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IRAQ: AN UNSETTLED POST-ELECTION PERIOD

The general elections have left the Iraqi political caste in a troubled and mutually suspicious state, since the neck and neck result secured by Iyad Allawi, the "secular" nationalist leader and Nuri al-Maliki, the Shi'ite out-going Prime Minister, do not readily enable the formation of a new government or a new Presidential Council, without concessions or haggling on one side or the other. Indeed, Allawi's list, al-Iraqiyyah, secured 25.87%, i.e. 91 seats, as

against 25.76% for Maliki, or 89 seats. Moreover the list by led by Jaafari, another Shi'ite former Prime Minister, also won nearly 19%. Moreover it brings together Shi'ite public figures who have little sympathy for al-Maliki, like the supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, (SCIR).

Between these politico-religious Arab blocks, the Kurds, hitherto united, could serve both as a moderating third or as "King Makers" as they have often been

called. However it, the Kurdistan Alliance, which brings together the two principal Kurdish parties, the KDP and that PUK as well as other small left wing parties and both Moslems and Christians, now has to compromise with the votes of an opposition party, Goran, which won eight seats in the Iraqi Parliament (43 going to the Alliance of which 30 for the KDP and 13 for the PUK, and 6 for other small Kurdish parties). The Kurds must first to agree among themselves whether or not to support the re-election of

Jalal Talabani to the Iraqi Presidency. However the Goran movement itself is born of a disagreement between senior leaders of the PUK and the present leadership of Jalal Talabani's party.

However, as can be seen, these new differences within the pro-Kurdish movement, while they could seriously harm it faced with a strong and united Iraqi government, in no way cancel their weight in Baghdad, seeing how far apart are the stands adopted by Allawi's list and that of Maliki's. Moreover the rest of the Shiites, like those of the SCIR or As-Sadr's faithful followers, have no love for Maliki, who they accuse of wanting to monopolise power for personal ends, while having no even less sympathy for the Sunni nationalists, many of whom are former members of the Baath Party.

The Kurds, who also had moments of tension and disagreement with Maliki's government, cannot expect to do any better with the nationalist Arab bloc inside Iyad Allawi's party. They have thus let it be known, by a number of statements, that Nuri al-Maliki could enjoy their support in the formation of a government, but not without solid concessions and concrete measures to achieve the main demands of the Kurdish Alliance. Nevertheless, at the beginning of April they were being courted both by the Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs, each hoping to bring them to their side. Thus Allawi twice went to the Kurdistan Region, while the Shi'ite Vice-President Adel Abdul-Mahdi, also visited Irbil and al-Maliki had meetings in Baghdad with Jalal Talabani.

However the Kurds, who had had their fingers burnt by the previous government's decep-

tions, this time are demanding concrete assurances and not vague promises, as was stressed by the present Kurdish Prime Minister Barham Salih: "We have to be very serious and careful regarding the commitments that we succeed in securing from any future government, whatever it may be. Iraq can not allow itself four more years of political stagnation."

In the ranks of Massud Barzani's KDP the same tune can be heard thus Fadhil Mirani, Secretary of the KDP Political Committee said: "During previous alliances, the Kurds committed the mistake of making agreements without signing any documents" and confirmed "This time we will not make the same mistake".

A major demand of the Kurds is a referendum, provided for in article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution which could decide whether or not Kirkuk returns to the Kurdish Region. However the results of this election, in which Kurdish votes were divided between three making the Kurdistan Alliance's score equal to that of Allawi's party, makes more difficult the application of Article 140 since the Sunni Arabs are fiercely opposed to it.

The Kurds also demand that the Peshmegas, the Kurdish defence Army, should be more generously financed by Baghdad as a component of the Iraqi National Army, and be paid and equipped on an equal footing with other troops.

Finally there are disagreements over the contracts made between the Kurdish government and foreign oil companies over the exploitation and development Kurdistan's oil resources, which have not helped relations between Baghdad and Irbil. The Central Government is demand-

ing full control of all these agreements whereas the Kurdish government, while ready to concede the total revenue obtained from these hydrocarbon contracts to the Federal Government against payment of 17% of the Iraqi budget, does not intend to allow the Region's fuel policy to be controlled by the Arabs.

In any case it appears increasingly probable that whatever coalition eventually takes office in Iraq, the Kurds will be part of it and indeed a mixed government composed of both Sunni and Shi'ite Arabs is envisaged even though the durability and viability of such a team at the head of Iraq are highly questionable. Thus Massud Barzani declared, in a television interview on 4 April, that in his view the four main victors of these elections should be represented in the government because of the danger that marginalised movements might indulge in undermining and blocking tactics.

Another issue that is disturbing Iraqi politics is the future of the Iraqi Presidency. The outgoing President, Jalal Talibani, is supported by the Kurdistan Alliance. However there are doubts about the stand of the Goran party, which does not intend to support him without some concessions on differences regarding internal Kurdish politics. Thus one of its representatives Shoreshe Haji, hastened to declare that his party would only support Talabani's Presidency "in principle" on condition that the Alliance and especially the PUK, which politically controls the Province of Suleimaniyah, ceases its "persecutions" of the opposition.

Unlike the 2005 elections, this time the Iraqi President does not have the support of all the country's political blocks. At that

time, differences between Shi'ites and Sunnis had led the Iraqi Arabs to prefer a "neutral" Kurdish President. The first attack came from within the Presidential Council itself in the person of the present Sunni Vice President, Tariq Hashemi, who had already drawn attention to himself by including people suspected of being Baathists on his list. This accusation is far from being extinguished since the Sunni Arab has declared that "Iraqi is an Arab country and it is legitimate that an Arab be the next

President". Tariq Hashemi explained that this would have considerable importance in relations between Iraq and the other countries of the Arab League. The statement immediately was attacked by Massud Barzani who condemned these remarks as aiming at "sectarian conflict". This clumsy remark, was also the subject of sarcastic remarks from the Al-Arabiyyah Iraqi television service's Director-General, Abdul Rahman al-Rashid, who said outright that the Vice President's remark was "detestable" and

"racist", moreover stressing that no other country could dictate Iraq its choices in matters of government. Tariq al-Hashimi later tried to justify himself by stating that he only wanted to say that an Arab also had the right to be present.

In any case the two main Shi'ite coalitions have both expressed their support for Jalal Talabani's candidature to the Iraqi Presidency, which seems to provide a substantial majority for his re-election for a new term of office.

IRAN:

"THE COUNTRY IS A PRISON FOR JOURNALISTS"

There is no let-up in Iran in the sentencing and execution of prisoners, particularly in the Kurdish community, and this with complete disregard to age or sex. Thus on 2 April the mother of a family and her two children, aged respectively 19 and 20, was sentenced to death by the Mahabad Court that considered the family "endangered the security of Iran".

According to Amnesty International, which is expecting a wave of executions, these sentences and the way they are applied, are completely disproportionate to the charges against the accused, are, in fact, signals being sent to the population of Kurdistan and its activists that the Iranian regime will show zero tolerance to any emancipation movements by the Kurds. This systematic persecution is confirmed by Human Rights Watch, which recently published a report in which it also notes that very heavy repression is being exerted against all the minorities in Iran and practically the Kurds, to which is added many forms of discrimination, both religious and cultural.

Thus only in the winter of 2009,

the NGOs recorded nearly 181 cases of clear violations of Human Rights in the province of Kurdistan: threats, arrests, long-term detentions, cases of torture and suspicious deaths of detainees, irregular trials and heavy sentences going as far as capital punishment. Thus on 6 January last, Fasih Yasamani, a Kurdish political prisoner, was executed on the basis of a death sentence passed during a trial which only lasted a few minutes. In addition, three other detainees died in the course of their imprisonment, before they were even brought to trial.

Surveillance and repression are also, evidently, carried out in the universities — in this case with full co-operation between the university and legal authorities. Still during last winter, 110 Kurdish students were summoned by disciplinary commissions, 22 of them being sent down, either temporarily or permanently, for "political offences". Finally 37 of these students were charged and detained by the security forces.

In all, 143 people were detained, some of whom have been tried, and 29 sentences have been

passed going from 22 months to 6 years imprisonment.

Finally 17 Kurdish political prisoners who have been condemned are still in Death Row awaiting execution. The severity of these sentences is not limited to cases of political rebellion or the guerrilla action. They also cover journalists and peaceful human rights or feminist activists. According to the Kurdish paper Rudaw, practicing journalism in Iranian Kurdistan be compared to "walking on a minefield". Many of those cooperating with the press are arrested publication of papers are banned.

According to *Reporters sans Frontières'* classification Iran is now one of the worst countries for freedom of the press and safety of journalists, having fallen from 166th place to 172nd this year, since Ahmaddinjad's re-election to the Presidency, making the whole country "a prison for journalists".

According to Rudaw, over 350 journalists have been dismissed from their editorial jobs, more than 100 arrested and 25 daily and weekly publications banned. About 60 press officials have been interrogated and subjected to

investigation. The bulk of Kurdish journalists have fled abroad. Ten Kurdish journalists still in Iran are in detention including Adnan Hassanpour, Hiwa Butimar, Muhammad Sadiq

Kabudwand, Mukhtar Zarhi, Abbas Jalilian, Ali Muhammad Islampour. At the moment there is no not a single independent Kurdish newspaper or magazine that has not been banned: Ashti,

Rojhelat, Hawar, Peyamî Kurdistan, Peyam Mardam, Rasan, Jiwar, Nadai Jamiha, Nadai Danishdjo, Khatun, Zilan and yet others have ceased officially to appear.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S REPORT ON IRAQI KURDISTAN

The UK office of Amnesty International published a report this month on violence inflicted on the civilian population in Iraq, entitled "*Civilians under fire*". It dealt primarily with Iraq but with sections on the Kurdistan Region, as a separate study.

In a macabre survey of the violence suffered by the Iraqi civilian population as a whole, it thus specified that the "*semi-autonomous region*" of Kurdistan, that is to say the provinces of Duhok Irbil and Suleimaniyah, has been much less hit by violence than the rest of the country". This is because "*the authorities have taken positive measures to fight violence against women, even if this struggle needs to be pursued by stronger measures*". On the other hand, as in the rest of Iraq, the two parties in power are accused of aggression against journalists and opposition activists.

Violence against women in Kurdistan is, in fact, carried out by families who also attack the associations and all those who defend the women. Amnesty reports evidence given by a Kurdish woman lawyer reports death threats she received on her mobile telephone, in 2008 from the parents of one of her clients, who had been ill treated by her husband during divorce proceedings. A hostel in Suleimaniyah, where women can find shelter, was attacked on 11 May 2008 by armed men, suspected of being the parents of a fugitive sheltered there, who was seriously injured by shots in an adjoining building. The Kurdish authorities

arrested several members of this family, but were obliged to release them in the absence of sufficient proof — to date none of the authors of the attack had been identified.

The report also raises in the case of Aziz Kurdistan a Kurdish woman from the village of Kolkarash near Irbil, who disappeared in May 2008. In February of that year, she had fled with a young man with whom she was in love. These "*consenting kidnappings*" are an old tradition in Kurdistan, that allows young people to get married against the wishes of their families, provided they're not caught in the meantime. On the other hand, this practice is punishable by imprisonment under Kurdish law. In such a case, the culprits serve a prison sentence, which in fact is a means whereby the Kurdish authorities protect them from the vengeance of their families, giving them time for calm down. At the end of February, the young woman had been able to return home after her parents had promised the authorities to ensure her safety. However in May 2008, Kurdistan Aziz disappeared. The young girl's father declared to the local police that his nephew had phoned him admitting the murder. To this day it would appear that the murderer is still free. However this case shows limitations on authorities' margin of manoeuvre in family affairs.

Since 2002, the Kurdistan regional government has withdrawn

the clause "*honourable motive*" in cases of honour crimes, which existed in Iraqi law from Baathist times. Today women threatened can seek refuge in welfare centres organised by NGOs or the state -- which is not the case in the rest of Iraq, where only NGOs provide this facility. Even though this does not totally protect them from family reprisals.

In the majority of cases, the hostels staff, police officers, and community leaders, are involved in negotiations with the families, who must in commit themselves in writing not to use violence against the women or girls who accept a return to their families. However Amnesty International points out that these agreements are can be broken and women are still being killed or wounded.

The amendments to articles 128, removing the "*honourable motives*" from honour crimes perpetrated against women does not yet cover homosexuals. Thus, on 24 October 2005, the Kurdistan appeal Court confirmed the sentence of one year's imprisonment on the man from Koya who had confessed to the murder of his brother, a homosexual. The court had considered that the wish to "*put an end to the shame that the victim brought on his family by deprived conduct and engaging in prostitution*" could be considered an "*honourable motive*" for the murder.

Reporters sans Frontières has

relayed a number of complaints by journalists in Kurdistan, especially during the electoral period, alleging pressures threats and attacks. Akar Fars and Rizgar Muhsin, both journalists on Yekgirti TV (an Islamic opposition party channel) while campaigning for the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, were both beaten by armed men who wanted to prevent them filming a polling station in Irbil on 7 March the day of the elections.

Other Kurdish journalists were threatened or attacked for having written articles criticising the two parties in power — the KDP and the PUK.

Sabah 'Ali Qaraman, aged 28 years, thus escaped an attempt at kidnapping on 19 January last at Kifri (Suleimaniyah). It seems that his criticisms of the regional officials had displeased them, in any case the victim states that he had recognised one of the three men in a jeep parked in front of his house. This was a former official of the PUK, against whom he had complained officially. To date the latter has not been bothered by the police.

Nabaz Goran, 32 years a journalist on the magazine Jihan, was attacked near his office on 29 October 2009 by 3 men in the Iskan district of Irbil. The men, who he accused of being linked to the KDP, after asking him his name, hit him on the head with a metal object.

A more serious case, since it is a matter of murder, took place in Kirkuk. Souran Mama Hama, 23 years old, who was working for the magazine Levin, was shot outside his parents home on 21 July 2008, by men in a car dressed in civilian clothes. Sauron had frequently criticised the corruption and nepotism of the KDP and the PUK and had

received death threats several days before his assassination.

Several Goran party activists have complained of attacks some of which involved death. In December 2009, five of this party's activists were shot and killed by "persons unknown". Thus Raouf Qadir Zaryani was shot down before his home on 25 December 2009 in Halabja Taze, Suleimaniyah province, by persons unknown travelling in a vehicle. . Sarda Qadir, a businessman and Goran party candidate, for 2010, was wounded in his home at Iskan, on 4 December 2009 by a shot fired through the window. He pointed out to Amnesty's reporters that he had never received any threats but that some weeks prior to the attack he had been followed and in his view this attack was politically motivated.

Dara Tewfik, an officer, reported to amnesty that he had been attacked and struck with an iron triangle in front of his home, on 7 October 2009. He had been unable to see his attackers, but recognised that one of them spoke with a local accent. He had never received any threats, but thinks that the attack was due to his breaking win the PUK and his support of Goran.

The election campaign has accentuated pressures against the opposition and, especially, by the PUK against its dissenting members who had gone over to Goran, as can be seen above, and to some extent against the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, whose offices were attacked by armed "persons unknown" in Suleimaniyah on 14 February, while on the 18th several of its members were arrested in Duhok.

The Kurdistan Region has been spared the acts of violence

against religious and ethnic minorities current elsewhere.

The section on territorial conflicts begins by recalling the origins of the problem, namely the expulsion by the Iraqi authorities of Kurds from Kirkuk together with members of other minorities, so as to replace them by Arab settlers brought from the centre and south of Iraq. The report also recalls that during the Anfal campaign in at the end of the 80s, tens of thousands of Kurdish civilians were the victims of a "disappearances", persecutions, and bombardment by chemical weapons. One of the consequences of this was a very great number of refugees and displaced persons, principally Kurds, who fled or were expelled from Kirkuk and other territories claimed by the KRG all through the 1990s.

The bulk of these refugees have not yet been able to return to their original homes.

The Iraqi Constitution, approved by referendum in 2005, makes provision for a return of the Arab settlers to their original region with suitable compensation, and a referendum on all the disputed regions, to enable them to choose whether or not to be attached to the Kurdistan region.

Amnesty highlights this and the uncertain and unstable political situation as a source of violence and tension there and points out, as does Human Rghts Watch, that the non-Kurdish and non-Arab minorities are caught, sandwiched in a trial of strength between Baghdad and Irbil. This also results in internal divisions within these communities, with camps and parties having opposed preferences regarding their "protectors". Thus the Kurdish authorities have set up a system of self-defence for these minorities by

forming village militia, principally Christian, but also Yezidi and Shabak, so as to protect them against attacks by Islamists or Arab Nationalists. Some public figures among these minorities, who are opposed to the KRG, accuse the Kurds of seizing the disputed territories by means of these local militia and the threats and ill-treatment dealt out by the

Peshmergas, especially during the election period. Thus Murad Kashti al-Asi, a Yezidi from the Sinjar, whose party is opposed to the pro-Kurdish one, has been frequently detained, threatened and ill-treated. The most recent incarceration was in November 2008, which seemingly coincides with the period of the provincial elections.

The Iraqi authorities have not been idle either — in October 2008 the Kurds in Qaratepe were subjected to a raid and threats from the Security Forces.

Finally the report mentions the fact that the Kurdish Constitution, passed in 2009, now describes the claimed territories as forming part of Kurdistan.

TURKEY: THE FILM "MIN DÎT" HAS BEEN RELEASED

As the film "MIN DÎT" has just been released in Turkey, its Kurdish film director Miraz Bezar was interviewed by the newspaper Zaman. He explained that he had wanted, through this film, to tackle the Kurdish question in Turkey "without hesitations nor censorship" even at the risk of hampering his career as a film maker with a political subject that could offend non-Kurdish public opinion in Turkey:

"If I was solely concerned by business or making a career, like some of my colleagues, I would have tried to find myself a place in the market by shooting other films. But there are certain problems that strike me, from a film director's point of view. This film was made possible by an approach to the Kurdish question without hesitations or censorship. That is why this film had to be in Kurdish. Because the language people speak where it was filmed is Kurdish. Today the film can be shown with subtitles, like an American film. If a film in the Kurdish language can take part in a national film competition in Antalya, this means that we were right. This may also open the way for young film directors from Diyarbekir who have a future in this sector. Now Kurdish families from Iran want their children to become film directors and not doctors or engineers, because the film industry is a great opportunity for Kurds to express themselves abroad. In Turkey I went to school until I

was nine years old. When I left for Germany, my childhood was completely turned upside down. I tried to learn Kurdish because it had been forbidden in Turkey. Living the life of an immigrant after the 70s and during the period of the coup d'état in Turkey was difficult but if you came from a Kurdish family that was politically committed you were close to the problems that the whole of Turkey was facing. For example how many years have gone by before people even started to talk about the JITEM? For me, the JITEM was a problem that dated back 1995 and 1996. In fact, they should have started to be concerned about this problem after the accident at Susurluk but that never happened. If I had remained in Germany to make this film it would have had a completely external point of view. Thus I had to leave and deal with something other than what we all know or have learnt on paper"

Questioned about the title of his film, "I saw" in Kurdish, the director answered that the view point was first of all his own, "the painful view point of a Kurd", and also that of children, with a simple view of what they are experiencing, while at the same time trying to move a public a priori reticent or hostile.

"Generations come and go but this question has not been resolved and has been passed on as a heritage. The film's main message is to ask what we are

leaving to future generations. I invested five years in this film, yet and I am astounded that some people say that I have done this just for propaganda. What person, with any sort of conscience, can accept the fact that, today, three thousand children are in prison? Indeed, politicians in Turkey do not, unfortunately, have the same comments to make about these children as they do about Palestinian children who throw stones. "Those who throw stones today will be found with arms in their hands tomorrow", they say. Consequently they must not be allowed to throw stones. You will not change their world by putting them in prison. This is really rather like saying "I will hit you on the head until you learn your lessons". What you should really do is to open your arms to them and integrate them. Otherwise these children will feel that they are all alone. 90% of the children in Diyarbekir have such experiences. We are thus creating a mass of people who do not know how to express themselves except by violence.

I think that if we tell this story through the eyes of children, people living in Western Turkey and who know nothing about these incidents could more easily feel some empathy. We live together in this country. Nevertheless, people have been paid with our taxes to kill other people in our name.

And they were not even obliged to account for their actions. Frankly, I think that everyone in Turkey is as a victim, and not just the Kurds. The multicultural way of living that I experienced in Kreuzberg, in Berlin, could also be experienced in this country, but this is refused to people. Certain ideologies, dogmas, fears, have been made up. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on this war instead of being used for building schools, for science or the development of the country. We must ask ourselves firstly why this war was waged. Those who take certain decisions in our name, those who say that we are all brothers and sisters, adopt policies lacking any brotherhood, Those who have carried them out, must be questioned today. I have drawn the JITEM and those unsolved murders in my film in order that these wounds be healed and that people should be able to say aloud what they had been victims of, so as finally to be cured of their trau-

ma. I hope that one day we should be able to talk about traumas caused in this way by soldiers. Really we must answer these questions with our consciousness".

In the film's story, the mother of two children communicates with them about the tragedy which is befalling them by means of a fairy story.

Miraz Bezar reveals that the general tone of his film was inspired by Grimm's fairy, Hansel and Gretel, in which "children are left alone in the woods or in our vast world", as well as by a Kurdish story in which the villagers do not kill a wolf that has caused havoc to their herds but instead tie a bell round his neck. "As a film director, I wanted to present a means of restraining violence and prevented it being perpetuated. We see that violence only nourishes more violence. This, indeed, also applies to those who throw stones. This means that it is possible to develop an alter-

native method for responding to violence. Regarding the characters in the film, critics have said that the Kurds are all entirely nice and Turks entirely nasty. Turkey is experiencing a first experiment. When someone speaks Turkish in a Kurdish language film that this does not mean that that he is Turkish. I'm talking to you in Turkish, although I am a Kurd. We see things the way we want to see them."

A pall was cast over the film's release in Turkey, however, by the death in the same month of Evrim Alatas, the joint scriptwriter, succumbed to a cancer of the lungs. A Kurd and an Alevi, Evrim Alatas was also a journalist. She began in 1994 on the daily paper Yeni Politika. She subsequently worked for several dailies: Evrensel, Birgun, Radikal Iki, a supplement to the daily Radikal, as well as Demokrasi and Ozgur Bakis, both as a reporter and an editorial writer. She was also the author of many short stories.

GREAT BRITAIN: POEMS BY A KURDISH POETESS INCLUDED IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Four poems by the Kurdish poetess Choman Hardy have been selected by two British examination bodies for the curriculum of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), an exam that marks the successful conclusion of secondary education in Great Britain for young people at between 15 and 16 years of age. Pupils in the United Kingdom and Wales will now have to study "At the border 1979", which is in the curriculum of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) while the Edexcel will make its pupils study in "Invasion", "My Country's Penelopes" and "My Mother's Cooking".

Thus Choman Hardy's texts have now taken place in English literature alongside those of classical English writers and poets such as William Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, W.H. Auden, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Dylan Thomas, Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Ted Hughes, D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, as well as contemporary writers like Carol Ann Duffy, Gillian Clarke, Simon Armitage and Seamus Heaney (1995 Nobel literature prize).

Choman Hardy, poetess, translator and painter, was born in 1974 in Suleimaniyah, in Iraqi Kurdistan. A year later her family had to flee to Iran, after the collapse of the Kurdish revolt,

before returning to their country in 1979, following a general amnesty. In 1988, however, she and her family had to flee again from the Anfal campaign and emigrated to the United Kingdom in 1993. Choman Hardy first studied psychology and philosophy at Oxford and at University College London. She took a Ph.D. at Kent University, taking "The consequences of forced immigration on Kurdish women of Iraq and Iran" as is the subject of her thesis.

Writing in both Kurdish and English, Choman Hardy has published three collections of poems in her mother tongue and one collection in English, *Life for us*, that came out in 2004. She

was, for a time, chairman of the Association of Writers in Exile and has organised several writers' workshops for the British Council, as well as in Belgium, the Czech Republic and India. She has also exhibited her paintings, in particular in June 2007 at the Hawth Art Centre of in Sussex. She is at present carrying out postdoctoral research at Uppsala University in Sweden, in the Department Studying the Shoah Genocide and is due to bring out a work entitled "*Gendered experiences of genocide: Anfal survivors in Iraqi Kurdistan*".

Questioned by the Kurdish Media site, Choman Hardy said she was very proud to be placed among the great poets and authors of English tradition: "*I have only been writing in English for the last 10 years and it is a great honour to be thus introduced into the English tradition. Moreover, since my poems deal with the Kurdish problem, I hope that students will thus tackle aspects of Kurdish history through reading them. "At the border", for example, speaks of the moment when, in 1979 at the age of five years, I crossed the Iranian border to return to Iraqi Kurdistan. It was then that I realised how much all I had been told about Iraqi Kurdistan was wrong. The poem "My country's Penelope's" talks about the widows of the Anfal campaign who have been waiting for the return of their disappeared husbands ever since the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003.*"

At the border, 1979

By Choman Hardy

"It is your last check-in point in this country!"

We grabbed a drink-
soon everything would taste different.

The land under our feet continued
divided by a thick iron chain.

My sister put her leg across it.

"Look over here," she said to us,
"my right leg is in this country
and my left leg in the other".

The border guards told her off.

My mother informed me: We are going home.

She said that the roads are much cleaner
the landscape is more beautiful
and people are much kinder.

Dozens of families waited in the rain.

"I can inhale home," somebody said.

Now our mothers were crying.

I was five years old standing by the check-in point
comparing both sides of the border.

The autumn soil continued on the other side
with the same colour, the same texture.

It rained on both sides of the chain.

We waited while our papers were checked,
our faces thoroughly inspected.

Then the chain was removed to let us through.

A man bent down and kissed his muddy homeland.

The same chain of mountains encompassed all of us.



Le Kurdistan d'Irak offre la sécurité aux chrétiens

Un grand nombre de chrétiens irakiens se sont réfugiés dans la région autonome du Kurdistan. Notre envoyée spéciale raconte leurs espoirs et leurs incertitudes



Lors d'une messe dans le quartier chrétien d'Ain Kawa, à Erbil dans le Kurdistan irakien.

Zone sécurisée par les combattants kurdes, cette région du nord de l'Irak a accueilli des dizaines de milliers de chrétiens depuis 2003

ERBIL, DOHOUK, SOULEIMANIYA
De notre envoyée spéciale

« **K**urdistan is good for Christians. »

Dans son anglais approximatif, ce chauffeur de taxi de Kirkouk, qui a accroché un chapelet à son rétroviseur, résume ce que disent la plupart des chrétiens du nord de l'Irak. Alors que le Kurdistan irakien (1) comptait jusqu'en 2003 environ 30 000

chrétiens, ce chiffre aurait triplé en sept ans, si bien qu'aujourd'hui ils seraient près de 100 000 chaldéens (catholiques) et syriens - catholiques à vivre dans l'un des trois gouvernorats du gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan: celui d'Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan

irakien; de Dohouk au nord; de Souleimaniya au sud. Chaque mois, de nouvelles familles ayant fui Bagdad ou Mossoul viennent s'installer ici.

La première raison de cet engouement des chrétiens pour le Kurdistan est la sécurité. Grâce aux dizaines de milliers de *pehmergas* - les militaires kurdes - déployés sur les routes de cette région montagneuse au nord de l'Irak, les véhicules sont inspectés à de nombreux check-points. Erbil et Dohouk (sous contrôle du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, PDK) et Souleimaniya (sous contrôle de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, UPK) semblent aussi sûres que des villes occidentales.

C'est à Ankawa, quartier chrétien à la sortie d'Erbil, que s'est implanté depuis 2008 le séminaire chaldéen - l'ancien Babel College de Bagdad -, dans de vastes locaux en partie financés par Sarkis Aghajan, ancien ministre des finances du gouver-

nement du Kurdistan et chrétien activement engagé dans la cause kurde. « Ici, on peut vivre en paix », confirme le P. Bashar Warda, recteur rédemptoriste du séminaire d'Ankawa.

Les trois grandes villes du Kurdistan d'Irak sont en plein essor économique - comme le prouvent les immeubles et entreprises en construction un peu partout - et offrent des opportunités d'emplois dans l'électronique, les nouvelles technologies ou le secteur bancaire... « C'est la seule région d'Irak qui va bien », lancent ensemble des adolescentes kurdes, scolarisées dans le lycée international de Dohouk. L'établissement a été ouvert en 2004 à l'initiative de Mgr Rabban Al Qas, évêque chaldéen d'Amadiya et administrateur patriarcal d'Erbil, avec l'aide de l'ONG monégasque « Enfance mission ». Cette année, y sont inscrits 184 élèves de 11 à 18 ans, indifféremment kurdes et turkmènes, filles et garçons, mu-

sulmans et chrétiens. «C'est grâce à mes nombreuses relations avec les responsables kurdes que j'ai pu fonder ce lycée», souligne «Matran Rabban» – comme on l'appelle ici –, qui en assume la direction. Dans ce

«C'est la seule région d'Irak qui va bien.»

lycée modèle, les jeunes apprennent cinq langues (kurde, arabe, araméen, anglais et français) et n'ont pas d'enseignement religieux. «Cette école est une réponse à ceux qui veulent séparer les musulmans et les chrétiens», aime dire Mgr Al Qas. Le drapeau kurde flotte au-dessus de l'entrée de l'établissement et la photo de Mustafa Barzani – père de l'actuel président de la région autonome kurde, Massoud Barzani – est affichée dans tous les bureaux.

Pourtant, ce parti pris pro-kurde affiché par certains prêtres et responsables d'Église n'est pas sans poser question. Ne serait-ce que parce que certains n'ont pas oublié les tumultes des années Saddam. Du fait des révoltes kurdes contre la dictature et de la répression, près d'un million de Kurdes ont été tués, notamment durant la

campagne Anfal en 1988 et près de 1 500 villages kurdes musulmans et 400 villages kurdes chrétiens ont été détruits. «De nombreux chrétiens ont alors dû fuir l'insécurité et, peu à peu, des Kurdes musulmans ont occupé



Dans une rue d'Erbil, capitale du Kurdistan irakien. Chaque mois, de nouvelles familles ayant fui Bagdad ou Mossoul viennent s'installer ici.

leurs terres et leurs maisons», rappelle Mgr Louis Sako, archevêque chaldéen de Kirkouk. Du coup, même si le gouvernement kurde a reconstruit des maisons pour les chrétiens, ceux-ci demandent à retrouver leurs biens.

De plus, des rumeurs persistantes attribuent aux Kurdes certains attentats contre les chrétiens de Bagdad, de Mossoul ou de Kirkouk. Et ce, dans le double objectif de se donner un alibi pour s'installer dans la plaine de Ninive (berceau

historique du christianisme irakien) où initialement ils n'étaient pas présents, et obliger ainsi les chrétiens à venir s'installer au Kurdistan pour faire nombre. «Ces rumeurs sont absurdes et irrationnelles!», s'emporte Mohammed Salih Amedi, gouverneur PDK d'Amadiya. «Si les Kurdes musulmans voulaient tuer les chrétiens, ils le feraient au Kurdistan. Pas besoin d'aller à Bagdad pour cela! Les chrétiens sont une force pour le Kurdistan», poursuit le gouverneur en rappelant que, depuis des décennies, la confiance des Kurdes envers les chrétiens est «totale». Et de rappeler que depuis 1992, les chrétiens du Kurdistan ont les mêmes droits que les autres: «Dans aucune autre région du Moyen-Orient, ils n'ont une telle reconnaissance législative.»

Toutefois, les frontières du Kurdistan restent floues, bon nombre de villes et localités sont l'objet d'après revendications entre Kurdes, Arabes et Turkmènes, dans des affrontements d'appropriation de territoires >>>

>>> et de ressources. C'est le cas dans la province de Kirkouk, qui représente 13 % des réserves pétrolières de l'Irak et qui avait été «arabisée» de force par Saddam Hussein. C'est le cas également d'Al-Kosh, gros bourg entre Dohouk et Mossoul qui a accueilli 4 000 familles chrétiennes depuis 2003 mais qui ne dépend pas officiellement du Kurdistan. «Nous nous sentons proches à 100 % des Kurdes car ce sont eux qui nous protègent», explique-t-on à l'évêché d'Al-Kosh, récemment reconstruit par le gouvernement kurde.

De plus, les équilibres de populations dans ces provinces du nord

REPÈRES

Les chrétiens d'Irak

► À la fin des années 1980, l'Irak comptait 1,2 million de chrétiens (sur 23 millions d'habitants). On estime

que près de la moitié auraient fui dans les années 1990 à cause de l'embargo et de la situation chaotique du pays, et surtout depuis l'invasion de l'Irak en 2003 par une coalition menée par les États-Unis, avec la violence qui en a découlé.

► Ces 500 000 à 600 000 chrétiens d'Irak (2 % de la population) relèvent de diverses confessions: chaldéens-catholiques (350 000); assyriens-

orthodoxes (dits nestoriens: 30 000); syriens-orthodoxes (dits jacobites: 50 000); syriens-catholiques (40 000); arméniens apostoliques (13 000); arméniens-catholiques (4 000); catholiques latins (3 000); protestants (3 000). Il y a en Irak

15 diocèses catholiques: 11 chaldéens, 2 syriens, 1 latin et 1 arménien.

► Les chaldéens sont des descendants des empires assyriens (Ninive, Babylone) et considèrent la Mésopotamie comme leur terre patrie. Leur patriarche, Emmanuel III Delly, est à Bagdad. Leur langue liturgique est l'araméen. En novembre 2005, l'Église chaldéenne a tenu un synode spécial à Rome.

► Depuis 2003, l'Église de France a souvent manifesté son soutien aux chrétiens d'Irak: en juin 2007, message de soutien au patriarche des chaldéens par le président de la Conférence des évêques de France, le cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard; en février 2008, opération «Pâques avec les chrétiens d'Irak» menée par Mgr Marc Stenger, président du mouvement Pax Christi-France et membre du Comité international de Pax Christi; en septembre 2009, seconde visite de Mgr Stenger en Irak.

À lire

► *Le Kurdistan et ses chrétiens*, de Mirella Galletti, Cerf, 400 p., 35 €.

de l'Irak restent précaires. Ainsi, la petite ville de Qaraqosh, à une demi-heure de route de Mossoul, chrétienne à 98 % avec 40 000 chrétiens (dont 13 000 arrivés depuis 2003), se voit menacée par les autorités de Bagdad. «Alors que ces terres et maisons appartiennent depuis toujours à des chrétiens, 3 000 terrains à bâtir avaient été confisqués à l'époque de Saddam Hussein, en vue d'être distribués à d'autres minorités, et récemment

le gouvernement central vient de mettre la main sur 4 000 autres terrains à construire», explique Mgr Georges Casmooussa, évêque syrien catholique de Mossoul, qui s'est élevé contre ces préemptions. *Pour l'instant, tout est gelé... Mais que deviendra Qaraqosh quand elle aura accueilli 7 000 familles musulmanes?* ».

Si le Kurdistan est indéniablement aujourd'hui une zone sécurisée de l'Irak, permettant à de nombreux

chrétiens d'y trouver refuge, rien ne garantit qu'il le restera dans l'avenir. D'autant qu'avec le retrait des troupes anglo-américaines, à partir de l'an prochain, l'autonomie des Kurdes risque d'être fragilisée.

C. LE.

(1) Depuis le traité de Sèvres (1920), les 30 millions de Kurdes sont répartis entre Turquie, Syrie, Iran et Irak. Et depuis 1992, le Kurdistan irakien a été érigé en région autonome.



ENTRETIEN >>> Mgr Georges Casmooussa,
archevêque syrien-catholique de Mossoul

La Croix | JEUDI 15 AVRIL 2010

« La seule garantie pour les chrétiens est d'obtenir l'égalité des droits »

L'archevêque syrien-catholique de Mossoul est opposé à tout projet de rassembler les chrétiens au Kurdistan ou dans la plaine de Ninive

Le Kurdistan peut-il être l'espoir des chrétiens irakiens ?

Mgr GEORGES CASMOUSSA : Aujourd'hui, le Kurdistan est une région calme, pacifique où beaucoup de familles chrétiennes trouvent refuge. Cela n'a pas toujours été le cas : des centaines de villages chrétiens ont été rasés pendant la guerre entre le gouvernement central et les Kurdes. Pour autant, les chrétiens, présents au Kurdistan comme dans tout l'Irak depuis des siècles, doivent pouvoir habiter là où ils le veulent, c'est-à-dire partout. Comme n'importe quels citoyens. Partout dans le pays, ils doivent pouvoir trouver sécurité, travail et dignité. Si les chrétiens ne trouvent cela qu'au Kurdistan, c'est grave pour l'Irak ! Nous demandons donc au gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan de peser de tout son poids pour que la politique de respect des chrétiens ne soit pas que régionale, mais vise toute la nation.

Quelles garanties réclamer en ce sens ?

Il n'y a pas de garanties à demander, puisque nous nous adressons à tous les partis et à toutes les instances, au gouvernement central et à celui du Kurdistan. Partout, nous exigeons que les chrétiens ne puissent plus être chassés ni persécutés – comme les autres minorités dans ce pays –, mais qu'ils soient traités

comme des citoyens à part entière, qui paient leurs impôts et font leur service militaire.

Vous n'êtes donc pas favorable au projet de rassembler les chrétiens dans la plaine de Ninive ?

Je ne suis pas pour une telle zone, qu'il s'agisse du Kurdistan, de la plaine de Ninive ou d'autres créations d'une région au nom d'une communauté ethnique ou religieuse. Une telle zone ne garantirait la sécurité des chrétiens que pendant quelques décennies,

« Il y a beaucoup d'inégalités législatives que nous aimerions voir supprimer. »

mais après... Notre seule garantie, c'est de demander au gouvernement central l'égalité des droits. Et ce, afin que les chrétiens en Irak aient les mêmes droits que les autres citoyens et accèdent à leur majorité politique. Certes, quelques fonctionnaires sont chrétiens, mais cela ne suffit pas pour garantir nos droits sur le long terme et changer en profondeur la législation.

À quoi pensez-vous concrètement ?

Il y a beaucoup d'inégalités législatives que nous aimerions voir supprimer. La loi ne doit pas obliger le conjoint et les enfants d'un chrétien qui passe à l'islam à faire de même. Ni les élèves chrétiens en établissement public à suivre les cours sur l'islam.

Pensez-vous pouvoir évoquer ces questions lors du Synode pour le Proche-Orient en octobre prochain à Rome ?

Du Synode, j'attends qu'il aborde les questions qui se posent aux chrétiens au Moyen-Orient non pas tant d'un point de vue spirituel – même si cela est nécessaire pour poser les bases –, mais d'un point de vue culturel, social, politique, économique, bref, existentiel. J'attends aussi que l'Église universelle, forte de ses réseaux, soutienne la présence des chrétiens au Moyen-Orient, en promouvant leurs droits, leur liberté et leur sécurité. Toutes les Églises du Moyen-Orient sont confrontées à la même question : comment faire respecter le droit à l'existence des chrétiens face à un islam dominant, numériquement et surtout législativement ? Comment demander à l'islam d'élargir ses points de vue envers les minorités ? Il suffit de rappeler que, partout en Orient, ce sont des chrétiens qui ont promu la culture et le nationalisme arabes, pour constater que l'influence d'une minorité dépasse son faible pourcentage dans la population.

Les Lineamenta reçus par les évêques vont-ils dans ce sens ?

Leur point de vue est trop occidental. C'est aux évêques de chaque Église de se donner des orientations, mais en se sentant soutenus par le Saint-Siège. Nous avons besoin aussi que le Saint-Père nous stimule pour travailler davantage ensemble, notamment en Irak, au Liban ou en Égypte où nos communautés ont des efforts d'unité à faire. Nous sommes tous dans la même barque : si nous continuons de ramer chacun de notre côté, nous allons sombrer.

RECUEILLI PAR
CLAIRE LESEGRETAINE

The Boston Globe

APRIL 1, 2010

Iraq's Kurds want a voice in exchange for support

By ADAM SCHRECK

Associated Press Writer

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq (AP) -- After years of what they consider unfulfilled promises, Iraq's Kurds are hardening their demands to wring out the best deal from prospective allies following an election that has left the country's future government unclear and the Kurds' support more prized than ever.

In interviews this week in their self-rule northern region, Kurdish leaders and voters demanded real concessions on contentious issues many feel have been left to wither under previous post-war governments, including that of long-time ally Nouri al-Maliki.

Heading into the March 7 vote, a Kurdish alliance with al-Maliki's Shiite supporters was seen as the most logical choice. A shared resentment over perceived second-class treatment under Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated rule helped seal that bond.

