

INSTITUT
KURDE
DE PARIS

Information and liaison bulletin

N°319

OCTOBER 2011

*The publication of this Bulletin enjoys a subsidy
from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCID)
and the Fonds d'action et de soutien pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations
(The Fund for action and support of integration and the struggle against discrimination)*

This bulletin is issued in French and English

Price per issue : France: 6 € — Abroad : 7,5 €
Annual subscription (12 issues) France : 60 € — Elsewhere : 75 €

Monthly review
Directeur de la publication : Mohamad HASSAN
Numéro de la Commission Paritaire : 659 15 A.S.
ISBN 0761 1285

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- **TURKEY: A DEADLY EARTHQUAKE IN VAN.**
- **SYRIA: THE ASSASSINATION OF DE MACHAAL TAMMO.**
- **IRAQ: A DISPUTE OVER FLAGS FLARES UP IN THE KURDISH TOWN OF KHANAQIN.**
- **IRAN: A KURDISH ACTIVIST IS EXECUTED AND 18 OTHERS ARE IN DEATH ROW.**
- **CULTURE: "MEM Û ZÎN" IS PERFORMED AS A BALLET IN TORONTO.**

TURKEY: A DEADLY EARTHQUAKE IN VAN

The climate of political tension and war-like violence has worsened in Turkish Kurdistan as Ankara threatens to send its land forces into Iraqi Kurdistan. The pro-Kurdish BDP party reported politico-legal balance sheet that speaks for itself" 10 mayors in office, 2 former mayor, 2 Presidents and 4 vice-Presidents of provincial councils and 29 municipal councillors are at present behind bars. Also, according to BDP, between 14 April 2009 and 6 October 2011, 7,748 cadres and members of its party were detained, 1548 of them in the last six months.

In the military field, far from having calmed the situation, the recent Turkish bombardments of PKK bases have in no way reduced the number of attacks. On 18 October, 24 soldiers were killed and several more wounded in a number of simultaneous attacks along the border, in Hakkari Province, This is the second heaviest assessment of deaths in the Turkish Army, the heaviest being 33 killed in 1993.

The Army operation, which was initially announced as being "large scale" and including land and air forces, in fact took place mainly on Turkish soil plus "a few points in

Iraq" According to an official communiqué of 21 October. The operations involved 22 battalions, and though the General Staff did not give the number of soldiers involved, the Turkish press gave a figure of 10,000 men.

However, on 22 October an earthquake of 7.2 degree magnitude dominated the news, in Turkey. This hit the city of Van and the surrounding villages, including Ercis, the hardest hit.

As well as causing and estimated 600 deaths, the earthquake made thousands of families homeless, either because their houses had

been destroyed or they feared to return because of strong after-shocks.

Initially the Turkish government refused international assistance, spontaneously offered by a number of countries — including Israel despite its strained relations with Turkey — before asking for caravans and mobile homes since it number of tents available for the disaster-stricken population was seen to be far short of the need.

However, the anger of those affected at the lack of tents and food is increasing. Thus at Ercis, a small town of 75,000 inhabitants that recorded 360 deaths, the population complained of discrimination in the assistance provided by the Red Crescent: the families of local elected officials (AKP) and of Army and police officers and even of tribes connected to the authorities are said to have received priority treatment in the distribution of tents and assistance, while the police seemed unable to cope.

The rescue teams, in a race against time, succeeded in extricating survivors two days after the quake, including a two-week-old baby.

According to Mustafa Gedik, who runs the Kandili Seismological Institute in Istanbul, an earthquake of 7.2 on the Richter scale in a region where the bulk of the buildings have no safety measures against earthquakes, could cause between 500 and 1,000 deaths. Fortunately, the quake occurred on a Sunday, when many families were out of doors and the boarding schools were empty

Some powerful after-shocks, including one recorded at 5.4 Richter strength, on 26 October, maintain an atmosphere of panic. The Research Institute for Turkish Political Life (OVIPOT) interviewed on its site Çağlar Akgungor, a Doctor of political sci-

ence who had defended his PhD thesis at the Institute of Political Research in Grenoble, France, in 2007. The thesis was, appropriately enough, entitled “Turkey facing the test of earthquakes since 1999, a socio-political analysis seen through the post-catastrophe media discourse” and Dr, Akgungor has taken part in several research and rescue teams.

In his interview, Dr, Akgungor considered that this was the most serious (together with that at Bingol in 2003) since the quakes of 17 August and 2 November 1999 that occurred respectively at Izmit and Duzce in the Marmara region. While he observes that the State is better prepared for this kind of catastrophe since 1999, with an increase in the number of rescue teams, he points out that, for the moment there is some vagueness in the evaluation of the operation of these teams in terms of training, equipment and organisation. Referring to the criticisms of the government regarding the ineffectiveness of the first rescue operations, this research worker qualifies these criticisms:

“I think that one can never be “very effective” in the first 24 hours following a catastrophe. You find yourself isolated, thrown on your own means of action, part of which has been destroyed or blocked for various reasons. The same is true of team members who are native to the area, as they are first of all preoccupied by the fate of their own family, which is quite normal. As for help coming from outside the catastrophe area, it’s like an army. Administrative mechanisms have to be put in motion, which takes time. However, once an “operation” is under way, it advances. Even the voluntary rescue teams, that are considered more flexible, took between 4 and 12 hours to arrive on site (the official UN standard is a maximum of 36 hours)”.

As for the scenes of “looting” lorries and tents by destitute people,

they are not very different to those that occurred in 1999 and also in many other countries except for Japan that has a very different State culture.

On the question of whether or not the initial refusal of foreign assistance was a mistake, he distinguished between political motives and those connected to logistics: *“It must not be forgotten that, in international relations, accepting aid from abroad can be considered, politically, as an admission of weakness (...) Indeed, if foreign aid is finally accepted, it is probably for diplomatic reasons, to maintain good relations with the countries that had offered it. I would point out, moreover, that during catastrophes and emergency situations, the issue of accepting aid and of its effectiveness are often raised. Managing international assistance is an operation that requires the diplomatic co-ordination of a great number of organisations, which is not always simple whose effectiveness is not always feasible. One very surprising example, by the way, is that of the United States, the world’s most powerful nation, during the Katrina hurricane in 2005. It was literally incapable of managing the international assistance, which provoked a scandal when the States that had started to do so gave up sending aid even though the citizens of Louisiana still needed it”.*

As for the problem, which is a recurrent one in Turkey, of the non-conformity of new buildings to anti-seismic standards, tougher legislation would not alter anything much. On paper, Turkey has adopted regulations that conform to international standards. The problem is applying them in the field, where corruption, privileges and unlicensed building predominate.

All in all, the earthquake caused 601 deaths, 2,300 injured and orphaned 153 children.

SYRIA: THE ASSASSINATION OF DE MACHAAL TAMMO

Mashaal Tammo, a Kurdish political leader and spokesman for the Future Movement, was assassinated in his house at Qamishlo on 7 October. According to the Human Rights Research Centre: "Four masked armed men entered Mashaal Tammo's house and opened fire on him, his son and a colleague", wounding the two latter.

At Qakishlo, thousands of demonstrators collected for a protest march as soon as the news was known and remained all the night before the hospital to which his body had been taken and where his son and secretary were being treated.

Mashaal Tammo, aged 53, who has long been a Kurdish opponent to the regime, was recently released after three and a half years in detention. Unlike other Kurdish parties, he had chosen to bring his party round to support the Syrian National Council, created last August in Istanbul, which covers the greater part of the regime's political opponents.

The assassination was immediately condemned by the United States, which condemned an escalation in the Baath Party's repression of its opponents. Similarly, France condemned the "brutal violence" of the Syrian regime.

Accused in this way, Syria denied any involvement in this murder,

accusing rival "tribes" and Kurdish political groups. However, on 9 October, the Al-Qods (Jerusalem) Forces, a special 200 strong unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, sent to Syria to support the regime, claimed responsibility for the act. Members of the same Revolutionary Guards unit, shouting pro-Hizbollah slogan, opened fire on the huge crowd of 50,000 demonstrators who came to attend Mashaal Tammo's funeral, according to some who were present.

In an interview to the Kurdish newspaper *Rudaw*, the research worker Jordi Tejel, lecturer at the International Institute of Advanced Development Studies, and a specialist of Syrian Kurdish movements about which he has written two books, considered that the consequences of this assassination could be that the Kurdish parties would go over more openly to the Syrian revolt movement.

"It should not be forgotten that there are, at present, three blocks within the Kurdish movement that do not have a clear strategy regarding the regime. Some do not believe in the overthrow of the regime, evidently preferring to negotiate and secure concessions. This murder may oblige the Kurdish parties and organisations to adopt a more progressive stand".

Of all the Syrian Kurdish leaders, Mashaal Tammo was the most

decided about joining the Syrian opposition hand had recently left the Kurdish Front, whose stand regarding the regime was too hesitant. He, on the contrary, was much closer to the Kurdish youth movements who, for their part, are unreservedly involved in the street demonstrations. Jordi Tejel continued; *"In my opinion, the real danger of break-up comes from the split between the young people and, let us say the traditional old Kurdish parties, and I will give you an example of this. Since September, two groups have emerged, both of which are armed. They have announced on Internet that they are going to fight the regime. There are, therefore, two armed groups that intend to go into action against the regime. In the regions main city, there are three local committees, mainly of young people, that cooperated with the Syrian opposition and criticise the other Kurdish parties because they do not share their point of view, because they do not have a clear strategy against the regime. I think that there is a danger that the Kurdish parties may split between the youth and the old elites.*

As for the "moderation" of the Syrian branch of the PKK and even of its attempts to restrain the Kurdish movement, this should be seen as part of a strategy of falling back on Syria at a time when the PJAK bases are suffering from Iranian attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan and the PKK itself is threatened by a pincher movement between Iran and Turkey".

IRAQ: A DISPUTE OVER FLAGS FLARES UP IN THE KURDISH TOWN OF KHANAQIN

An Iraqi government decree forbidding flying of the Kurdish flag from official buildings in the town of Khanaqin, is inflaming feelings and aggravating

the conflicts around the future of the disputed Kurdish regions between the Central government and the Kurdistan Region. On 16 October, about 700 Kurdish demonstrators marched

from the town centre to the head offices of the Iraqi authorities, waving Kurdish flags and shouting: "Long live Kurdistan" and "Khanaqin is Kurdish". As for the town council, it has quite

simply refused to observe the decree, signed by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, as soon as it was informed of it on 11 October. Hitherto, the two flags, Iraqi and Kurdish, have flown side by side on all official buildings.

The Kurdish Region Government immediately supported Khanaqin. Thus on 15 October, the Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, Kamal Kirkuki, declared it was “unacceptable to violate the sacred character of the Kurdish flag”.

On the spot, the municipal authorities warned Baghdad that withdrawing the Kurdish flag from government buildings would be seen as a “provocation” by the population and ran the risk of unleashing political disturbances in Khanaqin.

“The flag affair” could even extend beyond Iraqi borders, since the Kurdistan office of Religious Affairs has even announced, in an interview to the daily *Aswal al-Iraq* that a group of 150 Kurdish pilgrims had the intention, during the coming Haj, of raising the Kurdish flag on Mecca’s Mount Arafat as a sign of protest against the Iraqi government.

On 22 September last, the President of the Kurdistan Region, Masud Barzani, visited Kanaqin and stressed that it was, legitimately part of Kurdish territory, when Peshmerga units were sent to Diyala Province to protect the Kurds there from terrorists. Arab nationalists had disapproved of this visit, despite Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which provides for a referendum that would allow the people of areas outside the KRG to be incorporated in it if they so wished. There are 175,000 Kurds, mainly Shiite, liv-

ing in Diyala province, where they had long suffered both as Kurds and as Shiites, from the Baath regime, and its campaigns of Arabisation and deportation. In 2006, the Khanaqin local authorities had demanded that the town be returned to the official territory of Iraqi Kurdistan.

This dispute over the Kurdish flag is this just a stage in the latent series of skirmishes between Baghdad and Irbil over the areas of Kirkuk and Diyala, the strategic issues of which are as important as their oil issues.

However, relations between the Iraqi political parties could be complicated by the most surprising stands that are sometimes expressed by politicians who define themselves as Arab nationalists. Thus Hassan Alawi, a writer and Member of the Iraqi Parliament on the al-Iraqiyya list, openly supports Kurdish independence. Al-Iraqiyya, the second largest political force in the country, after that of Nuri al-Maliki, is a coalition of Sunni and “secular” Shiite Arabs, generally considered pro-Arab and therefore disinclined to supporting Kurdish aspirations to independence, as is shown by the unfriendly relations between the elected representatives of the Kurdish Alliance and of al-Iraqiyya in mixed regions like Nineveh and Mosul. However, the N°2 on this list does not hesitate to wish in the future to concede Kirkuk to the Kurds and even to wish for Kurdish independence for the greater good of Iraq, which could then become a centralised state.

A veteran of Iraqi politics and one of the founders of the Iraqi Baath Party, Hassan Alawi does not believe in any possible return to dictatorship in Iraq,

contrary to the accusation made by Nuri al-Maliki’s opponents. “Saddam was the product of a specific historic period that is now over. In terms of personality, a dictatorship is not a garment anyone can wear. Dictatorship requires charisma and strength. A dictator must not have any character failings and must not be hesitant. He is someone who isolates himself from his circle. Dictators are not sects. That is why it is difficult to find a dictator who is anyone else’s agent, because dictators only work for themselves, not for others. They may form alliances with great powers, but they never become their agents because, essentially they are only working in their own interests. It is difficult to find these traits in Maliki. Maliki is not that kind of person and the period is different from that of Saddam. To declare a new dictatorship is emerging in Iraq is over-schematising politics. Dictatorships only emerge in centralised States”.

Asked by the daily paper *Rudaw* about Iraq’s possible return to a centralised state system, Hassan Alawi said he was in favour of this but pointed out that it could never happen in Iraq so long as a “Kurdish question” remained.

“The only way for Iraq to become a centralised State again is for Kurdistan to proclaim its independence. I am a fervent Arab nationalist wish for an independent Kurdistan while hoping for a centralised Arab State. The thing that has prevented Iraq from becoming a centralised State is the Kurdistan Region. Kurdistan must fully emerge before Iraq can become a centralised State again. Kurdistan has no connection of any kind — of people or land — with Iraq and has never really been part of Iraq. It is only part of Iraq on political maps, not geographic ones. Kurdistan is not part of the Arab geographic space”.



IRAN:

A KURDISH ACTIVIST IS EXECUTED AND 18 OTHERS ARE IN DEATH ROW

On 4 September a Kurdish prisoner, Aziz Khakzad, was secretly executed in Kerman Prison, despite the fact that his original sentence had been reduced to 5 years imprisonment and that neither his lawyer of his family were informed of his hanging.

Aziz Khakzad, was 29 years of age. Arrested in 2007, he had been sentenced to death by the Khoy Revolutionary Court for "assisting a Kurdish party" and as an "enemy of God", a "crime" that, if confirmed on appeal, carries an automatic death sentence. However, on appeal he was sentenced to 5 years and sent from Selmas to Kerman Prison, where his execution took place in flagrant illegality.

On 22 October, Amnesty International launched an appeal from its London offices, in favour of two other Iranian Kurds, Lughman Moradi and Zaniar Moradi, whose death sentences, confirmed by the Supreme Court, had been originally passed on 22 December 2011 by the 15th Chamber of the Teheran Revolutionary Court. They were found guilty of being "enemies of God" by the Iranian courts, convicted of membership of the Kurdish Komala Party and of the son of a mullah from Merivan. Their first trial only lasted 20 minutes and the two accused had lodged an appeal. On 12 October 2011, the Teheran Supreme Court confirmed their sentences.

Zaniar and Lughman Moradi were arrested on 17 August and 17 October 2009 respectively. During their first 9 months detention in the Ministry of Information premises, they were never notified of any charge of

murder. In December 2010, they were transferred to Karaj Prison to the North-west of Teheran. It was there that they both drafted a letter recording the tortures to which they had been subjected and the threats of sexual abuse I the secret service prison for 25 days, to get them to confess to a murder that they deny. Neither of them received any medical care of medicines that they required.

Amnesty has demanded a fair trial for these two condemned men, recalling that one of them was only 17 years old when arrested.

Finally, Human Rights watch published a letter from another Kurd, Jamal Rahmani, a Human Rights activist, arrested in 2008. In this letter, Jamal Rahmani explains that his confessions were extorted under the threat, in particular that of executing his brother if he did not confess.

Aged 29 years, Jamal Rahmani joined a local Human Rights defence organisation in 2006, and in 2007 the Iran Human Rights Activists association (IHRA). On 14 June 2008, plain-clothes police entered his student lodgings at Shahreza, in Ispahan Province. Without any warrant for his arrest, he was arrested together with a fellow tenant and taken to the Intelligence Services detention centre for that town. Jamal Rahmani said he remained there for 24 hours, handcuffed and bound to a chair before being transferred to Ispahan's Dastgerd Prison.

"The prison has 3 stories. The first story housed ordinary prisoners while the second was reserved for political prisoners. The third story was for prisoners who were members of al-Qaida. During the first few days

of my detention I was subjected to much violence and accusations of being a terrorist and counter-revolutionary. One night a guard entered my cell, blindfolded me and took me down to the prison basement, where I was immediately sexually assaulted and beaten, which happened on all the interrogations that followed. After a few days, my co-tenant and I were transferred to Sanandaj Prison (in Kurdistan Province).we were locked up in a tiny cell lacking in any sanitary conveniences. We were obliged to bang on the door for that and sometimes we had to wait for hours before the guard opened the door and allowed us to use the toilettes " which they sometimes didn't for whole nights — and rarely when the guards were on holiday. Food was rarely provided and was disgusting so I often had an empty stomach. There was a small light that constantly illuminated the cell and in the morning the guards woke us very noisily. I was interrogated relentlessly. They threatened to hand my brother Karim and I would not confess. At that time Karim was a student activist, imprisoned in Kermanshah Prison. They then arrested the girl I was in love with and threatened to ill-treat her if I didn't cooperate. At first I did not believe these threats but my interrogators gave me very specific details about this girl to convince me that they really had arrested her and were able to harm her. I suffered unbelievably during that period in which they threatened my family and those I loved to force me to confess".

Moreover there are 18 other Kurdish political prisoners still under sentence of death in "death row".

Since 2007, 10 Kurdish activists have been executed for membership of banned organisations. Prior to Aziz Khakade's death the last hanging took place was that of Ferhad Tarim, on 27 January

2011, in Urmieh Prison and that of Jussein Khizri that took place secretly on 5 January and was only officially announced on the 15th of that month.

They were both sentenced for membership of the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (IKDP). Another 7 prisoners had been

sentenced for membership of the PJAK between 2007 and 2010. They all attack the intense use of torture to extract confessions.

CULTURE :

“MEM Û ZÎN” IS PERFORMED AS A BALLET IN TORONTO

On 2 October, the first premier of the ballet “Mem and Zin” took place, staged by Ferhi Karakecili.

Fethi Karakecili is an artistic director, dancer, choreographer and teacher. Born at Urfa, in Turkish Kurdistan, he obtained a degree in folk dancing at the Turkish National Academy and his Masters in dancing at Istanbul Technical University. After teaching for 7 years in Turkey, at Gaziantep and Istanbul, he left to complete his academic career path in Canada, at York University, where he is now completing a PhD in ethnic musicology while teaching in the Department of Dance, Music and ethnic cultures. Fethi Karakecili is preparing a thesis on the rituals and music of Kurdish marriage, both in Kurdistan and in the Diaspora. He is also founder of the Dilan Dance Company and is staging,

this month a ballet based on “Mem and Zin”.

