme visant à réparer les liens distendus avec les pays de la région, Emirats arabes unis, Israël, Egypte, Arménie, Grèce. A ce jour, la Turquie n'a toujours pas d'ambassadeur en Egypte, ni en Israël.

Réalisant les dégâts causés par sa diplomatie du mégaphone, M. Erdogan comprend qu'il doit, pour sa survie politique, recoller les morceaux du vase qu'il a cassé, surtout au moment où l'économie turque est plombée par une grave

crise monétaire, laquelle ne peut que s'aggraver du fait de la guerre en Ukraine.

La monnaie turque a perdu 45 % de sa valeur par rapport au dollar en 2021, à cause de la politique monétaire peu orthodoxe menée par le président turc. Cherchant à sauver la livre, la Banque centrale a épuisé ses réserves en devises, et l'inflation a grimpé à 60 % en rythme annuel, suscitant une vague de mécontentement au sein des classes populaires. Une situation qui fragilise M. Erdogan, à quatorze mois d'une élection présidentielle cruciale, prévue en juin 2023.

Avant de tenter le réchauffement avec Riyad, la Turquie avait renoué le dialogue avec

les Emirats arabes unis. La visite à Ankara, le 24 novembre 2021, du prince héritier d'Abou Dhabi, Mohammed Ben Zayed Al Nahyane, a été fructueuse, marquée par la promesse d'une dizaine de milliards d'euros d'investissements. Deux mois plus tard, les Emirats se sont portés au secours de la livre turque mal en point, par le biais d'un échange de devises (swap) d'une valeur de 4,9 milliards de dollars.

Les mêmes investissements sont attendus de la part de Riyad. Les efforts ont déjà porté leurs fruits. Au premier trimestre 2022, les exportations vers le royaume saoudien ont bondi de 25 %, selon l'association des exportateurs turcs, ce qui confirme la levée du boycott.



April 29, 2022

## Turkey continues to exploit Iraq crises to create safe zone

**T**urkey is reportedly seeking to create a safe zone in northern Iraq, just as it did in Syria, where it succeeded in controlling a strip of land that includes Kurdish areas and villages that were later handed over to its allied Syrian militias to be managed.

Turkish reports said that Ankara is racing against time to impose an area extending to a depth of 60-70 kilometres, across which it will establish "temporary military bases" and military checkpoints, taking advantage of the absence of an official Iraqi response.

Turkey, experts say, knows that the Iraqi political class, whether in Baghdad or the Kurdistan region, is mired in domestic crises in the absence of political settlements. This means that neither Baghdad nor Erbil



Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar meets with military personnel at a command centre, in Ankara, April 18, 2022. (Reuters)

is currently able to push back against the Turkish military presence, not even politically, especially since Ankara succeeded in wooing Masoud Barzani, the strong man in the Kurdish region.

The Turkish Operation Claw-Lock in northern Iraq was

launched two days after a rare visit by the prime minister of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, Masrour Barzani, suggesting that he had been briefed on Ankara's plans. In Ankara, Barzani had reportedly met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the head of Turkish intelligence Hakan Fidan.

Barzani said after his talks with Erdoğan that he welcomes "the expansion of cooperation to enhance security and stability" in northern Iraq.

Turkish websites quoted military and political officials as saying that the "single goal" set by Ankara for its ongoing military Operation Claw-Lock is to "clear the terror corridor in Matina, Al-Zab, Avashin and Bassian and establish a safe zone."

Experts believe that the security aspect is not the only goal of Turkey's operation and that there is a Turkish plan to seize gas production in the Kurdistan region in coordination with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, in a way that makes Turkey the only gateway for exports and at prices that take into account the interests of Ankara. A di-

rect military presence would secure the success of this plan and prevent any attempt to counter it from either the Kurdish side or the Iraqi government.

Over the last few years, the Kurdistan government has increased its sales of oil independently of Baghdad and hopes to substantially increase gas production and exports as it seeks independence from Baghdad economically and perhaps politically.

European gas companies consider the Kurdistan region a potential source to supply gas to Europe via Turkey. Such supplies could help the continent reduce its heavy dependence on Russian gas.

Kurdish politician Muhammad Amin Panjwani said that Turkey is using the war on the Kurdistan Workers' Party

(PKK) as a pretext to control oil wells and natural gas supplies in southern Kurdistan.

He added that "Turkey is preparing to invade the Iraqi cities of Mosul and Kirkuk" in 2023 and that the goal behind this invasion would be to impose a fait accompli on Iraq and then later control the production of oil and gas in the north of the country.

Panjwani considered the recent Turkish military operation as preparation for a comprehensive operation to control Iraqi territory in the coming year.

"I think Operation Claw-Lock is a preparation for the potential comprehensive operation announced by Erdogan, Defence Minister Hulusi Akar and the head of intelligence. That's why they are planning to launch a large-scale attack to

invade Kurdistan from Mosul to Kirkuk," he said.

Turkey last week summoned Baghdad's top envoy to defend its decision to launch the military campaign against Kurdish militants in northern Iraq.

Iraq's chargé d'affaires was called in a day after officials in Baghdad denied President Erdoğan's claim that they backed the offensive.

Turkey launched its third campaign in northern Iraq since 2020 on Sunday, using Special Forces and combat drones to attack PKK fighters.

Erdoğan said on April 20 that Turkey's push into the mountains of northern Iraq was being conducted in "close cooperation with the central Iraqi government and the regional administration in northern Iraq."

The Iraqi foreign ministry said Erdoğan's claim was "not true."

The ministry for Iraqi peshmerga fighters in the country's autonomous Kurdish region also denied any cooperation or participation in the Turkish offensive.

Turkey's foreign ministry issued a softly-worded statement saying it called in Baghdad's envoy to convey its displeasure with the "unfounded allegations" made in the wake of Erdogan's statement in Iraq.

"As long as the Iraqi authorities do not take concrete and effective steps (against the rebels) and the threat posed by them from Iraq continues, our country will take the necessary measures on the basis of its right of self-defence," Turkish ministry said.