But the results that thrust Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite who relied on significant Sunni support, into the front-runner's spot have changed that dynamic.

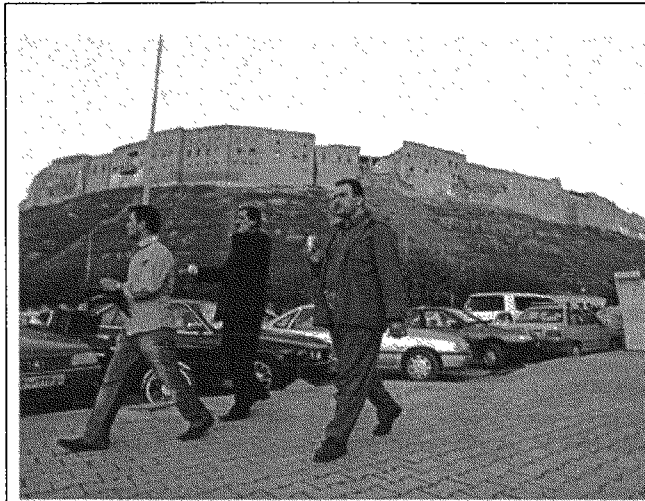
Many Kurds - who have been increasingly alienated from al-Maliki because of differences with the central government over oil contracts and other issues - say they are now willing to shift alliances to maintain a voice in Baghdad despite the nationalist stance of many Allawi supporters.

"We haven't seen any benefit from al-Maliki. He hasn't done anything for the Iraqi people, let alone the Kurds. Let's try Allawi. At least it's a change," said Twan Mohammed, 35, a mobile phone card salesman in Sulaimaniyah.

The speed with which high-ranking officials from the leading coalitions raced up to the three-province Kurdish region in the days after the election for a 325-member parliament emphasizes just how important the U.S.-allied minority's support will be.

Allawi went to the Kurdish region at least twice, and met with President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, in Baghdad on Wednesday. Vice President Adel Abdul-Mahdi, a member of the Shiite-led Iraqi National Alliance, traveled north as well, while al-Maliki appeared in a chummy meeting before television cameras in Baghdad with Talabani.

But Kurdish support won't come cheap.



In this photo taken Monday, March 29, 2010, An ancient castle towers above a park in Irbil, Iraq. After years of what they consider unfulfilled promises, Iraq's Kurds are hardening their demands to wring out the best deal from prospective allies following an election that has left the country's future government unclear and the Kurds' support more prized than ever.(AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

"We must be very serious in terms of the commitments that will be extracted from any future government," regional Prime Minister Barham Saleh said in an interview in his office in the regional capital Irbil. "Iraq cannot afford another four years of political stagnation."

Some Kurdish officials are demanding that any agreements with would-be suitors in forming an inclusive power-sharing government be put down firmly in writing as a condition of their support.

"In previous alliances, the Kurds have made the mistake of making agreements without signing any documents," said Fadhil Mirany, a senior official from the Kurdistan Democratic Party, which is allied with Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. "We won't make the same mistake this time."

High on the agenda, as always, is the resolution of long-standing disagreements over disputed territory, particularly the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, to Kurdish satisfaction. But that could prove more difficult after Kurds split electoral control of Kirkuk's Tamim province with Allawi's bloc after years in the majority.

Kurds say they want the next government to abide by Iraq's young and largely untested constitution, which includes provisions for a referendum to settle Kirkuk's future along with other protections.

They are also demanding greater clarity on the role of, and more funding for, regional security forces known as the peshmerga, many of whom are former militia members who fought Saddam and complain of lower pay and fewer resources than their Iraqi army counterparts.

Also still to be resolved is the fate of oil and gas contracts Kurds have signed without Baghdad's approval. The lack of a national oil law has left the legality of those lucrative deals in limbo.

"These are the issues that affect the economic realities of Kurdish society," said Hiwa Mirza Saber, a senior member of the Kurdistan Islamic Union.

Kurdish leaders declined to be more specific about their demands as they play the field by talking with all the major vote-getting blocs in heated jockeying to decide who will lead Iraq as U.S. troops leave.

Iraq's fragmented political landscape plays to the Kurds' advantage, although followers of anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr also have emerged as key power-brokers.

No electoral alliance came even close to a parliamentary majority - making the support of the Kurds invaluable during efforts to cobble together a coalition government.

Allawi's Iraqiya bloc got the most seats, with 91, but that was just two more than al-Maliki's State of Law coalition. The leading Kurdish alliance, meanwhile, picked up 43 seats, while smaller Kurdish parties claimed another 14 combined.

Kurds are known for their political unity in Baghdad. While an upstart political party called Gorran - Change in English - has broken the lock on power held by the two traditional parties, its leader indicated they would likely stick together on core demands on the national stage even as they disagree on local issues.

"On common issues, we'll support them. But we won't support them on

points of dispute," Gorran head Noshewan Mustafa said in an interview in his Sulaimaniyah home.

While Kurdish leaders say they are committed to remaining part of a federal Iraq, separatist sentiments remain high. Portraits of Talabani and Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani are the only leaders on display in hotel lobbies and market stalls in this rapidly developing city, where a huge Kurdish, not Iraqi, flag dominates the downtown skyline.

Much is at stake. American military

commanders have described tensions between Kurds and Arabs as the greatest threat to Iraq's security as the U.S. steps up troop withdrawals this year.

Many Kurds are insisting that they retain the federal presidency, a ceremonial but still evolving role. Talabani wants to return to the post despite complaints by supporters of Allawi's winning coalition it ought to be in the hands of Iraq's Arab majority. The current president and his deputies have veto power, but are expected to lose that once the new government is formed.

"This is the window in history where they can secure major concessions," Mustafa Alani, an Iraqi analyst at the Gulf Research Center in the United Arab Emirates, said of the Kurds. "Their support will come at a very high price."

TODAYS ZAMAN 2 April 2010

Barzani praises Turkish stance amid Iraq coalition debates

EMINE KART

According to a senior Iraqi Kurdish official, Turkey is not favoring any particular Iraqi politician at the expense of another as Iraq embarks on what is likely to be a grueling coalition-building process in the aftermath of the March 7 national parliamentary elections.

Nechirvan Barzani, the former prime minister of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq, had a lengthy meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Wednesday evening. Barzani, who in late January was appointed deputy head of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), also met with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Istanbul on Tuesday.

Barzani, speaking to a group of journalists in Ankara on Wednesday following his meeting with Erdogan, was reminded of Turkish news reports suggesting that Ankara has supported Ayad Allawi, who won the general elections by a narrow margin, since before the elections. Allawi is now looking for partners to form a coalition government to rule the country.

"What I noticed during my meeting with Mr. Prime Minister is that he is not supporting one side at the expense of the other side," responded Barzani, whose remarks made in

Kurdish were translated into Turkish through an interpreter.

"He [Erdogan] is displaying a position which supports all Iraqis. According to what I understood, he hopes that an agreement is reached through the participation of all groups," Barzani added. He was tightlipped when asked whether Iraqi Kurds are considering participating in a coalition ruled by Allawi or forming an alliance with incumbent Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Nonetheless, Barzani has indicated that the Kurds, who are widely assumed to be the kingmaker in the elections, will firmly demand real concessions on contentious issues during the bargaining period before the formation of a coalition.

"We will work as a partner of the central government and we will make demands for the sake of our region," Barzani said. He also reiterated the Kurds' demand for the implementation of Article 140 -- the clause in the constitution that lays out a plan to determine who will control Kirkuk. The plan includes holding a census and a referendum. The deadline for such steps has long passed, and Turkmens and Arabs, who accuse Arbil of sending hundreds of thousands of Kurds to Kirkuk to tip the ethnic balance, say the plan's blueprints are now obsolete. Kurds deny those charges.

The Iraqi Kurdish leader, meanwhile, praised Erdogan's courage in dealing with the Kurdish issue. Last summer, the Turkish government



Nechirvan Barzani is seen entering the Prime Ministry to meet with Erdogan in Ankara on Wednesday.

launched a democratization initiative which in part envisions expanding the rights of the country's Kurdish people, thus eradicating the grounds for support and sympathy for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"Important steps have been taken by Mr. Prime Minister, and they deserve the support of all parties. We should also support [these steps]. This is a great change. I hope we will succeed."

An Exclusive Interview with Najmaldin Karim, newly elected Kurdish member of Iraqi Parliament from Kirkuk for the Kurdistan Alliance

Kurdish Herald Early Release for April 2010 - Interview conducted by Goran Sadjádi for Kurdish Herald on 01 April 2010.

Washington, DC – Dr. Najmaldin Karim, a newly elected Kurdish member of Iraqi Parliament representing Kirkuk and a member of the Kurdistan Alliance, led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), recently sat down with *Kurdish Herald* to discuss the unresolved issue of the disputed areas in Iraq and the plans of the Kurdistan Alliance, as well as his own views on the recent Iraqi election. Dr. Karim is well-known for his activism in the U.S. on behalf of the Kurds and founded *Washington Kurdish Institute* and is a board member of the *Kurdish Institute In Paris*. He is a practicing neurosurgeon who left his home in the United States earlier this year to run in the 2010 Iraqi elections. Dr. Karim is a native of the city of Kirkuk.

Kurdish Herald: Many people expected that you would announce some sort of candidacy for the Kurdistan elections last year. What influenced your decision to leave your home in the U.S. to run as a candidate in the Iraqi elections, and particularly, to run to represent Kirkuk?

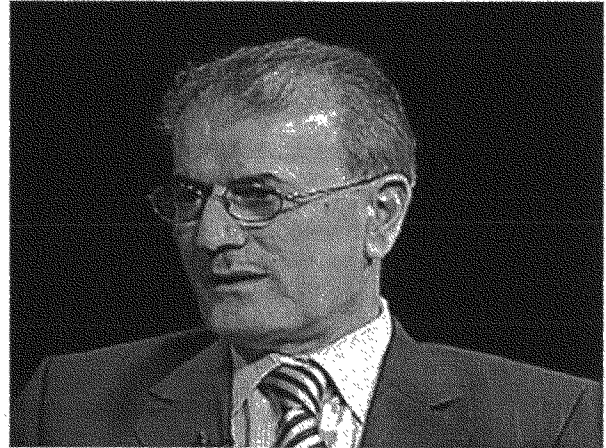
Najmaldin Karim: In the United States for many years, the Kurdistan issue – in all parts of Kurdistan – has been the focus of our activities. However, in the past few years, the challenges in Iraqi Kurdistan have become more pressing for all of us; particularly, the situation in Kirkuk.

As you know, the Anfal campaign and ethnic cleansing really all started in Kirkuk and the aim was to create demographic changes so that Kurds would no longer be able to claim Kirkuk and have it join the Kurdistan Region. The [current Iraqi] constitution was drafted and voted upon and Article 140 specifically laid out a roadmap for the return of all territories that have been cut off from Kurdistan. However, by the way of the actions of the government in Baghdad, and also lack of enthusiasm and push from the Kurdish side and our own deficiencies, the article has not been implemented. [Article 140] has 3 stages: Normalization, Census and the Referendum. We have not even started the first stage.

I felt that returning [to Iraq] would allow me to work to bring all the different communities in Kirkuk together, work toward having Article 140 implemented, and also address the many needs in Kirkuk with regards to services provided to the city. The best way to accomplish these goals and serve the people of Kirkuk and all its communities is to be there on the ground and work through the parliament and through any other position that allows me to address the needs of the people of Kirkuk and the other territories for that matter.

Kurdish Herald: What are some of the immediate plans of the Kurdistan Alliance for the disputed areas, and particularly the issue of Kirkuk, that will be done differently from that which has been done in the last 4 years?

Najmaldin Karim: I think, firstly, we need to organize ourselves as Kurds to speak as one voice and we need to have a strategy. I believe that there was a lack of strategy in the past with regards to the pressing issues. We have basically reacted to events rather than having a roadmap on how to reach our goals. Our strategy begins with our position and with who we will make an alliance with to form the new government in Iraq. Also, I believe that Article 140 and other disagreements that remain between governments in Baghdad and in Kurdistan should be the key matters in our discussions about the possible alliances with different groups that are trying to form the government in Baghdad.



Najmaldin Karim, newly-elected Kurdish MP in Iraqi parliament

Kurdish Herald: What are the major immediate obstacles to the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution that need to be addressed by the newly elected Kurdish Iraqi parliamentarians such as yourself?

Najmaldin Karim: Like I said, we need to have a strategy. We – the Kurdistan Alliance, the Change List, the Islamic Union List, and other representatives from Kurdistan – should hold regular meetings to go over the agenda that is before us and to make sure that important issues such as Article 140 are placed on the agenda of [Iraq's] parliament. One of the issues before us is concerning the parliament's decision to hold elections in Kirkuk. New [local] elections are needed in Kirkuk so that we will have a viable new representative government in Kirkuk to run the affairs of the province.

We also need to make sure that our appointed representatives in the Iraqi government who take charge of the ministries and other senior positions are really in capable positions and that there is dialogue and strategic meetings between the people who represent Kurdistan in the executive branch and in the parliament so that we can have our issues on the agenda during the meetings of the Council of Ministers in Baghdad.

Kurdish Herald: More recently, some people are suggesting that a special status will be given to Kirkuk in the future that will be a compromise that Kurds are likely to accept. What are your thoughts on this? Would you accept a special status for Kirkuk?

Najmaldin Karim: I believe that a special status for Kirkuk will not work. It will not work because such an arrangement would place Kirkuk in a weak position. During the election campaign and my meetings with other communities, such as the Arabs and the Turkmens, I asked the people if they were satisfied with the status quo. I asked if they were satisfied with the services that they have been receiving from Baghdad. I did not hear a single positive answer to these questions. Then I asked: 'If you are not satisfied, then will you be searching for alternatives to the current situation that guarantee your ethnic rights, human rights, and your democratic rights whether you are Turkmens, Arab, Christian, or another minority?'

The rights of the Turkmens, Christians, Yezidis – whether ethnic or religious minorities – are fully protected in the Kurdistan Region; be it the language or the practicing of religion, representation in the parliament, or having cabinet members. This is a reassurance to the different communities in Kirkuk.

I believe that with extra efforts from us, and by reassuring the non-Kurdish communities in Kirkuk – whether it is about preserving their rights or guaranteeing their rights to run their own affairs or even running the KRG affairs in Erbil – we will be able to win those people who have been opposed to joining the Kurdistan Region and that the future of Kirkuk is in Kurdistan. Baghdad has completely ignored Kirkuk, and if you go to Kirkuk and visit all the districts and different villages and small towns, you can see that the services are zero from schools, to hospitals, to roads, and to electricity and water. Kirkuk's budget ranks 14th or 15th among the budgets of the other governorates outside the Kurdistan Region. This is a great injustice against the people of Kirkuk.

Kurdish Herald: Some political analysts have mentioned that the emergence of the Change List and its popularity, specifically in Sulaymaniyah, might weaken the Kurdish position in Baghdad. How will the KDP and PUK work with the Change List in the near future to ensure that Kurdish demands are not lost and distorted or inharmonious?

Najmaldin Karim: I don't think the Change List will weaken the Kurdish position. I believe the Change List and the Kurdistan Alliance List and the Islamic lists will have a unified position on important issues such as Article 140, the issue of the Peshmerga, the issue of oil and gas, and the borders of Kurdistan. There will be one position on these issues. I have talked to our friends from the Change List, at the top leadership level, and I have no doubt that they will pursue the same goals.

Kurdish Herald: One of the surprises of the recent election results was Iraqqiya's strong showing in Kirkuk. What do you feel were the main reasons that the Kurds did not secure more seats in this election than Allawi's list?

Najmaldin Karim: Firstly, with regard to the total vote, the Kurdish votes were the majority in Kirkuk if we count the Kurdistan Alliance, Change List, Islamic Union and other lists. Second, we have no doubt that there has been massive fraud in the election in the Arab areas. I was in Kirkuk and in the Kurdish majority areas, and even in the mixed Turkmen/Kurdish and Arab areas, there were election observers that could visit the polling stations and make sure that there was no fraud and that the election was going well and was transparent.

However, in some districts in Kirkuk such as Hawija, Rashad, and Zab – these are 100 percent Arab-populated areas and areas where the Ba'athists are strong and insurgents and terrorists still receive support – election observers were prevented from visiting. They were threatened, and some of them whom I know personally, said they left because

they had the choice of either risking their lives and being killed or leaving the area. Also, how could you have around 65% voter turnout in the entire province, but in these places where we know that women do not even vote, there is a 94% - 96% turnout?

Kurdish Herald: Will the Kurdistan lists be making any objections to the election results because of these allegations of fraud?

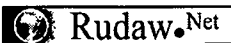
Najmaldin Karim: Yes, we have. Unfortunately, as I have expected, the UN's role was very negative. I think some of this was deliberate. When [observers] were turned away and threatened, [the UN] did not raise any objections. And some others may have also thought that by having a 50/50 result between the Kurds and the combined Arab and Turkmen lists, they would place doubt into whether or not Kirkuk will return to Kurdistan. We know Saddam Hussein tried to use these tactics, and actually at one time, the Arabs became the majority in Kirkuk. But fortunately, after 2003, significant numbers of deported Kurds from Kirkuk were able to return, despite the difficulties they faced.

And still, remember one thing, there are places such as Chamchamal, Kelar, Kifri and Tuz, which are outside of Kirkuk [and] are areas that were cut off from Kirkuk. If we get through the normalization process and these places join Kirkuk again, as they have always been part of Kirkuk, the Kurdish population will probably surpass 67% of the population of Kirkuk.

Kurdish Herald: On a different topic: You have been one of America's most vocal Kurdish activists for many years, frequently speaking out against the oppression of Kurds both inside and outside of Iraq's borders. As an elected Iraqi parliamentarian, will you remain a vocal advocate of Kurdish rights in Iraq's neighboring countries?

Najmaldin Karim: Of course. The Kurdish cause is the same whether it is in Iraq, in Turkey, Iran, or Syria. We will never look the other way or turn a deaf ear to the cries of help of our brethren in other parts of Kurdistan. We know about the atrocities and the oppression that is ongoing.

In Iran, you see that the torture and imprisonment for political belief is rampant in Iranian Kurdistan. In Turkey, people are still put on trial for beliefs, for writing articles, and for speaking out. Political parties are disbanded because of their defense of the Kurdish identity in Turkey. The Syrian regime killed Kurds and many others were wounded simply for celebrating Newroz. In addition, hundreds are in Syrian prisons being subjected to physical and psychological torture every day.

 3 April 2010

Barzani unites Kurds in Baghdad

Erbil - The president of the Kurdistan region, Massoud Barzani said in a statement on Saturday that all Kurdish parties will be united in Baghdad.

Barzani met representatives of the ruling parties KDP, PUK and the Kurdish opposition parties KIU (Islamic Union of Kurdistan), Komal (Islamic Group of Kurdistan) and the Change list (Gorran). The Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Kurdish Parliament also joined the meeting.

The political parties also declared their support for Jalal Talabani as president of Iraq, despite that the Change list



first had their doubts about electing Talabani as a president. "Everybody agrees that Mam Jalal is the candidate of the people of Kurdistan for the presidency of Iraq," said Barzani.

The Change list demanded from the Kurdish parties to drop intimidation and political pressure. According to the Change list hundreds of Change list supporters were fired in government institutions. Its not clear if Barzani promised to give the jobs back to the Change list supporters.

While the different political factions will keep their independence and will not join one Kurdish bloc, they will have the same views on joint issues, like the issue of oil, disputed regions (article 140) and the payment of the Kurdish regional guard (peshmerga).

© Rudaw

Judiciary in Turkey is target of amendments

Governing party moves to alter Constitution to loosen grip of secularists

BY SABRINA TAVERNISE AND SEBNEM ARSU

Turkey's governing party moved this week to further reduce the power of the country's staunchly secular old guard, submitting a series of amendments to the 1982 coup-era Constitution.

A number of the 26 amendments, if passed, would strike at the center of power for the old elite, the judiciary, by opening up its appointment process and expanding its membership. Liberals, however, criticized the measures for falling short of what is needed for deeper democracy in Turkey.

For generations, Turkey's judiciary has been controlled by a small class of hard-line secularists with a nationalist ideology, and the European Union, which Turkey hopes to join, has long urged reform. The amendments require 367 votes out of 550 to become law, more than the governing party has, and passage is far from assured.

Opponents of the party, Justice and Development, have criticized the changes, which they say are an effort by its leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to consolidate his own power. But supporters say those charges are overblown and maintain that the changes would start to bring Turkey in line with European countries.

"When you actually look at what the amendments propose, you see that all changes are copied from examples that function quite well in E.U. member states," said Joost Lagendijk, senior adviser at the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University and a former member of the European Parliament.

The Constitution is sensitive because it enshrines secularism, and efforts by Mr. Erdogan to change any part of it have met with ferocious criticism. His party commissioned a new draft in 2008, which was written largely by a group of intellectuals, but was forced to scrap it after the secular opposition party filed a suit against the party, and a high court threatened to ban it.

The government sees the changes as necessary to break away from a troubled past of military coups and strong control of the state by a small coterie of unelected officials in the bureaucracy and the judiciary.

The Constitution was put in place in 1982, after a military coup. It has been amended several times since then, though most Turkish intellectuals argue that it should be scrapped entirely.

Critics of the amendments fear that the key changes — the way appointments are made to the constitutional court, the main watchdog of secularism in Turkey, and to the Senior Council of Judges and Prosecutors, responsible for judicial appointments and monitoring court officials — would damage Turkey's founding principle. They do not

trust Mr. Erdogan, whose Islamic-inspired Justice and Development Party comes from a class of Muslim entrepreneurs that upper-class secular Turks long looked down upon.

"The secular democratic state in Turkey is in danger," said Sabih Kanadoglu, the chief prosecutor of the Court of Appeals, another powerful court.

Other changes include trials of military officers in civilian courts, and making it harder to ban political parties.

The disagreement follows a long-running divide in Turkish society between Mr. Erdogan's broadly popular Islamic-inspired party, Justice and Development, and secular Turks, who believe Mr. Erdogan is dismantling the old system in order to establish a new one that belongs to him alone.

One of the principle authors of the 2008 draft, Ergun Ozbudun, a professor of law at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey's capital, said the current changes did not go far enough. He said there were no concessions to ethnic or religious groups, for example, whose rights in Turkey have been routinely abused.

"The desire deep in their hearts was probably to go more courageously," he said by telephone, "but they are maybe afraid of the opposition and constitutional court," which nearly banned the party over the previous draft.

Nor do the amendments lower the controversial 10 percent election threshold, which keeps smaller political parties, including those that represent ethnic groups such as Kurds, out of parliament, one of the liberals' central demands.

Mr. Erdogan has said that if he fails to pass the changes in Parliament, he will bring them to a nationwide referendum.

Sadrists' straw vote backs return of Iraq's ex-leader

NAJAF, IRAQ

REUTERS

Supporters of the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr have chosen former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari as their nominee to lead Iraq, party officials said Wednesday, in a referendum that carried no legal weight.

Mr. Jaafari won 24 percent of the 1.43 million votes cast Friday and Saturday in a plebiscite to pick a prime minister. The vote was an attempt to clarify Iraq's muddled politics after a March 7 parliamentary election that failed to produce a clear winner.

Iyad Allawi, another former prime minister, whose cross-sectarian Iraqiya coalition won the most seats, finished fifth in the referendum, Sadrists officials

said. The current prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, whose largely Shiite State of Law bloc finished second in the election, placed fourth in the voting Wednesday.

The referendum had no government sanction and is not legally binding, but party officials said they would adhere to the results as they negotiated a nominee for prime minister.

The Sadrists' strong showing in the March parliamentary vote — the movement won about 40 seats as part of the Shiite Iraqi National Alliance bloc — made Mr. Sadr a potential kingmaker in what are expected to be weeks of talks to form a government.

Mr. Jaafari, a Shiite, served as prime minister in the transitional government in 2005-06 after the U.S. invasion that

ousted Saddam Hussein.

With no clear election winner, coalitions are jockeying for alliances that could give them the parliamentary majority needed to form a government.

The Iraqi National Alliance, whose leaders have close ties to Iran, won a total of 70 seats and has talked with State of Law about a possible merger of the two largest predominantly Shiite blocs.

The Sadrist movement objects to a second term for Mr. Maliki, who sent troops to crush Mr. Sadr's Mahdi Army militia in 2008.

The referendum ballot carried five names and a space for a write-in.

Jaafar Mohammed al-Sadr, a relative of the cleric whose name was on the ballot, finished second with 23 percent. Qusay Abdul-Wahab al-Suhail, a write-in candidate, placed third with 17 percent.

Party officials said the referendum was open to all Iraqis, but it was not clear how widely the ballots were available outside Sadrist strongholds in Baghdad and elsewhere.

Élections irakiennes - Le choc iranien

Le Devoir / Québec

Serge Truffaut

Vainqueur des élections législatives irakiennes tenues le mois dernier, Iyad Allaoui est ces jours-ci très remonté. Le sujet, le principal sujet de sa colère est un pays voisin. Il s'agit de l'Iran évidemment. Soit le royaume des ayatollahs qui tirent les ficelles du dernier scrutin, au vu et au su de tout le monde, afin que le prochain gouvernement lui obéisse au doigt et à l'œil. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, président de l'Iran, s'emploie effectivement à barrer la route à Allaoui par l'intermédiaire des formations irakiennes inféodées à Téhéran.

Au cours de la dernière semaine, des délégations regroupant des membres de partis défendant exclusivement les intérêts des chiites ainsi, c'est à retenir, que des

formations kurdes sont allées à la rencontre des dirigeants irakiens histoire d'enregistrer les diktats de ces derniers. En fait, le mot d'ordre signifié aux vassaux irakiens se résume comme suit: employer tous les moyens dont ceux-ci disposent pour empêcher que le seul parti laïque et nationaliste, soit le Bloc irakien d'Allaoui, grimpe les marches du pouvoir.

Dans sa manche, Ahmadinejad possède la carte maîtresse favorisant la formulation de chantages divers. Tous les partis chiites, y compris celui dont le premier ministre sortant, Nouri al-Maliki, est le patron, ont été formés lors des années d'exil en Iran. Ils ont été financés par l'Iran, armés par l'Iran. Ils sont à la botte d'un Iran qui digère d'autant moins la victoire d'Allaoui que celui-ci est parvenu à fédérer les chiites nationalistes et laïques avec les sunnites. Et qui dit sunnite

dit quoi? Éternel ennemi religieux.

Conséquence nette de ces tractations, de ces bras de fer, il est plus que vraisemblable qu'Allaoui et ses proches soient écartés du gouvernement à moins qu'ils ne parviennent à séduire l'Alliance kurde, qui a remporté les trois provinces du nord. Dans ses pourparlers avec ces derniers, Allaoui martèle et rappelle qu'il ne se passe guère une semaine sans que les Forces iraniennes répriment les Kurdes iraniens. Quoi d'autre? Allaoui, le chiite laïque, a le soutien des nations arabes sunnites, soit l'Égypte, l'Arabie saoudite et la Syrie.

En manipulant le destin des Irakiens à coups de forceps, Téhéran prend le risque d'enflammer un pays que tout un chacun sait qu'il demeure fragile. S'il s'avère qu'Allaoui est cantonné en dehors de la scène gouvernementale alors

qu'il est arrivé premier aux législatives, il est plausible que les sunnites se révoltent et que le cycle de la violence reprenne à vitesse grand V. Et ce faisant, qu'ils torpillent passablement le plan de retrait des Forces américaines.

En attendant une suite qui s'annonce aussi laborieuse que longue, Al-Maliki reste en poste. Après avoir déposé officiellement une plainte pour fraude électorale malgré le constat contraire portant l'empreinte des observateurs, Al-Maliki a tenu à rappeler haut et fort à l'attention de tout le monde et d'Allaoui en particulier qu'il demeurerait... le chef des armées! Et qu'il n'hésiterait pas à y avoir recours. L'Irak fut un chaudron, il risque de le redevenir.



IRAK: LES KURDES SOUHAITENT QUE JALAL TALABANI RESTE PRÉSIDENT

ERBIL (Irak), 3 avril 2010 (AFP) —

LES PARTIS KURDES ont affirmé samedi qu'ils souhaitaient voir le président irakien Jalal Talabani, un Kurde, reconduit dans ses fonctions pour quatre nouvelles années.

"Notre candidat à la présidence est Mam Jalal", a affirmé Massoud Barzani, le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) et président de la région autonome, en référence à Jalal Talabani surnommé "Mam Jalal" (oncle Jalal) au Kurdistan.

M. Barzani -dont le parti était allié à celui de M. Talabani, l'Union démocratique du Kurdistan (UPK) aux législatives du 7 mars- s'exprimait après une réunion avec le parti dissident Goran et deux autres listes islamistes.

L'ensemble de ces partis totalisent 57 sièges dans le nouveau parlement,

composé de 325 députés.

Un représentant de Goran (Changement, en kurde), Chourach Haji, a affirmé que son parti était en faveur de la candidature de M. Talabani mais a toutefois conditionné un accord final à la fin des persécutions exercées selon lui par le PDK et l'UPK contre des partisans de son parti.

Goran, qui a remporté huit sièges lors de sa première participation à un scrutin national, a accusé les deux grands partis kurdes d'attaquer ses membres et d'avoir limogé des fonctionnaires qui avaient voté pour lui, en particulier à Souleimaniyeh, fief de Jalal Talabani.

M. Barzani a par ailleurs appelé les minorités chrétiennes, sabéennes, chabaks et yazidiés, qui totalisent huit sièges, à s'unir aux listes kurdes pour accroître leur poids dans les négociations pour la formation du prochain gouvernement.



TURQUIE: LE "GROUPE DE PAIX" DU PKK VENU D'IRAK RISQUE LA PRISON

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 6 avril 2010 (AFP) —

UN TRIBUNAL DE DIYARBAKIR (sud-est de la Turquie) a lancé mardi des poursuites contre un groupe de rebelles kurdes et leurs sympathisants revenus d'Irak qui avaient fait acte de reddition dans un geste de paix, a-t-on indiqué de source judiciaire.

Huit rebelles présumés du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) membres du groupe risquent jusqu'à 20 ans de prison pour "appartenance à une organisation terroriste", a-t-on précisé de même source.

Vingt-deux autres personnes du groupe, des sympathisants présumés du PKK qui s'étaient réfugiés en Irak, Etat voisin de la Turquie où le PKK dispose de bases arrière, sont accusés de collaboration et de propagande en faveur du PKK. Ils risquent 15 ans de prison.

Le procès doit s'ouvrir le mois prochain à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est anatolien peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes.

Le PKK avait envoyé en octobre 2009 en Turquie un "groupe de paix" (34 personnes, dont quatre enfants qui ne sont pas poursuivis) pour exprimer son soutien aux efforts du gouvernement turc qui avait alors annoncé une série de mesures démocratiques visant à en finir avec le conflit kurde, qui a fait 45.000 morts en 25 ans.

Mais depuis, "l'ouverture kurde" du gouvernement s'est heurtée à de nombreuses entraves, notamment l'interdiction par la justice en décembre dernier du principal parti pro-kurde du pays, accusé de collusion avec le PKK.

Al-Qaïda en Irak attaque trois ambassades à Bagdad

Le groupe djihadiste reprend l'initiative grâce au vide politique dû aux législatives contestées

De 30 à 42 personnes, selon les sources, ont été tuées et plus de 200 blessées, dimanche 4 avril, à Bagdad lors de trois attentats-suicides synchronisés contre trois ambassades étrangères. Les chancelleries d'Iran, d'Égypte et d'Espagne ont été endommagées, certaines gravement. Hoshyar Zibari, le chef de la diplomatie dont le ministère avait pratiquement volé en éclats lors d'une attaque similaire l'été dernier, voit, dans cette nouvelle offensive, « *la marque d'Al-Qaïda en Irak* ». Selon lui, « *en termes de timing, de cibles et de simultanéité pour avoir un impact maximum* », ces attentats rappellent furieusement ceux du 25 janvier, qui avaient visé des grands hôtels fréquentés par les étrangers, et ceux de 2009, qui avaient détruit plusieurs bâtiments officiels.

Les opérations du 4 avril ont été menées à quelques minutes d'in-

tervalle, après 11 h 30, avec des véhicules bourrés d'explosifs pilotés par des kamikazes. Ces attentats, qui semblent démontrer que les disciples d'Al-Qaïda parviennent à se regrouper malgré les puissants revers militaires subis ces deux dernières années, se produisent dans un certain vide politique, le nouveau gouvernement issu des élections du 7 mars n'ayant toujours pas été formé. Le premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, refuse de reconnaître la victoire d'une courte tête de son rival chiite laïc Iyad Allaoui.

Les attentats de dimanche font suite à un véritable massacre perpétré dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi. Déguisés en soldats, une douzaine d'hommes, certains masqués, d'autres parlant anglais, ont fondu sur le village de Hour Rajab, dans la banlieue sud de la capitale. Croyant avoir affaire à des soldats

au volant de véhicules apparemment militaires, deux familles de la tribu des Joubouri ont ouvert leurs portes et laissé entrer les tueurs, qui ont isolé les enfants et tué, après les avoir torturés, vingt-cinq adultes dont quatre femmes.

Les Joubouri, qui appartiennent à la grande fédération sunnite des Doulaïmi, ont un temps rejoint les djihadistes. Comme beaucoup d'autres clans de la région, ils se sont ensuite retournés et ont rejoint les « comités du réveil » (*sahwa*) un temps rémunérés par les Américains, aujourd'hui salariés du gouvernement, pour empêcher le retour d'Al-Qaïda dans leurs zones de résidence. Dix-neuf des 21 hommes assassinés appartenaient à ces comités ou étaient entrés dans la police. Considérés comme des « traîtres à la cause », les hommes du *sahwa*, qui sont autour de 90 000 en exercice, sont régulièrement pris pour cible : en novembre 2009, treize d'entre eux, kidnappés chez eux par des hommes en uniforme près d'Abou Ghraïb, à l'ouest de Bagdad, avaient subi le même sort. ■

Patrice Claude

Washington assure que Pékin est prêt à discuter de sanctions contre Téhéran

La Chine tient à ménager son important partenaire iranien tout en évitant de s'isoler

Pékin

Correspondant

La Chine serait désormais prête à « *de sérieuses discussions* » sur l'imposition de nouvelles sanctions économiques contre l'Iran, accusée de masquer un volet militaire d'enrichissement de l'uranium derrière un programme nucléaire civil. L'ambassadrice des États-Unis aux Nations unies, Susan Rice, a déclaré à la chaîne américaine CNN, mercredi 31 mars, que Pékin va se joindre prochainement aux discussions engagées par les cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU – France, Chine, Grande-Bretagne, Russie (États-Unis) et l'Allemagne.

« Solution pacifique »

Cette annonce coïncide avec la visite à Pékin du négociateur en chef iranien sur la question nucléaire, Saïd Jalili, jeudi 1^{er} avril. L'ambassade d'Iran en Chine a confirmé cette arrivée sans préciser avec quels hauts responsables chinois va s'entretenir M. Jalili.

La Chine, qui s'est associée à trois reprises à des sanctions limitées contre l'Iran entre 2006 et 2008, reste opposée à de nouvelles, même si elle ne devrait pas utiliser pas son droit de veto. La stratégie de Pékin, qui plaide pour une « *solution pacifique* », est connue : la Chine défend tout à la fois le princi-

pe de non-intervention dans les affaires d'autrui et celui de la non-prolifération nucléaire. Dans le cas de l'Iran, elle estime que les preuves d'un programme militaire nucléaire ne sont pas rassemblées et ne pense pas que le régime de Téhéran puisse arriver à se doter de la bombe atomique à court terme.

La position chinoise semble cependant avoir récemment évolué : début mars, elle a appelé la République islamique à « *renforcer* » sa coopération avec l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) pour « *lever les doutes* ».

L'Iran est le troisième fournisseur de pétrole de la Chine, après l'Arabie saoudite et l'Angola. En 2009, Pékin et Téhéran ont signé des contrats pour développer des champs pétrolifères en Iran. La Chine fournit de grandes quantités de pétrole raffiné à Téhéran, qui ne dispose pas de capacités suffisantes. Pour la Chine, la place occupée par l'Iran sur les franges sud de l'Asie centrale, non loin de la province troublée du Xinjiang chinois, est en perçue comme non négligeable.

Pour toutes ces raisons, la Chine doit ménager son allié iranien tout en évitant de s'aliéner les États-Unis et d'éviter un isolement diplomatique. Sur les sanctions, la tactique de Pékin semble consister à accepter la discussion tout en déployant des trésors de rhétorique pour retarder la décision. Sur tout, comme le confiait la vice-ministre des affaires étrangères, Fu Ying, à un expert européen, la Chine fera tout son possible pour « *atténuer* » le plus possible la portée des sanctions quand ces dernières seront finalement imposées. ■

Bruno Philip



du 7 au 13 avril 2010

IRAQ. Tandis que les partis politiques mènent de difficiles tractations pour former le prochain gouvernement, la situation s'est détériorée après une série d'attentats qui menacent la sécurité du pays.

Les attentats aggravent la situation

Profitant du vide politique créé par les longues tractations sur la formation du gouvernement, plusieurs attentats ont eu lieu dimanche dernier en Iraq. Des kamikazes ont lancé des attaques contre des ambassades iraniennes, arabes et européennes à Bagdad. Le ministre iraquien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari, a affirmé à l'AFP que ces attentats portaient la « marque » du réseau d'Al-Qaëda, qui rappelle des attaques spectaculaires menées au cours des derniers mois contre des hôtels et des ministères. Deux premières attaques ont eu lieu dans le

quartier Mansour (ouest) : l'une à l'entrée de l'ambassade égyptienne et l'autre près des ambassades allemande, espagnole et syrienne non loin.

Ensuite, l'ambassade d'Iran a été visée. Mais, aucun diplomate n'a été tué dans ces attaques. Selon un dernier bilan du ministère de l'Intérieur, au moins 30 personnes sont mortes et 224 ont été blessées. En outre, les forces de sécurité ont stoppé une quatrième voiture piégée à Masbah (centre), qui devait être apparemment utilisée contre le quartier général des forces de sécurité

chargées de la protection des ambassades, selon un porte-parole du commandement militaire de Bagdad.

Déjà, les Etats-Unis, dont les troupes de combat doivent se retirer en août d'Iraq, ont mis en garde contre l'utilisation par Al-Qaëda du vide du pouvoir après les législatives du 7 mars. « C'est une attaque politique qui vise à nuire au processus (politique) et à envoyer le message que les terroristes sont toujours actifs », a insisté M. le ministre iraquien des Affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari.

Ce dernier a estimé que ces attentats tarderont la formation du nouveau gouvernement.

Devenant un faiseur de roi dans les négociations sur la formation du prochain gouvernement en Iraq, le mouvement du leader religieux chiite Moqtada Sadr a organisé vendredi dernier un référendum sur le nom du futur premier ministre.

Le mouvement, qui a inscrit sur le bulletin de vote le nom de cinq dirigeants chiites, a indiqué que cette consultation était ouverte à tout le monde. Mais la grande majorité des participants devrait être des membres ou des sympathisants du courant du chef radical, actuellement basé en Iran. Le courant de Sadr a obtenu à lui seul 40 sièges des 70 recueillis par l'alliance de partis religieux chiites dont il s'est associé au scrutin du 7 mars. Selon les résultats officiels de ce dernier, le bloc iraquien de l'ancien premier ministre Iyad Allawi, un chiite laïc, a obtenu 91 sièges au Parlement contre 89 pour l'Alliance pour l'Etat de droit du premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, sur un total de 325 au Parlement. Ainsi, sur les bulletins de vote figurent les noms de MM. Maliki, Allawi, de l'ex-premier ministre Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, du vice-président chiite Adel Abdel-Mehdi et de Jaafar Mohammed Baqer Sadr, fils de Mohammed Baqer Sadr, un ayatollah assassiné en 1980 et fondateur du parti chiite Dawa. « Des centaines de centres de vote ont été ouverts dans toutes les provinces du pays, à l'exception



du Kurdistan, pour le référendum (géré) par 3 500 volontaires », a affirmé à l'AFP Hossam Al-Moumine, l'un des organisateurs.

Selon un dirigeant du courant sadriste, Hazem Al-Araji, le référendum « montrera le point de vue des gens sur le nom du prochain premier ministre et notre courant se conformera à leur choix ».