Asked about his choice by a Canadian-Kurdish newspaper, the *Kurdistan Tribune*, the choreographer pointed out that throughout his childhood he had been lulled to sleep by Kurdish tales and epics and remembers having heard the story of Mem and Zin for the first time at the age of 7 years, from an illiterate Kurdish storyteller of the Urfa region. Since then his interest in Kurdish folklore has constantly grown but that, because of the oppression and negationism weighing on the Kurds, he had been obliged to read, in secret, Ahmedê Khanî’s book that was passed around illegally. It was at this time that the dancer promised himself to stage this great book.

Fethi Karakecili says he was surprised at the interest his show

has aroused in the international press and in academic, artistic and Kurdish circles. *“We have had an excellent response from the public and the media. I was interviewed by the Telegraph (UK), Radikal (Turkey), the Toronto Star (Canada), the ANF (Kurds in Europe) and over 100 local papers in Turkey. As a result, the bulk of our tickets have been sold to a multi-cultural and not just Kurdish community”.*

The “Mem and Zin” ballet includes three styles of repertoire: folklore, contemporary and classical with dancers coming from various disciplines. The music is played by musicians coming from many parts of the world: *“Be it for the music or the dancing, I have made an effort to include artists from a variety of horizons and “colours”. You can see there stylistic touches from other dances (east Indian, Capoeira, afro dances) in each of the dancers”.*

La rébellion kurde a repris les armes en Turquie

Depuis l'été, elle multiplie les attaques contre les casernes et les policiers.

LAURE MARCHAND
ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE A DIYARBAKIR

TURQUIE Un grondement enfle derrière les nuages, jusqu'à devenir assourdissant. On entend toujours les F16 avant de les voir. Des vieillards, qui prennent le frais à l'ombre des remparts millénaires de Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde de la Turquie, ont tous le même réflexe et lèvent la tête pour suivre la trajectoire des avions de combat dans le ciel. Une colère sourde se lit dans leur regard. Hier encore, l'armée turque a pilonné les camps de la guérilla kurde du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) installés dans les montagnes du nord de l'Irak. Les bombardements ont débuté mi-août et se sont intensifiés ces derniers jours.

Après une période d'accalmie, la Turquie, incapable de mettre un terme à une guerre civile qui a fait plus de 45 000 morts depuis 1984, se trouve une nouvelle fois confrontée à son démon kurde. Le conflit connaît un regain de violence, alimenté par une reprise des attaques armées du PKK et une brutale répression du mouvement politique kurde par les autorités turques.

Depuis la mi-juin, au moins 135 personnes ont été tuées en Turquie essentiellement lors d'affrontements conduits par le mouvement autonomiste. Dans le sud-est du pays, à majorité kurde, les rebelles multiplient les attaques contre des casernes, des policiers, des convois militaires sur les routes montagneuses. De plus en plus de civils font partie des victimes. Lundi soir, dans le centre-ville de Batman, une femme enceinte et sa fille ont été tuées au cours d'une fusillade. Samedi, six soldats et trois insurgés ont perdu la vie lors de l'assaut d'une gendarmerie dans la province de Siirt.

Attentats et kidnappings

La capitale, Ankara, n'est pas épargnée : la semaine dernière, l'explosion d'une voiture piégée, au cœur d'un quartier administratif, a fait trois morts. Les Faucons de la liberté du Kurdistan (TAK), un groupe radical que l'État accuse d'être une branche du PKK, a revendiqué l'attentat, assurant qu'il ne s'agissait que d'un « début » : « Les métropoles turques seront notre champ de bataille. » Et les représentants de l'État sont pris pour cible. Douze professeurs ont été enlevés ces derniers jours dans deux provinces du

Zone de peuplement kurde



Sud-Est. Ces kidnappings rappellent les assassinats d'enseignants dans les années 1990.

Dans le fief de Diyarbakir, l'engrenage militaire bénéficie d'une certaine bienveillance même si on déplore les victimes civiles. Signe d'une radicalisation des Kurdes de Turquie, estimés entre 11 et 15 millions. L'espoir né de « l'ouverture démocratique » lancée en 2009 par le gouvernement islamo-conservateur pour satisfaire les revendications de cette minorité n'est plus qu'un lointain et amer souvenir. En deux ans, plus de 3 000 représentants politiques kurdes ont été emprisonnés, accusés d'être membres d'une organisation terroriste. Vendredi dernier encore, 34 militants ont été arrêtés, dont trois maires d'importantes villes. À ce bilan, il faut ajouter les milliers d'anonymes derrière les barreaux. « Les prisons débordent », déclare Mehmet Kaya, qui dirige le Centre de recherches sociales du Tigre. Cet influent membre de la société civile kurde n'a jamais été un partisan de la lutte armée. Mais il dit ne plus avoir d'argument pour appeler le PKK au cessez-le-feu : « Il y a une radicalisation de la population même si les meurtres (commis par l'armée ou des groupes paramilitaires, NDLR) ont cessé. Car en voyant toutes ces détentions, les Kurdes se disent que la voie politique ne mène nulle part, y compris ceux qui condamnent les méthodes du PKK. »

Vers 18 heures, la fraîcheur de la nuit approchante est propice aux sorties entre Diyarbakiriotes. Pourtant, des tables

disposées autour d'une fontaine restent inoccupées. « Tout le monde craint des arrestations, même ceux qui n'ont pas d'activité politique, explique un serveur de ce café réputé proche de la formation nationaliste kurde, le Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP). La peur et la colère montent de concert. »

« Que peut-on attendre d'autre qu'une radicalisation de la part du PKK ? Il ne s'agit pas d'une organisation caritative, critique Sezgin Tanrikulu, ancien bâtonnier de Diyarbakir et député du parti kémaliste. Mais le gouvernement n'a aucune idée pour régler le problème, hormis l'approche sécuritaire. » Une intervention terrestre dans le Kurdistan irakien peut

« Tout le monde craint des arrestations, même ceux qui n'ont pas d'activité politique »

UN GARÇON DE CAFÉ DE DIYARBALIR

« être lancée à tout moment » selon le ministère des Affaires étrangères. Dimanche, en rentrant des États-Unis, où il a négocié la livraison de drones américains Predator pour frapper les camps en Irak, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a assuré que « les négociations étaient suspendues. La lutte durera jusqu'à ce que le PKK rende les armes ». La presse turque a révélé que des pourparlers directs entre le MIT (les services de renseignements turcs) et les grands chefs du PKK avaient bien eu lieu ces derniers mois, en Norvège et en Belgique. Aujourd'hui, la fenêtre de discussion s'est refermée. Et le leader de la guérilla, Abdullah Öcalan, est isolé sur l'île-prison d'Imrali, où il purge une peine à perpétuité : ses avocats ne sont plus autorisés à lui rendre visite depuis le mois de juillet.

Une timide issue apparaît pour sortir de l'impasse. Tandis que trois députés du BDP sont toujours en prison, les 32 autres ont décidé, mercredi, de retourner au parlement, qu'ils boycottaient depuis les législatives en juin. ■

Climat de guerre entre la Turquie et la Syrie

Murad Akincilar
lecourrier.ch

ANALYSE • L'alliance entre Damas et Ankara n'a pas résisté au soulèvement syrien. Pour le gouvernement conservateur turc, la crise syrienne est un «problème domestique».

Le torchon brûle entre la Turquie et la Syrie. Un climat de guerre règne à la suite de l'afflux des réfugiés syriens vers la ville frontalière turque mais très cosmopolite d'Antioche depuis mi-mai. L'escalade de la répression violente de l'armée syrienne et les contre-attaques de certains groupes d'opposition dans les villes d'Alep et Cisir el-Choughour ont remis en cause une embellie d'une décennie. Et quand la diplomatie américaine n'exclut plus l'option guerrière, il faut la prendre très au sérieux.

Depuis le 21 septembre, la Turquie a fermé son espace aérien aux vols syriens à buts militaires. De surcroît, la frontière turco-syrienne (la plus longue pour la Turquie) est devenue la scène d'un large déploiement des deux armées. Selon Damas, une partie de l'opposition syrienne se munirait d'armes à travers les frontières turque et libanaise.

Tournant radical

La crise est d'autant plus spectaculaire que les deux pays étaient de tout frais alliés stratégiques. Début 2011, Damas et Ankara avaient conclu onze accords bilatéraux, en marge des réunions du Conseil de coopération stratégique turco-syrien. Le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoglu, et son homologue syrien, Walid El-Mouallem, avaient même paraphé un accord stratégique,

prévoyant une coopération en matière de «lutte contre le terrorisme et les organisations terroristes». Une lune de miel considérée comme le couronnement de la coopération entamée en 1998 lorsque la Syrie avait expulsé le dirigeant du PKK, Abdullah Ocalan.

Compte tenu de la politique turque de «zéro problème» avec ses voisins et de ces récents rapprochements, la rupture turco-syrienne marque un tournant radical dans la région. Depuis quatre mois, la Turquie accueille plusieurs représentants de groupes d'opposition à Damas, en majorité de la diaspora syrienne, dont le dénominateur commun est de rejeter toute forme de dialogue avec le régime de Bachar el-Assad.

La peur du vide

Cependant, cette attitude ne résulte pas exclusivement de la sensibilité humaniste de la diplomatie turque quant au sort des réfugiés. Le bras de fer entre le régime syrien et diverses tendances de l'opposition remue aussi la politique interne déjà tendue de la Turquie. Nationalistes du CHP et néoconservateurs de l'AKP (souvent qualifiés d'islamo-conservateurs) s'accusent mutuellement de parti pris idéologique dans la bataille syrienne au détriment de l'intérêt national. Les intellectuels libéraux ainsi que les politiciens du parti au pouvoir voient ainsi un apparentement entre la tradition kémaliste du CHP, fondatrice de la République turque, et l'idéologie souverainiste du Baath au Moyen-Orient.

Face aux accusations d'interventionnisme, le gouvernement turc réplique que le conflit en Syrie relève du domaine de sa politique intérieure: «Pour nous, c'est un

problème domestique», disait sans ambiguïté le premier ministre Tayyip Erdogan le 7 août dernier, à la suite de la répression sanglante des manifestations dans la ville de Deir ez-Zor – coïncidence tragique – terminus de la déportation arménienne en 1915.

Dans son article du 4 septembre dans le quotidien Milliyet, Fikret Bila, doyen des commentateurs de la politique officielle d'Ankara, voit dans celle-ci la crainte que la zone nord de la Syrie soit hors de contrôle. Un vide de pouvoir qui pourrait profiter à la rébellion kurde à l'image de ce qui s'est passé dans le nord de l'Irak. D'ailleurs, le journaliste vétérinaire pour le Moyen-Orient Robert Fisk, du quotidien *Indépendant*, est parmi ceux qui anticipent une safe heaven(1) entre les deux pays en cas de guerre civile en Syrie.

Derrière l'agitation de la Turquie, membre de l'OTAN, le journaliste d'origine syrienne et binational Husnu Mahalli pointe, lui, une «machination» occidentale, qui aurait pour but de porter les pro-sionistes et les Frères musulmans au pouvoir en Syrie. Cet ancien correspondant de la BBC pour le Moyen-Orient estime que la ville syrienne d'Alep est convoitée par les forces favorables à une intervention de l'Alliance atlantique. Cité majoritairement sunnite située, à trente minutes d'Antioche, elle pourrait servir de sanctuaire militarisé à une opposition musclée. Un peu sur le modèle logistique appliqué en Libye à Misrata.

L'AKP au côté des Frères?

Quoi qu'il en soit, l'embrasement en Mésopotamie prend toujours plus la forme d'un conflit entre

élites autocrates issues des Etats nations et des forces politiques qui déploient une interprétation de l'islam compatible avec les intérêts occidentaux. En atteste l'intense présence des Frères musulmans et de leurs alliés aux activités de restructuration de l'opposition syrienne qui ont lieu dans une Turquie gouvernée par l'AKP.

Reste que le rôle futur de cette mouvance en Syrie dépendra de plusieurs autres facteurs encore incertains. Ainsi les résultats des élections législatives en Egypte, qui auront lieu le 28 novembre prochain, mettront en évidence la force de ce nouvel «islam modéré» dans la région.

La question syrienne est également dépendante des tensions entre Ankara et le mouvement kurde. La Turquie souhaiterait mener des opérations militaires hors de ses frontières avec le soutien des GI's, une éventualité toujours négociée avec les Américains. Mais la spirale de la violence pourrait toutefois s'apaiser avec la décision, le 28 septembre, du Bloc pour la liberté et la démocratie, dont le mouvement politique et légal kurde constitue l'axe principal, d'en finir avec le boycott du parlement turc par ses élus.

Plus immédiatement, la conférence d'une partie de l'opposition syrienne, qui aura lieu ce week-end à Istanbul, pèsera d'un certain poids dans le dénouement de la crise. Même si, finalement, ces groupes d'opposition ont bien peu de relais dans le vrai mouvement contestataire qui s'exprime dans les villes syriennes. Une révolte où l'on voit davantage l'opposition traditionnelle de gauche et les seize partis et organisations kurdes qui, eux, ne seront pas présents à Istanbul. |

(1)Zone protégée ou tampon. *Irish Indépendant* du 9 août.

L'opposition syrienne unie au sein d'un Conseil national

Agnès Rotivel

Après des mois de querelles intestines, l'opposition syrienne a annoncé dimanche 2 octobre, à Istanbul, la formation du Conseil national syrien (CNS) qui réunit les courants politiques opposés au régime du président Bachar Al Assad.

Des manifestations de soutien ont eu lieu dimanche dans le quartier de Qadam, à Damas, en dépit du déploiement massif des forces de sécurité, mais aussi à Hama, Homs, Idleb, Deraa, Deir Ezzor et la province de Damas, a indiqué l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH).

COMMENT EST COMPOSÉ CE CONSEIL ?

Le Conseil est doté d'un secrétariat général de 29 personnes, représentant sept factions de l'opposition intérieure et en exil : six représentants des comités locaux de coordination (LCC) qui chapeautent les manifestations en Syrie ; cinq pour les Frères musulmans et les tribus ; quatre pour ceux représentant la déclaration de Damas (qui rassemble les partis de l'opposition laïque) ; quatre pour le courant « libéral » mené par Burhan

Ghalioun ; quatre Kurdes ; un chrétien ; et cinq indépendants, a précisé Hassan Hachimi, membre du Conseil.

Les sept tendances seront également représentées dans un comité exécutif de sept personnes, assurant la présidence du CNS. Soit « tous les poids lourds et toutes les forces qui font le lien entre les composantes de la société syrienne », a indiqué la porte-parole du Conseil, Bassma Kodmani. « Désormais la confiance est établie, ainsi que la conviction qu'il nous faut travailler ensemble. »

Le CNS réunira son assemblée générale, forte de 190 membres, début novembre dans un lieu non encore précisé. Selon des sources diplomatiques à Damas, la montée en puissance du CNS découlerait d'un accord entre Américains, Turcs et Frères musulmans, permettant de fédérer les trois principales tendances de l'opposition : « nationalistes », « libéraux » et « islamistes ».

QUEL SERA SON RÔLE ?

« Le Conseil national syrien est le cadre qui réunit les forces de l'opposition et de la révolution pacifique », a déclaré l'opposant Burhan Ghalioun, universitaire syrien vivant en France.



Basma Qadmani, membre du Conseil national syrien, s'exprime lors de la réunion du Conseil à Istanbul le 2 octobre 2011.

« Il œuvre pour mobiliser toutes les catégories du peuple syrien et apporter le soutien nécessaire à la marche de la révolution et la réalisation des espoirs et attentes de notre peuple pour le renversement du régime et de ses symboles y compris la tête de ce régime. Le Conseil rejette toute ingérence extérieure qui porte atteinte à la souveraineté du peuple syrien. »

LES ISLAMISTES SONT-ILS PRÊTS À JOUER LE JEU ?

L'opposition n'arrivait pas à se mettre d'accord sur un programme en raison, entre autres, de différends entre islamistes et laïcs. Mais l'ancien chef des Frères musulmans de Syrie, Ali Sadreddine Al Bayanouni, a assuré dimanche 2 octobre que la confrérie aspirait à l'instauration d'un État « démocratique » et non pas islamique en Syrie en cas de chute du régime du président Bachar Al Assad. □

AFP

PKK: le Parlement turc prolonge une autorisation pour des raids en Irak

ANKARA, 5 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE PARLEMENT TURC a approuvé mercredi le renouvellement pour un an de l'autorisation de procéder à des raids contre les repaires des rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien, un feu vert qui intervient alors que le gouvernement turc menace de lancer une opération terrestre dans cette zone.

Cette motion gouvernementale, initialement approuvée par les députés en 2007 et prolongée chaque année depuis, permet à l'armée turque de mener "conformément au droit international" des raids aériens contre les caches du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) et d'intervenir au sol, selon le texte.

La motion a été votée à main levée à une large majorité des parlementaires présents, les députés kurdes du Parti de la paix et de la démocratie (BDP) votant contre.

Le Parlement turc a déjà prolongé quatre fois cette autorisation, votée ini-

tialement en 2007. L'actuelle, qui prend fin le 17 octobre, a permis à l'armée turque d'effectuer depuis la mi-août des raids aériens dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, 2.000 combattants du PKK. Des troupes turques ont aussi réalisé dans cette zone une intervention terrestre de huit jours en février 2008.

Le conflit kurde connaît un regain de violence en Turquie depuis le début de l'été, alimenté par une reprise des attaques armées du PKK et une répression du mouvement politique kurde par les autorités turques.

Depuis la mi-juin, plus de 120 personnes ont été tuées lors d'affrontements et d'attaques conduits par le PKK, un mouvement considéré comme une organisation terroriste par bon nombre de pays.

Pour répondre à ces attaques et visiblement calmer une partie de l'opinion publique turque excédée par les attaques du PKK, le gouvernement du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'apprête à lancer une opération terrestre dans le nord de l'Irak.

End of Kurdish MPs' boycott raises hopes for new constitution in Turkey

The National / UAE
Thomas Seibert

ISTANBUL // The decision by Turkey's main Kurdish party to end a parliamentary boycott has boosted hopes for a political consensus on a new constitution that could help solve the Kurdish question.

But as Kurdish deputies took their oaths of office during Saturday's first session of parliament after the summer break, and government and opposition promised to support all-party talks about a new constitution, continuing violence in the Kurdish region served as a reminder of how difficult the road to peace is likely to be.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, said last week that he hoped for an agreement on a constitution within the first six months of the coming year.

On Saturday, he added that he was prepared to have Turkey's intelligence service take up new negotiations with Kurdish rebels, sworn enemies of Ankara.

There is broad agreement among politicians, non-governmental groups and academics that Turkey, a rising regional power and an EU candidate country, needs to replace its constitution, which was written under military rule in 1982 and includes many regulations restricting democracy.

But opinions about how the new one should look differ widely.

Mr Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which raked in almost 50 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections in June, has started preliminary talks with two opposition parties, the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP) and the

right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), about the shape of negotiations on the constitution.

The parties agreed to set up a special committee for work on the new basic law.

In a step widely seen as reaching out to the Kurds, the prime minister said the AKP would seek talks in the coming days with the Party for a Democratic Society (BDP), the main Kurdish party.

The BDP won about 30 seats in June but refused to send its deputies to parliament, in protest against the imprisonment of a colleague.

The party decided last week to end the boycott so it would not be left out of the constitutional talks.

The BDP parliamentary group established after the oath-taking on Saturday includes Leyla Zana, a legendary Kurdish politician who spent 10 years in prison after speaking Kurdish during her first oath-taking in parliament in 1991, and Erol Dora, Turkey's first Christian deputy since the 1960s.

But for all the symbolism and the hope for a speedy agreement on a new basic law, politicians and analysts alike warn that negotiations will not be easy.

Selahattin Demirtas, the BDP leader, said after a meeting with Abdullah Gul, Turkey's president: "We have entered a tough new phase."

Turkish courts have jailed numerous BDP members for suspected links to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a rebel group that has been fighting against the Turkish state since 1984.

Just as politicians in Ankara get ready to tackle the question of whether to enshrine cultural



The newly elected MPs of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party and its chairman, Selahattin Demirtas, (foreground) seen arriving outside the parliamentary building in Ankara as they ended a four-month boycott of the Turkish parliament. ADEM ALTAN / AFP PHOTO

rights of minority groups like Turkey's estimated 12 million Kurds in the new constitution, the PKK has stepped up its violent campaign in the Kurdish region.

While increasing attacks on outposts of the military and the police, PKK fighters have also started to target civilians.

Twelve teachers, seen by the PKK as representatives of a system that suppresses Kurdish language rights, have been kidnapped by rebels in recent days.

Two weeks ago, four female civilians were killed in a PKK attack in the province of Siirt. The rebels later apologised for the deaths.

Last week, a pregnant woman and her 4-year-old daughter were killed in another shoot-out between PKK members and the police in Batman.

Police say the woman and the girl were shot by PKK members but pro-Kurdish media say police bullets killed them.

As a response to the increase in attacks by the PKK which started in August, Mr Erdogan has ordered airstrikes on rebel camps in northern Iraq.

The government is also asking parliament to extend a mandate for cross-order operations of the armed forces, which would enable Ankara to strike at the PKK in Iraq with an intervention by ground forces.

Mithat Sancar, a law professor at Ankara University, said: "There is a logic of war on both sides." But while the state was trying to weaken the PKK militarily to force it to accept a solution, the rebels were convinced the state would solve the Kurdish question only under pressure of violence, he said "It is a vicious circle," Mr Sancar said.

The violence had the potential to derail the political process that was about to begin with the constitutional negotiations, he said.

However, Mr Sancar said, there were also signs of hope, such as the BDP's return to parliament and Mr Erdogan's willingness to talk to the Kurdish party.

"This demonstrates that both sides are expecting something from a peaceful process," Mr Sancar said.

"Both sides are aware that violence is a dead-end street."

□ □ □

Violent turn may foretell future of the Syrian revolt

HOMS, SYRIA

Residents in Homs fear a civil war as fighting around city grinds on

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The semblance of a civil war has erupted in Homs, Syria's third-largest city, where armed protesters now call themselves revolutionaries, gun battles erupt as often as every few hours, the security forces and their opponents carry out assassinations and expensive rifles flood the city from abroad, residents say.

Since the start of the uprising in March, Homs has stood as one of Syria's most contested cities, its youths among the best organized and most tenacious. But across the political spectrum, residents speak of a decisive shift in past weeks, as a largely peaceful uprising gives way to a grinding struggle that has made Homs violent, fearful and determined.

Analysts caution that the strife here is still specific to the city itself, and many in the opposition reject violence because they fear it will serve as a pretext for the government's brutal crackdown.

But in the assassinations, the rival security checkpoints and the hardening of sectarian sentiments, the city offers a dark vision that could foretell the future of Syria's uprising as both the government and the opposition ready themselves for a protracted struggle over the endurance of a four-decade dictatorship.

"We are done with the protesting phase," said an engineering student in the city who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "We've now entered a more important phase."

Homs is a microcosm of Syria, with a Sunni Muslim majority and minorities of Christians and Alawites, a Muslim sect from which President Bashar al-Assad draws much of his leadership.

Six months of protests and crackdowns have frayed ties among those communities, forging the conditions for urban strife. The opposition is battling the security forces in the most restive neighborhoods. Rebels have tried to protect the same peaceful protesters the government has relentlessly sought to arrest. The tensions have grown so



In a cellphone-camera image taken on Friday in the Syrian province of Idlib, a woman displayed her hand with the Arabic word for "leave" at an anti-government protest.

dire that members of one sect are reluctant to travel to neighborhoods populated by other sects. Men in some parts of the city openly carry weapons.

Perhaps the most dramatic facet of the struggle is a series of assassinations last week that left nearly a dozen professors, doctors and informers dead in a paroxysm of violence that echoes the sectarian vendettas still besetting Iraq.

Unlike the uprising's early days, when the government exercised a near monopoly on violence, the fear is beginning to spread in the other direction, as insurgents kill government supporters and informers, residents say.

One of those killed was Dr. Hassan Eid, the chief of thoracic surgery at the Homs National Hospital and an Alawite from Al Zuhra, one of a handful of neighborhoods where the sect makes up a majority and where buildings and streets are still plastered with the portraits of Mr. Assad. Dr. Eid was shot in front of his house as he was leaving for work Sept. 25, residents said.

Al Ouruba, a government-aligned newspaper, called Dr. Eid a "symbol of dedication" and said he had treated victims of the violence "without discriminating between any of them."

But in Sunni Muslim locales, residents called him a government informer who had helped the security forces detain the wounded who were treated at his facility.

Within hours of his shooting, a hint of triumphalism echoed in parts of the city, as some people celebrated his death. "He was responsible for the death of many young men," said a 65-year-old resident of Homs, who gave his name as Rajab. "He was killed because he deserved it."

Soon after dawn the next day, gunfire erupted as children went to school.

"They shot Abu Ali," an old man who collects garbage and cleans the streets in the neighborhood said a short time later.

Abu Ali, the name most knew him by, was another informant, the residents said.

"The guys were aware of him a long time ago," said an activist who gave his name as Abu Ghali. "But now it's different. He kept reporting, so they had to kill him. I don't think he died right away, though." Abu Ghali added that it was not difficult to get information on informers. "You can do anything with money," he said. "You just bribe an officer, and be generous with him, and you can get all you want."

The killings took place during two bloody days in Homs, a city along the Orontes River and not too far from the medieval castle Krak des Chevaliers.

Residents said that after Abu Ali died, three Alawite teachers were killed at a school in the neighborhood of Baba Amr. Government newspapers did not confirm those deaths.

In the afternoon, Mohammed Ali Akil, an assistant dean at Al Baath University

"We are done with the protesting phase. We've now entered a more important phase."

in Homs, was found dead in his car on a highway. Students said he had shown support for the uprising and had criticized Mr. Assad's leadership.

"It is true that we were scared during your lectures, but you were a wonderful professor," a student posted on Facebook. "May you rest in peace. We won't forget you."

Near the Lebanese border — where residents say weapons flow across the border with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and even Qatar — Homs strikes an odd posture. Many of its Sunni residents are at once fearful and proud, empowered by

their opposition to Mr. Assad. Many Alawites are terrified; they are often the victims of the most vulgar stereotypes and, in popular conversation, uniformly associated with the leadership.

In Alawite villages, only government television is watched. To do so in Sunni neighborhoods amounts to treason. In those, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya are the stations of choice. Suspicions give currency to the wildest of rumors. In one, a female butcher in Homs named Um Khaled asks the armed gangs to bring her the bodies of Alawites they capture so that she could cut them up and market the meat to her customers.

Centuries-old connections between sects still knit together the city, even as the suggestion of civil war threatens to sever them forever. The countryside, residents say, is roiled by far more sectarian hatred. Government checkpoints separate Sunni from Alawite.

"One side kills an Alawite, the other kills a Sunni," an activist said.

The uprising's overall toll has been

grim: By the United Nations' count, more than 2,700 people have died. The revolt still draws much of its strength from the countryside, and the two largest cities, Aleppo and Damascus, remain relatively quiescent. Although protests have flagged lately, Homs has stayed defiant.

Armed men often protect the perimeter of protests in places like Bab al-Sbaa, Khaldiya and Baba Amr, where some stores are shut and buildings are scarred by broken windows and bullet holes. Some of these men have carried out the assassinations of informers, or "awayniyeh," as they call them. Others scout government checkpoints and occasionally set up their own, temporary versions.

"They have rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikovs," said a driver in his late 50s who lives in the neighborhood of Khaldiya.

"They should be armed," he added. "They protect us."

A woman who gave her name as Suleima lives on Al Joura Street in Baba Amr. She earns a living by preparing

kibbe, a dish of minced meat with cracked wheat, for wealthier clients in other neighborhoods of Homs. She said that for three days, gunfire had kept her inside her house and that telephones were down.

"You never know when they will start shooting again," she said.

Angry and exhausted, she professed neutrality in a conflict that makes such a notion ever more difficult.

"Neighbors accuse me of being with the regime, so I laugh," she said at her house, which she shares with her daughter.

"What on earth did this regime give me?" Suleima said. "Absolutely nothing. But neither did the revolutionaries. I work, I eat. If I don't work, I starve. At least I worked before. Now I'm at home, hardly leaving it, and hardly making a living."

This article was reported by a correspondent for The New York Times in Homs and written by Anthony Shadid in Beirut.

REUTERS

Turkish police detain over 120 in Kurdish rebel probe

ISTANBUL - 5 October 2011 - REUTERS

TURKISH POLICE detained more than 120 people across Turkey on Tuesday as part of an investigation into alleged links between the Kurdistan Communities Union, or KCK, and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Hundreds of people, including elected mayors, are already on trial on charges of ties to the PKK, as part of a two-year old case which has fueled tensions in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey.

A surge in PKK violence in recent months has sparked Turkish military air and artillery strikes against PKK bases in the mountains of neighbouring northern Iraq.

Police staged simultaneous dawn raids in Istanbul and southeastern provinces, where 40 people were detained, including a deputy leader of the main Kurdish political party and several mayors.

Another 80 people were detained in Turkey's largest city Istanbul, the sources said. Istanbul police declined to comment.

Media reports said about 20 people were also detained in the southeastern province of Gaziantep, including the local head of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP.

The investigation is focused on the KCK, which the PKK established in 2005 with the aim of creating its own Kurdish political system, according to a 2009 indictment.

Some 150 politicians and activists are being tried in Diyarbakir



where a large courtroom has been specially built. Similar trials are being held in other cities across Turkey.

The European Union, which Turkey is aiming to join, is closely watching the cases and their human rights implications.

Deputies from the BDP swore their parliamentary oaths at the start of the legislative term at the weekend, ending a boycott triggered by court rulings barring some of its elected candidates, jailed in the KCK cases, from taking their seats.

The renewed violence is another setback for a government initiative in recent years to boost the rights of minority Kurds who account for up to 15 million of Turkey's 74 million people.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party, or AKP, fresh from a third parliamentary election victory in June, aims to achieve cross-party consensus for a new constitution to replace one drafted after a military coup in 1980.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union.

Turkey's New Policy on Syria

By Asli Aydintasbas

Ankara may soon slap the Asad regime with mild sanctions, but most of its Syria policy will remain just rhetoric in the absence of international consensus regarding stronger action.

Although Turkey has gradually distanced itself from Syria, policymakers in Ankara believe that their options for further action are limited. Without a proper game plan and international consensus, the United States and others cannot count on Turkey to make the Syria problem "disappear."

The Arab Spring has posed a particular challenge to Turkish foreign policy under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Once characterized by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's catchy phrase "zero problems with neighbors," in reality this policy has centered on "zero problems with regimes." As the AKP successfully pursued its goal of turning Turkey's EU-obsessed foreign policy eastward and boosting ties with the Arab world, its top new ally became the half-century-old Baath Party dictatorship in Syria.

From Ankara's perspective, getting closer to the Bashar al-Asad regime made economic and political sense. Long gone were the days when Syria was a Soviet ally or proud host of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan. Over the past decade, Ankara no longer saw a strategic threat in Syria, but instead a convenient opening into the Arab world befitting the AKP's neo-Ottomanist ideas of regional leadership. Relations steadily grew closer, resulting in a free-trade agreement in 2004 and an unprecedented three-day joint military exercise in 2009. That same year, the two countries lifted visa requirements and began the highly symbolic practice of joint cabinet meetings. No longer interested in a close alliance with Israel, Turkish officials began to speak openly of a "strategic pact" with Damascus, describing the Asad regime, somewhat naively, as Turkey's "protege." And on a personal level, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his family developed warm ties with Syria's young leader and his stylish, Western-educated wife.

Lesson from Libya

As the regional uprisings started unfolding earlier this year, Erdogan was quick to call for Hosni Mubarak's ouster in Egypt. Yet when it came to Libya and Syria, he initially advocated engagement. In the former case, he held numerous phone conversations with Muammar Qadhafi and his sons to broker a ceasefire and at first publicly refused a NATO involvement. Yet in this new era of people power in the Arab world, Erdogan's seemingly pro-Qadhafi stance quickly backfired, sparking anti-Turkish demonstrations in Benghazi and strong anti-Turkish sentiment among the rebel forces. This was a huge affront to AKP leaders, who saw their party as the prototype for both democracy in the

Middle East and the resurgence of conservative Islamist movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere.

It took several months of painstaking diplomacy to reassure the Libyan public and interim government that Turkey was "with the Libyan people," as Erdogan proclaimed in a recent visit to Benghazi, and not with Qadhafi. Libya therefore served as a useful reminder about the pitfalls of reliance on unpopular dictators at the expense of the public. As demonstrations raged on in Syria throughout the summer, Ankara was determined not to lose the people again.

Asad Angers Erdogan

As with Libya, both Erdogan and Davutoglu at first assumed that their personal leverage would be enough to steer Asad into a controlled, top-down process of gradual reform. But numerous visits by the foreign minister and other officials -- including Hakan Fidan, head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization -- resulted in no tangible easing of repression, despite hours of private conversations with the Syrian leader. Against this backdrop, four main factors drove Ankara to drop its support for the Asad regime:

1. Assessment that Asad was either too weak or unwilling to reform. During private meetings, Davutoglu and other officials often heard Asad express willingness to reform. Yet the president seemed too weak within the ruling family to effect any real change. Ankara was encouraged somewhat in June and August when Asad announced reform packages that including some of Turkey's suggestions, such as abolishing the decades-old emergency law, allowing the opposition to form political parties, and conducting a national dialogue. But no concrete steps were taken to implement these reforms. Disappointment eventually turned to frustration and, finally, anger.

2. Influx of refugees. In June, thousands of refugees fleeing repression crossed the border into Turkey, focusing international attention on the brutality of the Syrian regime. Once he received firsthand reports about Syrian atrocities, Erdogan described the regime's behavior as "savagery" and urged Asad to sack his brother Maher, whom Turkish officials saw as the mastermind of the brutal crackdown. Although the Syrian military sealed off the border area to prevent further exodus into Turkey, the presence of the camps sowed seeds of mistrust and sparked a low-intensity propaganda war between the two countries.

3. Sunni sentiments and Hama. The Islamist and overwhelmingly Sunni character of Turkey's ruling party also contributed to its shift away from the Asad regime, which is tightly controlled by a clan from the minority Alawite sect. Throughout the holy month of Ramadan, news of mass killings and random shootings by Syrian security forces resonated with particular force among the conservative Turkish public. In response, groups such as the Humanitarian Relief Fund (IHH) -- the Islamist NGO responsible for the 2010 flotilla to Gaza -- began organizing protests and becoming involved with the Syrian refugee crisis.

All of this came on the heels of a June electoral campaign in which the AKP stooped to sectarian innuendo, deliberately highlighting the Alevi origin of its secular opponents

(including main opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu). In doing so, the party conflated the Alevis tradition of Islam in Turkey with the Alawite nature of the Syrian regime, conveniently eliding the significant historical and theological differences between the two traditions. This in turn made it easier for the AKP to turn its back on Assad. The coup de grace was the brutal siege of Hama on August 1, the eve of Ramadan, when the Syrian military killed dozens of civilians in an effort to put down the uprising. For the AKP leadership, this was a bitter reminder of Hafez al-Asad's bloody crackdown on the same area some thirty years earlier -- an event that still looms large in the Islamist consciousness.

4. Iran's influence. With the Assad regime's growing international isolation came a growing reliance on Iran. One of the foremost characteristics of the AKP's foreign policy has been its determination to forge better ties with Tehran. Rather than clashing with the Iranian regime on the subject of Syria, Turkey hoped to persuade Tehran into pushing Assad toward reform -- as Erdogan tried to do in his recent meeting with President Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad at the UN -- or else into helping Ankara prepare for a post-Assad region. Yet the prospect of leaving Syria in a state of instability and under Iran's influence poses a strategic concern for Ankara. Moreover, Turkish officials now believe that Syria's backers in Tehran only embolden Assad's brutality.

Much Rhetoric, But Little Room for Action

Over the past few months, Ankara has decisively moved to the anti-Assad camp. By midsummer, senior Turkish officials start-

ed talking about "losing hope in Assad," and despite warnings from Damascus, Turkey began hosting gatherings of Syrian opposition activists, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood. By late summer, Turkish officials were musing publicly -- though anonymously -- about the regime's fall as an unavoidable prospect. Finally, toward the end of September, Erdogan announced that he had "cut off all dialogue with the Syrian regime," and that Assad had "lied [to him] continuously." A few days later, he took a bolder tone: "This process might be extended a little bit more, but sooner or later in Syria, if people take a different decision, just as in Egypt, as in Tunisia and as in Libya," the regime would self-destruct.

At the same time, Turkey is convinced that its options are limited. Ankara is ready to slap the regime with mild sanctions, as Erdogan told President Obama in New York late September, and it has already intercepted some weapons shipments to Damascus. Erdogan will also be visiting the refugee camps on the border with Syria, further stepping up his rhetoric against the regime and bringing renewed international attention to Syria. But beyond that, Turkey's Syria policy will remain rhetoric in the absence of a clear international consensus regarding further action. Much like Turkey's opposition to the Iraq war a decade ago, Ankara will be highly resistant to military intervention. Consequently, as the United States considers its own options in Syria, it should regard on Turkey as a facilitator and a potential partner-- but not the designer of a decisive policy toward its increasingly unstable neighbor.

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Asli Aydintasbas is a columnist for the Turkish daily Milliyet, specializing in Turkish politics and foreign policy.

The Washington Post OCTOBER 4, 2011

Iran criticizes Turkey for agreeing to allow NATO missile defense equipment on its territory

By Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran criticized Turkey on Tuesday for agreeing to allow NATO to station an early warning radar in the southeast of the country that will serve as part of the alliance's missile defense system.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed the defense system was meant to protect Israel against Iranian missile attacks in the event a war breaks out with the Jewish state.

"The missile defense shield is aimed at defending the Zionist regime. They don't want to let our missiles land in the occupied territories (Israel) if one day they take action against us. That's why they put it there," Ahmadinejad said in an address to the nation on state TV late Tuesday.

Turkey agreed to host the radar in September as part of NATO's missile defense system aimed at countering ballistic missile threats from neighboring Iran. Ankara claims the shield

doesn't target a specific country and had threatened to block the deal if Iran was explicitly named as a threat.

A military installation in Kurecik has been designated as the radar site, according to Turkish government officials. Kurecik in Malatya province lies some 700 kilometers (435 miles) west of the Iranian border.

In September, Pentagon spokesman Col. Dave Lapan said the United States hopes to have the radar deployed there by the end of the year.

Ahmadinejad said his government has conveyed Iran's displeasure to Turkish officials.

"We told our Turkish friends that it was not a correct job (decision) they did and that it's to their detriment," he said. "Such shields can't prevent the collapse of the Zionist regime."