De l'autre côté, un modeste progrès a été réalisé en vue de la formation d'un gouvernement, les négociations entre les différents blocs ayant révélé des divergences profondes. Le courant sadriste est hostile au maintien à son poste de M. Maliki qui avait mené une campagne militaire sanglante et d'arrestations en 2008 pour mettre fin au règne des milices armées.

Mais le Conseil Suprême Islamique d'Iraq (CSII), qui fait partie de la même alliance que celle du courant sadriste, a apporté son soutien à M. Allawi, ce qui pourrait s'avérer crucial, ni Allawi ni Maliki ne semblant près de s'assurer les 163 sièges nécessaires à la formation du gouvernement.

Pour accroître leur poids dans les négociations pour la formation du prochain gouvernement, Massoud Barzani, chef du Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), a appelé les minorités chrétiennes, sabéennes, chabaks et yazidies, qui totalisent huit sièges, à s'unir aux listes des partis kurdes.

De sa part, le premier ministre iraquien, Nouri Al-Maliki, a annoncé que son parti avait déposé un recours contre les résultats des élections législatives, décision de nature à retarder un peu plus la constitution d'un nouveau gouvernement.

Maha Salem

EDITO

Complications

ACCUSATIONS d'ingérence iranienne, conflit constitutionnel, manque de confiance entre rivaux : les obstacles s'accumulent en Iraq pour la formation du gouvernement qui s'annonce plus ardue que prévue.

Après l'annonce des résultats, les candidats des listes arrivées en tête se sont lancés dans des négociations marathon, qui ont surtout révélé l'ampleur des différends qui les opposent. Les souvenirs des batailles politiques et armées, des trahisons entre ex-alliés et des rancunes, qui ont rythmé la vie de l'Iraq au cours des cinq dernières années, pèsent lourd sur les négociations. La preuve en est le front du refus qui s'est formé contre le premier ministre sortant, le chiite Nouri Al-Maliki, arrivé en deuxième position avec 89 sièges, derrière son opposant laïc Iyad Allawi, qui a remporté 91 sièges.

L'opposition à sa candidature provient de la communauté chiite même et en particulier du mouvement de Moqtada Sadr, chef radical actuellement en Iran, qui a réussi à emporter une quarantaine de sièges. Il représente désormais le parti religieux chiite le plus fort du pays. Les Sadristes éprouvent de grandes rancœurs contre Maliki après les campagnes militaires menées en 2008 contre la milice de l'armée du Mahdi, ancien bras armé de Moqtada Sadr.

Alors qu'une alliance entre la liste Iraquiya de M. Allawi et l'Alliance de l'Etat de Droit (AED) de M. Maliki semble très peu probable, étant donné les relations glaciales qui existent entre eux, M. Allawi a obtenu le soutien crucial d'une importante formation chiite, le Conseil Suprême Islamique d'Iraq (CSII), qui a annoncé qu'elle ne rejoindrait pas un gouvernement auquel ne participerait pas M. Allawi. Le bloc de l'Alliance nationale iraquienne, dont fait partie le CSII, a remporté 70 sièges aux législatives et reste populaire parmi les chiites dans le sud de l'Iraq. Son soutien au bloc Iraquiya pourrait s'avérer crucial, du fait que ni Iyad Allawi ni Nouri Al-Maliki ne semblent près de s'assurer les 163 sièges nécessaires à la formation du prochain gouvernement. Mais la Cour suprême est venue compliquer les choses en rendant un avis à la demande de Nouri Al-Maliki sur un article de la Constitution. Selon cet avis, la tâche de former un gouvernement peut incomber au chef de la coalition qui dispose du plus grand nombre de sièges lors de la séance inaugurale du Parlement. En clair, M. Maliki pourrait venir couper l'herbe sous le pied d'Iyad Allawi s'il arrive à former des alliances avec les Kurdes et les partis religieux chiites.

The elusive proportionality in Iraq

Daily Star/ Lebanon

By Muayyad Al-Chalabi

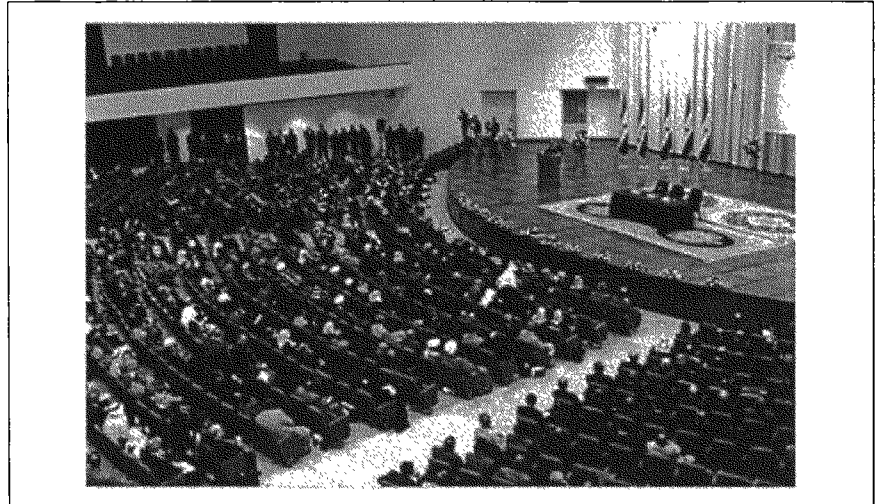
The preliminary results announced by the Iraqi Independent High Elections Commission (IHEC) show that the major seats were divided up among four major blocs. Of the total 325 seats in Parliament, Iraqiya, led by Iyad Allawi, won 91 seats; State of Law (SoL), led by Nuri al-Maliki 89 seats; Iraqi National Alliance (INA), led by Ibrahim Jaafari, 70 seats; and the Kurdish Alliance (KA), 43 seats. The remaining 32 seats were spread among 10 blocs with the largest, the Kurdish Goran party, getting eight seats.

In a tight race where the major blocs are locked up in a fierce fight, a slight advantage in the way votes converted to seats make an important difference. The Iraqi system is based on a proportional allocation scheme. There are two main proportional allocation methods, successive proportional allocation (d'Hondt, Sainte-Lague), and straight proportional allocation (largest remainder). Iraq uses the successive proportional allocation schema in dealing with the remainder after dividing the number of votes by the divisor (number of votes per seat).

The successive proportional allocation method is past-step dependent – in the jargon “previous iteration” – while the largest remainder is past-step independent. This means that if several parties compete for a given number of seats, and one of the parties receives a much higher proportion than the others, that “dominant factor” trumps the proportional system by reinforcing the largest vote getter. In effect, the scheme gives the votes that were not sufficient for a smaller party to get a seat to the dominant party. Indirectly, the vote for a small bloc ends up supporting the largest bloc.

This can be illustrated in the Iraqi elections as follows: in Ninawa, Salahuddin, Anbar and Diyala, the Iraqiya Bloc won the largest number of votes compared to the other blocs.

In the north (Suleimaniya, Irbil and Dohuk) were dominated by the Kurdish Alliance. And in the south, the vote was split between INA and SoL



with no notable dominance factor. The capital Baghdad was split between Iraqiya, SoL and INA, again without a notable single dominance.

Take the example of Diyala and Basra: the use of successive-proportional allocation produces different results than those of the largest remainder method. Table (1) summarizes the seat allocations results under the different methods used.

The four major blocs received 442,564 votes. If we allocate the seats to the largest remainder, SoL and Tawafuq would get one additional seat while Iraqiya and INA would get one less seat in Diyala.

In the successive allocation scheme in contrast adopted by IHEC, Iraqiya was rounded up from 6.33 to 8 and INA from 1.23 to two while the other parties were rounded down.

In Basra, 814,810 votes were cast for 24 seats. The largest blocs collectively received 743,614 votes. We present the results in Table (2).

If we give the seats to the largest remainder, Tawafuq would get one more seat and Iraqiya would get one less based on the fact that Tawafuq's remainder is 0.49 while Iraqiya's remainder is 0.22. The split votes between INA and SoL explain the difference between the final IHEC results (successive proportion method) and the alternative largest remainder method.

Table (3) shows the results for Ninawa where the dominant bloc, Iraqiya, also got the benefit of rounding up the numbers at the expense of the

bloc that received less number of seats. There were 1,054,798 votes cast for 31 seats (excluding compensatory seats for minorities).

Kirkuk provides a final illustration. In Kirkuk, 12 seats were allocated, six each to Iraqiya and KA. Iraqiya and KA received 211,675 and 206,542 votes respectively.

The total for the two blocs was 418,217 votes. The total votes for the governorate was 556,348. This means that Goran, the Islamic Kurdish Parties and Tawafuq which received the balance of 138,13, an equivalent to 25 percent (three seats) of the vote, ended up with no seats at all. The smaller parties did not pass the threshold of 46,365.3 votes per seat. Since success in Kirkuk was evenly divided between Iraqiya and KA, they both were the beneficiaries of the votes of the smaller blocs.

In the light of results for Diyala, Basra and Ninawa, and Kirkuk, the method used for allocating the remainder of the division of votes to divisor “denominator” has been a major factor in allowing dominant Blocs to benefit from the votes of the smaller blocs. Proportional system remains elusive in Iraq.

Muayyad Al-Chalabi is an Iraqi American consultant on technology and democracy. He has worked for the University of Utah's Global Justice Project: Iraq in the past year.



Kurds should gather around the table



By Ako Muhammed

When François Mitterrand wanted to bring French left parties to work together in the 1970s, he proposed them to have a unified position in the parliament. The Kurdish president should do the same.

The Kurdish president Barzani should launch such a proposal for Kurdish lists, to strengthen the Kurdish position in Baghdad and to get more results. The Kurdish veteran politician, Jawhar Namiq, also said the same in an article in Rudaw.

Many things has been said about Kurdish unity in Baghdad, but in reality there is no Kurdish unity yet. This is partly

because of the conflict between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Change list (Gorran).

Kurds have a good chance to be part of the next Iraqi government. Kurdish lists expressed their readiness to talk with other Iraqi Arabic lists about forming new Iraqi government.

Two Iraqi lists are not enough to form the majority for the new Iraqi government, but if the Kurds do not show their strength, they might be kicked out of the next Iraqi coalition government.

Kurdish voters played their role in voting for a better participation of the Kurds in the Iraqi parliament and the Kurdish politicians should make up their promises and guarantee the political power of Kurds in Baghdad.

The Kurds failed miserably in Kirkuk. Only the Kurdistan Alliance alliance and

Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) won seats in Kirkuk, but none of the other Kurdish lists won any seat in Kirkuk. As a result the Kurds will not get the majority of seats. This will have political importance.

But this is history now, now the Kurds should have a better position regarding the disputed areas and especially article 140 in this stage of forming new Iraqi government.

Both Kurdish ruling parties and opposition parties talked about gathering around presidency table to form an agreement regarding the Iraqi election. It is time to gather around the same table to agree on an agenda which makes Kurds stronger in Baghdad, and this should be done soon before the other Iraqi lists start negotiations to form the next Iraqi government.

© Rudaw

Iranian dissidents escape to exile in Turkey

Scheherezade Faramarzi
Associated Press

Nigde, Turkey --Light snow was falling when the two young men set out on horseback for the border to flee Iran. By the time they were deep in the mountains, it had become a blinding blizzard, the temperature had dropped below freezing, and they were barely alive.

Hesam Misaghi and Sepehr Atefi were joining what has become an exodus of dissidents fleeing Iran's political turmoil. For them that meant a harrowing journey through the country's rugged northwest in the dead of winter, with the help of Kurdish smugglers.

At a river crossing, the ice broke beneath them and their horses stumbled in, soaking the two with freezing water.

"There was no feeling in my legs and hands," recalled Misaghi, a tall, wiry 21-year-old. "I felt drunk. I didn't know where I was. I was laughing from pain."

Atefi, 20, spotted a van from a distance, grabbed Misaghi's arm and dragged him toward it through the snow.

"There was no life left in me to move forward, but we had to reach the highway," he said.

The men, both Iranian human rights reporters, reached the van, begged a ride

and made it to safety in Turkey.

At least 4,200 Iranians have fled their homeland since disputed presidential elections in June, according to a list compiled by activist Aida Saadat, who herself slipped across the border into Turkey in December. These refugees have scattered to the United States, Europe and Gulf nations like the United Arab Emirates.

Most of all, they have come to Turkey - around 1,150 of them, according to the U.N. refugee agency - taking advantage of the porous border and Turkey's policy of not requiring a visa. Most of the new arrivals fled for political reasons, including those who took part in opposition protests after the vote.

The danger these Iranians face back home is clear. A month after Atefi and Misaghi's January escape, police raided their homes in the central Iranian city of Isfahan. Among the charges against them: "waging war against God," a crime punishable by death.

Police arrested their friend and colleague, Navid Khanjani, who was supposed to have fled with them but changed his mind at the last minute. With Khanjani's arrest, eight people in the independent Committee of Human Rights Reporters have been jailed, and three remain in prison and could face

execution.

In Turkey, the refugees are safer, but they live in limbo. Almost all brought little money and cannot work because of Turkish restrictions, so they cram into small, coal-heated apartments with minimal furniture.

Many of the Iranians have been put in the central town of Kayseri and nearby towns such as Nigde. Like other refugees in Turkey, they are required to live in particular towns designated by the Interior Ministry, must regularly report to police to confirm their location, and must get permission from authorities to move to other cities.

Some refugees claim they have been harassed by Iranian intelligence agents while in Turkey, with threatening phone calls or even physical attacks. Human rights officials say Iranian intelligence agents have infiltrated the refugee community here, leading to widespread suspicion.

Despite the obstacles, reform activist Saadat says she is determined to keep up her political work, campaigning for Iranian women's rights and writing for the Committee of Human Rights Reporters.

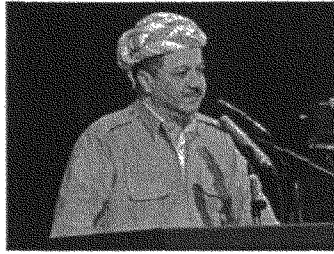
"I am not an immigrant. I've come here to continue my work," she said. After months of repression, Iran's reform activists are all in hiding, in jail or in exile, she said.

"When we leave our country, we leave behind all our past, our love, memories, the sum of our lives."

Aswat al-Iraq

April 3, 2010

Barazani urges Christian, Shabak, Yazidi winners to merge with KA



ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: The president of Iraq's Kurdistan region, Massoud al-Barazani, has called on election winners

from the Christian, Shabak and Yazidi lists to enter a coalition with the Kurdistan Alliance (KA). This came after Barazani's meeting with four winning Kurdish lists: the Change List, the KA, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Islamic Grouping-

in an attempt to adopt a unified stance. The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has recently announced the names of the winners in the legislative elections.

The results were announced on Friday (March 26) with former prime minister Iyad Allawi's al-Iraqiya bloc obtaining 91 out of the parliament's 325 seats, followed by incumbent Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Dawlat al-Qanoon (State of Law) with 89 seats, the Iraqi National Alliance (INA) with 70 seats and the Kurdistan Alliance with 43 seats.

AP Associated Press

Suicide bombers target embassies in Iraq, kill 42

April 4, 2010 Associated Press Writers

By ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA

BAGHDAD – Suicide attackers detonated three car bombs in quick succession near foreign embassies in Baghdad on Sunday, killing more than 40 people in coordinated strikes that Iraqi officials said were intended to disrupt efforts to form a new government.

The bombings followed the execution-style killings of 24 villagers in a Sunni area two days earlier, a spike in violence that suggests insurgents are seizing on the political uncertainty after the recent election to try to destabilize the country as U.S. troops prepare to leave. No clear winner emerged from the March 7 vote.

Sunday's explosions went off within minutes of each other, starting shortly after 11 a.m. One struck near the Iranian Embassy and two others hit an area that houses several diplomatic missions, including the Egyptian Consulate and the German and Spanish embassies. It was not immediately known whether diplomatic staff were among the victims. Authorities said they foiled two other attacks aimed at diplomatic targets by stopping the would-be bombers' vehicles and defusing the explosives.

Stunned victims in bloody clothes were loaded into ambulances as gray smoke rose over Baghdad.

"I saw children screaming," Hassan Karim, 32, who owns a clothing shop in Baghdad, told The Associated Press. "Cars were crashing into each other in streets, trying to find a way to flee."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, although multiple, coordinated bombings in the capital are a hallmark of al-Qaida in Iraq. The violence suggests insurgents are trying to regroup in the political vacuum left after the elections.

Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's cross-sectarian bloc tapped into heavy Sunni support to come in just two seats ahead of the mainly Shiite list of the incumbent, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. But neither side has enough seats to govern alone, which means they are scrambling to cobble together enough parliamentary support to form a government.

Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the bombings were an attempt to inject more turmoil into the political scene as the election front-runners try to forge a coalition government.

"These terrorists will not be able to stop Iraqis and friends of the Iraqi people from building a free, secure and prosperous future," the ministry said.

Several Iraqi guards from the German and Egyptian missions were confirmed dead, authorities said. One police official said many of the victims were employees at a state-run bank near the Iranian Embassy. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The Spanish embassy building suffered "considerable damage" but nobody was injured, the Spanish government said.

The attackers wore suicide vests and drove cars laden with explosives, said Maj. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi, a spokesman for the city's operations command center. Guards at the Egyptian Consulate opened fire on one of the attackers as he drove toward them, but they were unable to



stop him.

At least two other planned attacks were thwarted.

Security forces fatally shot a man wearing a suicide belt before he could detonate a fourth bomb-rigged car near the former Germany Embassy, which is now a bank, al-Moussawi said. A fifth would-be bomber was captured on his way to the area where two of the explosions happened, said a senior Iraqi security official. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

While overall violence has dropped considerably in Iraq since 2006 and 2007, the ability of insurgents to carry out well-planned attacks against prominent targets shows that significant security lapses remain. Many fear such attacks will complicate American efforts to speed up troop withdrawals in the coming months.

On Friday, gunmen trying to pass themselves off as U.S. and Iraqi soldiers raided a Sunni village outside Baghdad and killed at least 24 people in an execution-style attack, apparently targeting a Sunni group that revolted against al-Qaida in Iraq.

The killings were reminiscent of those that plagued Iraq at the height of the sectarian bloodshed of 2006 and 2007, when men, sometimes dressed in police or army uniforms, snatched people from their homes at night.

After Sunday's attacks, U.S. military spokesman Capt. Jay Ostrich said American forces, including explosives disposal teams, were assisting Iraqi troops at the government's request. He said the U.S. military is "ready to support any further requests for assistance" from Iraqi authorities.

Sunday's bombings were among the worst this year, but there have been deadlier attacks recently.

Late last month, twin bombings near a restaurant north of Baghdad killed 57. On Feb. 1, a female suicide bomber killed at least 54 people when she detonated explosives hidden beneath a cloak while mingling among Shiite pilgrims on the outskirts of Baghdad.

On Jan. 25, suicide bombings of three hotels favored by Western journalists killed more than 40 people, and on Dec. 8, a wave of coordinated attacks targeted high-profile government sites in Baghdad, killing at least 127.

Immigration turque: Erdogan à Paris prône l'intégration, pas l'assimilation

© AFP - Lionel Bonaventure

Le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a appelé mercredi soir, à la fin de sa visite à Paris, les Turcs de France à "s'intégrer" et à demander la double nationalité pour être les "diplomates" de la Turquie en Europe, mais s'est prononcé contre "l'assimilation".

"Pour l'intégration, il n'y a pas de problème, mais je suis contre l'assimilation", a lancé M. Erdogan à environ 6.000 Turcs venus l'entendre prononcer un discours fleuve dans une salle de concert parisienne.

"Personne ne peut vous demander d'être assimilés. Pour moi, le fait de demander l'assimilation est un crime contre l'humanité, personne ne peut vous dire: +renonce à tes valeurs+", a-t-il dit à ses auditeurs drapés de



drapeaux rouges au croissant et à l'étoile blanche.

En revanche le Premier ministre turc, venu à Paris plaider une fois de plus en faveur de l'adhésion de son pays à l'Union européenne, a appelé ses compatriotes à "s'intégrer" en France et dans les pays où ils vivent pour qu'"en Europe les prénoms turcs" augmentent.

"Vous êtes devenus un pont entre

la Turquie et l'Europe", a-t-il expliqué alors que la France, comme l'Allemagne, est opposée à une adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, redoutant l'arrivée dans l'Union d'un pays de 71 millions d'habitants, en majorité musulmans.

"Chacun d'entre vous êtes les diplomates de la Turquie, chacun, s'il vous plaît, apprenez la langue du pays dans lequel vous vivez, soyez actifs dans la vie culturelle, sociale du pays où vous vivez", a-t-il dit à l'adresse des nombreuses familles présentes.

"La France vous a donné le droit à la double nationalité: pourquoi vous ne la demandez pas? Ne soyez pas réticents, ne soyez pas timides, utilisez le droit que la France vous donne. Prendre un passeport français ne vous fait pas perdre votre identité turque", a-t-il poursuivi.



8 AVRIL 2010

Recep Erdogan à Paris, tête haute et verbe franc

VISITE Du Proche-Orient à l'UE, le leader turc a martelé ses convictions.

C'est la première visite officielle à Paris du Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, depuis le début des négociations d'adhésion de son pays à l'Union européenne, même s'il était venu en juillet 2007 au sommet inaugural de l'Union pour la Méditerranée. Cette fois, l'occasion est la clôture de la saison turque en France, marquée par plus de 600 manifestations.

Le leader de l'AKP, le parti islamo-conservateur au pouvoir depuis 2002, a tenu pour l'occasion à rappeler haut et fort le poids de son pays à un président français hostile à l'intégration pleine et entière d'Ankara dans l'UE. «La question de l'adhésion n'est plus un objet de débat: la Turquie a entamé et poursuit ses négociations et une majorité des 27 nous soutient», a expliqué Erdogan à un groupe de journalistes relevant que «la Turquie remplit déjà beaucoup plus de critères que certains des Etats mem-

bres, qu'il s'agisse de critères politiques ou des critères économiques». Et il assure: «Je pense que Nicolas Sarkozy peut réviser son approche.» Ce der-

nier a promis de se rendre en Turquie au début de la présidence française du G20 en novembre.

Majeur. Mais c'est surtout la nouvelle dimension d'acteur diplomatique majeur sur la scène moyen-orientale qu'a voulu affirmer Erdogan avec le verbe haut dont il est coutumier. Ses dénonciations de la politique israélienne, lui valent depuis deux ans une popularité sans précédent pour un leader turc dans le monde arabe. C'est sur cette veine qu'il a à nouveau joué hier. «Israël est la principale menace pour la paix régionale», a-t-il déclaré, affirmant: «Si un pays fait un usage disproportionné de la force en Palestine ou à Gaza, utilise des bombes au phos-



phore, nous n'allons pas lui dire bravo.» Il s'est référé au rapport Goldstone sur l'opération «Plomb durci»: «Ce texte est clair

et c'est un juif qui l'a écrit», a insisté le leader turc.

Interrogé sur les sanctions contre l'Iran, et son programme nucléaire que Paris et Washington dénoncent comme militaire, Erdogan est revenu à la charge contre l'Etat hébreu. «Il est hors de question de mettre en accusation l'Iran sur la base de simples probabilités alors que des pays de la région qui ont l'arme nucléaire ne font l'objet d'aucune mesure, seulement parce qu'ils ne sont pas signataires du traité de non-prolifération», a-t-il martelé. Rappelant que les sanctions déjà prises par deux fois contre Téhéran sont quotidiennement violées par ceux qui les ont imposées, dont les Etats-Unis et les Européens.

Le dossier arménien, autre point de litige avec Paris, a aussi été évoqué. Le processus de normalisation entre Ankara et Erevan a été lancé à l'automne avec la signature à Zurich de protocoles qui devraient aboutir à la réouverture de la frontière. Mais pour le moment tout reste bloqué. Le texte n'a pas été donné au Parlement pour ratification et Ankara veut des gestes de l'Arménie à propos du Haut-Karabakh, enclave arménienne en Azerbaïdjan turcophone.

«Mémoire». Erdogan assure vouloir aller de l'avant. Mais toute forme d'excuse ou de reconnaissance du génocide de 1915-1917 est exclue: «La Turquie ne cherche pas à imposer sa propre mémoire à d'autres et il ne faut pas que d'autres cherchent à lui imposer la leur. Si cela est acquis, je crois que cette question [celle de la normalisation avec l'Arménie, ndlr] se résoudra plus facilement.»

MARC SEMO

A Paris, le premier ministre turc campe sur ses positions à propos de l'Iran et d'Israël

La Turquie a sa propre vision des questions de sécurité internationale. Sur l'Iran, le Moyen-Orient, la prolifération nucléaire, elle se fait le porte-voix d'une opinion musulmane qui voit en Israël le principal fauteur de troubles. Pays membre de l'OTAN et candidat à l'Union européenne, dirigé depuis 2002 par les « islamistes modérés » du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), la Turquie diversifie ses attaches diplomatiques et se glisse dans le camp des pays du « Sud ». Celui des pays qui entendent faire front contre des Occidentaux en mai, lors de la conférence d'examen du traité de non-prolifération (TNP) de 1968, clef de voûte de l'ordre mondial en matière nucléaire.

Cet affichage d'émancipation de l'allié turc était bien manifeste lors de la visite à Paris, mercredi 7 avril, du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accompagné de son ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, l'idéologue d'une diplomatie de puissance régionale émergente et ambitieuse. Lors d'une rencontre avec la presse dans un hôtel parisien, quelques heures avant son déjeuner avec Nicolas Sarkozy à l'Élysée, le premier ministre turc a martelé son message. Qui diffèrait de l'approche française sur plusieurs enjeux majeurs.

A propos d'Israël. « Israël est la principale menace aujourd'hui sur la paix régionale », déclare M. Erdogan, devenu coutumier de ce type de diatribe depuis la guerre de Gaza (décembre 2008-janvier 2009). Il dénonce la « politique de provocations permanentes » des constructions de colonies et interpelle : « Lisez le rapport Gold-

tone, c'est un juif et son rapport est clair ! », en parlant de l'enquête commanditée par l'ONU sur l'offensive israélienne sur Gaza.



tone, c'est un juif et son rapport est clair ! », en parlant de l'enquête commanditée par l'ONU sur l'offensive israélienne sur Gaza.

A propos de l'Iran. Ce pays, commente M. Erdogan dit « que son programme nucléaire est uniquement civil. L'AIEA (Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique, le bras de vérification de l'ONU) parle de probabilités. On ne peut pas mettre un pays en accusation sur la base de probabilités ».

Et de déployer tout un argumentaire qui préfigure les débats de la conférence du TNP. « Israël possède de l'arme nucléaire mais n'adhère pas au TNP », observe ainsi M. Erdogan. « Est-ce que cela veut dire que ceux qui n'ont pas signé le TNP sont dans une position privilégiée ? » interroge-t-il, à moitié ironique.

Un interlocuteur difficile pour Nicolas Sarkozy. Or la Turquie, membre du G20, compte. D'autant plus qu'elle siège actuel-

lement au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, et que sa coopération est recherchée pour parvenir à une résolution de sanctions contre l'Iran, nouvelle étape des efforts diplomatiques menés par Barack Obama et les Européens pour tenter d'enrayer la course nucléaire de l'Iran et ses potentiels corollaires régionaux. C'est d'ailleurs un des grands non-dits de la visite à Paris de M. Erdogan : la Turquie, si d'aventure l'Iran se nucléarisait, pourrait-elle être tentée de suivre

le même chemin comme le pensent certains experts ?

M. Erdogan faisait étape en France avant de se rendre à Washington au sommet sur la sécurité nucléaire organisé par M. Obama. Il a recueilli de Nicolas Sarkozy une réponse positive à l'invitation de se rendre en visite bilatérale en Turquie, une vieille proposition faite par Ankara aux chefs d'Etat français depuis l'époque du général De Gaulle, mais à laquelle aucun, pas même Jacques Chirac, n'avait donné satisfaction. Face à de grandes incertitudes stratégiques, une éclaircie est-elle possible avec Nicolas Sarkozy, qui, vu d'Ankara, réduit la Turquie à un thème-repoussoir auprès de l'électorat français ? Les deux dirigeants se sont abstenus de tenir une conférence de presse à l'issue de leur discussion. ■

Natalie Nougayrède

Surmonter les différends avec l'Arménie

En visite à Paris, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a déclaré à la presse, mercredi 7 avril, qu'il avait adressé une lettre au président arménien soulignant la détermination de son gouvernement à faire aboutir le processus de réconciliation. « Nous serons toujours fidèles aux signatures que nous avons apposées. Il est hors de question pour nous de reculer, à moins d'une situation extraordinaire »,

a-t-il dit. Des sources diplomatiques turques ont indiqué qu'un émissaire turc devait « explorer les moyens de surmonter », avec ses interlocuteurs arméniens, les différends sur le processus de ratification des protocoles signés. Ces protocoles prévoient des relations diplomatiques et la réouverture de la frontière commune. Ils doivent être ratifiés par les deux Parlements, un processus qui traîne en longueur.



Turkish Parliament passes bill allowing Kurdish campaigning

ANKARA - Daily News Parliament Bureau

The bill stipulates that campaigning in Turkish language is 'essential' but it does not apply a penalty of imprisonment for campaigning in languages other than Turkish. Both verbal and written campaigning in non-Turkish languages will thus be allowed for political parties during election periods.

The ruling government has passed a bill allowing political parties to campaign in Kurdish during election periods in a gesture to Turkey's pro-Kurdish party ahead of the parliamentary debate on the constitutional reform package.

Submitted by ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, deputy Haluk Ipek, the draft bill anticipates changes to the election law and was approved in the early hours of Thursday.

The bill states that campaigning in the Turkish language is "essential" but did not bring any penalty of imprisonment for campaigning in languages other than Turkish. Both verbal and written campaigning in non-Turkish languages will thus be allowed for political parties during election periods. Campaigning in Kurdish is among the main demands of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP.

Campaigning will be possible in open areas for two hours after the sun sets, and political parties and independent candidates will be allowed to campaign in their election offices until 11 p.m., according to the bill.

The parties and candidates will be able to attend programs

like panel discussions or interviews on radio and television through live or delayed broadcasts until 24 hours before voting stations open.

It will be forbidden to campaign through e-mail or by sending voice, video or written messages to mobile or fixed phones. In the 10-day period before election day, it will be forbidden to publish or distribute any sort of verbal or visual public opinion surveys, questionnaires, predictions and mini-referendums that can potentially affect citizens' votes.

During election periods, handing out gifts and giveaways, other than brochures, flyers, party flags, posters, CDs and DVDs, will be forbidden. The campaign period for billboards, meanwhile, was extended from 20 to 30 days. Advertisements and commercials will also be exempt from fees and taxes.

Wood ballot boxes will no longer be used in line with the new arrangements. The ballot boxes will be transparent, heat-proof and impact-resistant plastic. The inner parts of polling booths will not be seen while the voting envelopes will be much larger. At the same time, the envelopes will be a different color for every election. Furthermore, talking on a mobile phone is forbidden wherever ballot box officials are discharging their duties.

Without an identity card, a citizen will not be permitted to vote while voters will not be allowed to enter a ballot booth with a mobile phone or a camera.

TODAYS ZAMAN

10 April 2010

Zaza, Kurdish offered as elective courses

ALI HAYDAR GÖZLÜ / TUN-
CELI

In a move that could be seen as the fruit of the government's democratic initiative to expand the rights of previously disadvantaged Kurds, Tunceli University has begun offering Kurdish and Zaza language courses as electives.

The rector of the university, Professor Durmus Boztug, said the courses began in the spring term of the 2009-2010 academic year. Recalling that Mardin's Artuklu University's Living Languages

Institute is offering Kurdish courses for graduate students only, Boztug said: "Tunceli University is the only university that is extending its full support to the democratic initiative. It is also the only university that offers Kurdish as an elective course for graduate and undergraduate students." Noting that 600 students are currently attending Kurdish courses while 400 are enrolled in Zaza, a related language, he said an instructor whose mother tongue is Kurdish is giving the Kurdish courses, while Zaza is taught by a retired Turkish teacher whose mother tongue is Zaza.

Speaking Kurdish was banned in

Turkey until 1991. Prodded by the European Union, which has been pressing Turkey to strengthen Kurdish rights, the country has allowed private language schools to teach Kurdish and some Kurdish-language radio and TV stations to operate. In January, the government launched a 24-hour state-run Kurdish television station. In a gesture of goodwill to Kurdish citizens, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also uttered a few words in Kurdish on the day the station was launched.

Sadr followers snub Allawi and Maliki. Who will lead Iraq?

With followers of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr saying they support neither Nouri al-Maliki nor Iyad Allawi, the top two vote-getters continue to jostle for allies to form a coalition that will lead Iraq.

By Scott Peterson, Staff writer, Alice Fordham, Correspondent

Istanbul, Turkey; and Baghdad —

As Iraq's politicians jockey for power to form a new government, Iraqis on the streets hope that their vote in the March 7 elections will help end sectarianism and violence after seven years of insecurity. "We have experience of the religious parties and it just raises tensions," says Bassim Mohamed, grabbing a bite at a Baghdad sandwich stall on his way home.

That's why he supports secular challenger Iyad Allawi, whose alliance narrowly beat Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite bloc. But minibus driver Mohamed Qarghil sees Mr. Maliki as the best man for the job.

"He has achieved security and stability," says Mr. Qarghil, who lived through the ethnic cleansing of Baghdad neighborhoods by Sunni and Shiite militias. "We noticed the change. We now can go out and move around different areas of the city."

The view of many Iraqis on both sides of the Maliki-Allawi divide may be summed up by Sundus Abbas, a Sunni student. "Religion should be between a man and God," she says. "The state is for everyone."

Both Maliki and Mr. Allawi tapped into that sentiment, campaigning as staunch Iraqi nationalists — despite long exiles from Iraq — and seeking to distance themselves from sectarian ties (see box).

"Both of them tried to play the same music — to revive Iraqi nationalism," says Mustafa Alani at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, adding that Iraqis are tired of religious parties. "That is why both Allawi and Maliki won a high percentage of the vote, because even Maliki tried to detach himself from the religious groups."

Maliki cries foul, UN calls election fair

Allawi's alliance cut across sectarian lines, winning 91 seats to Maliki's 89, but neither won the outright majority required to form a government.

"You could argue that Sunnis and Shiites both want a strong state with a secular ideology, but they are voting for different



Supporters of anti-American radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr cast their votes in Baghdad, Iraq, April 2. Followers of Mr. Sadr say they support neither Nouri al-Maliki nor Iyad Allawi. (Hadi Mizban/AP)

parties to deliver it," says Toby Dodge, an Iraq specialist at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies.

While Allawi, as the winner, would normally get first dibs on forming a government, Maliki has challenged that right. So both leaders are jostling to ally with other parties that will give them at least 163 seats in parliament — and the right to lead Iraq.

Whoever takes the helm will shape the future of Iraq's nascent democracy. It will also help determine how Baghdad addresses tensions with the Kurds, who seek to expand their autonomy to include the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and a greater share of oil profits.

Maliki has charged massive fraud since slipping behind Allawi in the final tally, calling for a recount of every ballot to prevent violence and threatening to use the Iraqi military to do so. Security forces under Maliki's control have also issued arrest warrants for four winning candidates on Allawi's slate, while a controversial de-Baathification commission ruled others ineligible to take their seats. Allawi decried the moves as political ploys. Allawi has also accused Shiite Iran of meddling by hosting postelection meetings with Kurdish and Shiite factions, including Maliki's bloc.

On March 31, the United Nations called on all parties to accept the election results and "avoid inflammatory rhetoric and actions," noting that international observers had confidence in the election's "overall integrity."

Potential coalition with Kurds, Moqtada al-Sadr

Among possible coalition partners for Maliki and Allawi are the followers of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Though Sadrist — who will control more than half of the 70 seats won by their Shiite alliance — share Maliki's Shiite religion, they remain bitter over Maliki-ordered assaults on their militia in 2008.

But today, following a two-day referendum among Mr. Sadr's supporters held Friday and Saturday, Sadrist officials said they had chosen former prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari as their nominee to lead Iraq. Jaafar Mohammed al-Sadr, a relative of the cleric whose name was on the ballot, finished second. Maliki finished fourth and Allawi finished fifth among the 1.43 million votes cast. It is not legally binding.

Kurdish parties, which won more than 50 seats, likewise have issues with Maliki's forays against Kurdish peshmerga, or militia, and are worried about both men's strong Iraqi nationalism.

Maliki's "overt threat of violence if he doesn't get his own way has alienated even more the people who would need to back him" in a coalition government, says Mr. Dodge. But Dodge is also unsure that Allawi has matured as a leader since getting bumped out in 2005. "I'm yet to be convinced that he has the modesty and diplomatic skills to form a working coalition."

Baghdad blasts revive old fears

BAGHDAD

BY TIMOTHY WILLIAMS
AND YASMINE MOUSA

Deadly blasts shook Baghdad for the second time in three days on Tuesday, deepening fears that Iraq is teetering on the edge of a new outbreak of insurgent and sectarian violence, officials said.

At least seven bombings of residential areas of the capital, both Shiite and Sunni, killed 35 people and wounded more than 140 Tuesday. The violence came against a backdrop of continuing political instability after parliamentary elections March 7 rendered a fractured result that has left no single group with the ability to form a government, forcing a scramble for coalitions.

A similar political void after the 2005 parliamentary vote sparked months of violence and preceded Iraq's bloody sectarian warfare of 2006 and 2007, from which the country has only begun to emerge.

There are also new concerns that the country's army and police may drift back into sectarianism amidst the political tumult.

"The security forces have lost direction," said Baha al-Araje, a Sadrist member of Parliament. "They don't know what will become of them. They are scared they will lose their positions if the government changes. What we need now is a kind of selflessness among all the blocs to quickly form the next government."

The explosions Tuesday came after at least 30 people were killed and more than 240 were wounded Sunday in attacks on diplomatic buildings in Baghdad, including the Iranian Embassy.

Qassim Atta, a spokesman for Baghdad's security network, said Tuesday that the violence represented a war in which insurgents connected to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia were seeking to destabilize Iraq amid its postelection confusion. In the past, Iraqi and U.S. officials have said that that Sunni insurgent group had been all but routed.

"We are in a state of war with what remains of Al Qaeda," he said, referring to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, whose links to Al Qaeda, if any, are uncertain.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki has made no public statements about the spate of attacks, though he held a meeting with his top security officials on Sunday about the violence. U.S. officials in Iraq said they had not been asked by the government for assistance.

Ali al-Dabbagh, Mr. Maliki's chief spokesman, sought on Tuesday to distance the government from the bombings, even though the military officials



Bombings in residential parts of Baghdad caused more than 175 casualties Tuesday, two days after attacks killed or wounded 270 people.

responsible for securing the capital are appointed by Mr. Maliki and answer to him directly.

"Ask the military and whoever is responsible for the security situation," Mr. Dabbagh said during a brief interview by telephone. "I have nothing else to say."

The bombings Tuesday hit Baghdad from its southern tier to its northwestern outskirts, beginning about 9 a.m. and continuing until about 11:30 a.m., Mr. Atta said. In one instance, a parked car packed with explosives was detonated in a Shiite neighborhood in southern Baghdad.

At least five bombs were placed inside apartment buildings, an unusual tactic. In at least two of those cases, an apartment or store had been rented out in recent days by men who had paid unusually large sums of money, according to people who live in the neighborhood.

Mr. Atta said at least two other bombs had been successfully defused by Iraqi security forces.

Violence over the past several days also claimed the lives of an extended family of 25 Sunni Arab men and women who had their hands bound before they were shot or had their throats slit in a village south of Baghdad on Friday. Their killers wore uniforms that resembled those of U.S. and Iraqi security forces.

And on Monday, six Shiite Arabs from one family were shot and killed in Wasit Province, east of Baghdad.

The State of Law alliance, the political organization of Mr. Maliki, a Shiite, won

89 seats in last month's parliamentary election, while the secular Iraqiya coalition led by Ayad Allawi won 91 seats.

The groups have held competing talks with smaller parties during the past two weeks in an effort to form a larger coalition to win 163 of the 325 seats in Parliament needed to form a new government.

On Tuesday, Mr. Allawi had some of his harshest remarks yet about Mr. Maliki's government.

"We want a government of partners that is functional, not like the one now that can not make decisions," he said, speaking while donating blood for the injured. "They say they are a national government, but they are not."

"The government keeps saying, 'Let the Americans leave; we are prepared.' What is 'prepared'? The security forces are prepared? I've not seen any preparation."

U.S. combat troops are scheduled to leave Iraq by Aug. 31, and all U.S. forces are to withdraw by the end of next year.