The deployment in Turkey, the biggest Muslim voice in NATO, signals improving ties with Washington since the 2003 Iraq invasion. Turkey also clo-

sely works with U.S. forces in NATO operations in Afghanistan and Libya, though it is not directly involved in combat.

Last month, Turkey confirmed talks with the U.S. for possible deployment of Predator drones on its soil after the U.S. leaves Iraq. The U.S. currently shares drone surveillance data with Turkey to aid its fight against Kurdish rebels who have bases in Iraq. Turkish authorities did not specify if they want armed drones or just surveillance ones.

Turkey has built close economic ties with Iran and has been at odds with the United States on its stance toward Iran's nuclear program, arguing for a diplomatic solution to the standoff instead of sanctions.

But the agreement over the radar facility comes at a time when Turkey and Iran appear to be differing on their approach toward Syria, with Turkey becoming increasingly critical of Iranian ally Syria's brutal suppression of anti-regime protests. □

Le sort incertain des Syriens réfugiés en Turquie pour fuir la répression du régime de Bachar Al-Assad

Un colonel déserteur a disparu en Turquie avant de réapparaître en Syrie pour une repentance télévisée

Istanbul
Correspondant

Qu'est-il arrivé au colonel Hussein Harmouch? Une semaine après avoir brusquement disparu de Turquie, début septembre, cet officier de haut rang, déserteur de l'armée syrienne qui se présentait comme le leader du « mouvement des officiers libres », a refait surface à la télévision d'Etat de Damas, le 15 septembre. Amaigri, mal rasé, en chemise blanche, M. Harmouch s'y est livré à une confession publique grossièrement mise en scène.

Dans cette interview, l'ancien militaire nie avoir reçu l'ordre de tirer sur des civils, lorsque sa brigade se trouvait en opérations dans le nord de la Syrie. Il explique avoir été payé pour mentir et mettre en cause le régime de Bachar Al-Assad, accusant les différents groupes de l'opposition syrienne, et notamment les Frères musulmans. « Ils ont été les premiers à me contacter, affirme le colonel. Ils m'avaient promis des armes et de l'argent, mais ils ne me les ont jamais livrés. »

Pour l'un des exilés syriens qui l'ont côtoyé ces derniers mois en Turquie, les « aveux » de Hussein Harmouch « n'ont pu être extorqués que sous la menace et la torture physique ». Mais sa trajectoire reste parsemée de zones d'ombre.

Le jour de sa disparition, personne n'a rien vu. « Nous étions régulièrement en contact avec lui, mais un jour, il a subitement disparu. Nous sommes restés sans nouvelles jusqu'à ce qu'on le voie resurgir sur la

chaîne du régime », témoigne Mahmoud Moussa, le porte-parole du camp du Croissant-Rouge de Reyhanli, dans la province de Hatay, à la limite du territoire syrien. Invité à dîner en dehors du camp par un contact turc, M. Harmouch était allé au rendez-vous accompagné de deux autres anciens compagnons d'armes. Tous trois ont disparu.

Plusieurs activistes ont mis en cause la Turquie, l'accusant d'avoir « livré Harmouch » à la Syrie... Version démentie par Ankara. « C'est impossible », répond aussi Ahmad Hijazi, un déserteur qui se présente comme le nouveau chef du « mouvement des officiers libres » et se cache à la frontière turco-syrienne. « Ils ont vraisemblablement été enlevés par les services secrets syriens avec la complicité d'un groupe de Turcs alaouites pro-syriens. Mais sans que le gouvernement turc ne soit au courant. Celui-ci essaie de tirer l'affaire au clair », affirme-t-il.

Natif de la ville de Homs, un bastion de la contestation au régime d'Assad, Hussein Harmouch avait fait défection à la mi-juin, après vingt-deux ans de service dans l'armée syrienne. Avec plusieurs dizaines d'autres soldats, il avait gagné les camps informels situés dans la zone frontalière, proche de la province turque de Hatay.

M. Harmouch expliquait alors à la presse avoir désobéi aux ordres de ratisser les villages. « Trop c'est trop », disait-il en évoquant les instructions de tirer sur les civils dans la région de Jisr Al-Choghour dans le nord-ouest syrien, théâtre, selon

lui, de « massacres de grande ampleur ». « On nous a dit qu'il fallait capturer des gangs armés, mais je n'en ai vu aucun. Il n'y a pas eu de résistance dans les villes. J'ai vu des gens qui s'enfuyaient à pied dans les collines être tués d'une balle dans le dos », déclarait-il.

Depuis, le groupe de déserteurs s'était installé côté turc, pris en charge dans l'un des villages de tentes dressés à la frontière. M. Harmouch et ses hommes se croyaient à l'abri. « Cela montre que les opposants syriens ne sont pas du tout en sécurité ici », s'excl-

« Les opposants syriens ne sont pas en sécurité ici », s'écrit un réfugié en Turquie

me Nazir, un activiste réfugié dans la ville d'Antakya qui craint lui aussi d'être enlevé. La Turquie a officiellement ouvert ses portes aux Syriens en fuite depuis juin.

Le 21 septembre, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a annoncé avoir rompu tout contact avec le pouvoir syrien, après de vaines tentatives de négociations. « Notre territoire est ouvert à tous les opposants syriens », a-t-il déclaré, se prononçant pour la première fois en faveur de sanctions contre le régime. L'opposition se réunit régulièrement sur le sol turc.

Après une rencontre à Antalya, en mai, elle a fondé le Conseil national syrien (CNS), en août, une ins-

tance qui s'est élargie à Istanbul, samedi 1^{er} et dimanche 2 octobre.

Mais l'absence de protection par la Turquie lui vaut de nombreuses critiques parmi les réfugiés, établis côté turc depuis plus de trois mois. Au moins 7 000 personnes sont toujours hébergées dans les camps d'accueil, disséminés tout autour de la province de Hatay. Ceux-ci ont été installés, souvent à quelques centaines de mètres à peine de la frontière syrienne, contrevenant à une règle élémentaire en matière de protection des réfugiés. La frontière avec la Syrie reste ouverte et les collaborateurs du régime de Damas circulent sans peine dans la zone.

Les Syriens accueillis en Turquie sont considérés comme des « invités temporaires », et non pas des « réfugiés ». Aucune procédure de demande d'asile politique ne leur est proposée et les ONG internationales n'ont pas accès à ces camps, pas plus que la presse.

Le Haut-Commissariat aux réfugiés de l'ONU ferme les yeux. Certains Syriens, entrés illégalement, préfèrent se cacher dans des villages des environs. De plus, les militaires déserteurs sont isolés du reste des réfugiés. « Entre 400 et 500 d'entre eux sont regroupés dans un village de tentes à Altınözü », estime Nazir, l'un des coordinateurs du mouvement de résistance dans la région. Des proches du colonel Harmouch affirment avoir tenté de l'envoyer dans un pays tiers pour qu'il y dépose une demande d'asile. Sans succès. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



Erdogan n'exclut pas de relancer les discussions avec les rebelles kurdes

ANKARA, 3 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE PREMIER MINISTRE turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a déclaré qu'il n'excluait pas de relancer des discussions avec les rebelles kurdes, qui ont considérablement intensifié leurs attaques ces derniers mois, a rapporté lundi la presse turque.

Dans l'avion de retour d'une visite en Macédoine, M. Erdogan a confirmé qu'il y avait eu l'an dernier des discussions secrètes avec le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), en lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984.

"J'ai envoyé Hakan Fidan (le chef du renseignement, MIT). Il était mon émissaire spécial et il n'était pas seul", a-t-il expliqué à la presse.

Des enregistrements de ces discussions, tenues en 2010 à Oslo, ont été publiés dans la presse, provoquant des protestations de l'opposition. Les dirigeants turcs n'ont pas nié ces discussions.

M. Erdogan a ensuite déclaré que le dialogue avec le PKK, qui aurait été rompu après la multiplication récentes des attaques rebelles, pourrait reprendre, si nécessaire.

"Je n'ai pas été choqué par ces fuites sur ces discussions (...) Le MIT est fait pour ce genre de choses. Si nous l'estimons nécessaire, nous prendrons une décision et dirons aux camarades (du MIT) de faire le nécessaire", a poursuivi M. Erdogan.

L'annonce de contacts entre les autorités turques et le PKK a provoqué un choc en Turquie, le gouvernement ayant toujours rejeté officiellement l'éventualité de négocier avec les "terroristes" du PKK.

Depuis la mi-juin, plus de 120 personnes ont été tuées lors d'affrontements et d'attaques conduites par le PKK, principalement dans le sud-est du pays.

Calme précaire à Damas

► Las du régime, frustrés face à la situation économique, les Damasçènes, anxieux, se réfugient dans l'immobilisme.
 ► Il s'en faudrait de peu, cependant, pour qu'ils versent dans les réactions radicales.

DAMAS

Correspondance particulière

C'est la pagaille devant la station-service de la rue de Bagdad. Dans un concert de klaxons, des dizaines d'automobilistes attendent leur tour pour faire le plein. Toussotant derrière son volant, un chauffeur de taxi s'emporte : « Il n'y a plus moyen de trouver du diesel dans cette ville ! C'est à cause des trafiquants. Ils vident les réserves et profitent des subventions pour aller revendre leur mazout au prix fort au Liban ! » Alors que le mouvement de contestation contre le régime a embrasé le reste de la Syrie, seules les conséquences économiques de la crise semblent pour l'instant préoccuper les Damasçènes. Il faut dire que le prix des produits de base a connu ces derniers mois une augmentation pouvant atteindre 40 %.

Pour endiguer cette inflation galopante, le gouvernement vient de décréter un embargo sur la quasi-totalité des produits d'importation, espérant ainsi préserver ses stocks de devises étrangères et maintenir



À Damas, comme dans tout le pays, les conséquences économiques de la crise préoccupent la population. Le prix des produits de base a enregistré ces derniers mois une augmentation pouvant atteindre 40 %.

à flot une livre syrienne en chute libre. Les médias officiels ont présenté la mesure comme étant destinée « à soutenir l'industrie locale et favoriser la création de nouveaux emplois ».

Tous les Syriens le savent : la chaîne de télévision d'État Addounia est rompue à l'art de la désinformation. Après avoir attribué les violences qui ensanglantent le pays à d'introuvables « gangs armés », elle n'a ainsi pas eu peur d'affirmer très récemment que la chaîne qatarienne Al-Jazira, qui dénonce la répression, avait fabriqué dans ses studios de Doha des répliques en

carton-pâte de plusieurs grandes villes syriennes, dans le but d'y tourner de fausses images de manifestations...

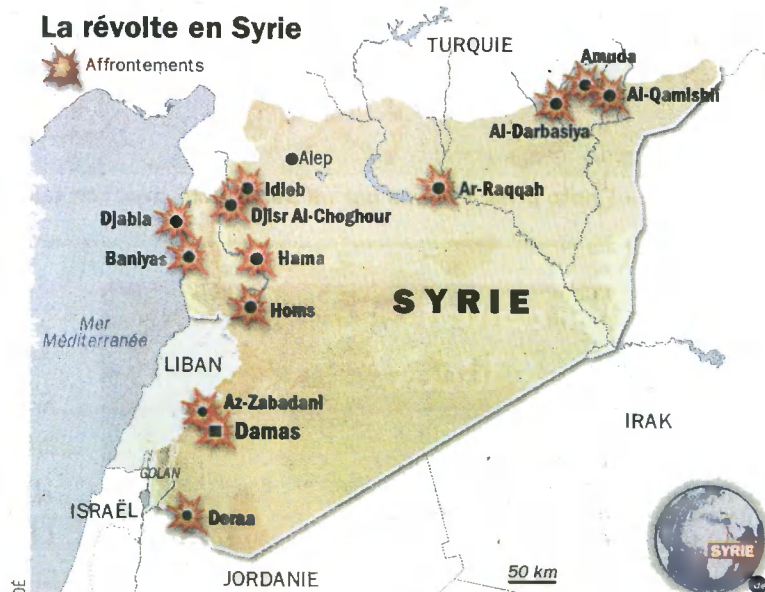
Reste que les habitants de Damas, toutes communautés confondues, ne s'aventurent pas à mettre en doute publiquement la version officielle, aussi délirante soit-elle. En privé, ils préfèrent se fier aux informations que leur communiquent

« Cet État est depuis trop longtemps gouverné par des truands. Si ça continue, je prendrai les armes, comme les gens de Homs. »

leurs proches restés en province.

Dans son salon de coiffure de la place Merjeh, au cœur de la capitale, Ahmed écoute d'une oreille distraite le présentateur de la même télévision annoncer le décès du chef d'état-major adjoint de l'armée. Officiellement, Bassam Najim Antakiya serait mort des suites d'une crise cardiaque. Officieusement, il aurait été tué par Asef Shawkat, beau-frère de Bachar Al Assad et généralissime des armées, qui l'aurait soupçonné de vouloir fomenter un coup d'État.

Centre névralgique du pouvoir, Damas est noyauté par des points



de contrôle de l'armée, dont les convois traversent quotidiennement les grands axes. Au club des officiers, on joue les fiers-à-bras et on n'hésite pas à faire monter le volume de la sono, qui, tous les week-ends, fait trembler les murs des habitations à plusieurs centaines de mètres à la ronde.

L'attitude de l'ancien ministre de la défense d'Hafez Al Assad, Moustapha Tlass, qu'un journaliste sud-américain a récemment rencontré, est symptomatique de l'état d'esprit du régime. Le général à la retraite l'a reçu dans sa somptueuse résidence, où des posters géants de la joueuse de tennis russe Maria Sharapova, en petite tenue, côtoient sans gêne apparente les photos d'une rencontre avec l'ayatollah Khomeyni. « On a buté tous ces terroristes, la révolution est finie », lui aurait lancé l'octogénaire, que l'on tient pour responsable du massacre de Hama en 1982, qui a fait plus de 20 000 morts.

Insolence ? aveuglement ? décadence de fin de règne ? Ces termes pourraient tout aussi bien qualifier l'attitude des classes huppées de la capitale, visiblement peu touchées par la crise économique. Tandis que sur la piste de danse on se déhanche sur des rythmes électro, Marouane claque son verre

sur le comptoir d'une boîte de nuit à 40 dollars (30 €) l'entrée : ●●●

●●● « Tu vois, ce que j'aime chez les Syriens, c'est que malgré les problèmes, on continue à faire la fête ! »

À Douma, en banlieue de Damas, où la répression de manifestations avait fait plusieurs morts, Mohammed et son père voient les choses différemment. Mohammed a perdu son travail, trop occupé à tenter de mobiliser les gens de son quartier pour qu'ils rejoignent le mouvement de contestation, sans grand succès. Il s'est depuis reconverti en chauffeur de taxi. « C'est ça, la Syrie de Bachar : un pays de chauffeurs de taxi ! Les vrais emplois, ceux qui rapportent, il les garde pour ses "potes" alaouites. »

« C'est ça, la Syrie de Bachar : un pays de chauffeurs de taxi ! Les vrais emplois, ceux qui rapportent, il les garde pour ses "potes" alaouites. »

Son père montre du doigt un lotissement rutilant destiné à abriter les officiers de l'armée issus de cette minorité chiite musulmane qui est

celle de la famille Al Assad. Un quartier construit selon lui sur des terrains dont la population locale aurait été dépossédée. « Le jour où le régime tombe, tous ces Alaouites vont déguerpir et rentrer dans leurs montagnes. Cet État est depuis trop longtemps gouverné par des truands. Si ça continue, je prendrai les armes, comme les gens de Homs », lance encore le vieil homme d'un ton glaçant.

Las du régime, frustrés face à la situation économique, les Damas-cènes anxieux se réfugient dans l'immobilisme. Il s'en faudrait de peu, cependant, pour qu'ils versent dans les réactions radicales. Dans la file à la station-service, un autre chauffeur de taxi tambourine sur son klaxon : « Je sais, moi, pourquoi il n'y a plus de diesel : le gouvernement fait des stocks pour l'hiver, voilà tout ! » Si c'est vrai, le régime a sans doute vu juste. À Damas, comme ailleurs en Syrie, tout en effet porte à croire que l'on s'apprête à passer un très long hiver.

JULIEN COUTURIER

la Croix

jeudi 6 octobre 2011

La Syrie sauve sa tête à l'ONU

► Chine et Russie opposent un veto à une résolution contre le régime de Bachar Al Assad.

Avec l'aide de la Chine et de la Russie, la Syrie a sauvé sa tête à l'ONU, malgré une répression qui a fait, selon l'ONU, plus de 2 700 morts depuis la mi-mars. Mardi, Pékin et Moscou, membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, ont opposé leur veto à une résolution qui menaçait le régime syrien de « mesures ciblées ».

Neuf pays ont voté pour la résolution initiée par le Royaume-Uni, la France, l'Allemagne et le Portugal, en coopération avec les États-Unis. L'Afrique du Sud, l'Inde, le Brésil et le Liban, échaudés par la résolution onusienne contre la Libye, destinée à « protéger les populations civiles », mais qui s'est transformée, sur le terrain, en une chasse contre les leaders du régime libyen, se sont abstenus.

« La France, avec ses partenaires,

a tout tenté pour proposer au Conseil de sécurité un texte fort mais qui puisse répondre aux préoccupations de tous. Certains ont décidé de mettre leur veto. C'est un triste jour pour le peuple syrien. C'est un triste jour pour le Conseil de sécurité », a déploré hier, dans un communiqué, le ministre français des affaires étrangères, Alain Juppé.

L'ambassadrice américaine à l'ONU, Susan Rice, a eu du mal à contenir sa colère : « Que je sois claire : les États-Unis pensent qu'il est grand temps que ce Conseil assume ses responsabilités et impose des mesures ciblées dures et un embargo sur les armes contre le régime du président syrien Bachar Al Assad. » Elle a implicitement condamné Moscou et Pékin qui « préféreraient vendre des armes au régime syrien ».

Pourtant, afin de rallier un maximum de pays, les mots de la résolution avaient été pesés : le texte parlant de « mesures ciblées » plutôt

que de « sanctions ». C'était sans compter sur les vieilles alliances. Du temps de l'Union soviétique, Moscou et Damas étaient déjà alliés. La Syrie est aujourd'hui un partenaire commercial de Moscou et l'un des derniers pays où les Russes ont encore un peu d'influence au

Moyen-Orient. L'ambassadeur russe à l'ONU, Vitaly Churkin, a dénoncé « une politique de changement de régime », tout en insistant sur le fait que Bachar Al Assad devait mettre en œuvre les réformes promises.

La Chine, partenaire économique de Damas, fait, elle aussi, face à une

contestation interne, et ne veut pas d'interférence extérieure dans ses affaires intérieures. La résolution « n'aidera pas à améliorer la situation », a simplement déclaré dans un communiqué Ma Zhaoxu, porte-parole de la diplomatie chinoise.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

Turquie: 150 arrestations de Kurdes

AFP

La police turque a arrêté aujourd'hui près de 150 personnes soupçonnées de liens avec les rebelles kurdes dans différentes provinces du pays, ont annoncé les médias. Dans plusieurs quartiers d'Istanbul, 90 personnes ont été arrêtées tôt mardi matin, selon l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Elles sont soupçonnées de liens avec le KCK (l'Union des communautés du Kurdistan), une association considérée comme la branche urbaine du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), le mouvement armé en lutte contre l'autorité centrale en Turquie. De nombreux militants du principal parti pro-kurde de Turquie, le Parti pour une société démocratique (BDP), figurent parmi les gens arrêtés à travers la Turquie.



La police dispose légalement de quatre jours pour interroger ses suspects, dont la plupart devraient être déférés devant un tribunal. A Diyarbakir, la plus grande ville du sud-est, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes, 31 arrestations ont été opérées, et 20 à Gaziantep, dans la même

région, selon la chaîne de télévision NTV.

Plus de 2500 Turcs d'origine kurde, dont cinq parlementaires, sont actuellement emprisonnés, accusés de liens avec la rébellion, qui a considérablement augmenté ses attaques contre les forces de sécurité ces derniers mois.

Selon les autorités turques, le KCK a été créé en 2005 par le PKK avec pour objectif la création d'un système politique kurde.

Cent cinquante militants et responsables politiques kurdes sont actuellement jugés à Diyarbakir où un vaste tribunal a été spécialement construit pour l'occasion. Des procès similaires se tiennent dans d'autres villes du pays.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, a pris les armes en 1984 pour la défense des droits des Kurdes, qui représentent environ 15 millions des 73 millions d'habitants de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts, selon les données officielles.

Des milliers de Kurdes défilent à Paris

Les militants venus de toute l'Europe ont réclamé la libération de leur leader Abdullah Öcalan, détenu par la Turquie depuis 1999.

Plusieurs milliers de Kurdes ont manifesté samedi à Paris pour réclamer la libération de leur leader indépendantiste Abdullah Öcalan, et dénoncer la politique de la Turquie et les arrestations en Europe de militants et d'opposants kurdes. Réunis derrière une immense banderole "Non au complot international contre Öcalan", plus de 3 000 personnes, Kurdes de Turquie, d'Allemagne et de France, ont défilé de Denfert-Rochereau à la place d'Italie en brandissant des portraits du fondateur du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, Abdullah Öcalan, en prison depuis 1999.

"Liberté, Identité", "Nous existons, donc nous résistons", "Autonomie démocratique pour le Kurdistan", pouvait-on également lire sur les petits panneaux distribués aux manifestants. Les organisateurs de la Coordination nationale Solidarité Kurdistan ont revendiqué 10 000 manifestants. Ils étaient 3 500, selon une source policière. "En assimilant la résistance kurde au terrorisme, la France et l'Union



européenne participent à la recrudescence de la violence, à la continuation de la guerre et à la non-résolution du conflit", ont estimé les organisateurs dans un communiqué.

Arrestations en France

"Les arrestations de militants et d'opposants kurdes en France et dans d'autres pays de l'Union européenne se multiplient et font écho à celles opérées en Turquie", ajoutent-ils. "La Turquie profite du Printemps arabe, de ce que le monde regarde ailleurs, pour écraser notre mouvement", estime Daniel Yaser, un Kurde de 42 ans venu manifester avec son fils de 8

ans. "Les arrestations quotidiennes, les bombardements au Kurdistan irakien continuent, et les Européens et les Américains ne réagissent pas", déplore-t-il.

La Turquie et la France ont signé vendredi, lors d'une visite du ministre de l'Intérieur Claude Guéant, un vaste accord de coopération sécuritaire, visant notamment à lutter contre les membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui ont repris le combat contre Ankara. Selon Paris, 70 membres du PKK ont été arrêtés sur le sol français en 2010 et 2011. Plus de 2 500 Turcs d'origine kurde, dont cinq parlementaires, sont actuellement emprisonnés, accusés de liens avec la rébellion, qui a considérablement augmenté ses attaques contre les forces de sécurité ces derniers mois.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, par les États-Unis et par l'Union européenne, a pris les armes en 1984 pour la défense des droits des Kurdes, qui représentent environ 15 millions des 73 millions d'habitants de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait au moins 45 000 morts, selon les données officielles.

Preparing for Peace in Turkey

The Erdogan government must not let the escalating insurgency distract it from addressing Kurdish civilians' underlying problems.

By HUGH POPE

Turkey's activism throughout the Arab Spring and its showy challenges to Israel have gotten Ankara plenty of international attention in the last several months. But closer to home, a disturbing trend is emerging. Since June, at least 150 people have been killed and hundreds injured in an escalation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) long-running insurgency.

It's nothing like the worst days of the conflict in the 1990s—not yet, at least. But the downward spiral already includes familiar kidnappings, tit-for-tat clashes between the PKK and Turkish forces, terrorist bombings, Turkish attacks on PKK bases across the Iraqi border, mass detentions of Turkish Kurds and flashes of ethnic strife between Turkish and Kurdish civilians in major cities.

The escalation is even more significant given that Turks and Kurds have come closer than ever to peace over the past two years. But Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been reluctant to spend enough of his enormous domestic political capital to tackle some of the underlying problems of his 15% Kurdish community. He has allowed a hardening of Turkish anti-terror laws, which have put 3,000 Kurd activists behind bars—not for any violent acts, but because they happen to share the nationalist goals of the PKK. He has not relaxed the ban on Kurds learning their mother tongue at primary and secondary school. Just as importantly, Mr. Erdogan has only briefly attempted to reeducate the Turkish-majority public, whose views have been distorted by a near-century of nationalist education and, in the past, anti-Kurd propaganda.

Mr. Erdogan has taken a more nationalist line since campaigning for the June elections, but he needs to find a way back to



AFP/Getty Images
Ankara must not let renewed violence distract from addressing Kurdish civilians' underlying problems.

the pragmatic negotiating position he adopted after his Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in 2001. In 2005-09, he developed a strategy that became known as the Democratic Opening. This ended torture in jails, gradually liberalized Kurdish-language broadcasting and higher education, and spread a new sense of normalcy and development to the impoverished, refugee-flooded cities in Turkey's Kurdish-majority south-east.

Not surprisingly, the whole country has benefited. Although these reforms were only steps on the road to fully recognizing Kurds' civil rights, Mr. Erdogan and the AKP have arguably done more for Turkey's Kurds than any previous government. Thanks to this, AKP consistently wins half of ethnic Kurds' votes.

In parallel, Mr. Erdogan allowed state representatives to negotiate secretly with the PKK. Meeting in Turkey, Europe and northern Iraq, they appeared to have reached agreement on essential parts of an eventual peace deal—including an end to the fighting, a gradual amnesty for insurgents, and perhaps better conditions for jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. A major step occurred in October 2009, when the government allowed eight PKK fighters and 26 PKK sympathizers, who had been living in a refugee camp in Iraq, back into Turkey.

But sadly, Mr. Erdogan and the AKP did not ready the Turkish public for the gesture. Instead of the quiet rapprochement the government had envisioned, tens of thousands of Turkish Kurds poured down to the Iraqi border two years ago, overjoyed at the prospect of an end to the conflict that had blighted their lives for generations. Turkish Kurd politicians overplayed their hand, feting the returning insurgents, who were wearing their distinctive guerrilla outfits. The scenes were broadcast nationwide and outraged an unprepared western Turkish opinion, which did not see Kurdish joy at the possibility of peace, but instead saw only cele-

brations at their own expense. Mr. Erdogan, meanwhile, saw his polls slipping among Turks and instead of standing fast and seizing control of the story, he dropped the initiative.

Tensions again shot up this year after June's national elections, when one of the 36 parliamentary deputies from Turkey's main legal Kurdish nationalist party (Peace and Democracy, or BDP) was stripped of his seat for a last-minute conviction under Turkey's catch-all antiterror laws. Five other newly elected BDP deputies, detained on similar charges, have been kept in jail since June. Amid Kurds' protests, BDP deputies boycotted parliamentary sessions over the summer and only returned to chambers this week. Less visibly, the secretive peace negotiations between the Turkish authorities and the PKK have broken down.

The PKK has clearly been the prime mover in the recently escalating violence, perhaps seeking to impress the Turkish authorities with its disruptive abilities and probably also trying to polarize sentiment to win back influence over Turkish Kurds. But the bloodshed is not helping. New pleas for an end to the fighting from Turkish Kurd civil society show that the vast majority of Kurds do not want to split off from Turkey but want to continue to live and prosper there. And the toll of 79 dead Turkish security forces since June underlines that any government attempt at a military solution will be costly and likely as fruitless as that of the 1990s.

BDP's decision to return to parliament is thus a critical opportunity for the AKP government and Turkish Kurds to find new ways to end the chronic conflict. It goes without saying that the PKK, the armed and dominant wing of the Turkish Kurd nationalist movement, must end its latest wave of terror attacks and commit to legal means of pursuing full rights for Turkish Kurds. Prime Minister Erdogan and the AKP will also have to consider why their recent attempts failed to lessen the mistrust between Turks and Turkish

Kurds.

The Turkish authorities must not fall into the PKK's trap and let the ongoing fighting distract them from pursuing a new constitution, legal system and education curriculum cleansed of ethnic discrimination. They should also change laws that have detained thousands of Turkish Kurds for what they think and not what they do, and engage the BDP far more.

To make this all work, Mr. Erdogan will have to use his domestic support to both convince Turkish Kurds of his sincerity and to persuade Turks that equal rights for all ethnicities will strengthen Turkey, not destroy it. Such an effort will take time and consistency, and may prove initially expensive in the polls. But there could be no bigger achievement than ending a conflict that has killed 30,000 peo-

ple and, by Mr. Erdogan's own estimate, cost \$300 billion since 1984. Forging a lasting peace with Kurds would truly yield a "Turkish model" of democracy worth emulating elsewhere in the region.

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THE HUFFINGTON POST October 10, 2011

Publication of Kurdish PSCs and Baghdad use of Delaying Tactics



Shwan Zulal
(Kurdish Blogger, political Risk, Oil and Gas in Kurdistan Region-Iraq)

It has been three weeks since the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) published the Kurdish PSCs (Production Sharing Contracts) and surprisingly there has been very little reaction from Baghdad and the media in general. Before the publication of the oil deals, commentators were speculating about the content of the contracts and allegation of corruption was rife. Nevertheless, so far little evidence of corruption charges pointed at the KRG or companies involved has emerged.

Due to the volume of the documents published it maybe some time before the Kurdish opposition or Baghdad make any comments on the content of the contracts. This may also be due to the ongoing talks between the political blocs to find a way forward on the range of issues crippling Iraqi government.

The publication of the contracts is a step forward for KRG in its transparency initiative. There have been debates within the KRG for some time now weather to publish the PSCs or not, but it appears that PM, Barham Slaih's efforts to open up the KRG has taken a step forward by successfully publishing all the contracts. The initiative is

also highly political and annuls Iraqi government's arguments over the transparency of the contracts and corruption allegations.

The Kurdish PSCs have adopted a regressive fiscal regime by having bonus payments at the commencement of the contract. While oil prices go higher and production starts, the incremental cash flow increases with it the contractors' profitability. There have been allegation of wrongdoing and misappropriate use of the bonuses by the government, but so far no evidence of this has merged.

It is not a secret that the Kurdish PSCs are on more favourable terms compared to TSCs on offer by Baghdad. Companies that entered PSCs with the KRG enjoy a higher rate of return and their windfall profit is significantly higher if the oil prices stay above \$70.

While Iraqi oil export is about to hit 3 million bopd- pre war production level- soon, Kurdistan region has not been able to increase oil production as fast, largely due to infrastructure limitation and partly because of the political impasse with Baghdad and geopolitics. The political deadlock with Baghdad has been eroding confidence and holding back many investors and companies which otherwise will be willing to invest in the region.

Kurdistan Region has deliberately given favourable terms to the oil companies to attract as many operators as possible and managed to do that successfully. Policy makers appear to believe that it is a price worth paying to gain a control over the vast untapped oil and gas reserves in the region. Kurdish control over its natural resources give the KRG the influence it needs to be listen to in Iraq and the region.

Kurdish PSCs typically gives the oil operators five years period for exploration and in some cases it can be extended by another 2 years. Some contracts have been awarded since 2007 and the companies involved have undertaken their obligation under the contracts by surveying the blocks and undertaking a drilling campaign at a considerable expense. Many have been successful and few suffered setbacks. A number of operators are ready or will be in a position to start production soon. However, due to lack of infrastructure and political disagreement with Baghdad, more delays expected.

The debate over a suitable oil and gas law is still raging and different versions of the law put forward by different blocs yet to be agreed upon. It is unlikely that the law will make it to the statute book any time soon. The Iraqi deputy PM for Energy matter, Hussain Shahrstani, continues to challenge the Kurdish PSCs and only today he was quoted by Reuters repeating the his stance on the Kurdish deals and declaring them illegal. He has also reiterated the exclusion of companies operating in

Kurdistan from Iraq.

While the political wrangling continues, oil companies are becoming nervous. Baghdad appears to be using a delaying tactics. Time is of the essence for the Kurdish oil contracts and the companies involved in the region will inevitable face challenges. The longer the stalemate drags on, operation and financing cost will mount. Although the exploration period can be extended for a limited period, smaller operators will find it difficult to raise funds in the future and may be forced to sell or relinquish part of their obligation under the contract at a cost. It is needless to say that under the terms of the contracts, large part of the cost is recoverable and the longer the disagreements carries on the KRG and Iraqi government will ultimately incur increased cost, as and when oil production starts.

Consolidation is already taking place as Vallares-Genel and DNO-RAK merger is concluding. Moreover, Gulf keystone petroleum has raised \$ 200m and is looking for a buyer to sell its 20 per cent interest in Akri-Bijeel block, possibly fund new pipelines exporting oil from its mega oil find. Larger oil companies like Hess has entered the region and Others are weighing their options and some are negotiating their contracts.

Kurdistan region's bold oil and gas strategy has so far proved effective by attracting investors and upstream operators however; exporting the hydrocarbon and building up the much-needed infrastructure will require a fresh approach. □

theguardian

OCTOBER 8, 2011

Syrian forces fire upon 50,000 funeral mourners, kill 5

ZEINA KARAM /Associated Press

BEIRUT — More than 50,000 mourners marched through the capital of Syria's Kurdish heartland Saturday in a funeral procession for one of the country's most prominent opposition figures a day after his assassination. Security forces fired into the crowds, killing five people, witnesses said.

The turnout was by far the largest in the Kurdish northeast since the start of the uprising against President Bashar Assad's autocratic regime seven months ago.

But it remains to be seen whether Friday's slaying of charismatic Kurdish opposition figure Mashaal Tammo will trigger a sustained, large-scale outpouring by Syria's Kurds that might bolster the wider uprising against Assad taking place across the nation.

Despite the gunfire, crowds pouring into the streets of Qamishli called on Assad to step down, chanting, "Leave! Leave!" — adopting the cry used by tens of thousands of other Syrian protesters during the uprising. Some demanded Assad's execution; others ripped down a statue of his late father and predecessor, Hafez Assad.

Tammo was killed Friday by masked men who burst into an apartment and gunned him down.

"All of Qamishli is out today. The funeral is turning into a massive protest," Kurdish activist and lawyer Mustafa Osso told The Associated Press by telephone. The grieving cries of fellow mourners could be heard in the background.

Members of the Kurdish ethnic minority — Syria's largest — have long complained of neglect and discrimination. Assad granted citizenship in April to stateless Kurds in eastern Syria in an attempt to address some of their grievances in the face of the swelling anti-government uprising that began the month before.

While many Kurds — who make up 15 percent of the country's 23 million people — have been taking part in the anti-government protests, Kurdish groups have yet to put their full weight behind the revolution.

If they do, their numbers could significantly reinforce the protest movement. Syria's security forces already have their hands full in trying to stamp out dissent across much of the rest of the country.

A Syrian opposition figure said many



Faris (L), the son of the Syrian Kurdish opposition Meshaal Tamo, who was assassinated in Syria the day before, gathers with supporters outside the Parliament of Kurdistan in the Iraqi Kurdish city of Arbil, in northern Iraq, on October 8, 2011. Credit: (SAFIN HAMED/AFP/Getty Images)

Syrians were pinning their hopes on the Kurds joining the revolution. But he said Arab-Kurdish ethnic sensitivities might keep them from doing that.

"There is a mutual lack of trust between the two sides; the Kurds are worried. They already feel excluded from the decision making process and they fear for the future," he said on condition of anonymity, because of the sensitivity of the subject

Outrage over Tammo's killing spilled over the border into Iraq's Kurdish region.

Syrian Kurdish opposition parties based in Iraq's self-ruled northern Kurdish region accused the Syrian government of killing Tammo and called for international intervention.

"The assassination of Mashaal Tammo is evidence of the barbaric nature of the Syrian regime," the spokesman of the Syrian Left Party, Nooreddin Othman, told the AP in a phone interview.

Tammo's slaying was also significant because he was the most prominent person to fall victim to a recent string of targeted killings that has raised concern Syria may be sliding toward civil war.

Other signs of growing disorder include fierce gunbattles between army units and fellow soldiers who have defected to join the opposition. There are also signs that some of the protesters, who have remained largely peaceful, are taking up arms to defend themselves from regime attacks.

The crowd of mourners in Qamishli Saturday swelled to more than 50,000 people, Osso said.

Security forces fired on the crowd, killing five mourners and wounding several

others, he said.

An activist network called the Local Coordination Committees also said five people were killed and several others were injured in the gunfire. The group said the city has been completely shut down after a general strike was declared to mourn Tammo.

Security forces also fired on a funeral procession in the Damascus suburb of Douma for three people killed a day earlier, activists said. A 14-year-old boy was killed and 10 other people were wounded, according to the Local Coordination Committees and the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Tammo, a 53-year-old former political prisoner, was a spokesman for the Kurdish Future Party. He was also a member of the executive committee of the newly formed Syrian National Council, a broad-based front bringing together opposition figures inside and outside the country in an attempt to unify the deeply fragmented dissident movement.

A vocal regime opponent, Tammo had been instrumental in organizing anti-government protests in Qamishli in recent months.

It was not clear who carried out the killing. Some in the opposition said the regime was responsible for his assassination. Osso said Tammo had no enemies and blamed security forces, but others noted there was a power struggle between him and rival Kurdish parties.

State-run news agency SANA reported his killing by "four masked gunmen in a black car," calling him a "national" opposition leader.

Syria, Iraq and the Shiites

Unrest in Syria is unlikely to cause sectarian problems in Iraq

By Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi

Although the Iraqi government recently reversed its stance of solidarity with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad amid the ongoing unrest in Syria and is now calling on Assad to step down from power, it is still true that many Iraqi Shiites deeply fear the possible consequences of an overthrow of the Alawite-dominated Baathist regime.

Specifically, their concern is that hardline Sunnis could come to power in Damascus and embolden fellow Sunnis in Iraq, potentially reigniting sectarian violence and civil war. As one anonymous, senior Iraqi Shiite politician put it to Reuters, Change in Syria will cause major problems for Iraq. They [Sunnis] will incite the western [Sunni] part of Iraq.

Are these anxieties justified? In a word: No. To understand why, it is necessary to examine the question of what was primarily responsible for the dramatic drop in violence in Iraq from 2007 onward. The prevailing orthodoxy affirms that the increase in the number of U.S. troops and use of counter-insurgency strategy as part of the surge were the key factor behind the weakening of Al Qaeda and Sunni turn against the militant group.

However, such reasoning imputes far too much game-changing power to the American military and belittles the importance of local Iraqi actors. In fact, Sunni insurgents began to turn against hardline militants fighting coalition troops and the central government in Baghdad largely because by the end of 2006 they increasingly realized they

were losing the sectarian civil war focused in and around the capital against the Shiite militias, which were at the time being actively protected by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Indeed, it is a truism that a key cause behind the swelling of the ranks of the Sunni insurgency after 2003 was the de facto transformation of the de-Baathification process into de-Sunnification, most notably in the disbanding of the old, Sunni-dominated Iraqi army by decree of Paul Bremer, former U.S.

administrator to Iraq, in the Coalition Provisional Authority. Of course, one can easily point the finger in hindsight solely at Bremer for this grave mistake, but, as author Patrick Cockburn has noted, the fact is that Bremer was backed and encouraged in his decision by the Shiite and Kurdish politicians who were eager to fill the ranks of the new Iraqi security forces with their own forces.