Omar al-Jawshy and Riyadh Mohammed contributed reporting.

Iraq, Iran, and Sistani

Robert Dreyfuss / The Nation (USA)

AYATOLLAH ALI SISTANI, the Persian cleric who wields great influence in Iraqi politics, has been quiet lately. Too quiet, they might say in a horror movie.

Sistani, of course has cultivated a reputation as a "quietist," that is, as a cleric who does not believe in a noisy role for the Shiite clergy in political affairs, as -- you'll note -- is the opposite of the situation that prevails next door in Iran. There, the clergy rules under a questionable, or bogus, notion of Rule of the Jurisprudent, with the jurisprudent being a fancy word for a learned mullah. The fact that the mullahs in Iran are benighted and decidedly not learned hasn't deterred them from advancing the "Rule" idea, which was dragged out of obscurity by Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the 1979 revolution.

Sistani reportedly does not subscribe to Khomeini's Rule, also called the *velayat-e faqih* doctrine. But if he doesn't, he doesn't say so. Apparently, his quietism extends even to being quiet about quietism.

Lately, though, Sistani is butting in once again in Iraqi politics. When they aren't flocking to Tehran to figure out the makeup of the next Iraqi government, they're flocking to Najaf, where the crusty, bearded old Sistani is holding court. The latest to make the pilgrimage is President Jalal Talabani, who's the Kurdish (non-Shiite) leader closest to Iran. (Back in the 1990s, when Talabani and Masoud Barzani engaged in a mini-civil war, Talabani got Iran's backing and Barzani sided with Saddam Hussein.)

An important Associated Press story now suggests that behind the scenes jockeying is underway to get ready for a successor to Sistani, 83, and that Iran is deeply involved. Iran's role is no surprise, since they've had Sistani hemmed in for years and since Iran has been quietly assembling chips in Najaf, part of its overall effort at acquiring political muscle in Iraq. Reports AP:

Behind the scenes in this holy city, Shiite clerics are quietly intriguing over who will succeed the sect's most revered and politically influential leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in a tussle that circles around money and foreign meddling as much as knowledge and piety.

The 83-year-old al-Sistani's departure from the scene would dramatically change Iraq's political landscape. There are already signs that neighboring Iran is seeking to increase its influence in Najaf and has long-term hopes of seeing a figure closer to Tehran's clerical leadership eventually ascend to al-Sistani's position.

Since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein, al-Sistani has used his patriarchal standing to keep stability throughout Iraq's shaky shift to democratic rule by urging Shiites to stay away from any violence. At the same time, he has firmly promoted the rise and consolidation of Shiite power by urging his followers to turn out strongly in every election. ...

Aides say al-Sistani has a clean bill of health, though a heart condition sent him to London for treatment in 2004. But his advanced age has been enough to spark maneuvering behind the scenes in Najaf, the cloistered holy city south of Baghdad that is the Shiite world's foremost seat of theological scholarship, with dozens of religious schools.

Whoever replaces the Iranian-born al-Sistani could play a role in shaping the future of Iraq and the direction of its recently empowered Shiite majority.

That makes the position a lure for Iran as it seeks to boost its position while American forces begin their withdrawal, due to be completed by the end of 2011. Iran already wields consi-

derable influence, largely because most Iraqi Shiite politicians lived there for years while in exile during Saddam's rule. ...

Still, insiders in Najaf say Tehran is beefing up its presence in the city, which has long maintained a stubborn independence from Iran's Shiite theological centers.

"There are sometimes attempts by hidden hands to meddle in the affairs of the *marjaiyah*," said Sheik Ali al-Najafi, the son and top aide to Pakistani-born Grand Ayatollah Bashir al-Najafi, one of the city's four top clerics. *Marjaiyah* is Arabic for the collective Shiite spiritual leadership.

"It is to be expected that foreign nations meddle in Najaf," he said, in an implicit reference to Iran.

An aide to al-Sistani said top clerics from Iran, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have recently opened representative offices in Najaf, with some collecting the Shiite tax known as "*khoms*," or "fifth," and enrolling students in seminaries run by their representatives.

"When the Americans leave, the Iranians will play with us as they please," said the al-Sistani aide, mirroring fears in Najaf and elsewhere in Iraq that Tehran's influence in post-U.S. Iraq would grow. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

Money is also a factor in the choice of a successor to al-Sistani, say several Najaf insiders, who are in daily contact with the city's clerical leadership. They spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of Najaf's internal dealings.

For example, seminary students -- there are an estimated 7,000 in Najaf, from across the Shiite world -- are mostly poor and depend on the city's top clerics for food and housing.

Clerics who offer better living conditions and higher stipends attract more students, translating into a wider base of support.

Al-Sistani holds the title of "*al-marja al-akbar*," or the "greatest object of emulation," and is venerated in Iraq and around the Shiite world. The world's estimated 200-plus million Shiites can choose what cleric they follow, but even among those who have their own "*marja*," al-Sistani holds considerable weight.

Choosing a successor is a complicated, informal process, without clear requirements beyond basic qualifications like knowledge and piety. Dozens of senior and middle-ranking clerics known as the "*experts*" take part, privately debating their choice -- and their view carries a great deal of weight.

Two grand ayatollahs in Najaf are seen as the top candidates to succeed him: The Afghan-born Mohammed Ishaq al-Fayadh and the Iraqi Mohammed Said al-Hakim. Both, however, are old and may only be interim figures.

The 80-year-old al-Fayadh is widely seen as the more likely. He has lived in Najaf for the past 40 years, enjoys only a fraction of the worldwide support al-Sistani commands. But the Najaf insiders say he is the closest to al-Sistani from among the city's grand ayatollahs.

Al-Sistani has kept his distance from Iran's regime and, significantly, does not subscribe to the religious principle on which the Islamic republic is based: "*velayat al-faqeeh*," or the right of the most learned cleric to hold political power.

Al-Fayadh is known to conditionally subscribe to that doctrine, though that does not necessarily mean he supports Iran, or that Tehran would prefer him in the post.

More likely, Iran is looking long-term, hoping that by building its influence among Najaf's lower clerics, it can ensure a figure close to its ruling clergy eventually rises to the top.

Since there is no figure with al-Sistani's stature, it is possible a weak or ailing successor moves in as a stopgap. The insiders say it is also possible that no one takes al-Sistani's title, and the three other grand ayatollahs continue to function the same way as they do now.

REUTERS 

Turkish court convicts Kurdish politician for speech

ISTANBUL, April 8, 2010 (Reuters) -

KURDISH POLITICIAN Leyla Zana, a former Nobel Peace Prize nominee, was sentenced to three years in prison by a Turkish court on Thursday, the latest in a series of convictions against her for spreading terrorist propaganda.

State-run Anatolian news agency said she was convicted by the court in the southeastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir for speeches she made at a Kurdish political congress and a protest meeting in 2008.

Zana and her lawyer did not attend the hearing. They were not

immediately available to comment on the verdict.

Courts in Turkey have imposed a series of prison sentences on Zana in recent years under anti-terrorism laws, but she is still at liberty as these cases are at the appeal stage.

She drew international attention in 1994 when she was convicted by a state security court of having links to the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla group after she spoke in Kurdish at her parliamentary oath ceremony.

She was released in 2004 after Turkey's appeals court overturned her conviction.

More than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK since the rebels took up arms in 1984.

Zana was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in the 1990s and was awarded the 1995 European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought.

Hurriyet DailyNews.com  April 9, 2010

Turkish business association visits North Iraq

ISTANBUL – **Hürriyet Daily News**

The Young Businessmen Association of Turkey pays a visit to northern Iraq in an attempt to draw attention to the commercial opportunities in the region. Northern Iraq, which has strong cash power due to its share of oil income, is in need of investments almost in all fields, according to Lütfü Küçük, chairperson of the association

Turkish business people looking to invest in other countries should consider northern Iraq, according to the head of a Turkish business association following a recent visit to the region.

In order to designate commercial opportunities, draw young entrepreneurs' attention to northern Iraq and secure corporate cooperation, the Young Businessmen Association of Turkey, or TUGIAD, visited Arbil from April 2 to 5. The program aimed to garner information on sectoral needs, demands and investment opportunities as well as incentive applications and future investment plans.

The official talks and bilateral meetings with Turkish business people investing in Arbil have signaled that Turkey is delayed, said TUGIAD Chairman Lütfü Küçük.

"Our businessmen that set off to discover the world for market diversifi-

cation should analyze northern Iraq as well. Words are not enough to express; one should go and see," said Küçük.

The visit took place prior to the formation of the northern Iraq Trade Committee, which the association plans to organize in upcoming months. The preliminary committee program covered the Süleymaniye, Arbil and Duhok regions.

The TUGIAD committee visited the northern Iraq regional administration with Arbil Consul General Aydin Selcen and recently nominated Arbil Commercial Counsel Deniz Kutlu. The committee also had talks with Sinan Celebi, minister of industry and trade, and Safeen M. Dizayee, minister of education.

Call to assess opportunities

Arbil Consulate General and the Commercial Counselor, which was opened in April, is a delayed but proper decision, according to Küçük, and will provide significant support to businesspeople planning to invest in the region.

TUGIAD committee's consultation meeting with Selcen and Kutlu focused on the positive impacts of the Turkish Airlines flight to launch soon. The flight is supposed to motivate the Turkish public and private brands to open branches in northern Iraq, par-

ticularly in Arbil, as well as establishing a Young Entrepreneurs Association in the region.

"The common vision of the businesspeople living in the region, the regional government's and official representatives is to secure mutual friendship and cooperation with Turkey. Our mission is to become a leader in the region as we deserve," Küçük said, expressing the need to adopt a "little problem, more trade" strategy with northern Iraq.

Küçük said northern Iraq requires investment in almost all fields, particularly in infrastructure, construction, building materials, energy generation, distribution of resources, agriculture, stock breeding, tourism, food, logistics, real estate value assessment, health services and industry. Besides these opportunities, he said, there are also relatively weaker lines, such as supporting and protecting domestic production, property, supplier industry and the supply of qualified personnel.

The advantage that differentiates northern Iraq from other potential markets, according to Küçük, is its cash power. Northern Iraq is a significant financial power as 17 percent of the country's oil revenues flow in the region, Küçük said. Inspired by this, the regional administration has launched improvement and development initiative.

Before leaving Arbil, the TUGIAD committee also visited Arbil International Airport, constructed by Makyol-Cengiz Insaat, and will start operating soon

AFP

LE CHEF KURDE IRAKIEN BARZANI CHEZ LE ROI ABDALLAH D'ARABIE SAOUDITE

RYAD, 12 avril 2010 (AFP)

LE PRÉSIDENT DU KURDISTAN irakien, Massoud Barzani, a rencontré lundi à Ryad le roi Abdallah, au lendemain d'une rencontre du souverain saoudien avec le président irakien, le Kurde Jalal Talabani.

La rencontre a permis d'évoquer des "questions d'intérêt commun", s'est contentée d'indiquer l'agence officielle de presse saoudienne Spa.

Dimanche, le roi Abdallah s'est prononcé en faveur d'un gouvernement représentant tous les Irakiens en recevant à Ryad M. Talabani.

"Le souhait de l'Arabie et l'aspiration de tous les Arabes sont de voir tous les Irakiens participer à la conduite du pays. C'est le message qu'il entend transmettre (à tous les responsables irakiens) qui visiteront le royaume", a-t-il dit à son hôte, selon un communiqué de la présidence irakienne.

Le souverain faisait allusion à la participation des sunnites qui ont voté massivement pour l'ancien Premier ministre Iyad Allawi.

Selon le roi Abdallah, son pays "se tient à égale distance de toutes les parties (irakiennes) et soutient l'Irak sans vouloir interférer dans ses affaires internes".

Pour sa part, le président Talabani a discuté avec son interlocuteur "de la situation post-électorale et des négociations en cours pour former le nouveau gouvernement", a ajouté le communiqué.

Les élections du 7 mars ont donné sensiblement le même nombre de sièges au chef du gouvernement sortant Nouri al-Maliki et à l'ancien Premier ministre laïc Iyad Allawi, avec un léger avantage à ce dernier. Le système politique oblige le prochain chef de gouvernement à constituer une large coalition.



AFP

TURQUIE: DES KURDES DÉNONCENT LES ARRESTATIONS, METTENT EN GARDE LE POUVOIR

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 avril 2010 (AFP)

HUIT MOIS APRÈS l'annonce de "mesures courageuses" du gouvernement turc en faveur des Kurdes, des responsables de cette communauté disent leur déception, dénoncent des arrestations en nombre et mettent en garde contre de nouvelles violences.

"Il y a des dizaines d'arrestations chaque jour. Depuis 1990, je n'ai pas vu une telle répression", affirme à l'AFP Meral Danis Bestas, numéro deux du parti pro-kurde BDP (Parti de la paix et de la démocratie), dans son cabinet d'avocate à Diyarbakir (sud-est de la Turquie).

Depuis un an, plusieurs centaines de personnes, dont de nombreux élus, ont été arrêtées dans les villes kurdes, accusées de liens avec les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Les arrestations se sont accélérées en décembre, alors que le plan gouvernemental dit d'"ouverture démocratique" en faveur des Kurdes disparaissait de l'actualité.

"Cette répression accrue a entraîné un accroissement des départs vers la montagne", ajoute Mme Bestas, sans préciser l'ampleur de ce mouvement vers les bases du PKK.

"Maintenant qu'on arrête tous les politiciens, il est impossible que ceux de la montagne déposent les armes", ajoute-t-elle.

Considéré comme un mouvement terroriste par de nombreux pays, le PKK lance des attaques contre les forces turques à partir du nord de l'Irak. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts en un quart de siècle.

Pour tenter de tirer un trait sur cette "sale guerre" et saper le soutien au PKK chez les 12 à 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie (sur 71 millions d'habitants), le gouvernement a promis en août des "mesures courageuses".

La presse turque a aussi évoqué l'annonce de propositions du chef toujours incontesté du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné à vie.

Mais rien n'est sorti au grand jour de sa prison et les propositions du gouvernement, annoncées en novembre, se sont limitées à l'usage de la langue kurde et à la création de commissions de défense des droits de l'homme.

Enfin, l'"ouverture démocratique" a fait long feu lorsque la Cour constitutionnelle a prononcé en décembre la dissolution du principal parti pro-kurde DTP.

Le BDP a pris le relais du DTP, mais cette interdiction a été suivie d'émeutes dans les villes kurdes.

"L'ouverture démocratique, pour nous, ça ne veut rien dire. L'ouverture, c'est d'arrêter les morts, aussi bien les jeunes dans les montagnes que les jeunes dans l'armée", affirme Ramazan Akcicek, maire du quartier des "450 maisons", près de Diyarbakir, où vivent des milliers de paysans kurdes chassés de leurs villages par la guerre.

"Les gens qui pourraient être utiles sont arrêtés et les autres ne parlent pas", dit une habitante du quartier, tandis que, de la cour d'école proche, on entend garçons et filles crier comme chaque matin d'une seule voix: "Je suis Turc! Je suis honnête! Je suis travailleur!"

"L'ouverture démocratique, ce n'est pas nécessairement un paquet de lois, c'est un processus sur la durée", plaide au contraire Baki Aksoy, numéro un à Diyarbakir du parti gouvernemental AKP, au pouvoir depuis 2002.

Reconnaître la culture, la langue "dans un pays où on a nié l'identité kurde pendant 81 ans, c'est déjà quelque chose", ajoute-t-il.

Nombre d'observateurs estiment ainsi que, si l'"ouverture démocratique" a raté son but, un tabou a bel et bien sauté: aujourd'hui, on parle librement des Kurdes en Turquie.

"Lorsqu'un gouvernement veut vraiment changer les choses dans un domaine aussi lourd, il doit agir dans les trois premiers mois de pouvoir", estime pour sa part le président de la Chambre de commerce de Diyarbakir, Galip Ensarioglu.

"Et il doit être prêt à prendre le risque de perdre les élections".

AFP

DEUX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 avr 2010 (AFP)

DEUX REBELLES KURDES ont été tués et deux autres blessés dans des affrontements mercredi avec l'armée dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont affirmé des sources de sécurité.

Trois soldats ont été blessés, selon les mêmes sources à Diyarbakir (sud-est).

Les combats se sont produits au cours d'une opération de sécurité près d'Eruh, dans la province de Siirt, après que les autorités ont reçu des informations indiquant la présence dans la région de membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie).

Dans un incident séparé survenu dans la province de Sirnak, trois soldats ont été blessés lorsque leur véhicule a été pris pour cible par des tirs, ont annoncé les mêmes sources de sécurité, selon lesquelles le PKK pourrait être à l'origine de l'attaque.



TURQUIE: MOBILISATION EN FAVEUR D'ENFANTS KURDES LOURDEMENT CONDAMNÉS POUR TERRORISME

15 avril 2010 (AFP) De Miichel SAILHAN

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), — Berivan, une jeune Kurde de 16 ans accusée d'avoir participé à une manifestation où on lançait des pierres, pourrait rester sept ans en prison si le gouvernement turc oublie sa promesse de changer la loi comme le réclament des organisations humanitaires.

"Ils m'ont mis un foulard sur le nez (la loi interdit de se cacher le visage lorsqu'il y a une manifestation), ils m'ont prise en photo, m'ont menacée et je n'ai rien pu dire": c'est le message que cette jeune fille a, de sa prison, fait passer à sa mère, explique Kezban Yilmaz, l'avocate de l'Association des droits de l'homme (IHD), basée à Diyarbakir, la grande ville du sud-est.

Comme des centaines d'enfants ou d'adolescents mineurs kurdes, Berivan a été jugée comme une adulte, selon la loi antiterroriste, après une interpellation lors des nombreuses manifestations souvent violentes dans les régions kurdes de Turquie.

C'était le 9 octobre 2009: on manifestait dans plusieurs villes du sud-est contre la détention du chef du mouvement rebelle kurde PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), Abdullah Öcalan, et Berivan était de passage à Batman, en visite chez sa tante...

"Elle n'a rien d'une terroriste. C'est une enfant. Chaque fois que quelqu'un vient la voir, elle croit qu'on vient la chercher pour la sortir de prison!", ajoute Me Yilmaz.

Selon l'IHD, en 2009, 1.300 enfants ont été arrêtés à Diyarbakir, et 100 ans de prison ont été requis contre 13 mineurs détenus actuellement à la prison de Midyat.

"Je connais 450 dossiers de mineurs en cours de jugement dans le cadre de la loi antiterroriste", indique Me Yilmaz.

F.G., 16 ans au moment des faits, a été arrêté en juillet 2008 après une manifestation de colère parce qu'on avait "rasé la tête" du détenu Öcalan, explique son père.

Il a été condamné à sept ans et demi de prison pour jets de pierre sur les forces de sécurité lors de cette manifestation et d'une précédente, le 28 mars 2006.

"Membre ou pas du PKK, on considère qu'il a agi en faveur du PKK", explique son père.



Les parents d'un jeune garçon emprisonné posent devant la prison de Diyarbakir, le 8 avril 2010

"Quand ils sortent de prison, ce sont des militants. Ils se disent: pourquoi est-ce que je suis là? C'est parce que je suis kurde!", affirme le père de M.U., lui aussi condamné pour les mêmes faits à 7 ans de prison, mais en liberté conditionnelle après 10 mois de détention.

"Mon fils n'avait rien à voir avec le PKK, mais il s'est radicalisé. Il a été battu par la police", raconte-t-il avant d'ajouter: "Je préfère qu'il soit dans la montagne (avec le PKK) plutôt qu'en prison..."

"Les gamins voient leurs parents harcelés, battus par la police, c'est pour ça qu'ils lancent des pierres", accuse Behcet Kaya, 55 ans, un des milliers de déplacés par le conflit, qui habite la banlieue de Diyarbakir.

Dans son rapport 2009 sur la Turquie, Amnesty International souligne, en citant les archives officielles, que "des enfants dès 12 ans ont été jugés par des tribunaux pour adultes, selon la même procédure que les adultes, en contravention avec la loi turque de protection de l'enfance et la convention de l'ONU sur les droits des enfants".

Amnesty demande que la loi soit changée et signale aussi des périodes de détention préventive de mineurs qui ont duré plus d'un an, et des témoignages de torture sur mineurs.

Fin 2009, le gouvernement a commencé à discuter avec l'opposition d'une modification de la loi.

Les mineurs ne seraient plus jugés par des tribunaux pour adultes et, au cas par cas, les peines de prison seraient commuées en amendes ou réduites.

Mais le processus est en panne, tout comme un plan annoncé en novembre par le gouvernement pour octroyer plus de droits à la minorité kurde.



UN SOLDAT TURC TUÉ DANS DES AFFRONTEMENTS AVEC LES REBELLES KURDES

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 15 avril 2010 (AFP)

Un soldat turc a été tué et deux autres blessés jeudi dans des accrochages avec les rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont annoncé les autorités locales.

Les affrontements se sont produits pendant une opération de l'armée contre le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, séparatistes kurdes), dans les régions montagneuses de la province de Batman, selon ces sources, qui ont précisé que l'opération se poursuivait.

Deux militants du PKK avaient été tués mercredi dans un accrochage dans la province voisine de Siirt.

Les affrontements entre rebelles et troupes régulières sont fréquents au printemps, après la fonte des neiges, les rebelles étant alors en mesure de quitter leurs bases montagneuses de la Turquie et du nord de l'Irak.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par de nombreux pays, lutte par les armes depuis 1984 pour la défense des droits des Kurdes de Turquie. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts.



UN SOLDAT TURC TUÉ PAR L'EXPLOSION D'UNE MINE DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE

ANKARA, 21 avr 2010 (AFP)

Un soldat turc a été tué et un autre blessé mercredi dans l'explosion d'une mine dans le sud-est de la Turquie, dans la province de Hakkari,

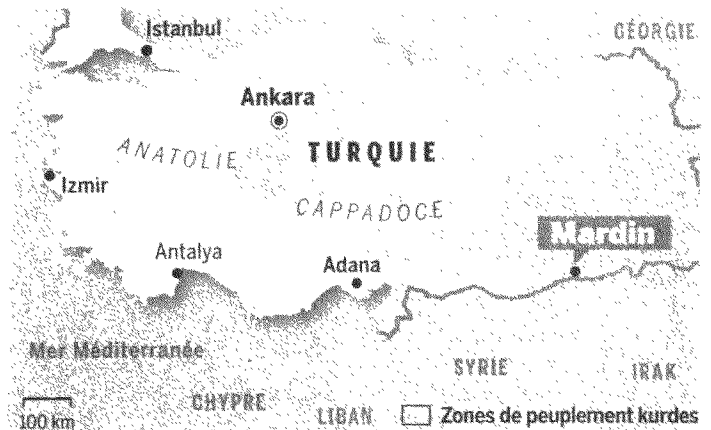
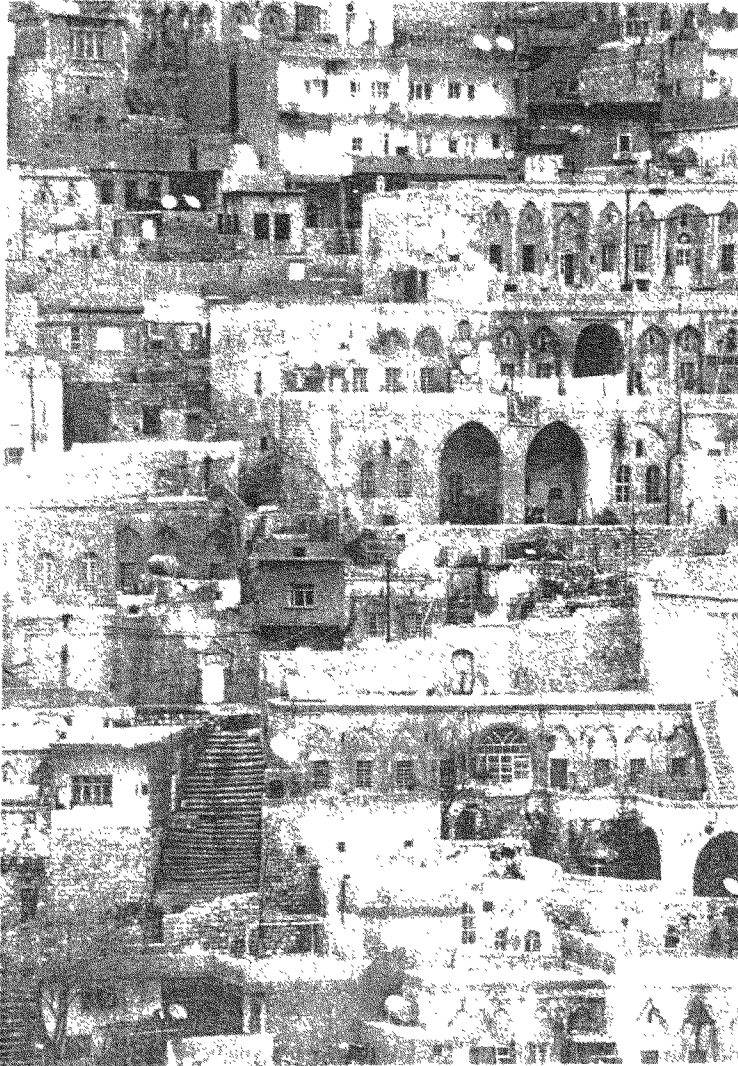
non loin de la frontière avec l'Irak, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolia.

L'explosion a eu lieu lors du passage d'une patrouille de sécurité près de la ville de Semdinli, a ajouté Anatolia.

L'origine de la mine n'a pas été déterminée mais l'utilisation de ces engins explosifs est une technique souvent utilisée par les rebelles du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, séparatistes kurdes) qui luttent par les armes depuis 1984 pour la défense des droits des Kurdes de Turquie.

Mardin, perle de la haute Mésopotamie

Loin des plages d'Antalya, la petite ville du sud-est de la Turquie devrait accueillir un million de visiteurs en 2010



Voyage

Mardin (Turquie)

Envoyé spécial

Assaillie par le printemps, la forteresse de Mardin est envahie par des bataillons de fleurs sauvages jaune safran qui se mêlent au vert des herbes folles et à l'ocre de la roche. Étalées sur les flancs de ce piton rocaillieux, à 1 000 mètres d'altitude, les maisons de pierre rectangulaires de cette petite ville du sud-est de la Turquie, située à 30 kilomètres de la frontière syrienne, se dévoilent sous leur plus beau jour.

Les charmes de Mardin sont longtemps demeurés un secret bien gardé, dans cette région à majorité kurde, quadrillée par les check-points et les garnisons militaires. En 2000, seulement

60 000 étrangers venaient goûter les saveurs des lieux. Dix ans plus tard, la fréquentation atteindra un million de visiteurs annuels.

Les Français aussi commencent à s'intéresser à ce joyau de la Mésopotamie turque, situé hors des sentiers battus, aux confins orientaux du pays. La Saison de la Turquie, qui s'est terminée début avril, leur a permis de découvrir un peu mieux un territoire et une culture infiniment plus vastes que les habituels circuits organisés qui mènent à Istanbul ou sur les plages d'Antalya. Le cap du million de touristes français devrait être franchi en 2010.

Dans les ruelles de Mardin, c'est une autre atmosphère que l'on vient humer. Un enchevêtrement de cultures et de peuples. Historiquement à majorité arabe,

assyro-chaldéenne et arménienne, repeuplée de Turcs et de Kurdes, plus récemment : la mosaïque de Mardin, que la Turquie veut aujourd'hui promouvoir après l'avoir longtemps niée, est tout cela à la fois. Au fil des siècles, les influences se sont mêlées, comme les parfums des épices dans le dédale de venelles du petit bazar central. Les clochers des onze églises de la vieille ville et les neuf minarets des mosquées se fondent gracieusement dans le paysage.

« *Etre de Mardin passe avant toute origine ethnique ou orientation religieuse*, affirme Davut Beliktay, le directeur de l'office du tourisme local, qui arpente quotidiennement sa ville, l'appareil photo en bandoulière. *C'est la cité vivante des civilisations, où l'on parle indifféremment quatre ou cinq langues.* » Cette richesse est en partie restituée dans le musée flambant neuf, ouvert en octobre 2009 par les Sabanci, une puissante famille de mécènes d'Istanbul. La galerie, installée dans une bâtisse ancienne ceinte de verre, retrace plus de 5 000 ans d'histoire. « *Les premières traces de civilisation remontent à 15 000 ans avant J.-C.* », relate même le guide.

Mardin a ensuite vu défiler les Romains, les Byzantins, les Perses, les Abbassides, les Hamdanides, les Seldjoukides... Et surtout les Artoukides, une dynastie turcomane qui régna sur les lieux de 1108 à 1408. C'est sous leur domination que furent construits les hammams et les madrasas, ainsi que les plus belles mosquées de la ville, à commencer par la Grande Mosquée (Ulu Cami), datant du XII^e siècle, avec son minaret sculp-

té et sa cour intérieure où les fidèles viennent faire leurs ablutions à l'ombre des arbres en fleurs.

La ville haute est hérissée de clochers, surplombe la place de la République, percée moderne dans cet ensemble urbain millénaire. Les églises sont syriaques, chaldéennes, arméniennes... La plus ancienne, l'église des Quarante-Martyrs, date de 569.

Autrefois majoritaire, la présence des chrétiens se réduit désormais à quelques dizaines de familles à Mardin. Pas de quoi remplir les nefs. Les Arméniens ont quasiment tous disparu avec le génocide de 1915 et les syriaques sont partis nombreux en France ou en Suède.

Avec le développement du tourisme, les projets se multiplient et redonnent à Mardin un nouveau souffle. L'église Rouge, la principale église arménienne, va être remise sur pied. Les maisons syriaques et artoukides sont restaurées, transformées en hôtels de charme ou en lieu de villégiature pour Turcs aisés.

Le couturier Cemil Ipekçi a ouvert un atelier de la mode dans la vieille ville et une biennale d'art contemporain a vu le jour. Sa deuxième édition sera organisée au mois de juin.

Le potentiel de la ville est convoité. Les Hôtels Hilton vont ouvrir un établissement au pied du rocher et des bâtiments modernes défigurent déjà le paysage. Ce nouvel essor pourrait aussi menacer l'harmonieux équilibre, si le précieux patrimoine de la ville ne fait pas l'objet de mesures de protection rapides. Mardin espère être classé au Patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco d'ici à 2014. ■

Guillaume Perrier

AFP TURQUIE : LES GARDIENS DE VILLAGE FATIGUÉS DE LA "SALE GUERRE" AVEC LA RÉBELLION KURDE

14 avril 2010 (AFP) De Michel SAILHAN

SIIRT (Turquie)-LES GARDIENS DE VILLAGE, ces paysans kurdes qui se battent aux côtés de l'armée turque contre d'autres Kurdes -les rebelles du PKK-, sont fatigués par cette "sale guerre" qui dure depuis un quart de siècle et divise leur communauté.

C'est un nid d'aigle qui surplombe les eaux vives de la rivière Carpiran, près de Siirt, en pays kurde, au sud-est de la Turquie.

Mahsun Alan et ses deux collègues surveillent la route, dans un abri en béton construit sur cette hauteur.

Tous les trois portent l'uniforme de l'armée turque. Les Kalachnikovs sont posées contre le mur et on prépare le thé, assis sur des sacs de couchage.

La région est "calme ces temps-ci", explique-t-il, mais prudence car, comme chaque fin d'hiver, les deux camps se préparent à en découdre: l'armée turque, dont les renforts progressent en convois vers les montagnes, et les maquisards du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), qui quittent leurs bases du nord de l'Irak pour la Turquie.

Les combattants du PKK, tout comme Mahsun Alan, sont des Kurdes de Turquie. Ici, il est fréquent de trouver un hameau où tout le monde est Gardien de village, alors qu'à quelques kilomètres, on a rejoint la guérilla comme un seul homme.

"On sait qui est avec qui, ça évite les problèmes", assure Mahsun Alan, 44 ans.

Depuis 1985, le gouvernement turc emploie environ 60.000 Gardiens de village qui protègent leur secteur et servent d'éclaireurs.

"On envoie parfois ici des gars d'Izmir (ouest) qui ne connaissent rien à la région", explique un de ces miliciens.

"Les Gardiens de village aident l'armée. Pour nous, ce sont des traîtres", juge quant à lui Garip Yilmaz, 39 ans, qui a été chassé de sa ferme en 1994 par le conflit et qui vit à Diyarbakir, la grande ville de la région.

Beaucoup des déplacés affirment que les Gardiens de village se sont installés chez eux et que tout retour à la maison est impossible.

Régulièrement accusés de crimes et de trafics, les Gardiens de village sont dans le collimateur des défenseurs des droits de l'homme, qui réclament leur dissolution.



Des "Gardiens de village" kurdes patrouillent sur une route, près d'Hakkari, dans le sud-est de la Turquie

"Le concept de Gardiens de village n'est pas acceptable", estime Baki Aksoy, qui dirige l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, à Diyarbakir. "Il faudrait que l'Etat les embauche, comme gardes forestiers, mais c'est impossible tant qu'il y a le PKK".

Le chef d'état-major des armées, le général Ilker Basbug, a répété en mars que ces supplétifs jouent "un rôle très important" contre "le terrorisme".

"Quand on est devenu Gardien de village, on n'a pas eu le choix, on était pris entre le PKK et l'armée. Une nuit c'était le PKK, l'autre l'armée qui nous harcelait", explique Ishan Kuzu, 40 ans, en faction au bord d'une route, près de Silvan, avec neuf autres Gardiens de village.

"Le PKK, l'armée, le Hezbollah ont ruiné ma vie", confie bientôt un de ses collègues, la tête basse.

Le Hezbollah est un groupe islamiste anti-PKK, actif dans les années 1990, et qui aurait été aidé par l'Etat.

"Les gens sont fatigués de la guerre. Ce qu'on veut, c'est un pays qui ne soit pas divisé... On a tous fait la guerre ensemble, à Canakkale (la bataille des Dardanelles, 1915). La seule différence, c'est que nous, on est kurdes", plaide Ishan Kuzu.

Dans son bureau de Van (sud-est) où il pose sous un portrait d'Atatürk, Saban Kahraman, 48 ans, ancien chef d'une unité spéciale des Gardiens de village, le commando Simsek (éclair) n'est pas prêt à une telle réconciliation.

"Le PKK a brûlé des milliers de villages. Le PKK a toujours dit, soit vous êtes avec nous, soit vous partez", accuse l'ancien chef milicien reconverti dans le gardiennage d'immeubles, qui confie qu'il vit sous protection rapprochée.

AFP LA FRANCE REPREND SES FOUILLES AU KURDISTAN IRAKIEN

PARIS, 21 avril 2010 (AFP)

LE PREMIER CHANTIER FRANÇAIS de fouilles archéologiques au Kurdistan irakien depuis le début des années de conflit s'est ouvert à l'antique citadelle d'Erbil, a annoncé mercredi le Quai d'Orsay.

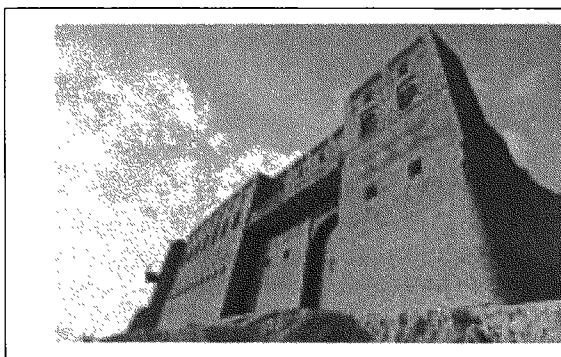
Au printemps 2009, en réponse à une demande des autorités universitaires du Kurdistan irakien, une mission exploratoire avait été constituée sous la houlette d'Olivier Rouault, professeur d'archéologie du Proche-Orient ancien à l'Université Lyon-II, et d'Alain Desreumeux, directeur de recherche au Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), en partenariat avec le département d'archéologie de l'université d'Erbil.

Elle "a permis de déterminer les priorités relevant de l'archéologie en milieu urbain" dans la région, a expliqué le porte-parole du Quai d'Orsay, Bernard Valero, dans un communiqué.

A Erbil, Assyriens, Babyloniens, Perses, Grecs et d'autres civilisations se sont succédé au long des millénaires.

L'imposante citadelle, très dégradée, est un des ensembles urbains les plus anciens du monde (8.000 ans d'âge), qui surplombe des quartiers modernes.

Les fouilles qui ont commencé mardi se feront aussi à Kilka Milshik. Ce site d'un hectare, à 2 km de la citadelle, a été occupé de manière continue depuis



Vue de la citadelle d'Erbil, dans le nord de l'Irak

la période du Bronze moyen (1500-1200 avant JC) jusqu'à l'époque islamique (7ème siècle après JC)

"Kilka Milshik sera un chantier école, permettant la formation d'archéologues kurdes", a expliqué M. Valero.

Une première équipe qui restera un mois, compte sept chercheurs italiens, belges et français.

Le projet bénéficie d'un financement français pour sa première année.

La délégation archéologique française en Irak, ouverte en 1977, avait arrêté ses activités en 1992 après la première guerre du Golfe. Une reprise des contacts avec les autorités irakiennes avait débuté en 1998.

L'ouverture de cette nouvelle mission au Kurdistan d'Irak "est symbolique de l'originalité du dispositif français de missions archéologiques", a souligné Bernard Valero.

Ahmet Türk agressé à Samsun.

Jean Marcou

Le 12 avril 2010, Ahmet Türk, a été victime d'une agression à Samsun, alors qu'il était en train de lire un communiqué de presse, à la sortie des premières audiences du procès de Bulanık. L'ex-leader du DTP (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - Parti pour une société démocratique) a eu le nez cassé par un coup de poing dont l'auteur, un certain Ismail Çelik, a déclaré avoir agi seul, par énervement. Toutefois, des députés kurdes du nouveau parti BDP (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi - Parti pour la Paix et la Démocratie), également présents sur les lieux, ont expliqué que leur délégation avait été prise à partie par un groupe criant des slogans hostiles, à la sortie du tribunal, et que cette agression avait en tout cas été rendue possible par la passivité des forces de l'ordre. Deux officiers de police ont d'ailleurs été suspendus et le directeur de la sûreté de Samsun rappelé par l'administration centrale. Alors même que l'interrogatoire d'Ismail Çelik se poursuit, Besir Atalay, le ministre de l'Intérieur, qui a rendu visite à Ahmet Türk à l'hôpital, la semaine dernière, a annoncé que ses services enquêtaient sur d'éventuelles négligences.

Les audiences auxquelles était venu assister Ahmet Türk sont celles du procès de Bulanık, une affaire remontant aux manifestations qui, dans les provinces kurdes du sud-est, avaient suivi la dissolution du DTP. Le 15 décembre dernier, lors d'une manifestation, à Bulanık (province de Mus), deux manifestants avaient été tués par deux commerçants en colère prétendant défendre leur magasin resté ouvert, en dépit d'un mot d'ordre de ville morte. Le procès, découlant de ce double meurtre, a lieu actuellement à Samsun (la plus grande ville du littoral turc de la mer Noire), à plus de 500 km de Bulanık, dans une région connue pour ses tendances nationalistes. Les autorités ont justifié cet éloignement géographique par des raisons de sécurité. Mais, estimant qu'il y avait un risque d'étouffement de l'affaire, de nombreux responsables kurdes, dont Ahmed Türk, ont décidé de se rendre à Samsun, pour assister au procès comme observateurs.

L'agression dont a été victime Ahmet Türk a été unanimement condamnée par la classe politique en Turquie, même par le CHP et le MHP. L'ampleur de la réprobation qui a suivi cet acte de violence montre à quel point la personne d'Ahmet Türk, en dépit de l'interdiction dont il a été l'objet récemment, est désormais ancrée dans la vie politique turque. Des Etats-Unis où il se trouvait pour le sommet sur la sécurité nucléaire, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, qui a fustigé ceux qui tentaient de minorer l'affaire, a téléphoné au leader kurde pour prendre de ses nouvelles et l'assurer de sa sympathie. Le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, a également appelé Ahmet Türk. Un grand nombre d'associations, d'organisations



non gouvernementales, de barreaux d'avocats, comme les principaux leaders et parlementaires kurdes, ont également émis des communiqués de protestation, en demandant que toute la lumière soit faite sur cette affaire. Des manifestations ont eu lieu dans les provinces kurdes du sud-est et ont parfois débouché sur des affrontements sévères avec la police. A Hakkari, un jeune lycéen qui sortait de ses cours a été roué de coups par les forces de sécurité. Deux officiers de police jugés responsables de cet incident ont été relevés de leurs fonctions. Un millier de personnes se sont rassemblées, le 13 avril, sur la place Taksim à Istanbul, demandant la démission du gouverneur de Samsun. Le 14 avril 2010, à la sortie de l'hôpital où il a été opéré pour une fracture du nez, Ahmet Türk a lancé un appel au calme, en se réjouissant que «les peuples turc et kurde» aient condamné cet incident. Le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, a salué cette attitude prônant l'apaisement. Mais l'affaire pourrait avoir d'autres prolongements inattendus, 50 avocats inscrits au barreau de Diyarbakir viennent en effet d'engager une action judiciaire, pour incitation au crime et à la haine, contre Yılmaz Özdil, un éditorialiste du quotidien Hürriyet qui, le 14 avril dernier, avait justifié, dans l'une de ses colonnes, l'agression dont a été victime Ahmet Türk, en estimant que «la personne qui a fait de son poing un marteau de justice en frappant le nez d'Ahmet Türk» avait «exprimé les sentiments de nombreuses personnes dans ce pays». Ces propos ne sont pourtant pas représentatifs de l'ensemble de la presse en Turquie.

Ces événements se déroulent dans un contexte où la question kurde connaît un regain de tensions. Depuis la dissolution du DTP, l'ouverture démocratique lancée par le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, au cours du deuxième semestre de l'année 2009, s'est enlisée. Bien que le BDP soit parvenu à recréer un groupe parlementaire, les tensions sont attisées par les très nombreuses arrestations d'élus et de responsables politiques ou par des condamnations de manifestants (notamment des adolescents) qui ont été opérées au cours des dernières semaines. Ahmet Türk et sa collègue Aysel Tugluk, qui ont été tous deux déchus de leurs mandats parlementaires et interdits de vie politique, au moment de la dissolution du DTP, sont eux-mêmes sous le coup de plusieurs procédures judiciaires et encourent des peines de prison ferme.

JM

AFP

UN MINISTRE TURC FRAPPÉ PAR UN HOMME MÉCONTENT DE L'OUVERTURE AUX KURDES

ANKARA, 19 avr 2010 (AFP)

UN HOMME a frappé lundi au visage le ministre turc de l'Energie, Taner Yildiz, pour protester contre la politique d'"ouverture démocratique" menée par le gouvernement en faveur de la minorité kurde, a-t-on appris de sources concordantes.

L'agression a eu lieu pendant les obsèques à Kayseri (centre) d'un soldat tué dans une embuscade des rebelles kurdes, au cours de laquelle des personnes présentes ont dénoncé la politique du gouvernement, selon la chaîne de télévision NTV.

A la fin de la cérémonie, un homme a frappé le ministre au visage, en criant: "Voilà, de la part de la nation turque". Il a été maîtrisé par des gardes du corps.

M. Yildiz a été soigné dans un hôpital proche pour une coupure au nez, et le coup porté a également brisé ses lunettes, a expliqué son porte-parole à l'AFP, précisant que le ministre n'avait pas eu le nez cassé comme l'avaient indiqué certains médias.

Le gouvernement turc a annoncé à l'automne des mesures pour accroître les droits de la minorité kurde, une initiative destinée à saper le soutien qu'une partie de la population kurde apporte aux rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en guerre depuis 25 ans contre l'autorité centrale.

Ces mesures, limitées à l'usage de la langue kurde et la création de commissions sur les droits de l'homme, ont cependant mécontenté tout le monde: les militants kurdes les ont qualifiées de dérisoires, et les milieux nationalistes ont accusé le pouvoir de brader l'unité nationale.

AFP

IRAN: TROIS MILITAIRES TUÉS LORS D'UN ACCROCHAGE AVEC DES REBELLES

TEHERAN, 21 avril 2010 (AFP)

TROIS MILITAIRES IRANIENS, membres des Gardiens de la révolution, l'armée d'élite du régime, ont été tués mardi lors d'un accrochage avec des "rebelles contre-révolutionnaires", a rapporté mercredi l'agence Mehr.

L'accrochage a eu lieu près de la ville de Khoy (nord-ouest), a indiqué l'agence sans donner de précision sur les rebelles.

En janvier dernier, des rebelles kurdes avaient tué le procureur de Khoy.

Les régions iraniennes frontalières de l'Irak et la Turquie, où vivent des minorités kurdes, sont le théâtre d'affrontements périodiques entre les forces armées iraniennes et le PJAK, basé dans le nord-est de l'Irak.

L'Iran accuse les Etats-Unis de soutenir ce mouvement ainsi que d'autres organisations ethniques aux frontières de l'Iran, ce que Washington a toujours démenti.

Les Kurdes représentent environ 7% de la population en Iran.

REUTERS

ATTENTAT À LA BOMBE CONTRE UN OLÉODUC DANS LE NORD DE L'IRAK

21 avril 2010 Par Reuters

Un attentat à la bombe a endommagé jeudi un oléoduc assurant un quart des exportations de pétrole de l'Irak, rapportent la police et des responsables du secteur pétrolier.

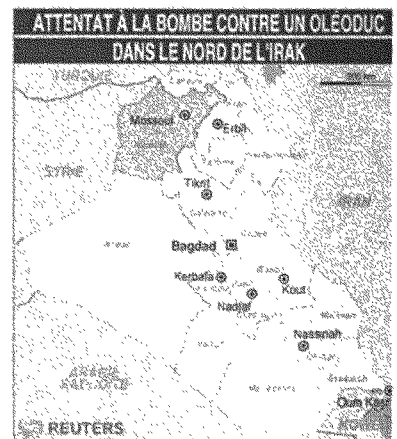
Les exportations de brut jusqu'au port turc de Ceyhan devraient être interrompues pendant trois jours, a dit un responsable de la compagnie publique North Oil.

L'explosion, dans la province de Nineveh située dans le nord du pays, a ouvert un trou dans l'oléoduc. L'attentat s'est produit dans le district d'al Hadhar, au sud de Mossoul et à 280 km au nord de Bagdad.

De sources policières, on assure que l'explosion a été provoquée par une bombe, mais un responsable pétrolier a dit ne pas pouvoir confirmer si l'arrêt de l'acheminement du pétrole était dû à un sabotage ou à un problème technique.

La région de Nineveh, située près de l'enclave semi-autonome des Kurdes, demeure un repaire d'insurgés, dont certains appartiennent à Al Qaïda.

L'oléoduc, d'une capacité maximale de 1,6 million de barils par jour, est utilisé en temps normal au tiers de son débit pour acheminer le brut vers Ceyhan où il est ensuite chargé sur des tankers.



AFP

TURQUIE: DEUX SOLDATS TURCS TUÉS, 2 BLESSÉS PAR LES REBELLES KURDES

ANKARA, 28 avril 2010 (AFP)

Deux soldats turcs ont été tués et deux autres blessés mercredi dans l'extrême sud-est de la Turquie dans le feu ouvert contre une patrouille par des rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), rapporte l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'incident s'est produit à Semdinli, petite ville située à l'intersection de frontières avec l'Iran et l'Irak, précise l'agence.

Un groupe de rebelles a attaqué avec des fusils-mitrailleurs une patrouille qui retournait d'une opération de ratissage.

L'armée a lancé une opération d'envergure pour capturer les assaillants, ajoute l'agence.

Le PKK intensifie généralement ses attaques contre les forces turques avec l'arrivée du printemps. Plus de 40.000 personnes ont trouvé la mort dans les combats opposant les forces de sécurité turques au PKK depuis le début de son soulèvement, en 1984.

REUTERS

Iraqi Kurds lay Saddam's child victims to rest

* No DNA tests available to identify remains
* Most children died of hunger, disease

, April 13, 2010 (Reuters) - By Sherko Raouf

CHAMCHAMAL, Iraq - The remains of more than 100 unidentified children who died of hunger and disease during a harsh crackdown on Iraqi Kurds by Saddam Hussein were buried on Tuesday in the Kurdish town of Chamchamal.

The children were detained with their families in 1988 in the town 65 km (40 miles) south of Sulaimaniya, which is 260 km northeast of Baghdad, and from surrounding villages during a wave of arrests made by the former government in April 1988.

In a solemn ceremony on a breezy, overcast day, Kurdish peshmerga fighters in full-dress uniform carried more than 100 small coffins draped in Kurdish flags and laid them in a cemetery created especially for the young victims of oppression. The bodies of two women were also buried.

Around 4,000 people attended and a brass band played solemn music throughout the ceremony.

The arrests were part of the "Anfal" campaign aimed at suppressing the Kurds, whom the regime regarded with suspicion.

The detainees were sent to prison in Dibis, northeast of Kirkuk in northern Iraq. Many of the children died of hunger and disease and were later buried in mass graves. Their bodies were exhumed after Saddam's fall in the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Saddam's ouster was followed by a bloody and devastating sectarian war. The country has been comparatively stable over the past year despite continuing bombings but there are concerns protracted coal-



tion talks following inconclusive elections in March could push Iraq back into sectarian conflict.

A spike in violence could delay U.S. plans to end combat operations in August ahead of a pullout by the end of 2011.

The ceremony on Tuesday was attended by Barham Salih, the prime minister of the semi-autonomous Kurdish Regional Government, other leading Kurdish officials, foreign diplomats and thousands of family members of Anfal victims.

Kurdish Health Minister Taher Hawrami told Reuters the regional government lacked the equipment to perform DNA tests on the children to ascertain their identities. None of the children had been identified.

"It is very difficult to identify the victims at the current time," he said. "We will take samples from the bodies and we will make DNA tests" when testing facilities become available.

Zeinat Fatah, 59, said she was held in Dibis with her two sons, who were aged eight and four. Both sons died of starvation in 1988. Her husband was killed during the campaign.

"Who are my sons?" she asked, weeping over the fact that her children's remains had not been identified.

"We were left starving with no food for about 10 days, she said. "Many children died. I am a widow with no sons. I'll cry for them until the end of my life.

REUTERS

Iran backs unity government in Iraq with Sunnis

BAGHDAD April 10, 2010 -(Reuters)

IRAN URGED leaders in neighboring Iraq on Saturday to form a national unity government that included Sunni Muslims.

Iranian Ambassador Hassan Kazemi Qomi said the Iraqiya coalition, which includes Sunnis and Shi'ites and won the largest share of seats in last month's parliamentary election, would hold discussions in Tehran in the coming days.

Iraqi political leaders have been in talks to form a government since the inconclusive election. Shi'ite Iran has in the past advocated a Shi'ite-dominated government.

"We support and encourage the participation of all the parties, but this is an internal Iraqi thing. It is only consulting (with Iraqiya), no more," Qomi told a news conference. "We are open to all parties."

Since the vote, a number of delegations from Shi'ite and Kurdish factions have traveled to Tehran for talks. Iraqiya leader Iyad Allawi, a secular Shi'ite and former prime minister, had criticized opponents for going to Iran after the polls.

Asked about Qomi's comments, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Christopher Hill, said: "I think that's up to the Iraqis to decide."

Iraqiya finished first in the election with 91 seats, two ahead of the State of Law coalition of Prime Minister Nuri Maliki.

Anti-U.S. cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who could play a key role in choosing a prime minister able to command a majority, echoed Qomi's remarks, saying he supported a government that included all Iraqi factions.

In a rare interview on Qatar-based al-Jazeera television that aired late on Saturday, Sadr said Maliki would be an unacceptable choice as prime minister in the new government.

An internal referendum in the Sadrist party last week backed former prime minister Ibrahim Jaafari for the post.

"This is the will of the people and I have to carry it out," said Sadr, whose followers won about 40 seats as part of the third-placed Iraqi National Alliance.

It was not clear when or where the interview was filmed.

Sadr, who has been studying theology in Iran for two years, said he did not reject Allawi as a prospective prime minister, but that his voter base was concerned that Allawi was close to supporters of the ousted dictator Saddam Hussein.

The inconclusive election promised weeks of potentially divisive talks between political blocs to form a new government.

There has been an upsurge in bombings and other attacks since the beginning of the month, in which more than 100 people have been killed.

TODAYS ZAMAN 12 April 2010

Man attacks DTP's Türk following press conference

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES

The former leader of the now-defunct Democratic Society Party (DTP), Ahmet Türk, was punched by an assailant on Monday as he read a press statement outside a courtroom in Samsun.

Türk on Monday read a press statement in front of the court where a trial regarding incidents in the Bulanik district of Mus on Dec. 15, 2009 that left two people dead was taking place. A man approached Türk as he read the statement, punching the former DTP leader in the face. Türk, who was bleeding, was hospitalized after the attack. Information about the identity of the attacker was not immediately available. He was detained by police after the inci-

dent.

Two people died and seven were wounded in the Bulanik district of Mus in December last year when a store owner opened fire on demonstrators protesting the closure of the pro-Kurdish DTP.

Turan Bilen, whose store was attacked and whose car was set on fire during the incidents, opened fire on the crowd, killing two demonstrators.

The DTP was closed by the Constitutional Court on charges of having links to the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Türk and 38 DTP members were banned from politics for five years because of their statements supporting the PKK.



The former leader of the now-defunct Democratic Society Party (DTP), Ahmet Türk, was punched by an assailant on Monday as he read a press statement outside a courtroom in Samsun.

TheNational

April 12, 2010

Iraq's Kurdish region aims to resume oil exports

Tamsin Carlisle

Abu Dhabi / UAE

The government of Iraqi Kurdistan hopes to resume talks with Baghdad to restart crude exports from the semi-autonomous region, as a power struggle to form Iraq's next government puts development of the country's biggest oilfields in limbo.

The Kurdistan regional government (KRG) plans to send a delegation to Baghdad this week to discuss the resumption of exports from new oilfields in north-east Iraq, Barham Saleh, the Kurdish prime minister, said in remarks published on the KRG website.

"The delegation would discuss oil exports from the region as well as the contracts signed by the KRG with oil companies," the statement said.

The KRG also said it had sent two of its oil contracts to Baghdad in an unusual move for a regional government that

had steadfastly resisted giving up control over natural resources.

The contracts were signed with Norway's DNO International and Turkey's Genel Enerji, which pump oil from the Tawke and Taq Taq oilfields, respectively.

The more than two dozen contracts the KRG has signed with foreign oil and gas companies have been contentious with Baghdad, which has declared the deals illegal.

The Kurds have argued they conform to Iraq's constitution that, according to legal experts, is loosely worded and subject to varying interpretations.

The spat over the Kurdish oil contracts led to the suspension last October of between 40,000 and 60,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude exports from Tawke and Taq Taq.

"We hope that the new talks would solve the problem," Mr Saleh said.

But it is unclear whether the Kurds in pursuing a resolu-

tion are now ready to give in to Iraqi oil ministry demands that it review and ratify the Kurds' oil and gas contracts before recognising them.

That would be tantamount to handing Baghdad jurisdiction over the region's natural resources and would be a huge concession by the KRG.

"I don't think they sent the contracts asking for ratification," said Samuel Ciszuk, the Middle East oil analyst with the consulting company IHS Global Insight. "There will be talks on how to deal with the contracts. How they go about reaching a compromise remains to be seen."

Hussain al Shahrastani, the Iraqi oil minister, has been a harsh critic of the Kurdish oil deals, which are production-sharing contracts rather than the technical services agreements favoured by Baghdad.

"He thinks the Kurdish exports should be put on-stream immediately, and it should be up to the Kurds to find a way to wriggle out of the deals they have signed," Mr Ciszuk said. "The KRG takes a different view."

Despite having the world's third-biggest proved oil reserves and ambitious plans to boost crude output capacity to as much as 12 million bpd,

rivaling that of Saudi Arabia, Iraq pumps only 2.4 million bpd, or less than Kuwait or the UAE. It has recently exported between 1.9 million and 2 million bpd of crude.

The Kurdish fields hold the best immediate opportunity for Baghdad to boost oil exports and foreign revenue: some of Iraq's big oil deals are running into trouble; sectarian violence is threatening output from the country's biggest northern oilfield, Kirkuk; and upgrades are urgently needed to the southern export terminal at Basra.

The national government's finances are in such poor shape that it is unable to fund its 51 per cent share of a proposed joint venture with Royal Dutch Shell to gather and market 700,000 cubic feet per day (cfd) of gas that is being burnt as waste at Iraq's main southern oilfields, Mr Ciszuk said.

In total, Iraq flares at least 1 billion cfd of gas associated with its oil production, causing air pollution, boosting greenhouse gas emissions and wasting potential fuel for power generation.

The much-needed project to reduce flaring is being held up by the financing problem, by Iraq's slow progress on refurbishing and developing gas and electricity infrastruc-

ture, and by opposition to the deal from certain parliamentarians and oil companies.

Foreign oil companies that recently signed oil development deals with Baghdad are not ready to commit to provi-

ding the Shell joint venture with large gas volumes when they may need the gas themselves to reinject into oil reservoirs if they are to meet their crude production targets, Mr Ciszuk said.

That points to further delays to a final agreement on Shell's gas contract, which has already been under negotiation for a year and recently received a six-month extension.

Last month, Iraq failed to

reach a deal with a Japanese consortium over the development of its Nasiriyah oilfield and said it would develop the field alone.

TODAYS ZAMAN 15 April 2010

Ahmet Türk, Kurdish intellectuals urge public to remain calm

AYSE KARABAT

Ahmet Türk, the former chairman of the defunct Democratic Society Party (DTP), who was punched in the face on Monday, has urged the public to remain calm, adding that the passionate reactions to the attack have proven the strength of ties between Kurds and Turks.

"I have received many messages of goodwill from all segments of society and from politicians. I realize that we are not alone in our struggle for democracy. Once more it has been proven that the people want to support each other, and I hope the politicians will act accordingly," Türk said while he was being discharged from the hospital. Türk was discharged from a hospital in Ankara two days after he had an operation due to his broken nose.

He was attacked on Monday shortly after reading a press statement in front of a courthouse in Samsun where a trial of a man charged with killing two protesters in the Bulanik district of Mus on Dec. 15 was being heard. His attacker, Ismail Çelik (23), who waits tables at a local coffeehouse, approached Türk, who is 68, after the statement and punched the former DTP leader in the face. Türk's nose was broken in the altercation. Çelik was arrested on Tuesday. In his testimony, he said that his attack was an individual action and that he is regretful and sorry.

Kurdish intellectuals and representatives of civil society organizations urged people to use common sense but at the same time underlined that the government should make efforts to reverse the increasing chauvinism in Turkey.

Meanwhile, in Hakkari, Yüksekova, Semdinli, Van, Baskale and some areas of Mersin, shops were closed in protest of the attack.

The pro-Kurdish Democratic Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) demanded the removal of the governor of Samsun and the city's police chief,



Ahmet Türk, who was punched in the face on Monday, has urged the public to remain calm, adding that the passionate reactions to the attack have proven the strength of ties between Kurds and Turks.

while the Interior Ministry opened an investigation into the case and provisionally removed two high-ranking police officers responsible for the security of the court building where Türk made his statement. Interior Minister Be'ir Atalay visited Türk at the hospital on Tuesday.

However, according to Kurdish intellectuals and representatives of civil society organizations the incident was an organized attack and should be investigated thoroughly. They recalled that for many years attempts to harm Kurds and Kurdish politicians have been made but emphasized that everybody should stay calm and not fall victim to provocations.

Galip Ensarioglu, the chairman of the Diyarbakir Chamber of Trade and Industry (DTSO), said that the aim of the attack was very clearly provocation. "Türk is one of the most respected figures in the society; he is known for his moderate views. If he was attacked, of course, this is a provocation to harm the current positive atmosphere. Everyone should be aware and act responsibly," Ensarioglu told Today's Zaman.

Diyarbakir Bar Association Chairman Emin Aktar suggested that the attack was an organized one and that even if it was not, there was severe neglect by the security forces in the incident.

"The court case was moved to Samsun for security reasons. If you have security concerns, you take measures against it. Plus, how come the attackers knew that Türk would be there? When Türk started his state-

ment, people started chanting anti-Kurdish slogans. These slogans alone should require further security measures," Aktar told Today's Zaman. He underlined that it's clear that there was a provocation attempt and that society should be calm, but he argued that the government must remove the Samsun chief of police.

Aktar noted that hostile attitudes toward Kurds are endemic to the country and need to end.

Bayram Bozyel, the chairman of the pro-Kurdish Rights and Freedoms Party (Hak-Par), said that all Kurds have been hurt and the attack shows that there are many individuals in society who would be willing to attack.

"This attack is a reflection of the deep anti-Kurdish feelings of the racist segment of society. But everybody should stay calm. The forces of democracy have to fight these provocations with democracy," Bozyel told Today's Zaman.

Meanwhile, Atalay also urged the public not to act in response to the provocations.

Atalay, speaking to a TV program, said Türk is known for being courteous and moderate and urged people to remain calm in the wake of his attack and look to his example as a model of a reasoned and measured response to injustice. He added that they will not tolerate attempts at provocation, and he cautioned security forces to take better measures to prevent such attacks in the future.



Letter to President Obama about the possible US troops withdrawal in summer and the Kurdish concern about leaving the problems between Hawler and Baghdad unresolved.

Mr. Barack Obama, President
United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

April 14, 2010

Honorable President Obama:

The apparent U. S. support to the Kurds in 1972 convinced the Kurdish leadership to believe that America had an interest in the Kurdish plight and would assist them to achieve their national and democratic goals in Iraq and transform Iraq to a democratic state. Unfortunately, that support was nothing but a gambit and an empty promise. That fact became apparent in 1975; exactly one year after the war had reignited between the Iraqi regime and the Kurds, when Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State at the time, played a very crucial role in forging a pact between Iran and Iraq. He successfully was able to bring the parties together in Algiers under the "Algiers Agreement" that ended the Kurdish revolution. Later, Mr. Kissinger referred to the ostensible U. S. support to the Kurds: "...it was to put pressure on Iraq's pro-Soviet government."

Mr. President, if it were not for America's support, which ultimately turned out to be mendacious, the Kurdish leadership would probably have used a different approach with the Iraqi government to achieve a common ground. But Kissinger's meeting with General Mustafa Barzani in 1972 changed the dynamic of the Kurdish view vis-à-vis America's involvement in Iraq. As a result of Kissinger's deceptive approach, the Kurdish leadership were not only unable to achieve a common ground with the Iraqi government, but also endured a catastrophic collapse before the Iraqi despotic regime.

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, created a menace against the stability of the region. Saddam's ambition to obtain nuclear weapons led the American administration to form a formidable international coalition against his aggressive ambitions. After Saddam's invading forces were driven out of Kuwait, President Bush refused to let the American led forces pursue the Iraqi army and remove Saddam's regime. At the time, America had fortified support from the international community and could have easily deposed Saddam Hussein. Instead, President Bush called upon the Iraqi people, as he put it, "to rise against the dictator, and take the matter into their own hands..." when the Kurds and the Shiites successfully rose up against the Iraqi tyranny in their respective regions, the very same president who encouraged them to rise turned his back on them and permitted Saddam's repressive forces to have a free hand in suppressing the Kurds and the Shiites. As a result of President Bush's reckless and callous behavior, a human catastrophe was created in Kurdistan-Iraq. Some two million people fled into the bitter cold mountains to escape an imminent death. While in the mountains, hundreds of innocent people including women, children, and elderly were dying on a daily basis. Eventually, under world pressure and some of his own constituents, President Bush decided to create a "safe haven" right above the 36th parallel which included Mosul, Duhok, and Arbil. Later, by a political decision, this safe haven border was shifted to exclude Mosul and encompass Sulaymani. The selection of the 36th parallel was an arbitrary measure the U. S. administration used to temporarily secure a haven to protect the people of Kurdistan from Saddam's murderous forces. Although it saved the Kurds, this measure left more than 50% of historically Kurdistan lands outside of Kurdistan. Ironically, a pan-Arab myopic political mentality has been pressing to demarcate the 36th parallel line as the permanent border of Kurdistan-Iraq.

After Saddam's removal in 2003 and the birth of a new political culture in Iraq—the post-Saddam Iraq allowed for a new Constitution to be drafted for which more than 80% of Iraqi people voted. The Kurdish leadership played an important role in drafting this Constitution in which all nationalities, ethnicities, religious and sectarian factions are fairly represented. Consequently, the Constitution was adopted. In this Constitution, article 140 calls for normalization of the arabized areas of Kurdistan and allows their respective residents to vote and decide whether they want to reunite with their ancestral national geography or remain under the Baghdad administration. However, under the U. S. tutelage, the Iraqi authorities have been dragging their feet and creating one obstacle after another to prevent the sequestered Kurds from deciding their own fate. Ever since the new Constitution was adopted, the U. S. administration has been giving only lip service to implementing the Constitution. Through its passivity, the US government appears to be engaging in another cynical retreat from support of a Constitution which could transform Iraq to a functioning democracy and stable state.

At the inception of the Iraqi liberation in 2003, the Peshmarga forces liberated Kirkuk and all the Arabs who had been brought to arabize this historically Kurdistan city fled. The American administration returned them to the city and prevented them from returning to the regions where they had come from. Americans did that under the pretext of "this process has to be legally implemented"—as if those Arabs originally had come to arabize Kirkuk and other areas of Kurdistan "legally." As a result of this U. S. cynical realpolitik, the Iraqi authorities have been able to trivialize the legitimate and constitutional demands of the Kurds to resolve Kirkuk and other pending issues peaceably and within the context of justice and genuine equality.

Mr. President, as long as the Arab dominant Iraqi government sees no or limited American involvement with regard to implementing the Constitution, they perpetuate their unrealistic policies towards Kurdistan—an approach that could take Iraq back to its dark and totalitarian era. Mr. Aseel Nujaifi's (Governor of Mosul) attitude is a clear indication as to what could happen to the people of Kurdistan if America leaves Iraq without resolving the pending crucial issues between Baghdad and Arbil. Therefore, in this post election epoch, our people and their leadership expect your administration to take a more visible role in working with the Iraqi authorities to implement the provisions of the new Iraqi Constitution. The people of Kurdistan along with their leadership committed themselves to help America to succeed in Iraq—they honored their commitment. It is time for America to do the same by helping them to regain their historical national territories which were confiscated. The two previous American betrayals still echo in the hearts and minds of our people. They fear that the third U. S. betrayal may be on the horizon, particularly when American policy pertinent to Kurdistan has been delivered in an opaque fashion and not measured with transparency.

America could not find a people more friendly and peaceful than the people of Kurdistan in the region. They deserve America's moral and political support. Mr. President, we believe you more than any leader in the world possess the moral authority to emphatically tell the Iraqi Arab authorities to honor the original Constitution supported by more than 80 percent of Iraqi voters and end this political maneuvering. If this is not resolved prior to the US withdrawal, Iraq could easily fall back into the days of dictatorship. Please do not let the people of Kurdistan down. We shall continue to pray for your success.

Sincerely yours,
Kirmanj Gundi
President

NATIONHOOD BEING FOSTERED AMONG IRAQI KURDS, ARABS

By Betsy Hiel

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

JALULA, Iraq - U.S., Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers unroll concertina wire to set up a security perimeter next to a police station. They are here to hand out aid to 200 families in this dry, dusty, impoverished town.

The plan is "to show the people that the Iraqi army and the (Kurdish) peshmerga are working well together," says 1st Lt. Dan Shoemaker of the 2nd Infantry Division's Bravo Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

Shoemaker, 30, of North Little Rock, Ark., hopes to convince the townsfolk -- an oft-antagonistic mix of Arabs and Kurds -- "that maybe they ... can work together, too."

These humanitarian drops can be tense, so he asks the local police to help.

As word of the handouts spreads, men, women and children walk through town and over a hilly cemetery to line up. One old man walks painfully with a cane; the town's Shia women cover their heads with black chadors, while its Kurdish women wear colorful scarves.

"The hills are alive," Shoemaker says, smiling, as more and more people arrive.

From the back of a truck, a Kurdish soldier in tan camouflage and a maroon beret passes tea, cheese, powdered milk and a blanket for each person to a burly Iraqi soldier in dark green camouflage and a maroon beret, who in turn hands it all down to the crowd.

Hemmed in by barbed wire, people begin pushing. The flowing robes of some of the women catch and tear on the wire.

Panicking, they begin to shout.



Children gather around a U.S. soldier with the Golden Lions as they visit the Kurdish village of Big Cheman, prior to the country's parliamentary elections in March. (Justin Merriman | Tribune Review)

A threat of bloodshed

Iraq's volatile Diyala province suffered years of intense fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims and U.S. forces.

It is calmer now. Yet, several cities and much of the countryside remain disputed between Kurds and Arabs, threatening to erupt anew when U.S. forces draw down in the summer.

Hoping to prevent that, the U.S. military established a security area some 43 miles long by 15 miles wide. It works with Kurdish peshmerga and Iraqi soldiers and police -- a joint force known as the Golden Lions -- on combined patrols and at five checkpoints.

"We are mitigating tension and demonstrating to the local people and the local security forces ... that they are a lot more alike than dissimilar," says Lt. Col. Joseph Davidson, 41, the 1st Squadron commander of the 2nd Infantry Division's 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Combat Brigade.

No security force patrolled here before. Instead, this was "an area that al-Qaida could ... move through and have a support zone in, because people weren't getting essential services and weren't being adequately secured," says Brig. Gen. Patrick Donahue, the deputy U.S. commander in northern Iraq.

"This Golden Lions force eliminated that scene."

'Simple, but it helps a lot'

In Jalula, the line for humanitarian aid grows more unruly as the shoving and shouting mount.

"Go back! Go back!" an Iraqi soldier shouts. When the crowd presses forward, he pushes back.

"I wish the Arabs wouldn't control us anymore!" a Kurdish woman yells to a Kurdish officer, Maj. Akram Majeed, before stalking off with her food and blanket.

Another woman, Saphia Ibrahim, thanks the soldiers: "I have four orphans. It is simple aid, but it helps a lot."

An Iraqi man approaches Lt. Shoemaker with a young boy.

"Is he your son?" the American asks, then turns to the boy and tousles his hair. "You got cool hair, dude! You look like my younger brother."

The man says the boy is near-sighted. "He needs glasses," the lieutenant replies and promises to "talk to our doctor."

Next, he cheerfully greets a diminutive woman in a black chador and orders his men to move her to the front of the aid line. She smiles and yells "Thank you!" in



Soldiers with the Golden Lions, a combined security force, made up of U.S. Army, Peshmerga, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police, patrol in Kirkuk, Iraq, prior to the country's parliamentary elections in March. (Justin Merriman | Tribune Review)

Arabic.

Pfc. Matthew Mahramus, 28, a Mt. Lebanon native, believes this mission is important: "We are helping rebuild this country, and that's very beneficial to the citizens of Iraq and in the long run ... to the U.S. as well."

'They can't be trusted'

All of the soldiers here are "brothers," insists Iraqi army Lt. Adriss Dhaham. Problems may erupt between political parties when the U.S. forces withdraw "but as for the army, we are all Iraqi."

The Kurdish officer, Maj. Majeed, 55, has a different opinion: "I got mad when the Iraqi soldier pushed the women back. I don't like how they treat the women, and I don't want to work with them."

He says that, under dictator Saddam Hussein, Iraq's army persecuted the Kurds. "They are the same people, and they can't be trusted. We just need our freedom, an independent Kurdish country."

"Obviously, that sentiment is felt," Lt. Col. Davidson admits. "There is that hesitancy, a lack of full trust, from the Kurdish side -- not all, but some."

He says local Kurds "have a lot of personal scars from the anti-Kurd campaigns, especially the Anfal campaign that happened in this area." That infamous genocidal attack killed up to 180,000 Kurds, according to international human-rights agencies.

Yet, Davidson says most Iraqi soldiers here are Shia, who Saddam also persecuted.

"I don't think they are the same army as before," he says. Its soldiers "are trying to help the people; they are working with

the Kurds.

"These are the things you play up ... with the hope that people will see this, as well."

'The hardest mission' yet

At Checkpoint No. 5, equal numbers of Kurdish, Iraqi and U.S. soldiers — 60 in all — live in shipping containers behind concrete blast walls, concrete barriers and sand-filled barricades.

The Kurdish and Arab soldiers cover their faces against razorlike blowing sand.

They are in the desert, cut off from phones and the Internet, and "when you don't have electricity or power, it's terrible," confesses 1st Lt. Samir Patel, 24, of Atlanta.

They are "sitting targets" for car bombs or mortar attacks, Patel says. But "the locals say this checkpoint helps keep them safe and acts as a deterrent more than anything else."

As the wind rips through the camp, Iraqi Sgt. Riddah Youssef, 25, takes shelter in a shipping container to smoke a cigarette. "The American guys treat us well," he says. "But the success of this checkpoint is in our hands. We are all Iraqi, and they are all our brothers."

Maj. Majeed speaks with Sgt. Youssef about the Kurds' fight against Saddam. "Throughout the history of Iraq, we have struggled. Now, we have freedom and security," says Majeed, a peshmerga fighter for 24 years. "I'm trained to have my own country and to raise the Kurdish flag."

He asks another Iraqi soldier why most Kurds speak Arabic but few Arabs speak Kurdish. The soldier replies that he speaks Kurdish, because his neighbor in Najaf was a Kurd.

Capt. Nick Shallcross, commander of the 2nd Infantry Division's Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, is

here to check on the men. He says such ethnic tension is "almost non-existent at the tactical level," such as checkpoints; it exists at the city government level, he admits, but not to an extreme.

On his third deployment in Iraq, Shallcross, 29, says this is "the hardest mission" yet. He uses two interpreters, one Kurdish and one Arabic, to get these "two different, opposing forces ... to the table and to do missions. It's a difficult process. It takes a lot of patience.

"In terms of counter-insurgency doctrine, with its 'clear-hold-build' stages," he says, "we are in the 'build' stage."

And it still has its dangers: Just weeks earlier, mortars hit a nearby U.S. base, killing one soldier and wounding two.

REUTERS

Iraq president says Kurds to join Shi'ite alliance

* *Kurds and Shi'ites 'natural allies'-Talabani*
* *Move could sideline Sunni-backed election winner**
Likely to anger minority Sunnis

April 15, 2010 (Reuters) - By Waleed Ibrahim

BAGHDAD- Iraq's president said minority Kurds can be expected to join the country's main Shi'ite blocs if they unite to form the next government following inconclusive elections in March.

Kurdish support would give the Shi'ite parties the muscle needed to sideline former premier Iyad Allawi, whose cross-sectarian alliance won the most seats in the March 7 vote after gaining the broad backing of Iraq's Sunni minority.

That could fuel Sunni anger at a time when the slaughter between majority Shi'ites and Sunnis who dominated Iraq under Saddam Hussein has subsided but attacks by Sunni Islamist insurgents continue to threaten Iraq's fragile security.

President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, said the Kurdistan list consisting of his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kurdish President Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party, stood ready to back a tie-up between Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's State of Law bloc and the Iraqi National Alliance (INA).

Talabani made his comments after a meeting on Wednesday night with former Iraqi prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, whose faction is part of the INA.

"As everyone knows, we are natural allies," Talabani told reporters, recalling Kurdish-Shi'ite solidarity when the two communities

were oppressed under toppled Sunni Arab dictator Saddam Hussein.

"In addition, we will support whichever candidate (for prime minister) our Shi'ite brothers propose."

The incumbent prime minister's Shi'ite-led State of Law coalition came a close second in the hotly contested March election with 89 seats, just two behind the 91 won by Allawi's Iraqiya list.

The election results have to be certified, a process that may yet take weeks.

The INA, which is led by overtly religious parties with close ties to Tehran, came third with around 70 seats and Maliki's bloc has been in talks with INA on forming a working majority in the 325-seat parliament.

But Maliki himself has become a sticking point. One of the main parties in the INA, anti-U.S. cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's movement, opposes his reappointment as prime minister. Maliki sent troops to crush Sadr's paramilitary Mehdi Army in 2008.

OTHER KURDS LIKELY TO JOIN

Protracted negotiations on forming a government raise the risk of a spike in sectarian violence. Lengthy coalition talks after Iraq's last election in December 2005 saw the country plunge into a bloody war.

A rise in violence could threaten U.S. plans to end combat operations in August ahead of a full pullout by the end of 2011. There are still around 100,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, seven years after the invasion.

Most Iraqi Kurds are Sunni Muslims, but mainly vote according to their ethnic, rather than their religious identity.

The Kurdistan list gained 43 seats in the election in March. A handful of smaller Kurdish parties also gained seats, taking the total potential Kurdish bloc to 58 in the next parliament if they join forces, as expected.

That would give a Shi'ite-Kurdish coalition government just enough seats for a two-thirds majority that would allow it to amend the constitution.

Le Monde
21 avril 2010

En Irak, Iyad Allaoui et Nouri Al-Maliki rivalisent pour composer une majorité gouvernementale

Le premier ministre Maliki, battu de peu aux législatives, a obtenu un recomptage des voix à Bagdad

Près de six semaines après les élections générales qui n'ont toujours pas permis de former un nouveau gouvernement, la commission électorale d'Irak a accepté, lundi 19 avril, de recompter « manuellement » les 2,5 millions de votes déposés le 7 mars dans les urnes de Bagdad.

Reclamée par le premier ministre sortant, Nouri Al-Maliki, qui a refusé sa défaite annoncée, cette opération, qui pourrait prendre encore quelques semaines, ne fait

De longs processus

15 décembre 2005 Premières élections législatives irakiennes après la chute de Saddam Hussein, en 2003.

21 avril 2006 Désignation du premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki.

20 mai Présentation d'un gouvernement incomplet.

7 mars 2010 Nouvelles élections législatives.

26 mars La commission électorale irakienne proclame les résultats : Iyad Allaoui devance Nouri Al-Maliki de deux sièges. Début des tractations pour constituer une majorité de 163 sièges sur un total de 325 à l'Assemblée.

pas droit à la totalité des récriminations du chef du gouvernement. M. Maliki, qui continue d'expédier les affaires courantes, demandait un recomptage complet dans cinq des 18 provinces d'Irak pour cause de « manipulations » présumées. Elles n'avaient été repérées ni par la commission électorale ni par les experts des Nations unies, lesquels avaient qualifié le scrutin de « globalement honnête et représentatif ». Le décompte initial contesté avait été effectué grâce à un logiciel informatique de l'ONU.

Mené de deux sièges seulement au plan national par son rival laïque Iyad Allaoui (91 contre 89), M. Maliki avait recueilli 26 sièges de députés dans la capitale, contre 24 au Bloc irakien de M. Allaoui. Peu après le scrutin national, des proches de M. Maliki avaient évalué à 750 000 (sur 11,5 millions de votes comptabilisés) le nombre de bulletins « contestables ». Hassan Al Sined, un élu de la liste du premier ministre, Alliance pour un Etat de droit, a déclaré à l'AFP que le recomptage devrait augmenter le score de sa liste. Il n'a pas précisé de combien.

Au point où en sont les tractations entre les deux listes de tête et les autres partis pour former une nouvelle coalition de gouvernement, quelques sièges de plus pour la liste de l'Alliance pour un Etat de

droit ne changeraient pas fondamentalement l'équation politique. Le Bloc irakien de M. Allaoui comme la liste de M. Maliki sont très loin des 163 sièges (sur 325) nécessaires à l'établissement d'une majorité à l'assemblée. Les deux listes de tête sont donc occupées depuis six semaines, via des émissaires, à négocier des ralliements avec d'autres formations.

« Troisième homme »

Trois listes font l'objet, entre les deux « vainqueurs », de surenchères diverses avec offres de ministères et de postes importants à la clé.

La première est celle du jeune prêcheur chiite radical antiméricain Moqtada Al-Sadr, dont le score (39 sièges contre 30 auparavant) a surpris tout le monde. Au début du mois, le mouvement sadriste a organisé une sorte de référendum parmi ses électeurs pour départager les deux listes de tête et déterminer avec laquelle il pourrait s'allier. Selon les chiffres non officiels fournis, 1,43 million de personnes ont participé à l'exercice.

Ni M. Allaoui ni M. Maliki, qui ont dû, l'un après l'autre, envoyer l'armée nationale contre la redoutable milice sadriste, l'Armée du Mahdi, en 2004 puis en 2008, n'obtiennent les faveurs des sympathisants du prêcheur. C'est Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, qui fut lui aussi, briève-

ment, premier ministre après M. Allaoui en 2005-2006, qui est arrivé en tête du « référendum » sadriste avec 24 % des voix contre 9 % à M. Allaoui et 10 % à M. Maliki. M. Moqtada Al Sadr, qui s'est replié à Téhéran depuis près de trois ans, n'ayant pas précisé s'il se conformerait ou non au vote de ses sympathisants, les tractations avec lui se poursuivent néanmoins.