In the case of the Kurds, such a desire was more understandable as the Peshmarga forces had played an active role in assisting the coalition forces during the invasion that deposed Saddam Hussein's regime, and accordingly wanted proper representation in the new Iraqi security forces. Even today, the proportion of Kurds in the army is less than the percentage of Kurds in the Iraqi population as a whole.

Nevertheless, de-Sunnification alone cannot account for the manner in which the Sunni insurgency gained recruits and strength. In any war, no side commences hostilities if it does not feel there is a good chance

of defeating the enemy. In this case, a key premise behind the Sunni insurgency was that the Sunnis were actually in the majority and could either subdue or wipe out the Shiites in a sectarian civil war.

The Sunni-majority delusion was well illustrated before the invasion when Sunni Arabs frequently accused outside demographers of under-representing their numbers. Those accusations were not mere rhetoric. The propagation of this false meme among Sunnis was partly the result of propaganda put out by Saddam's regime, and partly the consequence of a sense of disconnect from the majority Shiite population, created by 70 years of Sunni minority rule.

Having launched repeated mass casualty attacks on the Shiites, the Sunni insurgency was able to provoke the Shiite militias into retaliation, giving rise to the full-blown sectarian civil war in 2006 centered on Baghdad. The main aim of both sides was to seize control of the mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad and cleanse them of the rival sect.

Owing to numerical advantage and backing from the central government, the Shiite militias largely succeeded in cleansing the mixed neighborhoods of Sunnis, forcing the Sunni insurgents to retreat into the few remaining Sunni-majority strongholds of the city, like Yarmuk, or flee the country to Jordan and Syria. In the latter two countries, investigative journalist and reporter Nir Rosen interviewed numerous Sunni insurgent leaders who admitted that they had lost the battle against the Shiite militias in Baghdad.

So, the sectarian civil war subsided throughout 2007 and 2008 for the same reason wars generally end: One side had mostly lost its will to fight. Fearing further losses at the hands of the Shiite militias and central government, large numbers of Sunnis realized around the time the surge began that the only feasible option was to cooperate with coalition troops and Iraqi security forces against the likes of Al Qaeda, hence the rapid strengthening of the Anbar Awakening and birth of the Sons of Iraq movement.

Maliki would go on to reel in the Shiite militias such as Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, realizing that the remaining Sunni insurgency posed no existential threat to his government and that he could consolidate his power base by cracking down on the Shiite militants based in the south and around Baghdad.

In short, the point is that the risk of another sectarian civil war in Iraq on account of turmoil in Syria is very low indeed, as the Sunni Arabs in Iraq today generally appreciate that they are not in the majority and that they cannot afford to take on the Shiites in another conflict, having witnessed the disastrous outcome for the Sunnis of the sectarian civil war in 2006. For most of Iraq's Sunnis, the concern is not to reclaim the old status quo of minority rule, but to survive and adapt to the fact that the political process in Iraq today inevitably entails a Shiite majority.

Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi is a student at Brasenose College, Oxford University, and an intern at the Middle East Forum.

Syrie: cinq morts aux funérailles d'un opposant kurde assassiné

par Associated Press

BEIRUT - Les forces de sécurité syriennes ont ouvert le feu samedi sur les dizaines de milliers de personnes descendues dans les rues pour les funérailles du chef de l'opposition kurde Mechaal Tammo, à Qamichli (nord-est), faisant au moins cinq morts, selon des militants syriens.

Mechaal Tammo a été tué vendredi par des hommes armés et masqués qui ont fait irruption chez lui à Qamichli. Agé de 53 ans, cet ancien prisonnier politique était l'une des principales figures de l'opposition syrienne et un responsable de l'opposition kurde populaire et respecté. Porte-parole du Mouvement Avenir kurde, il était aussi membre du comité directeur du Conseil national syrien récemment formé pour tenter d'unir une opposition très fragmentée.

Son assassinat est le dernier d'une série de meurtres ciblés qui font craindre que la Syrie ne bascule dans la guerre civile, après sept mois de contestation contre le président Bachar el-Assad qui se sont soldés par près de 3.000 morts dans la répression, selon le Haut Commissariat aux droits de l'Homme des Nations unies. Plusieurs universitaires et médecins ont été tués par balles le mois dernier, principalement dans le centre et le nord du pays.

"Tout Qamichli est dans la rue aujourd'hui. Les funérailles se transforment en une manifestation de masse", a rapporté samedi à l'Associated Press le militant et avocat kurde Mustafa Osso, joint par téléphone. Il a estimé à plus de 50.000 le nombre de personnes qui ont



suivi le cortège funèbre en appelant Bachar el-Assad à quitter le pouvoir aux cris de "Dégage, dégage" et même "Exécution du président".

Les forces de sécurité ont ouvert le feu lors de la procession, tuant cinq personnes et en blessant plusieurs autres, a-t-il ajouté.

Les Comités locaux de coordination, un groupe qui organise et rend compte de la contestation, ont également fait état de cinq morts et plusieurs blessés. Ils ont précisé que des heurts avaient éclaté entre les forces de sécurité et des manifestants qui tentaient de déboulonner une statue du défunt président Hafez el-Assad, père de l'actuel chef de l'Etat.

Mechaal Tammo, qui avait participé à l'organisation des manifestations antigouvernementales, a été tué par "quatre hommes masqués en voiture noire", selon l'agence de presse officielle SANA, mais si Mustafa Osso assure qu'il n'avait pas d'ennemis et impute l'assassinat aux forces de sécurité, d'autres soulignent qu'il y avait une lutte de pouvoir entre lui et d'autres partis kurdes.

La mort de cet opposant pourrait

entraîner des manifestations violentes dans la région. Les Kurdes, qui forment la plus forte minorité ethnique de Syrie, soit environ 15% des 23 millions d'habitants du pays, se plaignent depuis longtemps d'être victimes de discrimination de la part de Damas. Bachar el-Assad a d'ailleurs accordé la nationalité syrienne aux Kurdes apatrides de l'est du pays en avril pour tenter d'apaiser les tensions.

La mort de Tammo a également suscité l'indignation de l'autre côté de la frontière, dans la région autonome kurde du nord de l'Irak. Des partis kurdes syriens y ont accusé Damas d'avoir tué l'opposant et ont appelé à une intervention internationale. "L'assassinat de Mechaal Tammo est la preuve de la nature barbare du régime syrien", a estimé le porte-parole du Parti syrien de gauche, Nouredine Othman, dans un entretien téléphonique à l'AP.

Washington a appelé Assad à démissionner plutôt que de continuer à mener son pays "sur cette très dangereuse pente". La France a exprimé son soutien au "peuple syrien, engagé dans une lutte pacifique et courageuse pour construire une Syrie libre et démocratique", et l'Allemagne a prévenu que "la détermination de l'opposition ne sera pas écrasée par la violence et la pression internationale ne diminuera pas, elle augmentera".

Selon des militants, les forces de sécurité ont aussi ouvert le feu sur une procession funéraire pour trois personnes tuées la veille, à Douma, un faubourg de Damas. Dix personnes ont été blessées, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme, basé à Londres.

PKK : cinq personnes arrêtées à Bordeaux mises en examen à Paris, dont quatre écrouées

PARIS, 15 octobre 2011 (AFP)

CINQ PERSONNES interpellées mardi à Bordeaux lors d'une opération menée dans les milieux proches du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été mises en examen samedi à Paris, et quatre d'entre elles ont été écrouées, a-t-on appris de sources proches du dossier.

Au total, sept personnes avaient été arrêtées après une perquisition au sein de l'Association franco-kurde de Bordeaux, au cours de laquelle a été découverte la comptabilité d'une collecte de fonds et son transfert au PKK. Deux ont été libérées à l'issue de leur garde-à-vue.

Les cinq autres ont été mises en examen samedi par un juge antiterroriste de Paris pour violences volontaires, association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste, financement du terrorisme et tentative d'extorsion, a-t-on précisé de même source.

Quatre d'entre elles ont été mises en détention provisoire samedi soir, tandis que la cinquième a été placée sous contrôle judiciaire, a-t-on ajouté.

L'Association franco-kurde de Bordeaux a également été mise en examen en tant que personne morale.

La perquisition avait eu lieu dans le cadre d'une enquête ouverte par le parquet de Paris et confiée à la Direction centrale du renseignement intérieur (DCRI), à la suite d'une plainte pour extorsion déposée début 2009 par une personne qui "refusait de payer l'impôt révolutionnaire PKK" et qui a ensuite été victime de violences.

Prévue de longue date, l'opération a eu lieu quatre jours après la signature, vendredi 7 octobre à Ankara, d'un vaste accord de coopération entre la Turquie et la France visant notamment à lutter contre les membres du PKK.

Ce groupe figure sur la liste des mouvements terroristes de bon nombre de pays et de l'Union européenne.

La «sale guerre» de la Turquie menée contre les Kurdes



Ariane Bonzon

Pressant la Turquie de reconnaître le génocide arménien, Nicolas Sarkozy s'est vu rappeler le passé colonial de la France en Algérie par le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères. Or Ankara mène aussi une «sale guerre» contre les quelque quinze millions de Kurdes qui vivent dans le pays et, à bien des égards, la politique du gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan ne diffère pas beaucoup de celle des précédents gouvernements turcs.

C'est, également, une «guerre qui ne dit pas son nom». Comme la démocratie française dans les années 1950-60, la démocratie turque est gangrenée par le problème kurde depuis 1984, depuis que le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a pris les armes.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, le PKK combat pour obtenir plus de droits culturels et politiques pour les quelque 15 millions de Kurdes (sur 73 millions d'habitants) qui vivent en Turquie ainsi que pour obtenir l'autonomie du sud-est du pays où la majorité d'entre eux résident.

Selon Servet Mutlu, professeur à l'Université d'Ankara, le coût de cette guerre aurait avoisiné les 65 milliards d'euros pour la période allant de 1984 à 2005. C'est «une somme substantielle pour une économie en développement», de quoi construire 6.000 kilomètres d'autoroutes, précise Servet Mutlu.

Aucun gouvernement n'est encore parvenu à trouver une solution. L'actuel Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, au pouvoir depuis 2002, semble aussi impuissant que les précédents alors même qu'il possède désormais autorité sur l'armée, laquelle avait auparavant fait de la question kurde son «domaine privilégié».

Pis: ce conflit, 45.000 morts à ce jour, connaît un regain de violence depuis le début de l'été. Les attaques contre des bâtiments officiels, ainsi que les affrontements meurtriers et les enlèvements de fonctionnaires, d'instituteurs en par-



Une manifestation pro-Ocalan à Istanbul, en mai 2011. REUTERS/Mura d Sezer

ticulier conduits par le PKK se sont multipliés depuis la mi-juin.

«Une résolution pour faire la guerre»

Depuis six mois, la police a procédé à l'arrestation de plus de 4.000 Turcs d'origine kurde -dont plusieurs parlementaires- emprisonnés, accusés de liens avec la rébellion. Une nouvelle escalade se dessine: le Parlement turc vient d'approuver le renouvellement pour un an de l'autorisation de procéder à des raids aériens contre les caches du PKK en territoire irakien. Et le gouvernement turc menace de lancer une opération terrestre à l'intérieur de l'Irak ainsi qu'il l'avait fait pendant huit jours en 2008. «Ce n'est pas une plaisanterie. Il s'agit d'une résolution pour faire la guerre», a souligné Hasip Kaplan, un député du parti pro-kurde, le BDP.

«Nous sommes revenus 20 ans en arrière, nos ennemis à l'intérieur du pays comme à l'étranger peuvent de nouveau jouer la carte kurde contre nous», déplore un analyste turc. «Exit Syria, Iran and Israël. PKK in» titrait ces jours-ci un éditorial du Milliyet (opposition, centre gauche). Résumé: c'en est fini du rapprochement de la Turquie avec l'Iran et la Syrie, et de la coopération stratégique avec Israël; on s'est mis à dos ces trois pays et à la place voilà le PKK qui revient en force.

Kadri Gürsel, l'auteur de cet éditorial sait de quoi il parle quand il évoque un retour en arrière. Alors journaliste à l'AFP, il avait été kidnappé par le PKK en 1995. A l'époque, Israël et la Turquie n'avaient pas encore signé les accords de coopération militaire de 1996, la Syrie abritait le chef du PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, tandis que l'Iran était dans la ligne de mire turque.

L'«ouverture kurde» de 2009 semble n'être plus qu'un lointain souvenir. De sa prison, sur l'île d'Imrali, Abdullah Ocalan avait pourtant établi une feuille de route, amendée puis finalement acceptée par le PKK. Plusieurs rounds de négociations entre le service de renseignement turc, le MIT, et le commandement du PKK ont eu lieu.

Mais selon l'universitaire turc d'origine kurde, Mesut Yegem, qui a eu accès aux minutes de ces négociations, les deux parties n'étaient pas parvenues à un accord en bonne et due forme; on ne peut donc accuser le Premier ministre turc d'avoir refusé de le signer, comme le suggèrent certains responsables kurdes.

Empêcher la représentation nationale

En fait, le PKK s'est toujours méfié des politiques d'ouverture et n'était en vérité guère enclin à abandonner les armes, malgré ce qu'annonçaient alors les médias turcs. Pour l'avoir écrit en 2009 dans un hebdomadaire indépendant, Express, le journaliste turc d'origine kurde Irfan Aktan vient d'être condamné à 16 mois de prison.

«En 2011, le PKK garde toujours la même position «pas de solution sans la lutte». Comme l'indique un militant, que nous avons interviewé pour cet article, il est hors de question de rendre les armes «avant que les droits kurdes ne soient garantis par la Constitution». C'est du moins, le sens de toutes les déclarations de la direction de l'organisation à Kandil (Irak du nord), chaque mois, depuis trois ans», argumente Irfan Aktan, qui connaît très bien le terrain kurde.

Si le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan a bien accordé quelques droits culturels à la minorité kurde, il s'est en revanche bien gardé de toucher à la loi électorale, et en particulier au seuil des 10% que tout parti doit atteindre au niveau national pour être représenté au Parlement.

Ce seuil inaccessible pour le parti prokurde du BDP (même s'il remporte bien plus que 50% des suffrages dans les régions kurdes) oblige les députés kurdes à se présenter sous l'étiquette d'indépendants et constitue une entrave sérieuse à la représentation politique de ce groupe minoritaire. 36 candidats kurdes du BDP ont été élus lors des élections de juin dernier, ce qui constitue un beau succès. Mais le maintien de cette barre des 10% garantit au Parti de la Justice et du développement (AKP) au pouvoir de remporter la mise et «présenter des candidats kurdes soigneusement triés sur le volet par Recep Tayyip Erdogan lui-même. Ainsi, les 70 députés kurdes que compterait l'AKP ne se distinguent pas par leur combativité en faveur des droits des Kurdes!», avance l'universitaire Mesut Yegem.

L'illusion de la «fraternité»

La stratégie de l'AKP consiste plutôt à jouer la carte de la fraternité musulmane sunnite. Ce qui explique son relatif succès électoral auprès de la classe moyenne et aisée des Kurdes pieux. Le gouvernement turc favorise financièrement ces derniers comme il le fait pour la classe moyenne turque pieuse. Les Kurdes les plus défavorisés sont quant à eux attirés par les services de santé gratuits ou par les distributions de charbon auxquels procèdent les représentants locaux de l'AKP.

«Les rapports entre l'AKP et les Kurdes démunis sont menés à travers les communautés religieuses. Puisque les communautés jouent ce rôle d'intermédiaire, on a l'illusion que les Kurdes sont séduits par le discours de «fraternité musulmane». Alors que dans le fond, il ne s'agit pas d'islam, mais de la nécessité pour les plus pauvres de se ranger du côté des communautés et du gouvernement par misère et désespoir», décrypte Irfan Aktan.

Dans le même temps, le gouvernement et les préfectures empêchent le mouvement d'opposition kurde d'intervenir légalement auprès des Kurdes défavorisés. Exemple: jusqu'à il y a peu, l'association kurde de lutte contre la

pauvreté de Sarmasik, située à Diyarbakir, était financièrement soutenue par la mairie BDP de Diyarbakir. Alors que cette association essayait d'aider 24.000 familles qui se trouvaient sous le seuil de pauvreté, la préfecture a interdit à la mairie de la financer. Par ce biais, le gouvernement AKP renforce le rôle des communautés religieuses.

Quels que soient les débordements et les excès du PKK, celui-ci est toujours largement soutenu par la population. «La grande erreur du gouvernement AKP, comme des gouvernements précédents, c'est de croire qu'il peut détacher le peuple du PKK», déplore Mesut Yegem. Le BDP constitue, de fait, la branche politique du PKK et c'est en tant que telle qu'il remporte des suffrages.

Car il n'est pas une famille kurde qui n'ait un enfant, cousin ou neveu parti rejoindre les rebelles du PKK. Et tous les conscrits kurdes racontent l'angoisse qu'ils éprouvent quand ils partent patrouiller dans les montagnes: «C'était notre cauchemar à nous tous! Qu'au cours d'une patrouille dans les montagnes, nous nous retrouvions face à notre frère ou à notre cousin et que nous devions tirer sur lui», se souvient Mustafa, dont le cousin a quitté la ville d'Hakkari, il y a quelques années, pour rejoindre les rangs du PKK et dont il n'a plus de nouvelles.

«Déconnecter» la population du PKK paraît d'autant plus difficile, selon Mesut Yegem, que «désormais, les Kurdes sont beaucoup moins enclins à quitter le sud-est de la Turquie; ils veulent rester «chez eux»». Les ratonnades contre les Kurdes se sont multipliées ces derniers mois, à la suite de la reprise des attentats du PKK et de la mort de plusieurs dizaines de jeunes conscrits turcs.

«Ces ratonnades ont lieu dans les quartiers ou les villes de l'ouest du pays où les Kurdes venus récemment s'y installer sont minoritaires dans un environnement de plus en plus nationaliste», précise Mesut Yegem.

Le geste de Guéant

Ahmet, un jeune étudiant francophone de père kurde et de mère turque vit à Istanbul. Il est encore sous le coup de ce qu'il a découvert sur la page Facebook de l'un de ses copains:

«Ce copain qui ne connaît pas l'origine de mon père a écrit qu'il regrettait qu'Hitler et ses chambres à gaz ne soient plus là pour y enfermer les Kurdes. Voilà

aussi pourquoi Erdogan manque de courage sur la question kurde, il sait qu'il risque de perdre le soutien des nationalistes.»

Vendredi, au moment même où d'Erevan Nicolas Sarkozy sommait la Turquie de reconnaître le génocide arménien, Claude Guéant était en visite à Ankara en soutien au gouvernement turc. Une situation paradoxale qui ne doit rien au hasard. Afin de désamorcer la polémique autour des déclarations du président de la République, et d'éviter des mesures de rétorsion économique contre les hommes d'affaires français, le ministre de l'Intérieur devait donner quelques gages à Ankara. Ce qui fut fait, en signant un vaste accord de coopération sécuritaire, a déclaré le ministre français qui a fait part de la «détermination totale, indéfectible de la France à lutter aux côtés de la Turquie contre le terrorisme du PKK».

Malgré ce geste français de bonne volonté, la réplique turque aux propos de Nicolas Sarkozy a été cinglante: «Ceux qui disent à la Turquie de se réconcilier avec son passé doivent d'abord se regarder dans un miroir», a asséné Ahmet Davutoglu, le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, faisant référence au passé colonial de la France en Algérie.