Elles continuent également avec la deuxième grande formation chiite, le Conseil suprême islamique (31 sièges), fondé à Téhéran en 1982 et dont le chef, Ammar Al-Hakim, a laissé entendre que le prochain gouvernement pourrait bien être dirigé par « un troisième homme » autre que MM. Allaoui ou Maliki.

La liste kurde, qui a obtenu 43 sièges, s'est déclarée prête, via son chef et actuel président de la république, Jalal Talabani, à « soutenir tout candidat au poste de premier ministre que proposeraient les frères chiites ». A la condition, non énoncée en public mais claire pour tous, que les candidats en question se montrent mieux disposés à régler l'épineuse question de Kirkouk, ville pétrolière que les Kurdes, qui s'autoadministrent dans les trois provinces du Nord, entendent rattacher à leur zone autonome. Les marchandages sont donc encore très loin de leur terme. ■

Patrice Claude

Le Monde
20 avril 2010

Iran

Deux partis réformateurs suspendus

TÉHÉRAN. Les autorités iraniennes ont suspendu, lundi 19 avril, les activités de deux importants partis réformateurs ayant soutenu le candidat malheureux Mir Hossein Moussavi à la présidentielle de juin 2009. Le Front de la participation de l'Iran islamique (FPIL) et l'Organisation des moudjahidin de la révolution islamique (OMRI), qui regroupent des personnalités proches de l'ex-président réformateur Mohammad Khatami, ont reçu l'interdiction de poursuivre toute activité en attendant une décision de la justice, selon le site Internet du quotidien gouvernemental *Iran*. Leur licence a été retirée et leur dossier sera envoyé devant la justice qui doit examiner une demande de dissolution des deux partis, accusés d'avoir « porté atteinte à l'unité nationale et tenté de créer des divisions au sein de la population ». - (AFP) ■

Iran

Trois dirigeants réformateurs condamnés à six ans de prison

TÉHÉRAN. Trois importants responsables réformateurs, notamment le secrétaire général du Front de la participation, principal parti réformateur, ont été condamnés à six ans de prison et dix ans de privation de toute activité politique et journalistique, a rapporté, dimanche 18 avril, l'agence ISNA. Mohsen Mirdamadi, secrétaire général du Front de la participation, Mostafa Tajzadeh (photo), ancien vice-ministre de l'intérieur, et Davoud Soleimani ont été reconnus coupables d'action contre la sécurité nationale et de propagande contre le régime. Ils peuvent faire



appel. Plusieurs milliers de personnes ont été arrêtées ces derniers mois pour avoir manifesté et contesté la réélection, en juin 2009, du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. La plupart ont été libérées. De lourdes peines ont été prononcées contre des militants réformateurs et des journalistes. - (AFP) ■ PHOTO. AFP

Les nouveaux horizons de la diplomatie turque

Notre axe, c'est Ankara et notre horizon a 360° C», résume Ahmet Davutoglu. Nommé il y a moins d'un an, après avoir été le principal conseiller diplomatique du président, Abdullah Gül, et du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, depuis 2003, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères est l'architecte de la nouvelle diplomatie turque, à l'œuvre sur tous les fronts. Il enchaîne les visites à l'étranger, multiplie les contacts et les médiations. Longtemps perçue sur la scène internationale comme un nain diplomatique, la Turquie revendique désormais une place parmi les puissants. « Nous avons beaucoup de choses à dire. Les grandes nations vont nous entendre », avertit le ministre, qui a orchestré l'offensive.

Cet universitaire fin et cultivé, professeur de sciences politiques, met aujourd'hui en pratique sa théorie peaufinée à la fin des années 1990. Sa thèse, « la profondeur stratégique », redéfinit la place de la Turquie dans son nouvel environnement international. « Depuis la chute du mur de Berlin, la Turquie peut se projeter comme un pouvoir régional et agir sur une aire étendue, utilisant toutes ses facettes », analyse Cengiz Çandar, éditorialiste spécialiste de politique étrangère. Ankara n'est plus cantonné à son rôle de « pilier oriental » de l'Alliance atlantique. Dans un ordre mondial multipolaire, la Turquie peut exprimer son identité européenne et occidentale, mais aussi sa dimension moyen-orientale, caucasienne ou balkanique...

Cette nouvelle orientation commence à ses frontières : autrefois en conflit avec la plupart des pays limitrophes, la Turquie de M. Davutoglu applique aujourd'hui le principe de « zéro problème avec ses voisins ». Au bord de la guerre avec la Syrie en 1999, elle entretient désormais d'excellents rapports avec Damas : les deux pays ont organisé deux conseils des ministres communs fin 2009 et supprimé les visas. L'influence turque progresse aussi en Irak, malgré

Analyse

Guillaume Perrier

Istanbul, correspondance

le refus de s'engager aux côtés des Etats-Unis en 2003. Les rapports avec le puissant voisin iranien se normalisent et la coopération se renforce avec la Grèce. Un processus de réconciliation historique a même été entamé avec l'Arménie. Surnommé « le Kissinger turc » par l'ambassadeur américain à Ankara, M. Davutoglu redessine à petits pas l'environnement de la Turquie. C'est lui qui a poussé la Syrie et Israël à dialoguer, en 2007-2008, assurant la navette entre les délégations à Istanbul. Sur l'Afghanistan, il prône, le premier, le dialogue avec les talibans et porte la voix des pays musulmans à la conférence de Londres, en janvier. A Téhéran, il tente d'infléchir la position du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sur le nucléaire iranien. Dans les Balkans, il relance le dialogue entre Serbes et Bosniaques... De la Macédoine aux Philippines, partout la médiation turque est sollicitée.

La Turquie redevient un acteur central au Moyen-Orient, où elle tire profit de l'affaiblissement de l'Egypte et de l'Arabie saoudite. Istanbul est de nouveau un phare régional. A Gaza, la popularité du premier ministre Erdogan est à son comble depuis que, au Forum de Davos en 2009, il a publiquement renvoyé dans les cordes le président israélien, Shimon Pérès, après l'opération « Plomb durci » menée à l'hiver 2008 contre Gaza. Les Turcs reprennent pied au Maghreb et en Asie du Sud-Est, où leur gouvernement fait figure de modèle pour le monde musulman. Utilisant l'Organisation de la conférence islamique (OCI), Ankara a signé de nombreux traités de libre-échange et des

accords de libre circulation avec près de soixante pays. La Turquie retrouve ainsi son aire d'influence naturelle, de l'Atlantique au golfe Persique, comme au temps du califat et de l'apogée de l'Empire ottoman. La stratégie de M. Davutoglu, un musulman pieux, est souvent qualifiée par ses détracteurs de « néo-ottomane ». Certains, tels que l'ancien ambassadeur Faruk Logoğlu, l'accusent même de tourner le dos à l'Occident et aux alliés traditionnels de la Turquie : Etats-Unis, Israël et Azerbaïdjan.

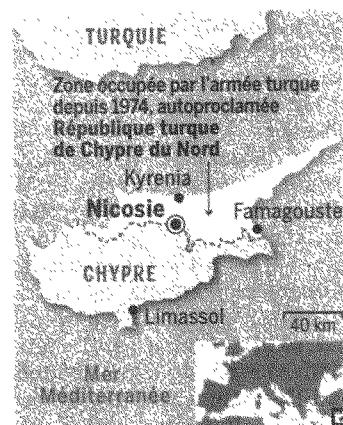
Le ministre turc réfute tout « néo-ottomanisme ». « Les deux piliers de la diplomatie turque restent l'Union européenne et l'OTAN », argumente-t-il. Malgré un net ralentissement des négociations d'adhésion à l'UE, ouvertes en décembre 2004, les réformes menées par le gouvernement turc ont suivi, peu ou prou, le chemin de Bruxelles. Les liens avec les Etats-Unis se sont nettement renforcés depuis l'élection de Barack Obama, dont l'une des premières visites avait été consacrée à la Turquie en avril 2009. A Washington, seuls les cercles républicains, proches des intérêts militaires, s'offusquent du dialogue de la Turquie avec l'Iran et la Syrie.

Loin de tourner le dos à l'Occident pour embrasser le monde musulman, la Turquie a l'ambition de défendre une place singulière, induite par sa situation géographique et stratégique unique. « Notre pays doit prendre confiance », répète le diplomate en chef. Ankara, membre du G20, a été élu membre non permanent du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Ses liens se sont renforcés avec le monde russe et dans toute l'Europe orientale. Ses diplomates partent à la conquête du monde, explorent de nouvelles problématiques. La Turquie célèbre en 2010 l'Année du Japon. Elle a noué d'importants partenariats avec le Brésil. Et elle s'est lancée dans une offensive sans précédent en Afrique. ■

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Le nationaliste Dervis Eroglu remporte la présidentielle dans la partie nord de Chypre

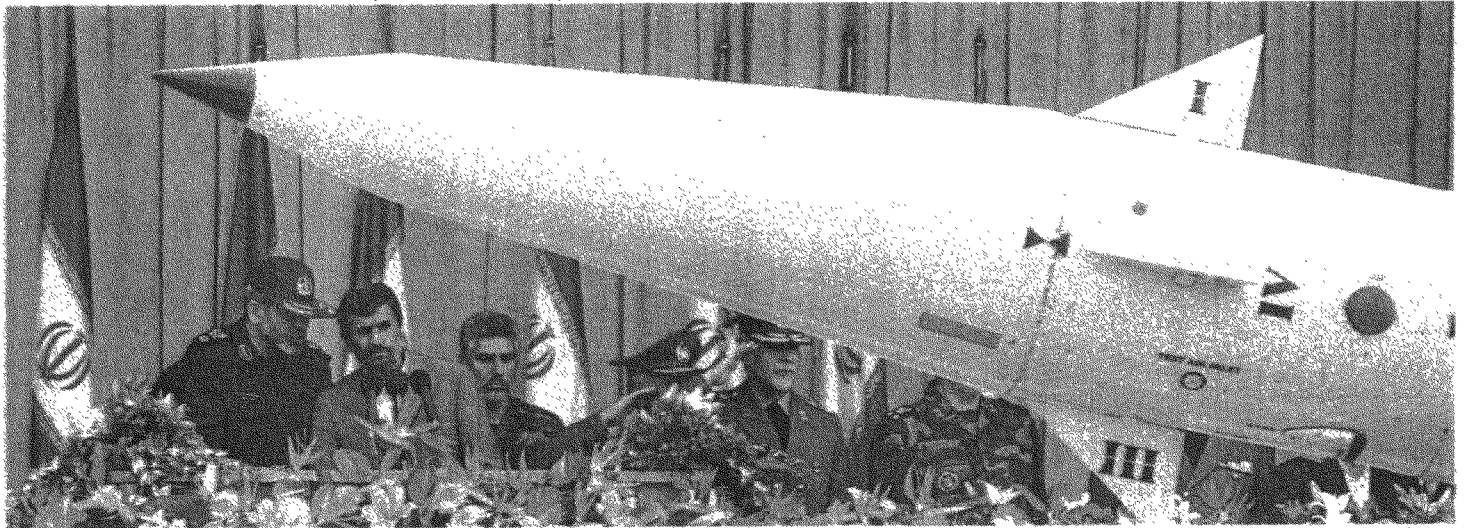
Le premier ministre nationaliste chypriote turc, Dervis Eroglu, a remporté, dimanche, dès le premier tour, l'élection présidentielle de la République turque de Chypre-Nord, reconnue par la seule Turquie, d'après les résultats officiels. Agé de 72 ans, M. Eroglu, chef du parti de l'unité nationale (UBP, conservateur), a recueilli 50,38 % des suffrages exprimés, tandis que le président sortant, Mehmet Ali Talat, a obtenu 42,85 % des voix. Les positions de M. Eroglu en faveur d'un partenariat entre peuples égaux et souverains sur l'île sont rejetées par le gouvernement chypriote grec, seul reconnu par la communauté internationale. L'île de Chypre est divisée depuis l'invasion turque de sa partie nord en 1974, consécutive à un coup d'Etat à Nicosie inspiré par le régime militaire grec.



Chef de l'Etat (élu le 18.04.2010)	Dervis Eroglu
Superficie	3 400 km²
Population (hab.)	260 000
Monnaie	Livre turque

Valse-hésitation à Washington sur l'attitude à adopter face à l'Iran

Une note interne de Robert Gates publiée par le « New York Times » fustige l'« absence de stratégie »



M. Vahidi, ministre de la défense, avec le président Ahmadinejad lors de la Journée de l'armée, le 18 avril, à Téhéran. VAHID SALEMI/AP

New York
Correspondant

Le débat aux Etats-Unis sur les difficultés à développer une stratégie contraignant l'Iran à renoncer à posséder l'arme nucléaire s'amplifie après la publication, par le *New York Times*, samedi 17 avril, d'une note remise en janvier par Robert Gates, le secrétaire à la défense, au général James Jones, conseiller à la sécurité nationale du président Barack Obama.

Dans la note – décrite par un responsable de la Maison Blanche comme un « appel à se réveiller » –,

M. Ahmadinejad approuve d'autres sites nucléaires

« Le président [Ahmadinejad] a approuvé les endroits choisis pour de nouveaux sites nucléaires. Leur construction commencera quand il en donnera l'ordre », a déclaré, lundi 19 avril, son conseiller, Mojtaba Samareh, cité par l'agence Ilna, dans une allusion aux nouvelles usines d'enrichissement que l'Iran a dit vouloir construire. Washington a mis en doute ces affirmations.

M. Gates s'inquiète de l'absence de stratégie claire face à un Iran qui s'efforce de posséder les éléments-clés pour fabriquer une arme nucléaire sans franchir le seuil fatidique de son assemblage.

Cette éventualité qui verrait l'Iran devenir une « puissance nucléaire virtuelle » est jugée inadmissible par M. Obama. Mais comment l'éviter ? M. Gates estimait en janvier que son pays n'avait pas encore de réponse adéquate à cette menace (et à celle, jugée peu vraisemblable, de l'accès d'un groupe soutenu par Téhéran à la capacité nucléaire). Selon le *New York Times*, depuis la remise de cette note, l'équipe Obama a avancé, montant de « nouveaux scénarios » au cas où Téhéran ne se soumettrait pas aux exigences occidentales. Le général Jones a argué le 16 avril que « le fait de ne pas annoncer notre stratégie à la face du monde ne signifie pas que nous n'en possédions pas une anticipant une série d'options ».

« Je n'avais pas besoin d'un memorandum secret pour savoir que les Etats-Unis n'ont pas de politique cohérente face au programme nucléaire iranien », a ironisé le républicain John McCain. Au-delà des

réactions destinées à l'opinion américaine, les inquiétudes de M. Gates reflètent les difficultés de l'administration face à la détermination de Téhéran.

« Deux à cinq ans »

L'opinion américaine est plutôt convaincue qu'il sera très dur d'empêcher l'Iran de parvenir à ses fins s'il entend se doter, qui plus est « virtuellement », de l'arme nucléaire. D'abord parce que « l'option militaire » pour l'en empêcher, formellement toujours « sur la table », est exclue par un nombre croissant d'experts. La semaine dernière, l'amiral Mullen, intervenant à l'université Columbia de New York, a ainsi défini le dilemme américain : « Un Iran possédant l'arme nucléaire serait un facteur incroyablement déstabilisant. L'attaquer créerait exactement le même résultat. »

Ensuite parce que, si la volonté du Guide suprême iranien, Ali Khamenei, et du président, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, de se doter de l'arme nucléaire fait peu de doute à Washington, des questions se posent sur leur capacité à y parvenir. Depuis 2005, plusieurs rapports du renseignement américain ont indiqué

que Téhéran ne serait pas en mesure d'accéder à la capacité nucléaire avant deux à cinq ans.

Le temps passe et cette échéance est chaque fois reportée. Il y a quelques jours, M. Gates a jugé que l'Iran progresse « plus lentement qu'on ne l'anticipait ». Au même moment, au Sénat, le général James Cartwright, spécialiste du nucléaire reconnu, estimait que l'Iran ne sera pas en mesure d'assembler une bombe A « opérationnelle » avant... « deux à cinq ans ».

Washington a aussi du mal à isoler le régime iranien. Le sommet récemment organisé à Téhéran pour « contrer » celui sur la sécurité nucléaire organisé par M. Obama a réuni 60 pays, même si de nombreux délégués étaient de rang subalterne. Moscou et Pékin étaient représentés. Bagdad et le Liban, qui présidera en mai le Conseil de sécurité, aussi. Pour tous ces motifs, la valse-hésitation vis-à-vis de Téhéran risque de se poursuivre. Lundi, le Pentagone a déclassifié une étude selon laquelle l'Iran serait capable « avec une aide étrangère » de frapper le territoire américain avec un missile d'ici à 2015. ■

Sylvain Cypel

L'Iran montre ses muscles dans le Golfe

Les gardiens de la révolution ont entamé, hier, trois jours de manœuvres pour « protéger » le détroit d'Ormuz.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

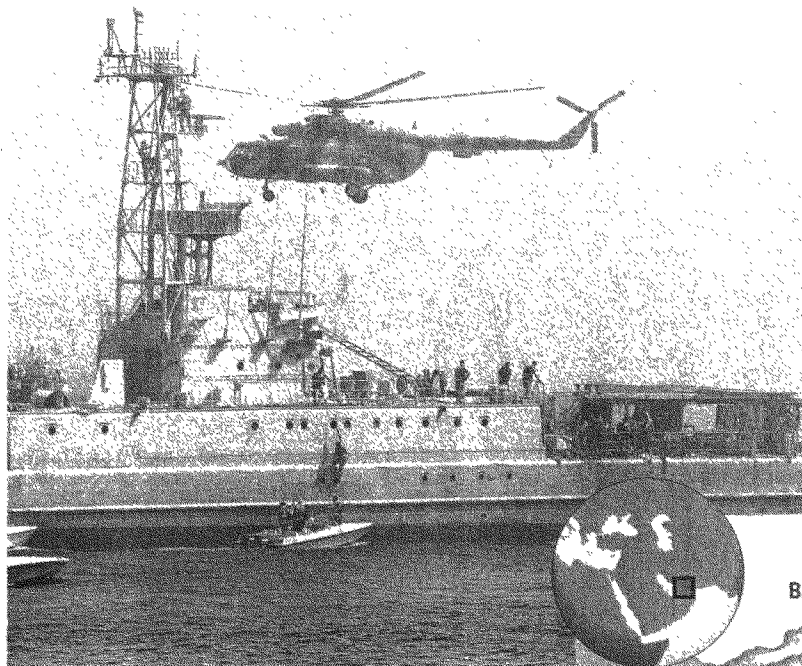
MOYEN-ORIENT Au moment où, à Washington, l'option militaire contre l'Iran semble être relancée, Téhéran affiche ostensiblement ses capacités de défense. Plus de 300 vedettes capables de tirer des roquettes et des missiles participent, depuis hier, à trois jours de manœuvres aériennes, navales et terrestres dans le golfe Persique. Ces exercices ont pour objectif de rappeler les moyens de riposte des gardiens de la révolution, l'armée idéologique en charge de la défense d'un régime contesté en interne et sous la menace de sanctions internationales à l'ONU, pour son refus d'abandonner son programme nucléaire.

Lors de ces manœuvres baptisées « Grand Prophète », une nouvelle vedette rapide a été testée. « Ya Mehdi serait capable de percer un trou de 7 mètres sur 7 », a déclaré le commandant Alireza Tanghsiri. Les Occidentaux redoutent l'utilisation par l'Iran de ces petits navires furtifs, capables de causer d'importants dégâts à leurs bateaux. Le golfe Persique pourrait être l'un des principaux théâtres de la riposte iranienne en cas d'attaque occidentale contre ses installations nucléaires. Près de 40 % de la production mondiale de pétrole proviennent de la région du Golfe et une grande partie de cet or noir transite par le détroit d'Ormuz. Téhéran a déjà averti qu'il pourrait paralyser le trafic pétrolier en bloquant

ce point de passage, stratégique pour l'économie mondiale.

Ces manœuvres ne sont, toutefois, pas nouvelles. Chaque année depuis 2006, Téhéran effectue des exercices dans le Golfe, de préférence pendant l'été. À Washington, un porte-parole du Pentagone a minimisé leur importance, rappelant que l'Iran surestime souvent les capacités de ses nouveaux équipements présentés durant des manœuvres.

Les Occidentaux suivent néanmoins de très près l'évolution de l'arsenal iranien. Début avril, le ministre de la Défense, Ahmad Vahidi, a inauguré un nouveau système de défense antiaérienne (Mirsad). Téhéran fait également d'importants efforts pour fabriquer des drones,



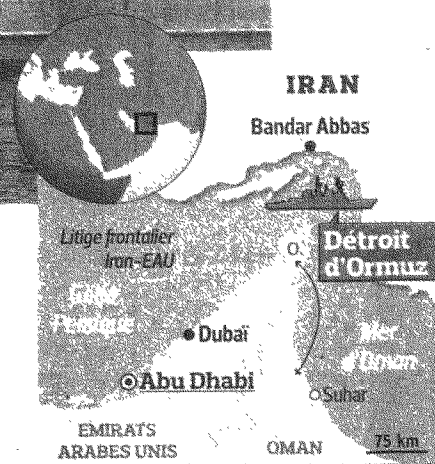
Un bateau de guerre, un hélicoptère et des vedettes rapides iraniens, lors d'exercices, hier, dans le détroit d'Ormuz. REUTERS

ces avions sans pilote, mais aussi des navires capables d'échapper à la surveillance des radars, en service sur les côtes de l'autre rive du Golfe, chez les voisins arabes de l'Iran, inquiets de ses ambitions nucléaires.

La menace de frappes israéliennes

Les autorités iraniennes n'ont donné aucune explication sur un avancement de ces manœuvres au printemps. Depuis que des émissaires turcs et qatariens ont averti Téhéran du danger de frappes israéliennes, les responsables iraniens prennent au sérieux un tel risque. Jusqu'ici, l'Iran répétait ne pas craindre ces attaques.

Mais, aujourd'hui, au sommet de l'État, « tout le monde se méfie de tout le monde », assure un Iranien qui a ses entrées dans certains cercles décisionnaires. « Le régime, ajoute-t-il, se sait infiltré. » D'où le recours à la terreur pour dissuader les candidats à la défection aux États-Unis, comme ce fut le cas l'an dernier de l'expert nucléaire Shahrain Ami-



ri, qui avait disparu à La Mecque, avant d'être récupéré par la CIA. Quelques semaines après, Massoud Mohammadi, un enseignant, fut assassiné à Téhéran. Le pouvoir iranien accusa Israël et les États-Unis. En fait, la victime « était proche d'Amiri et connaissait son histoire », selon son entourage. Ce témoin gênant ne devait pas parler. ■



Kurdistan Regional Government

16 April 2010

President Barzani makes official visit to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani has returned to Salahaddin following an official visit this week to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon where he met with King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz in Riyadh and Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in Beirut. During the visit, President Barzani discussed the latest political developments in Iraq and ongoing efforts to move the political process forward, as well as economic progress in Kurdistan Region.

In Riyadh, President Barzani met with the King and other senior officials of the Kingdom, including Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal in the King's palace.

In the second leg of his tour, President Barzani was received at Beirut airport by Prime Minister Saad Hariri. The two later held a meeting in which they discussed ways to further develop ties between Lebanon and the Kurdistan Region especially in the areas of investment, tourism, and education.

President Barzani and his delegation also met separately with Michel Sulaiman, the President of Lebanon, as well as with Nabih Birri, the Speaker of the Parliament. In both meetings, developments in Iraq and efforts to form the next government were discussed.

Later in the day, the President met with a large group of Kurdish-Lebanese people including students from the Kurdistan Region who are pursuing their education in Beirut. He also held separate meetings with former Lebanese President Amin Gemayel and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt.



GULF NEWS April 15, 2010

Kurds willing to switch alliances Say Al Maliki has not done anything for them

Associated Press

Sulaimaniyah: After years of what they consider unfulfilled promises, Iraq's Kurds are hardening their demands to wring out the best deal from prospective allies following an election that has left the country's future government unclear and the Kurds' support more prized than ever.

In interviews recently in their self-rule northern region, Kurdish leaders and voters demanded real concessions on contentious issues many feel have been left to wither under previous postwar governments,

including that of long-time ally Nouri Al Maliki.

Changed dynamic
Heading into the March 7 vote, a Kurdish alliance with Al Maliki's Shiite supporters was seen as the most logical choice. A shared resentment over perceived second-class treatment under Saddam's Sunni-dominated rule helped seal that bond.

But the results that thrust Eyad Allawi, a secular Shiite who relied on significant Sunni support, into the front-runner's spot have changed that dynamic.

Many Kurds — who have been increasingly

alienated from Al Maliki because of differences with the central government over oil contracts and other issues, say they are now willing to shift alliances to maintain a voice in Baghdad despite the nationalist stance of many Allawi supporters.

"We haven't seen any benefit from Al Maliki. He hasn't done anything for the Iraqi people, let alone the Kurds. Let's try Allawi," said Twan Mohammad, 35, a salesman.

The speed with which high-ranking officials from the leading coalitions raced up to the

three-province Kurdish region in the days after the election for a 325-member parliament emphasises just how important the US-allied minority's support will be.

Allawi went to the Kurdish region at least twice, and met with President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, in Baghdad recently.

Vice-President Adel Abdul Mahdi, a member of the Shiite-led Iraqi National Alliance, travelled north as well, while Al Maliki appeared in a meeting before TV cameras in Baghdad with Talabani.

Iraq-expert: Kurds will be included in the Iraqi government

By Hawar Ali

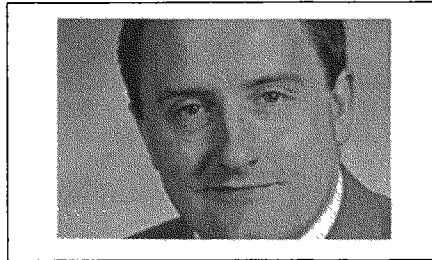
Rudaw - Iraq-expert Michael Knights predicts the Kurds will likely be included in the formation of a new Iraqi government.

Michael Knights is a Boston-based Lafer fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states. He worked with the U.S. Department of Defense and worked as a defense journalist for the Gulf States Newsletter and Jane's Intelligence Review. He also wrote articles about Kurdistan and the province of Kirkuk.

In your view, what role will the Kurds play in forming the next government?

The process of electing a president by a super-majority of 216 seats makes it more likely that the Kurdistan Alliance parties will be included in the first attempt to form a government. The Kurdistan Alliance and other Kurdish or pro-Kurdish parliamentarians will probably be able to muster sixty to sixty-three votes. This wedge of seats will be needed to combine with two of the three other major blocs - Allawi's Iraqiyya, Maliki's SLA or the INA - to elect a president.

There are three scenarios: Shia-Kurdish alliance redux. The most likely government will comprise a combination of Maliki's SLA, parts or all of the INA and the Kurdish parties would boast a



critical mass of around 220 seats and could draw smaller allies to increase this number. There are indicators that Maliki is seeking to draw together these groups, particularly the Kurds and the forty-seat Sadrist core of the INA. The main constraint on this kind of combination is the antipathy and suspicion that the leaders of the INA and Kurds feel towards Prime Minister Maliki.

Anti-Maliki coalition. A slightly less likely outcome will be the fusion of Allawi's bloc, parts or all of the INA and the Kurdish parties, which could combine with the aim of preventing Maliki's re-election. The main constraint on this combination is the difficulty of allying Allawi's mainly Sunni Arab list with the Kurdish parties. Allawi is also viewed negatively by some of the leadership in the Iranian-backed INA due to the Iraqiyya leader's perceived closeness to Western governments and intelligence agencies.

Nationalist coalition. An alliance between Allawi, Maliki and the Sadrist

rump of the INA would bring together nationalist elements from both the Shia and Sunni communities. Though personality politics and the direct competition of these coalitions makes such an arrangement unlikely, an uncompromising negotiating position by the Kurds could bring about this outcome.

Some experts believe that the Sadrists will replace the Kurds as the next kingmakers, what do you think of this?

No - as I wrote above - the Kurds are a larger bloc. Only in the third scenario will the Sadrists replace the Kurds. The Kurds would have to seriously frustrate their Arab partners for this to happen.

In your opinion, who should the Kurds choose as their preferred ally in Baghdad for the next government, the side of Allawi or Maliki?

It's tough. If the Kurds could form a government with Allawi, they would also, in effect, be making a deal with al-Hadba. This could mark a breakthrough in places like Mosul. It would get the two sides talking more regularly.

Do you think the internal division between the Kurds will hurt them in the new Parliament?

No, I think that Kurdistan Alliance, Gorran, Islamists, minority seats, will all work together on Kurdish issues, making up a powerful bloc of 60-63 seats.

© Rudaw

Ba'ath party: Allawi is the same as Maliki

Rudaw -One of the leaders in the Ba'ath Party rejected those reports that they had candidates in the Iraqi elections and that they want to bring their representatives back in the state through the elections.

Salah Mukhtar is a leader in the Ba'ath party and claims that the politicians that were banned by the deBaathification committee don't have any relations with the party. "Because the Ba'aths are those people who are fighting against the invaders," he told Rudaw.

According to some media reports, the banned Ba'aths Party is busy redeveloping itself in both Iraq and Kurdistan.

Furthermore Mukhtar revealed the Ba'ath policies after the withdrawal of the U.S Army from Iraq.

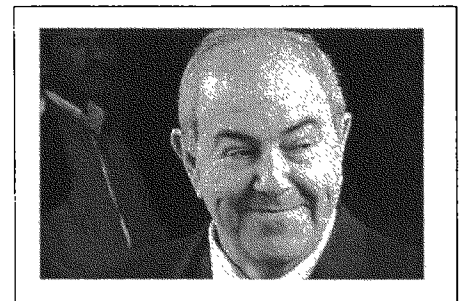
"(After the withdrawal of U.S Army) we will form a national alliance among those forces that resisted the invaders,"

he added.

The Ba'ath party collapsed after the fall of the regime in April 2003. Currently it's been banned as a political party in Iraq. The senior Ba'ath leader said there are no divisions within the Ba'ath party.

"The Ba'aths Party has strong structure and it has one leader and general commander of its forces and that's Izzat Duri," he stated. Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri was Saddam's number two, Revolution Command Council vice-chairman in the former Iraqi regime. He took over the leadership, when Saddam Hussein was hanged in 2006.

The Iraqiya list of Allawi is accused of being supporters of the Ba'ath ideology. In 2007, Time reported that the Ba'ath party endorses Allawi. But Mukhtar told Rudaw the Ba'ath party is against all the Iraqi political parties parti-



cipating in the process. "Because all of them are the slaves of the invaders".

Regarding his view on the former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, he told Rudaw. "Allawi is the same as Maliki and Ahmad Chalabi and they are not different, except Maliki and Chalabi is Iran's puppet and Allawi is U.S's puppet," he concluded.

© Rudaw

The New York Times

April 16, 2010

Iraqi Sunnis Expect Allegiance Shift to Bear Fruit

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS and SA'AD AL-IZZI

TIKRIT, Iraq — As he sits in his palatial home's reception hall, Sheik Munaf Ali al-Nidah denounces the governments of both Iraq and the United States and shakes his head over the vilification of the Baath Party. Above his mantel is a photograph of a smiling Saddam Hussein. A Saddam Hussein watch is wrapped around his wrist.

Mr. Nidah — well known in Tikrit, Mr. Hussein's hometown — ran in last month's parliamentary elections but lost to a candidate from the secular party of former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. He admits that even most of his cousins did not vote for him.

Mr. Nidah's poor performance among his own relatives illustrates how thoroughly Mr. Allawi has reordered Sunni allegiances. It might seem odd at first glance that voters in a hard-line Sunni area like Tikrit would support Mr. Allawi, who is not just a Shiite but also an enemy of Mr. Hussein.

But as a strong secularist and with the strength of his biography as a former ranking member of the Baath Party, he managed to convince Sunnis that he could end the sectarianism they said had gripped past Iraqi governments and protect the rights they believed had been impeded.

Sunnis, who live primarily in an arc north and west of Baghdad, are seen as crucial to whether Iraq can avoid the sectarian and violence that consumed it after the 2005 parliamentary elections. A spate of explosions and other attacks since the



Sheik Munaf Ali al-Nidah, a Sunni from Tikrit who ran for a seat in Parliament, lost to a candidate from Mr. Allawi's party.



Saddam Hussein's coffin in Tikrit, Iraq. Many Sunnis in the area have cast their lot with Ayad Allawi, a Shiite and a Hussein foe.
Joao Silva for The New York Times

voting on March 7, including bombs detonated outside the Iranian Embassy, have killed more than 100 people and wounded hundreds more. Many blame the political void created by the elections.

In Tikrit, elements of Mr. Hussein's Baath Party and Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia remain active, and thousands of unemployed men serve as a recruiting base. There are worries that the ranks of the disaffected men could increase, and so, too, violence, if Sunnis feel disenfranchised.

"The Sunnis are concerned about their own participation in the next government, not Allawi's, but they tied their fortunes to Allawi's," said Joost Hiltermann, deputy program director with the International Crisis Group, an independent, nonprofit organization. "They have seen these elections as a possible turning point, an important reason why they joined the surge in 2007," he added. "They were promised a chance to re-enter the new political order through these elections. If they fail in this quest, all bets are off concerning their future behavior."

Negotiations between political parties have yielded little progress because voters split almost evenly between Mr. Allawi's Iraqiya coalition and Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's State of Law alliance.

There are growing fears among Sunnis, however, that a coalition of Shiite and Kurdish parties could push them to the political sidelines again.

Ibrahim al-Sumydai, an Iraqi political analyst, said that if that happened, the result would be "a great disaster."

"Insurgents have entered the political process to support Allawi," Mr. Sumydai said. "If he is not included, the Sunni street will be angry. Things

will go back to square one."

Mr. Allawi's rise has corresponded with the decline of the Iraq Islamic Party, which has its voting base in Tikrit and other Sunni areas.

In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the Islamic Party and its Sunni allies, which had once been a default choice for Sunnis, even those who were not religious, won 44 seats and were given the posts of vice president and speaker of Parliament.

The organization represented Sunni aspirations and controlled patronage in Sunni areas, and its members helped persuade tribal leaders to turn against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia in 2006 and 2007, which together with the American troop surge quelled the insurgency. Since then, the party has been rattled by infighting and defections, including that of Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, who joined Mr. Allawi's list.

Now, after winning only six seats in the March elections — even though the total number of seats in Parliament was increased to 325 from 275 — the party has little bargaining power and has been largely absent from talks among the coalitions vying to form a new government.

Some in the party appear ready to write its obituary. Even some leaders acknowledge that many Iraqis have long believed that the organization was corrupt and incompetent and fomented sectarianism, and that Mr. Allawi's candidacy simply represented a better hope for Sunnis.

"The public has seen us for the past seven years defending them, but not changing anything," said Rashid al-Izzawi, an Islamic Party leader who was not re-elected.

Still, the support for Mr. Allawi in Sunni areas, which constituted his

base, appears tepid — the best choice among lesser options.

And though Mr. Allawi's coalition won a majority of the votes in Sunni areas, voter participation was generally down from 2005. In Salahuddin Province, of which is Tikrit is the capital, turnout fell to 73 percent this year from 88 percent in 2005. Turnout was also down sharply in heavily Sunni Diyala Province and increased only slightly in Anbar and Nineveh Provinces, which are also predominately Sunni.

In Tikrit, Mr. Hussein's coffin rests inside a building closed to the public to prevent it from becoming a

gathering point for Baathists.

Some people go so far as to say that Mr. Allawi represents the best hope for restoring the sense of pride they lost when Mr. Hussein was deposed.

"I think Allawi has views that are close enough to Saddam Hussein, and a personality that is close to Saddam Hussein," said Muhammad Majeed, 36, who is unemployed. "He is not sectarian. He's a tough politician, and he is serious in his work."

Many others said they turned to Mr. Allawi only after becoming disenchanted with the Sunni religious party.

"I know he is Shiite, but he is secular and he will work for us," said Ziad Atta, 42, a trader. "And I think he will work in our interest."

Others in Tikrit do not believe that Mr. Allawi is the answer for Sunnis. Machsoud Shabb Ahmed al-Mula, who leads the provincial council, declined even to mention Mr. Allawi by name.

"It's better to keep our personal views to ourselves," he said. "This is a dangerous time."

FINANCIAL TIMES April 15, 2010

Turkey finds a gateway to Iraq

By Abigail Fielding-Smith

In the lobby of the Erbil hotel that serves as the makeshift location of Turkey's first diplomatic presence in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq, Aydin Selcen, the new consul, describes the warm reception he has received since arriving a few days earlier.

"I don't think a diplomat could be happier," he says, sipping tea. The installation last month of Mr Selcen, who previously served as deputy chief of mission in Baghdad, marks a high point of two years of rapprochement between the Kurdish Regional Government and Ankara.

Relations hit a low at the end of 2007, when Ankara mounted a military offensive inside KRG territory against the Kurdistan Workers party, known as the PKK, a militant group fighting for greater rights for Turkey's Kurds.

Turkey's relationship with the KRG has historically been driven by anxiety about its own Kurdish minority, particularly after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 gave a boost to Kurdish nationalist sentiment.

Until recently, Turkey did not recognise the KRG as a specifically Kurdish political entity. Now, however, mutual economic interests and the emerging geopolitical realities of a post-American Iraq have pushed both sides to compromise.

A turning point was rea-

ched when the US, after the 2007 incursion, agreed to share intelligence with Turkey, paving the way for a Turkish-KRG rapprochement, according to analysts.

Now, with the US planning to complete its military withdrawal from Iraq by the end of 2011, the Kurds are keen to bolster themselves against a possible confrontation with Baghdad, using all the international connections, financing and diplomatic clout a closer relationship with Turkey can bring.

Turkey, for its part, feels Iran's expanding influence in Iraq is "threatening", according to Joost Hiltermann of the International Crisis Group, a think-tank. Ankara sees its relationship with the KRG as a way of maintaining a strategic position after US troops exit, he says.

Moreover, the Turkish government under the Islamist-rooted AKP party has adopted a policy of normalising relations with neighbours, not least to increase Turkey's chances of becoming an energy transit point between east and west. Kurdistan's natural gas might play an important role in the proposed Nabucco pipeline supplying Europe through Turkey.

"Our aim is to be a hub of energy lines," says Mr Selcen. "Our prime minister's vision is full economic integration. One day you won't notice the frontier between Turkey and Iraq."

Turkey already has a visible economic presence in Iraqi Kurdistan. An estimated 80 per cent of goods sold there are imported from Turkey.

Aras Qader Khoshnaw, an Erbil-based economic analyst, says 55 per cent of the foreign companies registered in the KRG are Turkish. These have been involved in many building projects in the region, including roads, two airports and a police academy.

Last year, Genel Enerji, a Turkish energy company, began exporting oil from the Tak Tak field in Iraqi Kurdistan, though production has since been suspended pending resolution of a dispute between the KRG and Baghdad over the legality of contracts.

It is not simply the KRG's rich natural resources and construction bonanza that are attracting Turkish investors. "Kurdistan is a gateway for business in Iraq," says Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's head of foreign relations. The KRG has been keen to market itself as a safer, more politically stable alternative to Baghdad for investors looking for a foothold in Iraq.

"The region can be a good bridge for Turkey to enter the Iraqi market," Mr Mustafa Bakir says, pointing to the benefits of mobilising construction resources from Erbil rather than Turkey.

Strong though the econo-

mic incentives for investment in the KRG are, it is impossible to separate them from the political situation. After the military incursion in 2007, the number of new Turkish companies being opened in the KRG dropped from 147 to 52 in 2008.

While it is resisting pressure to uproot the PKK by force from its base in the Qandil mountains in the north-east, Erbil has since taken steps to limit the movements of fighters as part of the rapprochement process.

Although the opening of a Turkish consulate in Erbil is a significant development in their relationship, and both sides speak with cautious optimism, progress remains fragile.

A recent initiative by the Turkish government to find a political solution to its domestic Kurdish problem is floundering after the constitutional court banned the main Kurdish political party last December, and even as Turkish companies flow across the border, violence between the PKK and the Turkish army in the area surrounding it has renewed recently.

"Now the talk of using the military [inside the KRG] is becoming weaker and weaker," says Hadi Ada, head of the politburo of the KRG's main Islamist party. "But things are always reversible."

TURQUIE

Courrier
INTERNATIONAL

DU 22 AU 28 AVRIL 2010

Pourquoi notre société est frappée de paranoïa

Des millions de Turcs restent persuadés que des puissances conspirent contre leur pays. Une théorie du complot qui est curieusement acceptée dans toutes les familles politiques, de droite comme de gauche.

▼ "Longue vie à la démocratie turque !" Dessin de Schot paru dans NRC Handelsblad, Rotterdam.

HÜRRIYET
Istanbul

La semaine dernière, j'ai reçu un courrier électronique de la part d'un étudiant me demandant conseil pour un devoir. Il désirait avoir mon "point de vue" pour écrire sur un sujet délicat : "les complots contre la Turquie : affrontements entre droite et gauche, alevites [minorité musulmane hétérodoxe] et sunnites, Turques et Kurdes, etc.". Je lui ai répondu brièvement : "Je vous conseillerais de ne pas aborder ces sujets du point de vue du 'complot contre la Turquie'." Le lendemain, nouveau courrier : "Pouvez-vous quand même m'aider au sujet des complots contre la Turquie ? — Justement, je ne crois pas en l'existence de tels complots !" répliquai-je.

Depuis, je n'ai pas de nouvelles, mais je sais que ma réponse n'aura guère convaincu cet étudiant, ni les millions de Turcs qui sont persuadés que des puissances obscures conspirent inlassablement contre notre beau pays. C'est quasiment un acte de foi national. Ce serait également l'explication ultime des tensions politiques que nous observons "entre droite et gauche, entre alevites et sunnites, entre Turques et Kurdes, etc."

Peut-être nous autres Turcs avons-nous une tendance naturelle à la paranoïa – une tendance soigneusement cultivée par le gouvernement. C'est l'une des premières choses que l'on apprend à l'école. Nous apprenons à lire, à écrire, à respecter nos aînés et aussi à nous méfier du tout nouveau traité de Sévres. Ce traité, signé en 1920, a marqué le démembrement de l'Empire ottoman. Aujourd'hui, très peu de gens s'en souviennent dans le monde, à l'exception de quelques historiens, mais tous les Turcs le connaissent par cœur. L'Etat se charge de garder ce souvenir bien vivant dans les consciences et les idéologues partisans d'un Etat fort n'oublent pas de rappeler aux citoyens que ce traité est toujours dans les tiroirs des puissances occidentales, qui n'attendent qu'une bonne occasion de voir l'Histoire se répéter.

Il m'a fallu un certain temps pour comprendre pourquoi l'Etat alimentait sciemment cette paranoïa. Ma première révélation date de ma lecture de 1984, de George Orwell,



roman dans lequel un parti justifie son pouvoir totalitaire en se référant à des ennemis extérieurs imaginaires. Certes, 1984 est une fiction, et la situation en Turquie est loin d'être aussi catastrophique, mais la logique est la même : créer des ennemis (intérieurs ou extérieurs) pour obtenir l'obéissance aveugle des citoyens. La foi en ces "complots contre la Turquie" permet en outre à l'Etat turc de ne pas aborder les véritables problèmes de notre société. C'est également un excellent moyen de cacher l'incompétence d'un gouvernement qui n'a fait qu'aggraver la situation. Prenez l'exemple de la question kurde. Depuis des décennies, le discours officiel est le même : il existe des puissances étrangères qui souhaitent diviser et affaiblir la Turquie. Elles exploitent des différences mineures au sein de notre société pour créer de larges fractures. Elles paient des citoyens non patriotes pour lancer des actions de trahison et de rébellion contre l'Etat. Mais notre Etat souverain les écrasera bientôt.

L'INTOLÉRANCE, SOURCE DE TOUTES LES TENSIONS SOCIALES

Comme vous pouvez le constater, ces propos sous-entendent deux choses : d'une part, il n'y a pas de problème kurde ; d'autre part, l'Etat turc n'est coupable de rien. En réalité, je pense qu'il a toujours existé une question kurde, qui s'est peu à peu transfor-

mée en nationalisme kurde. L'Etat turc, avec sa politique tyrannique de "turquisation" des Kurdes et la répression brutale de leur opposition, a involontairement jeté de l'huile sur le feu. Cette théorie du complot est largement sponsorisée par le gouvernement, et ses principaux défenseurs sont également de grands adorateurs de l'Etat, autrement dit les kémalistes* et autres nationalistes. Notons toutefois que les autres partis politiques ne sont pas immunisés contre ce genre de pensée. Leurs théories du complot ne sont simplement pas les mêmes.

Je dois même dire que certains représentants "de gauche" semblent également atteints par cette paranoïa. (Les guillemets me paraissent indiqués, en ce sens que même les marxistes réformés de la Turquie d'aujourd'hui ne sont plus vraiment "de gauche".) Ils ne sont toutefois que l'autre face de l'idéologie kémaliste. Alors que ces derniers rejettent toutes les fautes sur les "puissances étrangères", la "gauche" dont je parle vitupère contre l'Etat kémaliste, et notamment l'armée.

N'étant pourtant pas un fervent défenseur de l'armée turque ou des autres institutions kémalistes, j'estime néanmoins que cette position est un peu exagérée. Tout d'abord, je ne pense pas que les kémalistes soient des êtres cruels se plaisant à répandre le sang des Turcs dans les rues. Ce sont plutôt des patriotes. Le problème, c'est que leur patriotisme favorise l'autoritarisme plutôt que la démocratie et la liberté.

L'autre reproche que je ferais aux théories du complot "de gauche", c'est qu'elles tendent à laver la société de toute responsabilité et ignorent les véritables problèmes. Même si certains épisodes de violence dans l'histoire turque – comme les affrontements entre alevites et sunnites dans les années 1970 – étaient effectivement liés à des "provocations" de l'Etat, ils n'auraient jamais été possibles sans la profonde intolérance de notre société.

Il nous faut à présent reconnaître que cette intolérance est la source de toutes les tensions sociales dans notre pays. Si nous parvenons à nous en guérir, aucun "complot contre la Turquie" – si tant est qu'il en existe un – ne pourra nous arrêter.

Mustafa Akyol

* D'après le nom de Mustafa Kemal, dit Atatürk, fondateur de la Turquie moderne.

Iran: De la révolution inachevée de 1979 à la dynamique révolutionnaire en cours !

Omid Saedi

Le peuple iranien est en lutte pour la liberté et la formation d'un Etat de droit depuis plus d'un siècle. Il a fait "la révolution constitutionnelle" en 1906 pour imposer une Constitution à la monarchie dans une région du monde où certains pays sont encore, au XXI^e siècle, à des années-lumière du combat des Iraniens pour la démocratie.

Malgré des crises cycliques dues au despotisme – le mouvement "vert" de contestation en cours étant le dernier exemple en date –, la dynamique en faveur de l'instauration de la démocratie est toujours d'actualité.

La révolution de 1979 pour renverser le pouvoir autocratique du shah et le remplacer par un nouveau régime démocratique a été stoppée par des forces antagonistes et des obstacles politiques. La révolution a été usurpée à mi-chemin par le despotisme religieux.

Néanmoins, la progression sur ce sentier plein d'embûches et difficile d'accès qui mène à la liberté a repris de plus belle dès le lendemain de cette révolution inachevée. C'est ce même dynamisme des droits

démocratiques qui anime aujourd'hui les Iraniens et abouti à la mutation profonde du mouvement "vert" de juin 2009.

Ainsi les révolutionnaires d'hier poursuivent-ils toujours leur révolution. Les mécontentements populaires s'accumulent et se concentrent. Les enfants de la révolution sont persécutés parce qu'ils ne cautionnent plus la dictature islamique. Les violations systématiques, flagrantes et massives des droits de l'homme et des libertés publiques atteignent leur apogée et les gens meurent encore et encore pour la liberté.

Cependant, ce qui est en cours n'est pas "une autre révolution", mais juste une "demi-révolution". En effet, c'est une mutation qui cristallise sous une couleur verte les évolutions dynamiques et profondes de la société iranienne depuis des décennies. Elle constitue la moitié inachevée de la révolution de 1979. Sans plus.

Ce mouvement "vert" est un événement imprévisible, irrésistible et extérieur à la volonté des personnes qui le composent. Elles ne sont en rien responsables des conséquences que cette véritable "force majeure" peut entraîner dans la société ira-

nienne. Ni le régime islamique ni aucun pays développé au monde n'ont pu prévoir avant les élections du 12 juin 2009, les événements exceptionnels, extraordinaires et sans précédent qui allaient se produire.

Si le régime n'a pas pu, malgré la mort, la prison, la torture et le viol écraser cette révolte, c'est parce que c'est une dynamique quasi-insurrectionnelle, et à ce titre, plus puissante que le régime iranien.

Le fait que ce mouvement s'est imposé spontanément fournit en soi un bouclier de défense juridique aux personnalités clés du mouvement, qui fait rompre tout lien de causalité entre ces dernières et ce qui se passe au sein de la société.

Contrairement aux militaires du guide suprême, il n'y a pas entre les contestataires et les "dirigeants" de ce mouvement une hiérarchie permettant d'engager la responsabilité des donneurs d'ordre comme celle des exécutants. En principe, on n'est responsable que de nos actes personnels.

Le mouvement actuel n'appartient donc à personne en particulier. L'ensemble des Iraniens, où qu'ils se trouvent dans le monde, ont des droits de

citoyen et des devoirs dans ce mouvement, sans aucun droit de préférence ni privilège.

Il est intéressant de noter que la situation pré-révolutionnaire en 1978-1979 a des points communs avec la période de 2009-2010. Selon le préambule de la Constitution de la République islamique d'Iran, le régime du shah a commis une erreur fatale en s'en prenant au clergé à l'époque, ce qui a fait exploser la colère du peuple "et abouti en" un peu plus d'un an de lutte continue à la révolution de 1979.

Le régime islamique n'aurait-il pas, lui aussi, déjà commis une erreur fatale en juin 2009 lors de la réélection contestée de M. Ahmadinejad en assumant une fraude électorale contre la volonté du peuple ?

Omid Saedi est doctorant en droit à l'université Paris-1 (Panthéon-Sorbonne)



SYRIE: PEINES DE PRISON POUR QUATRE OPPOSANTS KURDES

DAMAS, 19 avril 2010 (AFP)

LA HAUTE cour de sûreté de l'Etat, un tribunal d'exception en Syrie, a condamné quatre opposants kurdes syriens à cinq ans de prison pour visées sécessionnistes, a annoncé lundi l'Observatoire syrien pour les droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Nazmi Abdel-Hanane Mohammad, Ahmad Darwiche, Dalkash Mamo et Yasha Qader ont été condamnés dimanche pour leur "appartenance à une organisation politique interdite, Yakiti, qui vise à amputer une partie du territoire syrien pour l'annexer à un Etat étranger", a précisé l'OSDH dans un communiqué.

Les quatre Kurdes avaient été arrêtés fin janvier 2007, alors qu'ils se trouvaient dans la maison de Qader à Alep (nord).

L'organisation a dénoncé "les jugements anticonstitutionnels émis par la Haute

cour de sûreté de l'Etat, créée en 1968 en vertu de la loi d'urgence, à des fins politiques illégaux".

Elle a demandé au gouvernement de "libérer les quatre opposants kurdes ainsi que tous les détenus de conscience dans les prisons syriennes" et de "voter une loi moderne qui organiserait le travail des partis politiques et des associations civiles en Syrie".

En Syrie, les détenus kurdes sont systématiquement accusés de vouloir rattacher une partie du territoire syrien à un futur Etat indépendant du Kurdistan. Mais les responsables kurdes de Syrie se défendent de toute visée sécessionniste et assurent qu'ils veulent uniquement la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ainsi que de leurs droits politiques.

Estimés à plus de 1,5 million de personnes, les Kurdes de Syrie représentent environ 9% de la population du pays.



Allegation: Turkey breaking landmine ban

ISTANBUL, Turkey, April 16, 2010(UPI)

Records indicating the Turkish military planted banned landmines in a southeastern province a year ago were published in a Turkish newspaper Friday.

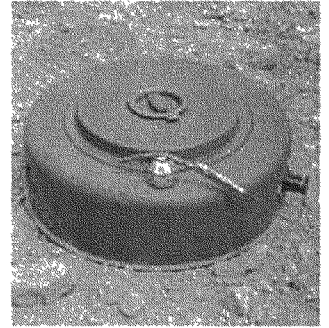
The Taraf daily published military documents showing M2A4 anti-personnel mines were planted on the outskirts of the province of Sirnak on April 9, 2009, despite Turkey's voluntary agreement to be mine-free by March 1, 2014, Zaman reported.

Turkey signed on to the Mine Ban Treaty, or the Ottawa Treaty, along with 155 other countries in 2003. Turkey agreed to completely destroy its landmine stocks by March 1, 2008, although the process is still ongoing, the report said. The treaty also calls for the country to be swept and cleared of all mines by March 1, 2014.

However, because the treaty is voluntary, there is no punishment for non-compliance.

Last May, seven Turkish soldiers were killed by a landmine in the same region and suspicions were published the mines had been planted by the banned separatist Kurdistan group known as the PKK. A subsequent investigation determined the mine belonged to the Turkish military, the report said.

There was no immediate response from military officials about the report.



WorldTribune April 17, 2010

Continued U.S. presence urged for northern Iraq to secure oil sector

World Tribune

WASHINGTON, — The U.S. military should maintain a major presence in the disputed oil capital in northern Iraq, according to a new report.

The report by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy said the U.S. military must maintain a significant presence in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk even beyond 2011. Under a 2008 accord, the U.S. military was scheduled to leave Iraq by 2012.

"Maintaining a U.S. military presence in Kirkuk would provide vital crisis-management and confidence-building support in the province's sensitive security zones for years to come," the report, titled "Kirkuk in Transition," said.

The report said the U.S. military has been keeping a lid on tension between Arabs and Kurds in the Kirkuk region. Since January 2010, U.S. forces have also supported the deployment of the Kirkuk Combined Security Force, www.ekurd.netdesigned to eventually comprise six 100-man units, with each comprising 33-man detachments from the Iraqi army, Iraqi police and Kurdish militia, known as Peshmerga.

"Washington should retain a brigade-level 'engagement headquarters' in Kirkuk under the terms of a future U.S.-Iraqi security agreement," the report, authored by Michael Knights and Ahmed Ali, said.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem." Kurds see it as the rightful and perfect capital of an autonomous Kurdistan state. The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry. Photo by Josh Rushing

So far, the United States has been recognized as a credible mediator in the conflict between Arabs and Kurds over control of Kirkuk. The report said Kirkuk police chiefs have allowed U.S. forces to operate more freely than in other areas of Iraq.

"In essence, Kurdish-led, multi-ethnic police forces have provided the Iraqi lead on security in Kirkuk city since 2003, when the Peshmerga pushed aside the Baath military's 'cordon of security' to the northwest and

east," the report said. "The U.S. military has consistently employed a light touch in Kirkuk, regarding the city as being in safe hands due to the fraternal postwar relations between American and Kurdish forces."

The institute recommended that the U.S. military establish a special training mission in Kirkuk and ensure that it remains in place even after most other forces have left Iraq. The report said this should be done as close as possible to the Dec. 31, 2011, withdrawal deadline.

The report also recommended that Washington and U.S. oil companies help train residents of the Kirkuk region in managing the oil sector. Oil from Kirkuk reaches the international market through Turkey in the north.

"The U.S. government and American oil companies should develop a trilateral industry training initiative involving U.S. partners, Iraq's Northern Oil Co., and the Kurdistan National Oil Co.," the report said.



Karayilan: "The EU and the US are responsible for the stalemate in the solution of the Kurdish issue"



by Selene Verri

Also published on Turkish Diary

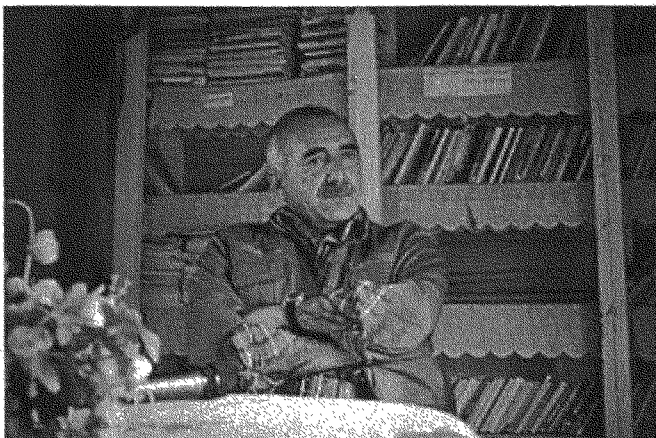
The Qandil Mountains, in Iraqi Kurdistan. We arrived here expecting training camps and PKK fighters all over the place. We find houses, children playing, women who greet us - all we can say in Kurdish is rojbas, have a good day - and serve us rice and chicken, and a smiling representative of PKK, who, behind his glasses and thick eyebrows, explains us kindly in English what we are going to do. We are here to meet a "leader" - we were not told who, although we already imagine who that could be. After lunch, they bring us a bit further into the mountains. Here we do find young fighters armed with Kalashnikovs. And here is where we learn we were right - the person we are meeting is Murat Karayilan, top leader of the guerrilla.



This interview was recorded in North Iraq on March 23rd. Turkish Diary does not necessarily share the opinions of the interviewee. However, since we had a chance to look at the issue from a viewpoint different from the official ones, our duty as journalists was to take this chance and show it to our readers. We are confident they are smart enough to tell the difference between truth and propaganda.

In the last few years it seems your goals have changed, you are no longer a separatist group. Why are you still fighting?

You are aware that the culture, the identity, all the national rights of the Kurdish people have always been denied. There has also been violence and oppression against this people. Because of that, the Kurdish people decided to protect themselves through struggle, through arms. But since 1999, August 2nd, we have been trying to solve the Kurdish question through peaceful means, because we believe that the Kurdish question can be solved not through war but only through political means. It's a social problem, so there can be only a political solution to it. So our struggle right now is a political, democratic struggle. What we want is a political, democratic solution within the Turkish borders. Our motto is: "A democratic Turkey for an autonomous Kurdistan".



What is the model for this autonomous Kurdistan?

I have a number of examples. Spain, Scotland, Belgium... we can give quite a number of examples in Europe. Through dialogue we could take all these examples and solve the issue. We are not asking much. The question can be solved with positive side effects for everyone.

Another example is France, the first nation-based State. Turkey sees France as an example, but there are different practices in Turkey. Whatever the French government has done; none for Corsica, all those rights, if given to Kurdish people, they will be accepted, there is nothing more.

the problem is that AKP today says that yes, there are Kurdish people, but in the meantime they say that within the Turkish people there's a Kurdish people. Other than that there is no Kurdish people. This means there are many ethnic groups in Turkey, but they are all Turkish. It's a way of playing with words. The assimilation policy that has continued for the last 86 years is still going on.

Since there are many examples of autonomy in Europe, do you think Turkey can be a part of Europe?

If there are changes in Turkey, why not?

We believe that the Kurdish issue is the main issue which can change Turkey democratically.

If Turkey changes its approach to the Kurdish issue, if it changes democratically... then why not?

The government has proposed constitutional reforms. What do you think of that?

These changes cannot bring democracy in Turkey, because of the mentality, of the approach, which is still the mentality of the 12 September 1980 coup. AKP is just having problems with the judiciary, and they are trying to overcome this. That's the only reason they are discussing the changes in the Constitution, nothing more than that. The mentality is the same, and this mentality cannot bring any democratic changes in Turkey.

But if the judiciary is less powerful, there will be no longer episodes such as the ban of DTP in Turkey. Isn't this positive?

It's not important at all. Of course it's positive, however for the Kurdish issue this has no relevance, because there will be no change on two crucial issues.

The first one is the 10 percent threshold in general elections. The second is the law on terrorism. For example, they give a lot of prison sentences to children. A woman can have a 7-year prison sentence just because she shouted certain slogans and carried a banner.

Erdogan is dealing with the problems they have, not the Kurdish people.

A few weeks ago Osman Öcalan said that if his brother was released and put to house arrest, PKK would disarm. Is this true?

That person has nothing to do with us, we do not have any relations at all, from time to time some people try to use him. So, it is not true.

Whatever that person said has nothing to do with us. At the beginning of February this year we proposed a road map for the solution of the Kurdish question in peaceful terms.

4 main steps need to be done:

- all the operations - military and political - have to be stopped
- since a lot of politicians have been arrested - some MPs, some mayors, members of the party, over 1.500 politicians - they have to be released
- we believe Abdullah Öcalan can play an effective role in the peace process, so he should be put to house arrest
- after these 3 conditions are fulfilled, the dialogue can start immediately



So, at that time, will the PKK disarm?

If the dialogue starts, this matter of arms can be taken as part of the dialogue, it can be discussed. We are not only 3 or 5 people, we are thousands of people, so what is the situation of this people going to be? How will the disarmament take place? On what conditions? Once the dialogue starts, we can discuss all these things there.

Öcalan is seen by Turks as a symbol of this war, of terrorism, so even if the government wanted to give him an effective role, it would be very difficult for them, they would meet a lot of resistance, so how do you propose to do that?

Such claims were already made before. For example, in South Africa, with the Mandela case, or for Yasser Arafat in the Palestinian case. But in the end if they hadn't spoken to Mandela, they wouldn't have solved the issue. The same happened with the Palestinian issue. Both Mandela and Arafat were seen as terrorists, terrorist leaders.

So, first of all Turkey has to change its language. Second, they have to make sincere steps, in order to solve the Kurdish issue. There is no terrorist leader, Abdullah Öcalan is not a terrorist at all. This is only a name given to the opposition.

Today millions of people - as you saw during the Newroz in Diyarbakir - shout "we are PKK". That's the reality, that's the approach of the people, and using other words, other languages is not going to help solve the Kurdish question.

But I don't believe the real problem is Turkey. The problem is Europe and the US. They are the ones who are affecting the solution period.

In what sense?

While the armed struggle was going on, the European countries never put our organisation's name in the list of terrorist organizations. But in 1999, we decided to change our strategy, Abdullah Öcalan at that time went to Europe in order to open a pathway for a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish issue - as you know he has been to Italy.

At that time Mr D'Alema and the Italian government were approached frankly by Abdullah Öcalan. D'Alema even went to Germany to speak with Schroeder regarding the Kurdish issue and Abdullah Öcalan, he said Europe should make a conference on the Kurdish issue, but Germany didn't accept. After an international conspiracy our leader Abdullah Öcalan was illegally captured and given to Turkey. So at that time the European countries never approached the issue to solve it peacefully and democratically - they could, at that time, but they did not, and after 1999 our organisation made a declaration that as a new strategy we were going to find a peaceful and democratic solution.

After the declaration we made, we announced that we were giving up arms. The EU in 2002 put us in the terrorists list.

This period showed us that the EU does not want a peaceful and democratic solution of the Kurdish issue. And for all these years the EU has given support to Turkey, militarily and politically. The same occurred with the US.

Les Turcs redécouvrent la part arménienne de leur identité

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

TURQUIE Sur la rive asiatique d'Istanbul, les voyageurs qui descendent du train à Haydarpacha risquent d'avoir un choc, ce samedi : à l'occasion du 95^e anniversaire des massacres d'Arméniens par l'Empire ottoman pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, l'Association des droits de l'homme réclamera devant la gare que l'État turc reconnaisse le génocide.

C'est de là que partit le premier convoi de déportés arméniens. Sur la place de Taksim, le cœur névralgique de la mégapole, les badauds auront également droit à une leçon d'histoire qui ne figure pas dans les manuels scolaires. Durde, un collectif d'associations turques, a appelé à un rassemblement pour rendre « hommage à la mémoire des victimes de 1915, silencieusement et vêtu de noir ».

« Environ 1,5 million d'Arméniens, 15 % de la population de l'époque, ont été tués ou déportés et ils n'ont même pas de tombe, explique Cengiz Algan, un des initiateurs du rassemblement. Notre démarche n'est pas une révolution, mais une contribution pour que les Turcs se confrontent enfin à leur histoire. »

C'est en tout cas une étape supplémentaire dans le long travail de reconnaissance du génocide engagé par une partie de la société civile turque. Près d'un siècle après les massacres de centaines de milliers d'Arméniens, c'est la première fois que des manifestations défient sur la voie publique le « négationnisme » de l'État.

Restaurer les églises

En 2005, le lancement des négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne avait fait souffler un vent de liberté en Turquie et les universitaires turcs avaient brisé le tabou du génocide en organisant une conférence sur ce non-dit de l'histoire. Deux ans plus tard, l'assassinat du journaliste arménien Hrant Dink a réveillé les consciences d'une avant-garde démocratique.

Le mois dernier, les votes d'une résolution sur le génocide arménien par une commission de la Chambre des représentants aux États-Unis et par le Parlement de Suède ont déclenché des crises

diplomatiques avec la Turquie. Pour Ankara, gardienne de la thèse officielle, le danger vient désormais aussi de l'intérieur.

Travaux d'historiens, documentaires, débats télévisés et ouvrages se multiplient. Film après livre, un passé occulté rattrape le présent et, avec lui, la part arménienne cachée de l'identité de la Turquie. Même les municipalités d'Anatolie se mettent à restaurer les églises arméniennes, alors que depuis sa création en 1923, la République turque avait tenté d'effacer toute trace de la présence arménienne, au mieux en laissant s'écrouler ce patrimoine, au pire en le rasant.

Transmission orale

Paru à l'automne dernier, *Les Petits-Enfants* fait témoigner des descendants d'Arméniens qui ont échappé aux massacres et qui ont été en partie assimilés au fil des décennies.

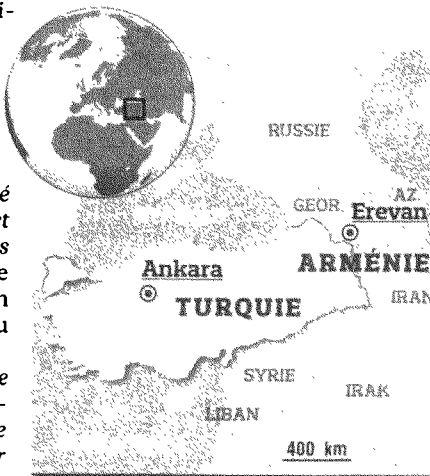
Ce recueil lève le voile sur le sort caché de ces milliers d'enfants, des filles le plus souvent, adoptés ou enlevés par des voisins musulmans. À l'exception d'un seul, tous les petits-enfants y racontent leur secret de famille anonymement. « Ce livre est un défi envers ce dont on a peur, la peur est centrale dans toutes les his-

toires racontées, déclare Aysegül Altınay, une des coauteurs. Mais en partageant leur vie avec les lecteurs, ils disent basta ! »

Selon Cengiz Aktar (*), un des auteurs d'une campagne de pardon pour la « Grande Catastrophe » - l'appellation désignant le génocide chez les Arméniens -, qui a recueilli plus de 30 000 signatures sur Internet, la seule façon de contourner le négationnisme est désormais de « mener des actions pour développer une politique de mémoire, conduire un travail pédagogique auprès de la population ». Afin de faire émerger une conscience commune, un projet turco-arménien s'est ainsi attaché à collecter dans les familles des histoires relatives au génocide. L'étude montre qu'une transmission orale a lieu en dépit du silence imposé dans la sphère publique.

Dans les familles, des récits se murmurent de génération en génération. « En privé, même si les témoins ne sont plus en vie, ce qui s'est passé est un secret de Polichinelle, explique Leyla Neyzi, anthropologue turque qui a supervisé le recueil des récits. Cela peut s'exprimer de façon inconsciente, mais même les anecdotes disent la culpabilité. » Comme ce vieillard qui s'est mis à raconter, quand il est devenu sénile, qu'il avait jeté des enfants arméniens dans la rivière. Les fantômes hantent toujours les mémoires. « Résultat, ajoute cette enseignante à l'université Sabanci d'Istanbul, les Turcs sont totalement schizophréniques. » Pour eux, être en paix passera par l'acceptation de leur responsabilité dans l'extermination d'un peuple qui vivait en Anatolie, sur la même terre que la leur. ■

(*) L'Appel au pardon, CNRS éditions.



Hier, à Erevan, en Arménie, une jeune femme prie lors d'une cérémonie commémorative du 95^e anniversaire des massacres d'Arméniens par l'Empire ottoman.

Iraqi court orders a partial recount

BAGHDAD

Fear grows that violence could erupt if election results are upended

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

An Iraqi court ordered a partial recount of votes in last month's national election on Monday, worsening the political turmoil that many here fear could easily turn violent as the United States begins to withdraw most of its combat troops this summer.

While the recount is limited so far to the province that includes the capital, Baghdad, it could upend the narrow, two-seat victory of the largely secular coalition led by a former prime minister, Ayad Allawi, over Iraq's incumbent leader, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

The region accounts for more than a fifth of the 12 million Iraqis who voted in March and 70 of the 325 lawmakers who will serve in the new Parliament.

Mr. Maliki, a Shiite whose own coalition won 89 seats, compared with 91 for Mr. Allawi's, filed a series of legal challenges that resulted in the court's ruling, complaining that the results announced nearly a month ago did not reflect the true will of the people.

"This decision is a victory for judgment, a victory for the independence of the law, a victory for the party lists and a victory for the Iraqi people," Mr. Maliki said at a news conference Monday after the ruling, predicting that the results of the election would now change.

Mr. Allawi, a Shiite whose alliance won a majority of Sunni votes, has warned that violence could erupt if his victory is overturned. His supporters responded angrily Monday, saying the court's ruling was evidence of intense pressure from an autocratic leader unwilling to accept defeat and step aside.

Haidar al-Mulla, a winning candidate in Mr. Allawi's alliance, Iraqiya, warned that if its victory were overturned, the country would "find itself in a legitimate crisis."

The disputed results of the election — which the United States and United Nations praised as largely fair and free of the huge fraud that marred the election in Afghanistan last year — have complicated what was already expected to be an arduous, months-long struggle for political power in the government for the next four years.

Neither Mr. Allawi nor Mr. Maliki won enough seats to win the post of prime minister outright. Both now have to cobble together coalitions with other parties, most of them vehemently at odds and opposed to their candidacies to lead the country.

A change in the number of seats could decide who has the first crack at being chosen when Parliament finally meets. Acting on an inquiry from Mr. Maliki, Iraq's highest court ruled last month that the largest coalition in the new Parliament had the right to form the government, not necessarily the one that won the most seats on its own.

Last week Mr. Maliki's bloc appeared near an agreement to merge with the second-largest Shiite alliance, the Iraqi National Alliance, which won 70 seats,

but the effort stalled because of Mr. Maliki's insistence that he remain in office. If his bloc ends up with more seats than Mr. Allawi's, Mr. Maliki will not need an alliance to have the first chance to win enough votes to return to office.

In an interview Monday, Ammar al-Hakim, the leader of one of the Iraqi National Alliance's main political parties, Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, called for a broad coalition government that would represent all the country's sects and ethnic groups.

Although he did not explicitly endorse a candidate for prime minister, he suggested that Mr. Maliki would not be the one to lead the country.

"In a mature democracy we should differentiate between personal emotions and the interests of the country," he said.

The recount is expected to take at least a week, according to the Election Commission. In keeping with practice, the three-member panel that ordered the recount, part of the Supreme Court, did not immediately publish any explanation of its ruling.

Officials said it was still considering more complaints of ballot irregularities and could order recounts in other regions, as well.

The Election Commission, as well as U.N. officials, had previously said there was no procedure for conducting a manual recount. In calling for one, Mr. Maliki's bloc cited irregularities like improperly signed voting forms and altered tally sheets that the officials complained affected 750,000 votes.

The court's ruling raised expectations of other parties with grievances, including the Kurdish alliance, which appealed to the court to review votes in two divided northern provinces, Nineveh and Kirkuk.

Iran presses its crackdown on reformists

BEIRUT

BY ROBERT F. WORTH

The Iranian authorities suspended two prominent opposition political parties, banned a newspaper and handed down prison sentences to three reformist political figures on Monday in the latest signs that the hard-line rulers aim to crush any official political representation by the reformist movement.

The opposition parties, the Islamic Iran Participation Front and the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution, were told to suspend all activities until a final decision was made about their status, according to the official news agency IRNA. The move was widely understood as a precursor to a full legal ban.

The Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolu-

tion, established during the Islamic Revolution in 1979, evolved to become a reformist organ and supported Mir-Hossein Moussavi, the opposition candidate in the disputed presidential elections in June. The Islamic Iran Participation Front was formed in 1997, after the victory of a reformist, Mohammad Khatami, as president, and it quickly became the most important reformist political group in the country.

The suspension was not a surprise, as many of the parties' members had already been arrested or jailed. But it suggested that the authorities might be moving more aggressively to stamp out reformist political groups as the anniversary of the election draws closer.

The government also banned the reformist newspaper Bahar, accusing it of spreading doubts about the election and

questioning the Islamic system of government, according to the reformist Web site Parleman News. Bahar had started publishing only three months ago, after a government ban on the popular reformist daily Etemad.

The three politicians, Mostafa Tajzadeh, Davood Soleimani and Mohsen Mirdamadi, each received six-year prison sentences and a 10-year ban on all activities related to political parties or the news media, according to the Fars news agency. They were arrested last summer in the wake of the post-election protests and convicted in a mass trial of opposition supporters on charges of conspiracy and propaganda against the Iranian government.

All three men were active during the reformist presidency of Mr. Khatami, between 1997 and 2005. Mr. Mirdamadi,

one of the organizers of the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in 1979 and a member of Parliament for four years, was men-

2 parties are suspended, and a full legal ban is expected.

tioned by Mr. Moussavi in his latest statement deploring the imprisonment of reformist figures.

Last week, Mr. Khatami was banned from traveling abroad to attend a nuclear disarmament conference in Japan, opposition Web sites reported. He openly supported the opposition movement last summer during a wave of protests against the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which was widely viewed as fraudulent. Conservatives have called for the arrest of Mr. Khatami, as well as Mr. Moussavi and other opposition leaders, though those calls have faded since the opposition movement lost momentum two months ago.

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, based in New York,

called the travel ban part of a systematic effort to "contain critical voices and prevent them from having contact with the international community."

Gates explains Iran memo

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has acknowledged that he wrote a classified memorandum to the White House in January raising significant questions about long-term Iran policy, but says his goal was only "to contribute to an orderly and timely decision-making process," Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger reported from Washington.

The New York Times and its global edition, the International Herald Tribune, reported that Mr. Gates had warned in a secret three-page memo that the United States did not have an effective long-range policy for dealing with Iran's steady progress toward nuclear capability. Before publication of the article, Obama administration officials had not publicly confirmed or denied the memo's existence.

In a statement issued Sunday, Mr. Gates said he wished to correct what he described as mischaracterizations about the memo's content and purpose, and to dispel any perception among allies that the administration had failed to think through how to deal with Iran.

"With the administration's pivot to a pressure track on Iran earlier this year, the memo identified next steps in our defense planning process where further interagency discussion and policy decisions would be needed in the months and weeks ahead," Mr. Gates said.

"The memo was not intended as a 'wake-up call' or received as such by the president's national security team," he added.

TODAYS ZAMAN 29 April 2010

Former foe Barzani formally invited to visit Turkey

TODAY'S ZAMAN

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has officially invited Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani to Ankara, a move underscoring a rapprochement between Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds after years of tension over the presence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq.

Davutoglu, speaking at a joint press conference with the foreign ministers of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, announced that the invitation had been conveyed to Barzani by Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu during his visit to Arbil on Tuesday. "He will visit Turkey at an appropriate time," Davuto?lu told reporters.

The once-warm ties between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds were transformed into unprecedented tension following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Ankara strongly criticized the Iraqi Kurds running the US-protected northern Iraq for harboring PKK terrorists, who use their bases in the northern Iraqi mountains as a springboard for attacks on Turkish targets. Following a

November 2007 deal with the US, Turkey began to launch cross-border attacks on the PKK targets in northern Iraq, drawing angry protests from Barzani and other Kurdish officials. The tensions were further exacerbated by disagreements over the fate of the disputed city of Kirkuk. The Kurds want to include the city, which sits atop six percent of the world's known oil reserves, in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, which currently comprises three northern Iraqi provinces. The Arab and Turkmen residents of the city oppose Kurdish rule and Turkey once warned that Kurdish attempts to control Kirkuk might be a reason to declare war on the Kurdish administration. But tensions have eased in recent years.

Expanding its focus beyond northern Iraq, Ankara has shifted its attention to stability in post-war Iraq and put into force a new policy based on dialogue with all the Iraqi groups, encouraging them to resolve their differences for a united Iraq.

Turkey maintains intense contact with all Iraqi groups, irrespective of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. "Turkey is in close dialogue with all groups to send them the same message, to help them build Iraq's future," Davuto?lu said. "We want all the Iraqi



Sinirlioglu conveyed Turkey's invitation to Kurdish leader Barzani during talks in Arbil on Tuesday.

groups to rebuild the country in a short period of time."

Barzani will be the latest senior Iraqi official to visit Turkey following of the country's March 7 election. Former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, who heads the cross-sectarian al-Iraqiyya coalition, and Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi from the same bloc visited Ankara recently for talks on the troubles in the post-election period. Al-Iraqiyya won the election by a small margin but some rulings by an election court threaten to reverse al-Iraqiyya's lead, a development that is likely to anger the Sunnis who support Allawi's bloc. The Iraqi Kurds tend to back Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite-dominated State of Law Alliance, which won 89 seats compared to al-Iraqiyya's 91.

Iran shows 'strength' in war games

Military exercise comes after Tehran says U.S. nuclear policy is a threat

BY NAZILA FATHI AND DAVID E. SANGER

State television in Iran reported Thursday that it had begun a large military exercise in the Gulf, where the United States and Israel have increased their presence in recent months.

The report came a day after Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declared that President Barack Obama's new nuclear strategy amounted to "atomic threats against Iranian people."

The Iranian military has defined the exercise as a three-day naval, ground and air war game in the Gulf, including the Strait of Hormuz, through which passes a large amount of the world's oil.

Brig. Gen. Hussein Salami, deputy chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, said Wednesday that the exercise was aimed at showing "Iran's strength and will against the threats of the enemies," the Fars News Agency reported. Iran regularly stages drills to show off its military power.

Ayatollah Khamenei's statement on Wednesday referred to the section of Mr. Obama's Nuclear Posture Review that guaranteed nonnuclear nations that they would never be threatened by a United States nuclear strike — as long

as they are in compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as judged by the United States.

In Washington on Wednesday, Gary Samore, Mr. Obama's top adviser on unconventional weapons, said the wording of the nuclear review was "deliberately crafted" to exclude Iran and North Korea from the security guarantee, creating an incentive for both countries to come into compliance with the treaty. North Korea has conducted two nuclear tests and is believed to have fuel for eight or more weapons, but Washington has never acknowledged it as a nuclear-weapons state.

Mr. Samore insisted that Mr. Obama's decision did not amount to making a nuclear threat against Iran, which many Western countries believe is pursuing a weapon. The policy, Mr. Samore said, refers only to the use of nuclear weapons in the most extreme circumstances, which most experts believe means in retaliation for a strike against the United States or its allies.

Still, Ayatollah Khamenei's statement struck at the heart of one of the criticisms of Mr. Obama's Nuclear Posture Review: that it could give Iran a pretext to argue that it should develop nuclear weapons to defend itself. The ayatollah's remarks suggested that the Iranian leadership regarded the Obama administration's policy as a new level of intimidation, or perhaps as a justification for pursuing its nuclear program.

"How can the U.S. president make atomic threats against Iranian

people?" Ayatollah Khamenei said in a speech to Iranian medical workers, Fars reported from Tehran. "This threat is a threat against humanity and international peace and no one in the world should dare to articulate such words."

Ayatollah Khamenei said Wednesday that countries that had nuclear ability were themselves "brazenly lying" about their commitment to nonproliferation. He argued that nuclear-armed states sought to keep nonnuclear states from developing such weapons because they did not want competition.

"We have repeatedly said that we do not intend to use weapons of mass destruction, but the Iranian people do not surrender to these threats and will force those who make such threats to come to their knees," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

To meet the United States' demands, Iran would need to take several important steps, including halting uranium enrichment and allowing broad inspections of the country to ensure that Iran had no secret plants.

Iran has refused to suspend its nuclear program despite existing United Nations sanctions and calls by the United States for new, more stringent sanctions.

Iranian officials have floated the possibility in recent days of revisiting a deal to swap a portion of their country's nuclear fuel. The Iranians agreed in principle to a deal last year that would have allowed the fuel to be converted overseas and then returned in a form that would be difficult to convert for weapons use, but they later renounced the agreement.