Tandis que des centaines de Kurdes vivant en France ont organisé à Paris une manifestation pour protester contre l'accord signé la veille à Ankara et dénoncer les nombreuses arrestations -plus de 70 depuis 2010- de militants kurdes chargés de récolter des fonds pour le PKK, parfois sous la menace. Comme le faisaient de nombreux Algériens vivant en France dans les années 1950 pour le FLN.

Ariane Bonzon (Journaliste, spécialiste de politique étrangère. Elle a été en poste à Istanbul, Jérusalem et Johannesburg. Vit et travaille actuellement en la France et la Turquie. Dernier ouvrage paru: «Dialogue sur le tabou arménien», d'Ahmet Insel et Michel Marian, entretien d'Ariane Bonzon, ed. Liana Levi, 2009.)

Syrian activists galvanized by killing of Kurdish leader

The killing of Mashaal Tammo, a Kurdish member of the new Syrian National Council who called for unity across ethnic and religious groups, may help galvanize Syrian activists seeking to topple President Assad.

By Scott Peterson
Istanbul, Turkey

More than half a year into a popular uprising against the rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that has already claimed 2,900 lives, Syrian activists say that the killing of one more at the hands of regime assassins is invigorating their cause.

Tens of thousands of Syrians protested the death on Friday of Mashaal Tammo, a member of the newly formed opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) and a leader of the Kurdish Future Party. The momentum may help galvanize Syrians who seek to topple Mr. Assad, following in the steps of the Arab people-power revolutions that have ousted dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

"His blood will be like the light of a candle for the Syrian revolution," Abdelbasset Hamo told mourners at an Istanbul memorial ceremony via Skype from Germany, noting that Tammo's given name means "flame" in Arabic. "He is a symbol for all people of the Syrian revolution."

The regime has warned that Assad's fall could prompt civil war between Syria's diverse ethnic and religious groups. But activists say they are unit-

ed across such lines and the death of Tammo – a proponent for such unity – will only strengthen their cause, in part by impelling even more of Tammo's fellow Kurds to join the opposition.

"By killing him, [the regime] will put oil on the fire, because Kurds are from the [northeast] border to the sea ... they will rise up and be very strong," said one university student activist who left Tammo's hometown of Qamishli for Turkey two weeks ago, and asked not to be named.

"He was an important person in Syria because he tried to combine all religious and ethnic groups," said the student, who knew Tammo and studied with his son. "He said: 'We are just Syrians, only Syrians; we must respect each other.'"

But Omar Shawaf, an exiled Syrian activist at the Istanbul ceremony, said the Assad regime has tried to prevent such unity.

"The regime has tried to play this game, so ethnic groups would fight each other," said Mr. Shawaf at the ceremony Saturday, where echoes of the killing in Syria's remote northeastern corner could be felt.

"This dirty regime will not keep quiet until they destroy the country and create a civil war," said Shawaf, as exiled Syrian activists sat quietly in their grief.

The killing of Tammo, a vocal critic of Assad, prompted mass protests across Syria on Sunday. Opposition groups said five people died during the funeral in Qamishli on Saturday, with handfuls more since then in daily protests across the country.

Widening regional



Syrian anti-government activists display wreathes and framed photos of slain Mashaal Tammo, a former political prisoner and a spokesman for the Kurdish Future Party who was the latest in a string of targeted killings in Syria, during a protest next to Egyptian army soldiers securing the surrounding area of the Syrian embassy in Cairo on Tuesday.(AP)

anger against Syria

The high-profile killing took place as Syria is coming under greater pressure from neighboring Turkey and Iraq, as well as from the European Union and even Russia. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is expected to announce some type of unilateral sanctions against Syria this week.

Turkey condemned the "heinous assassination" of Tammo and targeting of opposition figures, in a statement: "Turkey expects the Syrian administration to realize as soon as possible that acts of violence designed to suppress the the opposition in Syria, which strives to express its views through peaceful means, cannot turn back the course of history."

Turkey has hosted opposition meetings, and last week Istanbul was the scene for the creation of the umbrella SNC, which unified a host of regime opponents. The SNC was recognized over the weekend by its people-power brethren in Libya, the Transitional National Council, which ousted Muammar al-Qaddafi.

Such cooperation has angered Damascus, which stated over the weekend: "We will take tough measures against any state which recognizes this illegitimate council."

The killing of SNC member Tammo, however, has widened anger against the Assad regime.

The premier of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region, Barham Salih, sent out a tweet saying Tammo was a "democratic activist ... murdered by Syrian security. Lesson from Iraq: repression cannot defeat free will of Syria's people."

In a subsequent tweet, Mr. Salih noted on Monday that he met Tammo's son Faris, an "impressive young lawyer, determined to pursue his father's quest for liberty."

The Qamishli student activist who studied with Faris says that the murder must be understood in the context of Syria's increasing international isolation.

"This killing shows they are so desperate they will do anything now, because all coun-

tries of the United Nations know this [Syrian] regime will go," said the activist, decrying the Russian and Chinese veto last week of a UN Security Council resolution against Syria as out of synch with values that have increasingly resonated across the Arab world this year.

Even Russia and China, which blocked the resolution that would have led to only the "consideration" of sanctions if Syria did not ease its lethal crackdown, have since urged Syria to quickly implement promised reforms.

"There is trade between them, but now is the time of humanity," says the student activist. "We should be human now, because every day a lot of people are killed over there [in Syria]."

Pro-regime militiamen blamed for death

Syrians from Qamishli said that Tammo was murdered by a three-man hit team of the pro-regime militia known as the shabiha. Tammo had foiled an assassination attempt the day before, Syrian activists say, and another one a month ago.

Tammo had long been on the Syrian government's watch list, and has spent three years in prison for political opposition.

He was shot dead at home on Friday; Syrian activists who spoke with him less than an hour before his death say he told them he feared that he would soon be killed.

The Syrian state news agency, SANA, claimed that Tammo was killed by an "armed terrorist group," the same description the government applies to anti-regime activists who have demonstrated in cities across the country since March.

SANA reported on Monday that Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said Tammo was "assassinated ... because he rejected the calls for foreign interference." The killing, he claimed, aimed to "ignite sedition" in a province otherwise known for tolerance.

Regional and European officials blamed the Assad government.

"Mr. Tammo's death follows other targeted assassinations in the past days, which are totally

unacceptable," EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said in a statement. "These appalling crimes further add to the EU's grave concern over the situation in Syria."

New strategies for a dogged opposition

Despite the high price paid by Syrians like Tammo, and the Assad family's track record of brutality over more than 40 years in power – tens of thousands of opponents and Islamists were killed in the 1980s alone – activists still take to the streets.

"It's unbelievable what people are willing to do," says Ryan Gerety, an American who worked with a Syrian human rights lawyer in Damascus from March until three weeks ago. The opposition is very well organized, she says, and convinced that victory will come – one day.

"Now people are thinking more about strategies," says Ms. Gerety. "A lot of people thought it was enough to go to the street, and it's not."

Now activists are making their presence felt in the capital, for

example by dyeing the water in fountains red to mark the blood of pro-democracy martyrs; by setting up speakers playing pro-revolution songs in public places; and spray painting anti-regime messages.

"When I was there, I felt so happy," says the Syrian student activist who recently left Qamishli for Istanbul. "If someone was killed in front of me, I was not afraid, because we were all there, on the same path. But here I feel more afraid because I don't know what is happening. Here we wait for news; before I was one who was giving it."

Poet Ibrahim Yusuf, speaking on Skype from Dubai, said he had spoken about "the struggle" with Tammo the night before he was murdered.

"When they killed him, [the regime] thought they had killed the revolution," Yusuf told the mourners. "But its fire has risen. Multi-ethnic Syrians: raise our voice, to make this regime step down."



Khanqin warns of revolution outbreak if Kurdistan Flag is lowered

October 14, 2011 - Alsumaria Iraqi Satellite TV

The administration of Khanqin District in Iraqi Diyala province warned, on Wednesday, from the outbreak of "a major popular revolution" if the central government lowers Kurdistan Flag raised at the top of governmental buildings in the District. We already refused this demand, the administration pointed up while calling not to provoke the public opinion.

"Diyala Police Command addressed an official letter on behalf of central government ordering to lower Kurdistan Flag raised at tops of every governmental building in the district," Khanqin local governor Mohammed Mulla Hasan told Alsumarianews. "We refused firmly this demand in respect to the will of Khanqin District residents" he said.

"Lowering Kurdistan Flag will lead to the outbreak of a major popular revolution that could cause major complications in the District," Hassan warned. "Iraqi and Kurdistan flags are raised at

the top of governmental buildings in the district because they both mirror Iraq's image," he pointed up.

"This issue is very sensitive and raising it generates a state of distrust between Kurds and Baghdad," Hassan added while calling Iraqi politicians not to provoke the public opinion.

Armed Forces General Commander, Nuri Al Maliki, ordered local authorities in Khanqin District on Tuesday to lower Kurdistan Flag raised at tops of governmental buildings, declared head of Diyala provincial council Taleb Mohammed. Security forces had visited Khanqin District earlier and reported about having seen Kurdistan's flag raised at tops of police stations and official directorates, he said.

Khanqin District and related regions are Kurdish territories, stressed Kurdistan leader Massoud Al Barazani during his visit to Khanqin on September 22.

Peshmerga forces in Jaluawla and Saadia regions are not there to parade but to defend the region, Barazani concluded.

L'assassinat de Mechaal Tamo met à l'épreuve la retenue des Kurdes de Syrie

ANALYSE

L'assassinat de Mechaal Tamo, un responsable politique kurde très engagé dans la révolution syrienne, marque-t-il un tournant dans la mobilisation contre le régime de Bachar Al-Assad, qui craint cette communauté de 3 millions de personnes (10 % de la population) très organisée ? L'annonce de la mort de M. Tamo, tué par des inconnus, vendredi 7 octobre à Kamechliyé (nord-est), a immédiatement entraîné des manifestations. Samedi, 50 000 personnes ont assisté à ses funérailles à Kamechliyé, au cours desquelles deux manifestants ont été tués. Dimanche, les manifestations se sont étendues à Derbassiyeh, Malikiyeh et Amouda, où une statue géante de Hafez Al-Assad, le père de l'actuel chef de l'Etat, a été saccagée. Au même moment, des manifestants kurdes s'en prenaient aux ambassades de Syrie à Vienne, Berlin et Genève, hissant même le drapeau kurde à Londres.

Malgré cette flambée de violence, le pouvoir syrien, qui nie toute responsabilité dans l'assassinat de M. Tamo, a fait preuve d'une retenue remarquable au regard de la violence déployée ailleurs. Depuis le début des troubles, le 15 mars, il ménage la communauté kurde, qu'il a durement matée dans un passé récent, notamment en 2004, lorsqu'un soulèvement avait été réprimé dans le sang et l'indifférence.

Cette prudence s'explique par le fait que la douzaine de partis

kurdes disposent de militants disciplinés et de relais extérieurs, en Irak ou en Turquie. Ainsi, l'Union démocratique (PYD), le plus organisé et le plus important des partis kurdes syriens, est proche du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) turc, un mouvement armé interdit, en guerre contre Ankara. Un millier de Kurdes syriens seraient présents dans la principale base du PKK, qui compte 3 000 hommes dans le djebel Al-Qandil, au nord du Kurdistan irakien. Leur retour au pays mettrait en difficulté l'armée syrienne, minée par les désertions et épuisée par les protestations.

Mais pour l'instant, le PYD et les autres formations kurdes ont décidé de ne pas entrer en conflit ouvert avec le régime. "Le PYD n'a aucune sympathie pour ce régime basé sur le nationalisme arabe, analyse Ignace Leverrier, ancien diplomate. Mais il le sait affaibli et cherche à en tirer le maximum avant qu'il ne tombe." Le PYD n'a pas oublié que la Syrie a livré Abdullah Öcalan, le chef du PKK, à la Turquie en 1998, mais la méfiance à l'égard du reste de l'opposition, dominée par les islamistes et les nationalistes arabes, reste tenace.

Dès les premières semaines de manifestations, le pouvoir, qui prend garde à ne pas tirer à balles réelles dans les villes kurdes, a annoncé qu'il accorderait la nationalité aux quelque 300 000 Kurdes syriens privés de papiers d'identité. Le processus est en



Manifestation en hommage à Tamo, le 8 octobre 2010 à Qamichleh. AFP/SAFIN HAMED

cours pour 60 000 d'entre eux. Plus étonnant, le gouvernement a toléré l'ouverture par le PYD de trois centres culturels (à Alep, Kamechliyé et Malikiyeh) et de quatre écoles en langue kurde. Inimaginable il y a peu.

Jeu régional complexe

La moitié des 640 militants du PYD détenus dans les geôles syriennes ont été libérés. Et le chef du PYD, Salem Muslim, officiellement recherché, est réapparu au grand jour pour participer, le 17 septembre, à Damas, à une réunion d'opposants tolérée par le régime. M. Muslim est devenu vice-président du Comité national pour le changement démocratique, un regroupement d'opposants concurrents du Conseil national syrien (CNS), qui a la faveur des Occidentaux. Des partis kurdes sont membres du CNS, pas en leur nom propre mais via la déclaration de Damas, signée

en 2005 par plusieurs formations d'opposition. C'était le cas de Mechaal Tamo, un franc-tireur plus populaire auprès des jeunes manifestants kurdes que sur la scène politique où il ne pouvait s'appuyer sur un parti important.

Le Comité national pour le changement démocratique, lui, demande le démantèlement de l'appareil répressif mais pas le départ du président Assad. Cette position reste-t-elle tenable après l'assassinat de M. Tamo ? Cela dépendra de la rue kurde, mais aussi d'un jeu régional complexe auquel se mêlent l'Iran, l'Irak, dont les chefs kurdes ne veulent pas mettre en péril leurs acquis en s'impliquant dans l'aventure syrienne, et la Turquie, hostile à Bachar Al-Assad mais plus encore à un réveil kurde à ses frontières.

Christophe Ayad

Juppé serre la main du dirigeant de l'opposition syrienne



Alain Juppé, Burhan Ghalioun (d) et Bassma Kodmani (g), le 10 octobre 2011 à Paris (AFP)

Le chef de la diplomatie a rencontré lundi deux responsables du Conseil national syrien.

Le Nouvel Observateur avec AFP

La France a exprimé lundi 10 octobre son soutien à l'opposition syrienne, avec une première rencontre publique à Paris entre le chef de la diplomatie, Alain Juppé, et des responsables du Conseil national syrien (CNS), dont son dirigeant

provisoire Burhan Ghalioun.

Devant des journalistes, le ministre a serré la main de Burhan Ghalioun ainsi que de Bassma Kodmani, la porte-parole du CNS, considéré comme la structure la plus représentative de l'opposition syrienne, au début d'une soirée de soutien organisée par les milieux culturels français.

"Je suis ici à l'initiative du président du Conseil (Burhan Ghalioun) et de Mme Kodmani pour exprimer le soutien de la France au peuple syrien qui est en train de se battre pour sa liberté et ses droits fondamentaux, à mains nues, pacifique-

ment", a dit Alain Juppé avant de participer à cette soirée, au théâtre de l'Odéon à Paris.

"C'est tout un symbole que la soirée soit ouverte aux artistes, chercheurs, écrivains pour rappeler la richesse du patrimoine culturel et historique de la Syrie", a-t-il ajouté, alors que des personnalités françaises du théâtre, comme les metteurs en scène Patrice Chéreau et Ariane Mnouchkine devaient y assister.

Alain Juppé a précisé que la question d'une reconnaissance par la France du CNS "n'est pas à l'ordre du jour, parce que le CNS ne le demande pas". "Nous allons poursuivre nos contacts avec l'opposition syrienne, voir comment nous pouvons les accompagner", a-t-il affirmé.

Né fin août à Istanbul, le CNS réunit la majorité des courants politiques opposés au régime de Bachar al-Assad, en particulier les Comités locaux de coordination (LCC), qui chapeautent les manifestations sur le terrain, les libéraux, la confrérie des Frères musulmans, interdite de longue date en Syrie, ainsi que des partis kurdes et assyriens.

Il est pour l'instant dirigé par Burhan Ghalioun, qui est professeur de sociologie dans une université parisienne.



La marche lente de l'opposition syrienne

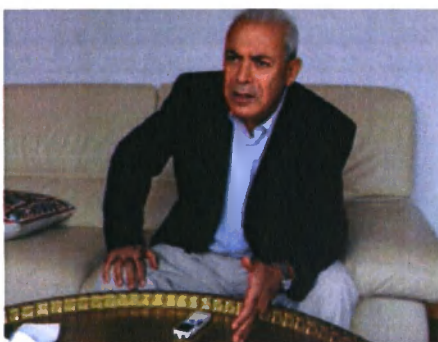
France Info - 11 octobre 2011

Etienne Monin

SEPT MOIS après le début de l'insurrection en Syrie, l'opposition lance toute une série d'initiatives en France pour tenter de débloquer la situation. Il y a un peu plus d'un semaine un Conseil national syrien a été créé. Il est dirigé par un universitaire installé en France. Mais il a encore du mal à atteindre son objectif qui est de fédérer toute l'opposition.

Cela fait des mois que ce Conseil national syrien est en chantier. Son acte de naissance date du 2 octobre en Turquie à Istanbul. Il est composé d'un secrétariat général de 29 membres, d'une assemblée de 190 membres, mais pas encore de comité exécutif. Selon les sources au sein du CNS, il rassemble de 60 à 80% de l'opposition avec des sièges pour les Frères musulmans, pour les comités qui organisent les manifestations en Syrie, pour les Kurdes, les libéraux, les chrétiens, etc...

Pour beaucoup d'opposants, c'est un premier pas, mais le conseil n'est pas encore suffisamment représentatif, notam-



Burhan Galioun, directeur du centre d'étude de l'orient contemporain à l'université Paris 3, est le président du Conseil national syrien. AFP / Miguel Medina

ment vis-à-vis de ceux qui restent dans le pays. Bassma Kodmani porte parole du Conseil national syrien défend sa composition y compris dans la place qu'il fait aux Frères musulmans.

Pour beaucoup d'observateurs, la mise sur pied de ce Conseil tient de l'exploit. L'opposition en Syrie est un puzzle. Elle comporte les islamistes qui ont farouchement combattu le régime dans les années 70/80 avant de se faire écraser. Les communistes, les libéraux, les Kurdes, les

indépendants. Et cette jeune génération qui descend dans la rue.

Le Conseil national syrien communique sur trois points : la chute du régime, la protection des populations et la construction d'un état civil et démocratique. Mais cela ne suffit pas à emporter tous les opposants. Certaines figures historiques refusent de siéger. C'est le cas de Haytham Manna qui est à la tête d'un groupe politique. C'est un opposant historique. Il critique la présence des Frères musulmans au sein du Conseil.

Le Conseil est présidé par une personnalité indépendante laïque et consensuelle : Burhan Galioun directeur du centre d'étude de l'orient contemporain à l'université Paris 3. Il veut éviter la guerre civile et l'intervention militaire extérieure.

Le temps presse explique Farouk Mardam Bay, intellectuel syrien qui dirige la collection Sindbad chez Actes Sud.

Hier le Conseil a reçu le soutien de la France, mais le ministre des Affaires étrangères Alain Juppé n'est pas allé jusqu'à la reconnaissance, comme la France l'avait fait pour le Conseil national de transition Libyen.