Foreign links to Iran's oil fields listed

WASHINGTON

BY RON NIXON

Over the past five years, 41 foreign companies have helped Iran develop its oil and gas sector, which accounts for more than half of the Iranian government's revenues, according to congressional investigators.

The Government Accountability Office said Thursday that the companies provided expertise, equipment and financing and did construction work on

oil and gas pipelines, enabling Iran to increase energy production and profits.

No American companies were listed in the report, but the China National Petroleum Corporation was reported to be financing an oil field in an agreement with the Iranian government estimated to be worth more than \$2 billion. Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering of South Korea was reported to be building tanker ships for Iran under a \$384 million contract.

The report did not determine whether the companies had violated the Iran Sanctions Act, devised to punish foreign companies that invested more than \$20 million in a given year to develop Iran's oil and gas fields.

"Clearly, we need to take a tougher stance against companies tied to Iran's refined petroleum capacity," said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, who has been pushing for hearings on companies that do business in Iran.

The House and Senate have passed legislation aimed at strengthening sanctions on companies doing business with Iran, and are working to iron out differences in the bills.

The United States and its European allies are trying to win support for tough new sanctions aimed at pressing Iran to rein in its nuclear program, but China and Brazil have resisted. Both countries have companies that work in Iran's energy sector, the report says.

Last month, The New York Times disclosed that over the past 10 years, the government gave more than \$107 billion in contract payments, grants and other benefits to foreign and multinational American companies while they were doing business in Iran. A number of companies have announced that they will end or curtail their operations in Iran.

Bombings hit Iraq after raid against insurgents

BAGHDAD

Attacks rake Baghdad and west region, killing 58 and wounding scores

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

A coordinated series of explosions struck a party headquarters, two mosques, a market and a shop in Baghdad on Friday, deepening the country's turmoil amid a political impasse and a concerted military campaign against the leaders of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

The attacks, which killed at least 58 people and wounded scores in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq, were the worst of an intermittent wave of bombings since the parliamentary election on March 7. The outcome of the vote remains unclear, as election officials prepare to conduct a partial recount in Baghdad and possibly other provinces.

The deadliest three bombings Friday came in rapid succession near the headquarters of the political movement headed by the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr in the impoverished Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad that bears his family's name. Each Friday hundreds of his followers gather in an open square there for noon prayers, and they accounted for many of the victims.

The movement's candidates did well in the election last month, giving them increased leverage to shape a new government that they say should not be led by the incumbent prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

A member of Parliament from the bloc, Balqis Koli al-Kafaji, linked the attacks to the elections, to a new controversy surrounding a previously undisclosed prison in Baghdad that held Sunnis from northern Iraq and to the government's claims of recent successes in dismantling the leadership of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the main insurgent group here.

Her remarks reflected how Iraq's myriad challenges — from politics to security to human rights — are perceived to be thoroughly entwined with the violence that still engulfs the streets.

"The security departments are messed up, as everybody looks to find a place in the new government," she said. "Until now we haven't seen any of the security heads announce his resignation. I assert that influential figures in the government, with external agendas, are trying to unsettle security in Iraq."

The attacks came five days after a joint Iraqi-American raid killed the top two leaders of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Iraqi and U.S. officials hailed the



A victim of one of three car bombs Friday in the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City in Baghdad was carried out of the area after the attack.

"Influential figures in the government, with external agendas, are trying to unsettle security in Iraq."

killings — and a series of other killings and arrests before and after — as a devastating blow to the group. At the same time they warned that retaliation was almost certain to come, though it was not clear that the group was behind the attacks on Friday.

At least seven explosions spread carnage in neighborhoods across Baghdad over the course of the day — from a clothing store in Dora to a market in Rahmaniya, from mosques in Huriya

and Amin to the three bombs near the Sadr office. The attacks used bombs hidden in a parked motorcycle and cars, among other places, but did not involve suicide bombers, a typical tactic of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

The attacks struck in mostly Shiite Muslim neighborhoods, but in Anbar, the sprawling Sunni province to the west of Baghdad, seven people were killed and 11 were wounded Friday morning when five homemade explosives damaged a cluster of houses in a small village. A police lieutenant heading to the scene was also killed by a roadside bomb.

Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and other Sunni extremists are blamed for much of the violence here, but Iraq faces threats

from other militias and terrorists, including those representing Shiites, often with support from Iran. Without a claim of responsibility, and often even with them, it is difficult to determine the source and motive of attacks here.

If the motive was to discredit Mr. Maliki's government and Iraq's security forces, however, it appeared to work.

"I was sitting on the second floor with my children and I heard the explosion," a man who identified himself only as Abu Ammar, 36, said near one of the blasts in Sadr City. "The windows were blown in. I came down and saw dead bodies everywhere. My house was burning. I did not know what to do, put out the fire or help the wounded.

"I just want to ask," he continued, "where is the government?"

The attacks came a day after senior Iraqi officials said that the previously undisclosed arrest of a senior Qaeda leader in Baghdad had provided a breakthrough that has since allowed Iraqi and U.S. security forces to kill or arrests dozens of the group's leaders and fighters.

The deaths of the two leaders and the killings and arrests that followed — with 12 more suspected insurgents seized Thursday in raids in Baghdad and Mosul in the north — may be the most significant blow yet to a still-deadly movement here that only a few months ago appeared to be regrouping, the officials said.

They asserted that the series of raids

— and the apparent cooperation of the leader arrested last month — had devastated its leadership ranks, its financing and possibly its links to Al Qaeda's international leaders on the borderlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"The map of the entire insurgency in Iraq is now clear to us," the country's minister of national security affairs, Sharwan al-Waili, said in an interview Thursday.

The lasting impact on Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia remains to be seen, given the group's resilience and previous overstatements by American and Iraqi officials of its imminent demise. Many details of the recent raids remain secret, and thus impossible to verify.

Mr. Maliki's government is also eager

to portray itself as strong on security as negotiations continue to form a coalition after the March 7 election.

Any significant weakening of the group could help smooth the Obama administration's primary goal in Iraq: the steady withdrawal of combat forces by the end of the summer. The withdrawal has appeared increasingly uncertain because of the political impasse over the election.

Mr. Waili and the senior Iraqi military spokesman in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta, said that the intelligence trove resulted from the arrest on March 11 of a man who was called Al Qaeda's "governor" of Baghdad, Manaf Abdul Rahim al-Rawi.

His arrest had not been previously announced, as Iraqi security officials quietly gathered what General Atta called "a huge quantity of important documents and information that were and are useful for the security agencies."

Mr. Waili said Mr. Rawi's arrest had led to the "dismantling of the entire network" over the month that followed, culminating in the raid Sunday and another in Mosul on Tuesday that killed Ahmed al-Obeidi, said to be the group's leader in three provinces in northern Iraq.

Tim Arango contributed reporting from Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, and Sam Dagher from Baghdad.

LEFIGARO 25 Avril 2010

Première commémoration du génocide arménien en Turquie

À Istanbul, une centaine de manifestants ont rendu hommage aux Arméniens massacrés par les Turcs ottomans entre 1915 et 1917.

C'est une première en Turquie. À Istanbul, une centaine de personnes se sont rassemblées à l'appel de la section stambouliote de l'Organisation des droits de l'homme (IHD) pour commémorer le génocide arménien, alors que les Arméniens célèbrent samedi le 95^e anniversaire du début des massacres commis par les Turcs ottomans pendant la Première Guerre mondiale.

Encadrés par la police et suivis par une myriade de caméras, des défenseurs des droits de l'homme, des intellectuels et des artistes turcs ont rallié la gare d'Haydarpasa, d'où est parti le premier convoi de déportation. La police a été obligée de tenir à distance un groupe de contre-manifestants qui arboraient des drapeaux turcs.

Plus tard dans l'après-midi, une autre manifestation, plus suivie, s'est déroulée sur la place Taksim, dans la partie européenne d'Istanbul.

Les Arméniens qualifient de génocide les persécutions et déportations, de 1915 à 1917, qui ont fait selon eux 1,5 million de morts. La Turquie rejette de son côté le terme de génocide et dément la mort d'un million et demi d'Arméniens.

Manifestations à Erevan et Paris

En Arménie, des milliers de personnes se sont réunies sur une colline de la capitale, Erevan, pour déposer des tulipes rouges et des œillets blancs au pied d'un monument aux morts.

Des manifestations similaires ont été organisées par la diaspora arménienne dans plusieurs villes à travers le monde.

En France, pays ayant reconnu l'existence du génocide, plusieurs milliers de personnes se sont rassemblés dans



Les manifestants se sont rassemblés à la gare d'Haydarpasa, d'où est parti le premier convoi de déportation des Arméniens; (Photo: AFP)

l'après-midi à Paris, place du Canada (8^e arrondissement).

Des représentants des communautés religieuses, dont Monseigneur Norvan Zakarian, primat du diocèse arménien de France, ont prononcé une prière et des gerbes de fleurs ont été déposées au pied de la statue de Komitas, ecclésiastique rescapé du génocide mort en 1935.

Les manifestants ont ensuite défilé sur les Champs-

Élysées jusqu'à la tombe du soldat inconnu, dont la flamme a été ranimée en présence de Charles Aznavour.

Une délégation de la communauté arménienne française, qui réclame une loi pour pénaliser la négation du génocide arménien, avait été reçue au Sénat vendredi.

Le génocide arménien admis par des intellectuels turcs

Pour la première fois, des manifestations sont organisées à Istanbul pour commémorer le début du grand massacre

Istanbul
Correspondance

Dans mon enfance, tout ce que j'ai appris de mon grand-père, c'est qu'il était un pacha ottoman très important. Puis qu'il a été assassiné par un Arménien. Sans savoir pourquoi. » Calmement, Hasan Cemal, éditorialiste influent du journal turc *Miliyet*, raconte son histoire familiale. Dans un coin de son bureau est posé un petit portrait en noir et blanc de son grand-père.

Son aïeul, Ahmet Cemal, dit Cemal Pacha, était, avec Enver et Talat, l'une des trois têtes du gouvernement nationaliste « jeune turc » au pouvoir à la fin de l'Empire ottoman. L'un des trois architectes du génocide des Arméniens d'Anatolie, lancé le 24 avril 1915 à Istanbul, et dont le 95^e anniversaire est célébré samedi 24 avril. Comme tout Turc, Hasan Cemal n'a longtemps connu que le récit officiel des massacres : « A l'école et à l'université, on apprend que les Arméniens coopéraient avec les ennemis et qu'il fallait qu'ils soient déportés vers la Syrie. On ne sait rien de la réalité historique. La Turquie a été maintenue dans l'obscurité. »

Les premiers écrits de l'historien

L'ombre des massacres

1896-1898 Massacres ordonnés par l'empereur Abdülhamit.

1909 Massacre de 30 000 Arméniens de Cilicie (Adana).

24 avril 1915 Arrestation de 220 intellectuels et artistes arméniens à Istanbul. Début des déportations et du génocide.

2006 Parution d'*Un acte honteux : le génocide arménien et la question de la responsabilité turque*, de Taner Akçam.

2010 La Turquie admet la mort d'environ 300 000 Arméniens à la suite de déportations, mais nie toute planification.

Taner Akçam, au début des années 1990, ont ouvert une brèche dans cette politique du déni, à l'œuvre depuis près d'un siècle. « Son courage a marqué un tournant, reconnaît M. Cemal, c'est lui qui a déverrouillé mon esprit. Puis c'est Hrant Dink [journaliste turc d'origine arménienne assassiné en 2007] qui a ouvert mon cœur. Aujourd'hui, les choses ont changé. » Au point qu'en novembre 2009, le petit-fils de Cemal Pacha participait, à Harvard, à une conférence sur le génocide de 1915, pour raconter son cheminement personnel. En 2008, il s'est rendu à Erevan, où il s'est recueilli au mémorial du génocide. Il a aussi tenu à rencontrer le petit-fils de l'assassin de son grand-père, tué par un Arménien à Tbilissi, en 1922.

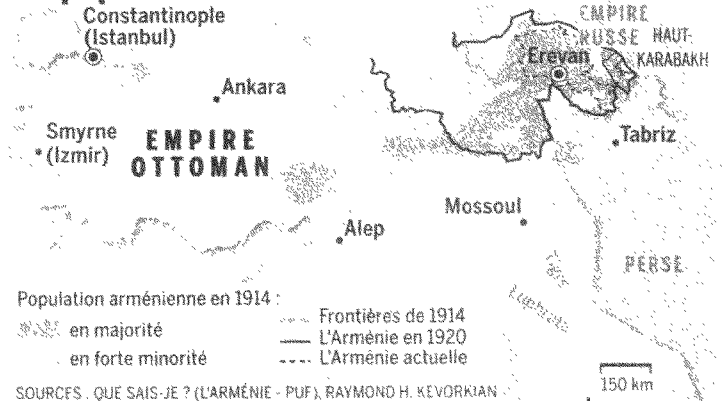
Le négationnisme officiel de l'Etat turc se fissure de l'intérieur. Pour la première fois, des manifestations publiques sont organisées, samedi à Istanbul, pour commémorer la rafle de 220 membres de l'intelligentsia arménienne, en 1915. Des rassemblements devant la gare d'Haydarpacha, d'où est parti le premier convoi de déportation, et sur la place Taksim, au cœur de la ville.

Bien sûr, les pressions se sont multipliées sur les organisateurs. A Ankara, une conférence organisée par l'association pour la liberté de pensée a été annulée au dernier moment. L'hôtel qui devait l'accueillir a prétexté des fuites d'eau dans le toit. Mais selon l'expression du politologue Cengiz Aktar, « les djinns sont sortis de leur bouteille », le tabou est levé. « Le temps de l'action est venu, explique l'auteur de *L'Appel au pardon* (éd. CNRS). Aujourd'hui en Turquie, il y a une tentative sérieuse de développer une politique de mémoire. »

Un groupe d'intellectuels, dont Cengiz Aktar, est à l'origine d'une pétition, rédigée en 2008, demandant « pardon » aux Arméniens ottomans pour « la grande catastrophe qu'ils ont subie en 1915 ». Elle a été signée par plus de 30 000 citoyens turcs.

L'emploi de l'expression « grande catastrophe » plutôt que du mot

La population arménienne en 1914



« génocide » a provoqué un débat dans la communauté intellectuelle et a été diversement apprécié dans la diaspora arménienne. « Bien sûr que c'est un génocide, mais le mot ne passerait jamais. La reconnaissance par l'Etat comme préalable est irréaliste », répond M. Aktar.

Militante à l'association des droits de l'homme (IHD), Ayse

Le négationnisme officiel de l'Etat turc se fissure de l'intérieur

Günaysu défend l'autre approche. « Sans reconnaissance officielle, rien ne peut se passer. C'est une position morale. Nous devrions tous ressentir cette honte », dit-elle. Un avocat d'Ankara a déposé, en mars, une action en justice pour demander la reconnaissance du génocide et la condamnation de Talat Pacha. Un procès est ouvert contre lui pour « insulte à la nation turque ».

Depuis quelques années, les confrontations, directes ou indirectes, des intellectuels avec l'Etat turc se sont multipliées. En 2005, l'écrivain Orhan Pamuk s'était attiré les foudres de la justice pour avoir déclaré qu'« un million d'Arméniens et 30 000 Kurdes ont été tués sur ces terres ». Deux ans plus tard, l'émotion déclenchée par l'assassinat du journaliste Hrant Dink

ouvrirait la voie à une remise en question de l'histoire officielle, d'une ampleur inédite.

Le débat s'invite sur les plateaux des émissions de télé ou dans les librairies. Les milieux culturels et de la recherche universitaire ont commencé à s'emparer du sujet. « On est dans la recherche d'un passé enfoui sous la superstructure de la République », constate Vincent Duclert, historien auteur de *L'Europe a-t-elle besoin des intellectuels turcs ?* (éd. Armand Colin). « Il y a en Turquie une vraie tradition d'intellectuels dissidents et une progression de la liberté de l'histoire, poursuit-il. La question est de faire baisser l'intensité du nationalisme qui nourrit le négationnisme. »

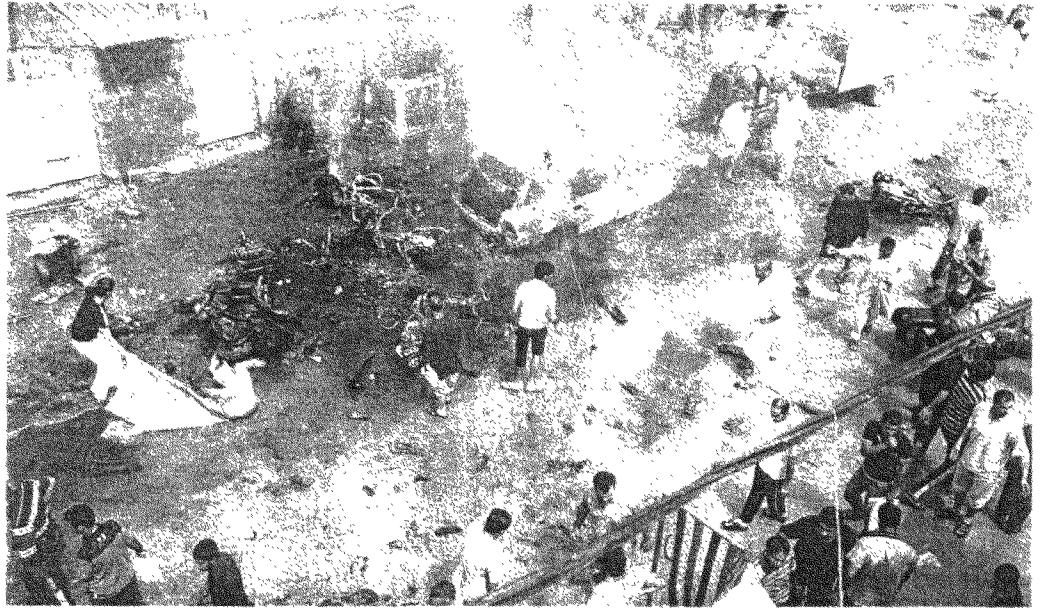
Ce débat apporte la contradiction au discours officiel, présent sur les sites Internet des institutions turques et dans les médias. « Mais dans les villages, les gens ne sont pas dupes, note Cengiz Aktar. Ils savent que pendant des années, leurs champs n'ont pas pu être cultivés parce que le menuisier arménien n'était plus là pour réparer la roue de la charrue. » Grâce à cette ouverture, les intellectuels ont pu porter de nouvelles questions sur la place publique. Celle du pardon, et aussi celle des réparations pour les spoliations dont les Arméniens d'Anatolie ont été victimes. ■

Guillaume Perrier

Le Monde
26 avril 2010

Al-Qaida frappe en Irak, malgré la mort de ses chefs

Moins d'une semaine après la mort de leurs deux principaux chefs, tués le 18 avril dans un raid irako-américain, les commandants intermédiaires d'Al-Qaida en Irak ont lancé, vendredi 23 avril à Bagdad, une série d'attentats à la voiture piégée. Les 58 morts et 118 blessés, victimes de ces attaques, appartiennent à la communauté chiite, majoritaire et qui domine le pays et le pouvoir depuis l'invasion américaine de 2003. La « filiale » irakienne de l'organisation dirigée par Oussama Ben Laden est exclusivement composée de sunnites qui ont, un temps, trouvé aide et sympathie parmi les tribus et les



A Bagdad, dans le faubourg chiite de Sadr City, les attentats ont visé un marché ainsi que plusieurs mosquées. KARIM KADIM/AP

Quatre mois d'attentats

Janvier 2010 Des attentats dans la ville sainte de Nadjaf, le 14 avril, et à Bagdad, contre des hôtels et l'institut médico-légal, font au moins 69 morts.

Février Des kamikazes d'Al-Qaida tuent, à Bagdad et à Kerbala, au moins 105 pèlerins chiites.

Mars Au moins 123 personnes sont tuées dans des attentats pendant la campagne législative et après les élections du 7 mars.

Avril En trois semaines, des attentats font plus de 80 morts, principalement à Bagdad.

couches sociales sunnites irakiennes qui dirigeaient le pays depuis quatre-vingts ans.

Première cible visée vendredi : une permanence du Mouvement sadriste fondé en 2003 par le jeune prêcheur chiite anti-américain Moqtada Al-Sadr. Cet attentat et celui qui a visé un marché voisin, dans le faubourg chiite de Sadr City, ont fait 39 tués et 56 blessés. D'autres attaques ont ciblé trois mosquées chiites et un marché.

Théorisée par le premier chef d'Al-Qaida en Irak, Abou Mousab Al-Zarkaoui, tué en juin 2006, la stratégie des djihadistes irakiens, approuvée par Oussama

Ben Laden, a toujours consisté à tuer le maximum de chiites, considérés comme des apostats de l'islam, pour les inciter à se venger sur la communauté sunnite et ainsi la « réveiller de sa torpeur défaitiste ». En créant sa milice, l'Armée du Mahdi, et en multipliant les représailles contre les civils sunnites, Al-Sadr était tombé dans le piège, contribuant ainsi à déclencher une guerre civile de deux ans (2006-2007), au prix d'au moins 70 000 morts.

Les successeurs du Jordanien Al-Zarkaoui, l'Égyptien Abou Hamza Al-Mouhajir pour l'aspect « mili-

taire » et l'Irakien Daoud Mohamad Khalil Al-Zawi, général de police sous l'ancien régime, pour la gestion politique et religieuse de l'organisation, ont ajouté deux cibles tactiques. D'abord, les institutions renaisissantes de l'État irakien, d'où les attaques depuis un an contre des ministères et des ambassades. Ensuite, les anciens alliés tribaux sunnites qui se sont retournés contre Al-Qaida fin 2007 pour

Des sunnites torturés dans une « prison secrète » à Bagdad

RÉVÉLÉE, le 18 avril, par le *Los Angeles Times*, l'existence d'une nouvelle « prison secrète » dans laquelle 431 détenus, essentiellement sunnites, étaient parfois torturés à coups de chocs électriques ou d'asphyxie contrôlée, suscite le trouble en Irak.

M^{me} Wijdan Salim, ministre des droits humains dans le gouvernement de Nouri Al-Maliki, a nié le caractère secret de l'établissement situé sur un aéroport militaire de Bagdad, « puisque deux juges d'instruction et cinq enquêteurs du

ministère de la justice y travaillaient ». Mais pas les mauvais traitements infligés aux détenus.

Amnesty International a demandé une enquête après cette révélation qui en rappelle une autre en 2005, lorsque des centaines d'hommes, essentiellement sunnites, avaient été découverts, torturés depuis des mois dans les sous-sols du ministère de l'intérieur alors contrôlé par des chiites. Cette nouvelle « prison », constituée de baraquements militaires cernés par deux rangs de murailles

antibombes, a été fermée sur ordre du premier ministre, le 20 avril. Une centaine de prisonniers ont été libérés et les autres transférés dans des prisons « légales ».

Un porte-parole de M. Maliki a fait savoir que celui-ci « ne savait rien » des tortures pratiquées. L'endroit, qui retenait des Arabes sunnites suspectés d'activisme ou de complicité avec les insurgés djihadistes d'Al-Qaida, était placé sous le contrôle du commandement des opérations de Bagdad, structure militaro-policière responsable

de la sécurité dans la capitale.

Les détenus avaient été arrêtés en octobre 2009 dans la région de Ninive, la plus « chaude » du pays, à 400 km de la capitale, par la brigade de Bagdad, unité antiterroriste créée et dirigée depuis 2008 par le cabinet du premier ministre lui-même. Selon certains, c'est à la demande de plusieurs juges de la région, directement menacés par les familles ou les tribus des interpellés, que les suspects étaient transférés à Bagdad. ■

P. C.

créer les Comités du réveil (*sahwa* en arabe). Ces milices sunnites, qui comptent autour de 90 000 hommes, continuent d'épauler l'armée et la police dans toutes les régions sunnites ou mixtes du pays.

Réservoir inépuisable

Chaque semaine ou presque, certains de ces miliciens sont assassinés. Vendredi, peu avant les attentats de Bagdad, des bombes ont explosé près de six maisons, dont celles d'un juge et de plusieurs policiers à Khalidiya, à 80 km à l'ouest de Bagdad. Sept membres de la famille d'un ancien *sahwa* ont été tués dans ces attaques. Quelques jours plus tôt, le 20 avril, l'épouse, la fille et les trois garçons de 12 à 16 ans d'un chef *sahwa* de Tarmiya, au nord de Bagdad, avaient été abattus par balle, les trois garçons ayant ensuite été décapités.

Applaudie le 19 avril par le vice-président américain, Joseph Biden, pour qui l'élimination de ses deux

chefs constituait « un coup potentiellement dévastateur pour Al-Qaida en Irak », la disparition des deux hommes, connus sous les noms de guerre d'Abou Ayyoub Al-Masri et Abou Omar Al-Bagdadi, n'a pas mis fin au terrorisme d'une organisation qui comptait encore fin 2007, selon les services américains, « autour de 10 000 hommes ».

Al-Qaida ne contrôle certes plus un seul pouce de terrain en Irak, mais semble disposer, dans un pays dévasté où près d'une famille sur trois n'a plus ni travail ni revenu, d'un réservoir inépuisable – hommes, femmes et même adolescents – de « candidats au martyre » pour ses opérations-suicides.

Selon le premier ministre chiite, Nouri Al-Maliki, l'organisation bénéficierait également, depuis la mort d'Al-Zarkaoui, de puissantes complicités parmi les partisans baasistes de l'ancien régime. Elu député le 7 mars à Bagdad sur la liste d'un parti chiite religieux, Ahmad Chalabi, l'ancien allié laïque des Américains, soupçonné par la suite d'avoir joué double jeu pour le compte de Téhéran, déclarait récemment au *Monde* que les forces de l'ordre seraient « infiltrées par de nombreux baasistes qui donnent parfois un coup de main aux djihadistes d'Al-Qaida pour s'approcher des cibles étatiques ». ■

Patrice Claude

Iran : offensive diplomatique pour éviter des sanctions

Téhéran veut gagner le soutien des membres non permanents du Conseil de sécurité

Vienne
Correspondante

Pendant que les Gardiens de la révolution iranienne se livrent à des manœuvres militaires dans les eaux du Golfe, affirmant avoir testé avec succès cinq missiles, en réponse aux « menaces nucléaires » des Etats-Unis, Téhéran mène une offensive diplomatique désespérée pour éviter que le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies adopte contre lui un nouveau train de sanctions. Scruté depuis plus de six ans par la communauté internationale, son programme nucléaire civil reste soupçonné de viser en réalité à acquérir l'arme atomique.

Cette offensive se concentre sur les dix membres non permanents du Conseil, l'accord de quatre d'entre eux au moins – soit 9 voix sur 15 – étant requis pour une majorité qualifiée. Le ministre iranien des affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki, a effectué une visite à Vienne, dimanche 25 avril, auprès de son homologue autrichien, Michael Spindelegger, qu'il a appelé avec insistance « mon ami » lors d'une conférence de presse.

L'Autriche siège cette année au Conseil de sécurité, tout comme l'Ouganda, où le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, vient d'essayer de gagner à ses vues son homologue Yoweri Museveni. Celui-ci a refusé, à la fin de la visite samedi, de se prononcer, et a coupé court aussi aux questions concernant un éventuel accord avec l'Iran sur le pétrole ougandais, dont les réserves sont estimées à 2 milliards de barils.

M. Spindelegger a été plus net, indiquant que la responsabilité de stopper la marche vers les sanctions incombait à Téhéran. « Nous attendons que la partie iranienne fasse des propositions qui rétabli-

ront la confiance » de la communauté internationale, a-t-il déclaré, en ajoutant que le train menant aux sanctions « ne peut être stoppé que si l'Iran bouge réellement ».

Cette phrase laisse entendre que les « quelques nouveautés » que M. Mottaki a présentées à ses interlocuteurs à Vienne pour tenter de les infléchir sont insuffisantes. M. Spindelegger n'a pas donné de détails, voulant en réserver la primeur à ses homologues au conseil des ministres de l'Union européenne, lundi 26 avril à Luxembourg, ainsi qu'à la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Hillary Clinton, avec qui il a eu des entretiens téléphoniques avant et après cette visite.

Accord arraché

Même scepticisme à l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique, l'AIEA, dont M. Mottaki a rencontré à Vienne le directeur général, Yukiya Amano. La proposition iranienne ne serait qu'une variante supplémentaire de celles qu'il a déjà avancées pour vider de son contenu l'accord arraché en octobre 2009 par le prédécesseur de M. Amano, Mohamed ElBaradei.

Son point essentiel est que l'Iran accepte de se séparer d'une quantité significative de l'uranium qu'il a déjà enrichi, en violation des résolutions de l'ONU. Il n'est manifestement pas prêt à y consentir, malgré les efforts répétés de la Turquie, elle aussi membre non permanent, tout comme le Brésil...

Le seul appui de taille sur lequel Téhéran puisse compter semble être Brasilia, dont le ministre des affaires étrangères, Celso Amorim, devait rencontrer, lundi à Téhéran, M. Ahmadinejad pour préparer la visite du président Inacio Lula da Silva, les 16 et 17 mai. ■

Joëlle Stolz

Package might lift bans on Kurdish politicians

ERCAN YAVUZ

The government-sponsored constitutional amendment package currently being voted article by article in Parliament might lift the political bans on former members of the Democratic Society Party (DTP), which was shut down by the Constitutional Court last year on charges of having links to separatist terrorists.

In addition to the ex-DTP members, the package will allow dismissed judges and prosecutors, expelled military officers and conscientious objectors to appeal their status.

The Constitutional Court in shutting down the DTP also ruled to ban a large number of former DTP members including its co-chairpersons, Ahmet Türk and Aysel Tugluk. The amendment package, when enacted, might give them the right to appeal this decision. Ferhat Sarıkaya, a prosecutor who was disbarred by the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) after indicting a chief of General Staff, might also be allowed to return to the legal profession. However, the package's amendments will need to be interpreted boldly by liberal judges in both cases.

The constitutional reform package changes the current regulations regarding party closures and reduces the political ban period of five years to three for members of parties shut down. Members of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the DTP's successor, have been lobbying to make sure the changes in the constitutional amendment package are extended to

cover the status of Türk and Tugluk. This week, the BDP submitted a motion requesting that the changes enacted apply retroactively to Türk and Tugluk. Both politicians are being tried for various allegations of promoting separatism. BDP Sırnak deputy Hasip Kaplan in the petition requested a temporary article to be added to the constitutional amendment package toward this end; however, the government has refused.

BDP lawyers are now planning to initiate a legal process to obtain this right through court rulings instead of a temporary article. Lawyers representing Türk and Tugluk will apply to court as soon as the package is enacted. However, legal experts expressed varied opinions on how the new regulations stemming from the changes in the package might be interpreted by different judges. Meanwhile, the BDP has also decided to go to the European Court of Human Rights to appeal their political ban, which might, experts say, shorten the duration of their ban from five years to three.

Disbarred judges and prosecutors

The constitutional reform package also makes changes to the HSYK's structure, which is remembered for expelling former Van Public Prosecutor Ferhat Sarıkaya from the legal profession after Sarıkaya had indicted then-Chief of General Staff Gen. Ya?ar Büyükanıt in 2005 on the grounds that he had overstepped his authority. Since its establishment in 1982 with the acceptance of the post-coup Constitution, the HSYK has dismissed 487 judges and prosecutors, none of whom have been able to appeal the

board's decision, considered to be the final ruling under current law.

Of the 38 prosecutors and judges dismissed by the board in the past five years, only one, Sacit Kayasu, who had attempted to bring Kenan Evren -- the general who led the 1980 coup d'état -- to justice has appealed to the European court, which ruled in favor of Kayasu and imposed a hefty fine on Turkey, asking that he be reinstated as a prosecutor. However, this decision has not been upheld by the board to date.

Arinç's statement on Sarıkaya

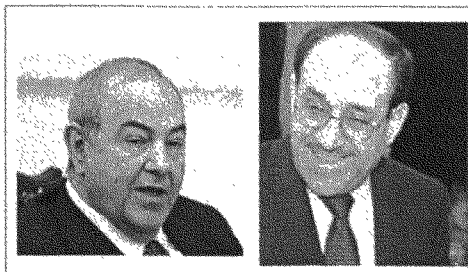
On Thursday Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arinç made a statement saying it could be possible, based on a judge's interpretation, for some individuals banned from politics or who have been disbarred by the HSYK to return to their posts. However, how it will work out in practice will depend solely on the Supreme Court of Appeals' rulings.

Currently, conscientious objectors in Turkey are tried in military courts if they are captured after being declared AWOL. The new package also amends the Constitution to prohibit the trying of civilians in military courts except in times of war. Conscientious objectors will most likely make use of this new right when the package passes. Not only they, but hundreds of others who are being tried in military courts despite being civilians, might obtain the upper hand in their legal struggle. Officers expelled from the military by the Supreme Military Council (YAS) will also have the right to appeal their expulsion.

Spokesperson: Maliki for president, Allawi for PM post

Rudaw - A spokesperson of the Iraqiye list of Iyad Allawi, says there are meetings between his list and the State of Law Alliance of PM Maliki to form a new government. He says that during the talks Maliki is named as president, while Allawi is named as the next Prime Minister.

Fatah Sheik says that there have been



negotiations with the State of Law Alliance in the last two weeks. Both lists have interest in cooperating. "We have set up a scenario, in which Maliki would be the next president and Allawi the prime minister,"

said Fatah Sheik.

He added that the two lists will announce their cooperation after the recount of the votes. He emphasized that the Kurdistan Alliance and the movement of Muqtada al-Sadr will not be excluded from a new government.

The Head of Al Iraqiya Coalition Iyad Allawi said he is ready to meet with Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki at anytime adding that he is waiting for a response on his proposal to meet, reported Al Sumaria (Photo: Rudaw).

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TODAYS ZAMAN

29 April 2010

Kurdish politicians slam BDP opposition to package

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which refuses to lend its support to the government's constitutional amendment package, has received its harshest criticism from members of the Participatory Democracy Party (KADEP), another pro-Kurdish party.

KADEP Secretary-General Nizamettin Maskan said the BDP is acting against the interests of Kurds, though the party claims to be the representative of Turkey's Kurdish residents.

"The BDP should say in Parliament what it wants in the name of democratization. In this way, Kurds will see what the people they elected have done so far," he stated and linked the path of the BDP to the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). According to Maskan, the party is losing the confidence of its voters due to its current stance, which contradicts its *raison d'être*.

The BDP had vowed to support the government's efforts to amend the Constitution but changed its mind after the constitutional reform package was presented to Parliament for a vote. The party said it does not plan to support any constitutional change unless the government agrees to take the necessary steps to reduce the 10 percent election threshold.

Maskan also criticized the BDP for refusing to support the abolishment of Article 15 of the Constitution, which bans any legal action against the military members who staged the Sept. 12, 1980 coup d'état. According to Maskan, those who are responsible for the coup, which caused great suffering to Turks and Kurds alike, should be called to account before the court. The article of the reform package that amends Article 15 was passed in Parliament on Tuesday. All three opposition parties -- the CHP, the MHP and the BDP -- refused to vote in favor of the removal.

The KADEP secretary-general also voiced support for the government's efforts to thaw the ice between the state and the nation's Kurds through a

massive democratization package and slammed the BDP for working to hinder the implementation of the package.

"Kurds really need the package. Victims should be allowed to benefit from the package. We support the government's democratization package and its efforts to make it come reality," he remarked.

Zahin Bilgiç, a former head of the Adana Ülkü Ocakları -- the youth branch of the MHP -- said he cannot understand why the victims of the Sept. 12 coup are opposed to government efforts to change the Constitution.

Bilgiç also recalled that he spent four-and-a-half years in prison after the coup. "I cannot understand why the victims of torture in prisons [after the coup] do not want the Constitution to change," he said. The current Constitution was drafted under martial law after the 1980 coup d'état.

Parliament is currently voting on whether to amend the Constitution. The single party that favors amending the Constitution is the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party).



April 27, 2010

Iranian Kurdish Activist Faces Execution

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

A Kurdish activist has been sentenced to death in Iran's northwestern city of Mahabad, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Habibollah Golparipour was arrested six months ago, the Human Rights Activists News Agency reported. He was sentenced on April 22 by a revolutionary court.

Journalist Khosro Kordpour told Radio Farda that "Golparipour's lawyer informed me that his charges include 'enmity with God through propagandistic activities' and 'membership in an opposition group.'"

Kordpour said Golparipour has 20 days to appeal his death sentence. He described a growing crackdown on Kurdish activists.

"Since last year, issuing death sentences for Kurdish activists on varied charges -- especially 'enmity with God' -- has become very common," Kordpour said. He said two Kurdish women activists -- Zeinab Jalalian and Shirin Alam-Huli -- are among those who have been sentenced to death.

According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency, 22 Kurdish activists are currently on death row in Iran.

Iran executed two young Kurdish political activists, Ehsan Fatahian and Fasih Yasamani, in November 2009 and January 2010, respectively.



26 April 2010

Kurdish opposition refuses to support Jalal Talabani

Slemani - The PUK-leader Jalal Talabani will not receive support from the Kurdish opposition Group Change (Gorran). The movement decided to reject the offer.

The decision of Barham Salih to give job backs to fired Gorran sympathizers wasn't enough for the Change list, a Change list source told Rudaw. Mohammed Tofiq told Rudaw that their decision is final. "Because in the last four years he has used his function in all occasions and elections for hostilities towards

the Change list movement and the democracy in the regions controlled by the PUK," said Rahim.

The dominant Kurdish lists will still come together on Tuesday to talk about forming one bloc in the Iraqi parliament. Its unclear if they will now cooperate. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan asked the Change list to support its candidate for the Iraqi presidency. Currently Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, is the president of Iraq.

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Mohammed Tofiq, Change [Gorran] movement

Elele, une association trop « exemplaire » pour durer

Exemplaire», ainsi la qualifie le ministre de l'immigration, Eric Besson, qui, au lendemain même de sa nomination, le 16 janvier 2009, se rendait dans ses locaux. « Exemplaire » parce qu'elle incarnait la vision de la politique d'intégration souhaitée par le gouvernement. Aujourd'hui, l'association Elele n'est plus : cette structure, qui œuvre pour l'intégration des immigrés venus de Turquie, vient brusquement d'apprendre que sa convention avec le ministère de l'immigration était... supprimée !

Accueil et suivi des femmes turques victimes de violences, aide à l'installation et à l'intégration en France, cours de français, soutien scolaire, actions culturelles... En vingt-cinq ans, l'association avait acquis une incontestable légitimité. Il y a peu encore, le ministère lui garantissait le renouvellement de sa subvention (125 000 euros en 2009) et lui proposait de rendre sa convention triennale. Mais en moins de huit jours, elle a été mise devant le fait accompli : doré-

navant, pour espérer un soutien financier, les associations devront répondre à des appels d'offres.

« Au-delà même de l'aspect aléatoire d'un tel mode de financement, c'en est fini de la créativité, de l'initiative des associations et de l'analyse qu'elles se font des besoins, car les priorités de l'Etat à travers les appels d'offres changeront chaque année », lâche, amère, Gaye Petek, sa présidente qui n'a pas eu d'autres choix que de déposer son bilan.

Elele ne peut même pas s'en remettre à son autre principal partenaire, l'Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances (ACSE). Sous la tutelle de la ministre déléguée à la ville, Fadela Amara, les subventions nationales ont été réduites pour privilégier désormais les structures de quartiers par un financement territorialisé.

« On disqualifie les associations nationales pour favoriser celles dites de pieds de tours, c'est-à-dire des cités. Ce faisant, on ne s'intéresse plus aux publics immigrés pré-

sents depuis plus cinq ans en France et ne vivant pas dans les quartiers », se désole M^{me} Petek. Parallèlement, le ministère de l'immigration recentre son action en matière d'intégration sur les seuls nouveaux arrivants.

« Vision misérabiliste »

« Elele défend une vision globale de l'intégration, une culture du respect de l'autre, de l'échange », relève sa présidente qui a, plus d'une fois, été sollicitée par l'Etat pour siéger dans des commissions ou des conseils (commission Stasi sur la laïcité en 2002, Haut Conseil à l'intégration...). « Cette approche est aujourd'hui détruite par une vision négative et misérabiliste de l'immigration. On assiste à un recentrage de l'idée de nation qui ne reconnaît pas sa diversité », déplore M^{me} Petek.

« Une charrette d'associations vont faire les frais de cette politique gouvernementale », s'alarme-t-elle. Déjà, l'Association départementale pour l'accompagnement des migrants et de leur famille (Adamif), dans le Loiret, a dû mettre la clé sous la porte en janvier. ■

Laetitia Van Eeckhout