Iran-Turquie : sourde bataille pour l'hégémonie régionale

Aymeric Janier

Ce sont deux nations unies par les fils invisibles de l'histoire, deux nations qui, l'une comme l'autre, portent dans leurs gènes l'héritage d'un empire. Malgré cette proximité, l'Iran et la Turquie ont toujours entretenu des liens complexes. Une relation qui s'est teintée récemment d'une rivalité exacerbée, à la faveur des bouleversements sociaux et politiques qui balayaient le Moyen-Orient.

Depuis deux ans, pourtant, les deux pays n'avaient jamais paru aussi proches. Fin octobre 2009, le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, faisant fi des pressions occidentales, avait ainsi qualifié le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "d'ami". Et en mai 2010, son pays avait lancé, de concert avec le Brésil, une mission de bons offices destinée à régler l'épineuse question du nucléaire iranien – sans succès durable toutefois. "Les relations turco-iraniennes ont connu un changement de paradigme considérable ces dernières années, qui a abouti à un rapprochement pragmatique dans les domaines politique et économique. En outre, l'amitié et la fraternité ont souvent occupé une place centrale dans le discours des dirigeants des deux Etats", souligne Emel Parlar Dal, chercheuse en sciences politiques et relations internationales à l'université Marmara d'Istanbul.

Les révoltes arabes qui ont éclaté en décembre 2010 ont profondément rebattu les cartes. Relativement timide lors des prémices de ce vaste mouvement d'émancipation populaire, l'antagonisme turco-iranien s'est amplifié au fil des semaines. La première faille est

apparue en mars, au moment de l'intervention militaire saoudienne à Bahreïn. Une opération menée sous le couvert du Conseil de coopération du Golfe (CCG) et censée officiellement restaurer le calme dans le modeste royaume sunnite, alors en proie à de violentes manifestations antigouvernementales. A l'inverse de la Turquie, qui s'est contentée d'un silence prudent pour ne pas froisser les pays membres du CCG, l'Iran a exprimé sans ambages sa très vive irritation, convaincu d'un complot ourdi pour soumettre par la force ses "frères" chiites (environ 70 % de la population).

LA SYRIE, POMME DE DISCORDE BILATÉRALE

Par la suite, c'est surtout sur le dossier syrien que se sont cristallisées – et se cristallisent encore – les tensions bilatérales. Engagée, comme l'Iran, auprès de Damas, la Turquie a fini par désavouer Bachar Al-Assad lorsque le prix politique de ce soutien est devenu trop lourd à supporter. Non sans l'avoir, au préalable, exhorté à mettre un terme à toute effusion de sang contre la population civile. Les autorités turques ont craint que la répression sanglante perpétrée chez son voisin – avec lequel elle possède huit cents kilomètres de frontière commune – ne "déborde" sur son propre territoire.

L'Iran n'a pas eu de tels scrupules. Trop effrayé à l'idée de perdre son principal allié dans le monde arabe, le régime des mollahs l'a défendu avec verve, contre vents et marées, fût-ce au prix de quelques menaces voilées contre la Turquie. Ainsi, le conseiller militaire du guide suprême, Ali Khamenei, le major général Yahya Rahim-Safavi, a-t-il estimé la semaine dernière que "le comportement



Le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, et le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, lundi 17 mai 2010 à Téhéran. AFP/ATTA KENARE

des dirigeants turcs envers la Syrie et l'Iran n'était pas correct et servait les objectifs des Etats-Unis". "Si la Turquie ne se départ pas de cette attitude politique 'non conventionnelle', elle va non seulement s'aliéner ses propres citoyens, mais aussi pousser les pays environnants, notamment la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Iran, à reconsidérer la nature de leurs liens politiques avec elle", a-t-il lancé.

Au-delà de ces postures divergentes, motivées par des intérêts nationaux bien compris, le "printemps arabe" a plus largement redessiné les équilibres régionaux. Avec les renversements successifs de Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali en Tunisie (14 janvier), de Hosni Moubarak en Egypte (11 février) et de Mouammar Kadhafi en Libye – toujours introuvable depuis la chute de Tripoli, le 23 août –, Ankara et Téhéran ont pris conscience qu'un espace s'ouvrait à elles pour asseoir leur suprématie sur la scène moyen-orientale. Et chacune tente, à sa manière, de faire fructifier ses atouts.

MODÈLES CONTRADICTOIRES

Des étudiants palestiniens brandissent un portrait du premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, alors en visite

en Egypte, pour l'inciter à se rendre dans la bande de Gaza, le 13 septembre 2011.

De ce point de vue, la Turquie, qui rejette toute velléité néo-ottomaniste, a aujourd'hui plusieurs longueurs d'avance. "Elle peut s'appuyer sur son système pluraliste, son islam politique maîtrisé et 'tolérant' et ses succès économiques [11 % de croissance au premier trimestre 2011]. Elle dispose aussi d'instances publiques (TIKA, l'Agence turque de coopération et de développement) ou privées (confréries, associations d'entrepreneurs, think tanks) de coopération économique et culturelle très actives, qui jouent un rôle de 'soft power' au niveau de sa politique étrangère", argumente Jean Marcou, chercheur associé à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul (IFEA) et coéditeur du blog de l'Observatoire de la vie politique turque (Ovipot) [voir notre entretien].

"L'Iran, lui, peut difficilement mettre en exergue sa révolution islamique, qui a plus de trente ans [la République islamique d'Iran, régime autoritaire, placé sous l'autorité de l'ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni, a été proclamée le 1er avril 1979] et fait l'objet d'une contestation interne. Si le modèle

turc n'est pas parfait et souffre en particulier d'un certain nombre de tares récurrentes, dont la non-résolution de la question kurde, il est plus séduisant que le système iranien pour les peuples arabes en révolte", analyse-t-il. Un point de vue corroboré par Emel Parlar Dal, pour qui l'ascendant de la Turquie est d'autant plus marqué qu'elle jouit en comparaison du soutien de l'Occident, notamment des Etats-Unis.

Profondément déstabilisé dans son ambition d'incarner "le"

modèle dominant au sein d'un Proche et Moyen-Orient battu par des vents diplomatiques contraires et violents, l'Iran voit d'un très mauvais œil l'activisme géopolitique de la Turquie. La tournée de Recep Tayyip Erdogan à la mi-septembre en Egypte, en Tunisie et en Libye en a apporté la preuve. Téhéran n'a guère goûté le fait qu'Ankara se réapproprie, à son avantage, une rhétorique anti-israélienne qu'elle estimait être son apanage. L'appel du chef de l'AKP aux pays arabes visités à suivre l'exemple turc, présenté comme un mélange

harmonieux d'islamo-conservatisme et de démocratie, a également fait grincer des dents.

Pour autant, une rupture est-elle envisageable entre les deux Etats ? Cela est peu probable car ils partagent des liens économiques très étroits. Depuis 2001 – date des premières importations turques de gaz naturel iranien – et jusqu'en 2008, le commerce bilatéral n'a cessé de croître. L'année dernière, après une année 2009 marquée par une chute brutale liée à la crise

financière mondiale, il a connu un fort rebond pour atteindre 10,6 milliards de dollars (7,7 milliards d'euros), un record. A cela s'ajoutent également des intérêts convergents : éviter l'indépendance des Kurdes (ils sont 13 à 15 millions en Turquie, entre 5 et 6 millions en Iran) et préserver l'unité de l'Irak. Ce qui fait dire à Jean Marcou que la relation bilatérale "va se stabiliser dans la méfiance réciproque", faisant la part belle à une sorte d'entre-deux. Ni amis ni ennemis...□

Le Monde 14 octobre 2011

"La relation turco-iranienne va se stabiliser dans la méfiance réciproque"

A l'heure où l'avenir du Moyen-Orient est frappé du sceau de l'incertitude, Jean Marcou décrypte les liens complexes et tendus qui unissent l'Iran et la Turquie, puissances régionales ascendantes.

Propos recueillis par Aymeric Janier

Quel est l'état de la relation turco-iranienne ?

Jean Marcou : La relation bilatérale a toujours été complexe. On a pour habitude de dire qu'elle obéit au précepte "ni amis ni ennemis". Mais il est vrai que ces dernières années, les deux pays ont donné l'impression de n'avoir jamais été aussi proches : en 2009, Recep Tayyip Erdogan était allé jusqu'à qualifier Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "d'ami" et surtout, au printemps 2010, la Turquie était intervenue aux côtés du Brésil (accord tripartite du 17 mai)



Jean Marcou, professeur à l'Institut d'études politiques de Grenoble, chercheur associé à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul (IFEA) et coéditeur du blog de l'Observatoire de la vie politique turque (OVIPO)

pour proposer une solution alternative à la crise du nucléaire iranien et tenter d'éviter les sanctions américaines.

Les Turcs, qui dépendent très largement de la Russie pour leur approvisionnement en gaz [environ 60 % de la consommation nationale totale l'année dernière], regardent aussi, entre autres, du côté de l'Iran

pour trouver de nouveaux fournisseurs, sans avoir obtenu pour l'instant des résultats convaincants. Enfin, ils comptent accroître leurs échanges commerciaux avec la République islamique pour les porter à 20 milliards de dollars (14,5 milliards d'euros). En dépit de la détérioration des relations turco-israéliennes, de l'amélioration spectaculaire des relations d'Ankara avec Damas entre 2007 et 2011 et des nombreuses initiatives en direction du monde arabomusulman, les relations turco-iraniennes ne paraissent pas plus simples.

En quoi les révoltes arabes ont-elles fait évoluer cette relation ?

Le "printemps arabe" a bouleversé la donne au niveau régional et a rendu la situation incertaine sur le plan stratégique. Il a affaibli les capitales arabes, plus occupées à gérer leurs affaires intérieures qu'à se préoccuper de leur rayonnement extérieur. Plus que jamais, la Turquie et l'Iran apparaissent comme les puissances ascendantes de la région, mais elles n'ont pas les

mêmes arguments pour l'être.

La Turquie dispose d'une vraie économie basée sur l'échange et sur la fourniture de produits finis de consommation courante, non sur la livraison de matières premières. Bien qu'elle ait été embarrassée dans un premier temps par les révoltes arabes, elle peut s'appuyer sur son système pluraliste, son islam politique maîtrisé et "tolérant" et ses succès économiques. Elle dispose également d'instances publiques (TIKA, l'Agence turque de coopération et de développement) ou privées (confréries, associations d'entrepreneurs, think tanks...) de coopération économique et culturelle très actives qui jouent un rôle de "soft power" au niveau de sa politique étrangère.

L'Iran, lui, peut difficilement mettre en exergue sa révolution islamique, qui a plus de trente ans et fait l'objet d'une contestation interne. Si le modèle turc n'est pas parfait et souffre en particulier d'un certain nombre de tares récurrentes (non-résolution de la question kurde, atteintes diverses à certaines

libertés fondamentales), il est plus séduisant que le système iranien pour les peuples arabes en révolte.

Depuis plusieurs mois, en dépit de liens économiques étroits entre les deux pays, on a l'impression que la rivalité turco-iranienne s'est exacerbée. Partagez-vous ce constat ?

Tout à fait. Cela tient au fait que la Turquie, qu'elle le veuille ou non, empiète sur ce qui constituait les chasses gardées de l'Iran – la rhétorique anti-Israélienne, la critique du système international – mais que, dans le même temps, elle maintient ses liens avec les Occidentaux, notamment son engagement dans l'OTAN [Le pays est membre de l'Alliance atlantique depuis 1952] et sa candidature à l'UE. Tout cela exaspère les Iraniens. Ces derniers voient dans la Turquie une puissance opportuniste qui joue sur tous les tableaux et ternit leur rayonnement potentiel. De ce point de vue-là, le mois de septembre a été révélateur. Tandis que Recep Tayyip Erdogan effectuait une tournée dans certains pays arabes en

voquant Israël aux gémonies, il confirmait la participation de son pays au bouclier antimissile américain et annonçait la construction d'un radar de détection précoce, élément majeur de ce dispositif, dans le sud-est de la Turquie, à Kürecik.

De l'Iran ou de la Turquie, lequel des deux pays est, selon vous, le mieux placé actuellement pour exercer un véritable leadership au Proche et au Moyen-Orient ?

La Turquie, avec les arguments politiques que nous évoquions précédemment et ses atouts économiques [le pays a enregistré une croissance de 11 % au premier trimestre 2011], paraît bien sûr la mieux placée. Mais elle a aussi commis des faux pas. Sa politique de bon voisinage a été prise en défaut à deux reprises, en Syrie et en Libye. Elle avait en effet noué des relations d'amitié avec Damas et a dû les dénoncer lorsque le régime de Bachar Al-Assad s'est engagé dans une répression sauvage.

Elle avait aussi fortement

développé ses investissements en Libye, et Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait même reçu un prix des droits de l'homme des mains de Mouammar Kadhafi en novembre dernier. Elle a finalement été contrainte de se rallier à l'intervention internationale et de reconnaître le CNT (Conseil national de transition, au pouvoir) après avoir hésité plusieurs semaines...

Jusqu'où peut aller la rivalité entre la Turquie et l'Iran ? Avec quelles conséquences géopolitiques, économiques ?

Je pense que les deux pays connaissent leurs atouts et leurs faiblesses et qu'ils ne se feront donc pas de cadeaux. Même si la Turquie a dénoncé le traitement du dossier nucléaire iranien par les Occidentaux, elle applique aujourd'hui les sanctions contre l'Iran. Car, si elle a milité pour une solution, selon elle "plus juste", à ce différend, elle n'en est pas moins inquiète à l'idée que l'Iran puisse se doter de l'arme nucléaire. En outre, l'acceptation du bouclier antimissile américain lui a permis d'obtenir le soutien legis-

tique renforcé des Etats-Unis : usage de leurs drones Predator pour lutter contre la guérilla kurde, achat d'hélicoptères d'attaque Chinook et Cobra, récupération du matériel militaire des Américains après leur départ d'Irak...

Les Iraniens, avec l'appui des Syriens, peuvent essayer d'instrumentaliser la question kurde, de revoir leurs liens commerciaux, de jouer sur la question énergétique, mais, parallèlement, il faut bien qu'ils vivent et fassent du commerce. De surcroît, l'instrumentalisation de la question kurde peut aussi se retourner contre eux [entre cinq et six millions de Kurdes vivent actuellement en Iran].

Une rupture entre les deux pays est-elle envisageable ?

Il me semble que cela n'ira pas jusque-là. A mon sens, cette relation turco-iranienne va se stabiliser dans la méfiance réciproque et continuer d'obéir au traditionnel "ni amis ni ennemis". □

AFP

La Syrie ferme un poste-frontière avec la Turquie

ISTANBUL, 8 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LA SYRIE a fermé un poste-frontière avec la Turquie et interdit aux Turcs le passage de la frontière à cet endroit situé non loin de la ville syrienne de Qamichli, où les forces syriennes ont tiré sur une foule participant aux funérailles d'un opposant kurde, a annoncé samedi l'agence Anatolie.

Les Turcs ne sont pas autorisés à entrer en Syrie par le poste-frontière de Nusaybin (sud-est de la Turquie), situé à peine à quelques kilomètres de Qamichli, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, a déclaré à l'agence Anatolie le gouverneur de la région Murat Girgin.

Les Syriens renvoient en Turquie ceux qui veulent passer par ce poste-frontière, a ajouté Anatolie.

Les forces de sécurité syriennes ont tiré samedi, à Qamichli sur une immense foule participant aux funérailles de l'opposant kurde Mechaal Tamo, assassiné la veille, faisant deux morts, selon des militants.

Les funérailles de Mechaal Tamo se sont transformées "en une manifestation de 50.000 personnes appelant à la chute du régime" du président Bachar al-Assad, a déclaré l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'Homme (OSDH), basé au Royaume-Uni.

AFP

Turquie: deux rebelles kurdes tués dans des heurts avec l'armée

ISTANBUL, 9 octobre 2011 (AFP)

DEUX REBELLES kurdes ont été tués dans des affrontements avec l'armée turque dans le sud-est de la Turquie, près de la frontière avec l'Irak, ont indiqué dimanche les autorités locales citées par l'agence Anatolie.

L'armée turque a mené une offensive de sept jours contre les rebelles dans la province de Hakkari près de la frontière avec l'Irak, a indiqué le bureau du gouverneur de Hakkari dans un communiqué cité par l'agence.

Les corps de deux membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été découverts sur place après les affrontements. Les militaires turcs ont également récupéré des tonnes de matériel dont des pièces d'artillerie et des armes à feu, selon le communiqué.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, a pris les armes en 1984 pour la défense des droits des Kurdes, majoritaires dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts, selon les données officielles.

The Kurdish strategy for Iraq: divide and exploit

By facilitating a dysfunctional coalition driven by suspicion in Baghdad, Kurdistan has been able to further its own ambitions



Ranj Alaaldin

Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki speaks during an interview with Reuters in Baghdad

Iraq's prime minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Photograph: Mohammed Ameen/Reuters

Keep Baghdad weak and sustain political divisions – that is the Kurdish strategy for Iraq, underpinned by an astute game of manipulation and patience.

Arab Iraq remains divided and the Baghdad coalition government is dysfunctional. Disputes over territory, natural resources and power-sharing, including the implementation of key legislation, and ongoing security problems stand in the way of enduring stability and progress.

The stable Kurdistan region, however, is moving ahead, despite being at the centre of these disputes. It garnered enough votes during the March 2010 parliamentary elections to position itself as a king-maker, since top vote-winners Ayad Allawi and the prime minister Nouri al-Maliki struggled to form a coalition independent of the Kurds.

After nine months without leadership and amid continuing terror attacks, Arab Iraq finally got a government – but only because the Kurdistan president, Massoud Barzani – having kept everyone guessing as to which individual the Kurds were going to back – brokered an agreement that paved the way for a coalition of Iraq's major political blocs.

Yet, that agreement never came to fruition; Allawi and Maliki failed to come to agreement over the distribution of power. Through the allocation of ministries, however, just about enough was done to appease various segments of Iraq's political spectrum, including key Sunni-Arab politicians who contested the elections alongside Allawi but, as a result of their new-found status and prestige, refuse to heed any calls to withdraw and go into opposition.

Arab Iraq was thus given a fragile and dysfunctional government, and the Kurds facilitated this, ensuring that a government of national unity was actually a government of unlikely bedfel-



Iraq's prime minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Photograph: Mohammed Ameen/Reuters

lows driven by suspicion. The politics is still divided along sectarian lines: hostility exists between the Shia Dawa party of Maliki and powerful politicians belonging to the Sunni-Arab dominated Iraqiya bloc, who remain wary of his grip on power and suspicious of his and other Shia blocs' links with Iran.

That works for the Kurds. It keeps Baghdad weak and unable to move forward. It allows them to exploit tensions to further their own ambitions. For example, when Baghdad recently moved to revise an earlier version of an oil and gas law to the detriment of the Kurds, the Kurdistan regional government recalled Kurdish officials in Baghdad and, at the same time, invited Maliki's foe, Allawi, to Erbil for emergency talks.

That response was aimed at exerting pressure on Maliki and his government, and the Kurds may be winning: the revised law is now unlikely to be approved and the Baghdad oil and gas licensing round, scheduled for January 2012, has been postponed. Similarly, while Baghdad may be adamant that the Kurds will never get oil-rich Kirkuk, the issue, unresolved, provides the Kurds with a powerful bargaining chip that allows them to push for other objectives in the meantime.

This includes objectives related to their own energy sector. Kurdistan is establishing itself as an industry champion, hosting the world's oil and gas players at a forthcoming oil and gas conference in Erbil. For the event organisers, CWC, this is a first; their previous conferences focused on Iraq as a whole – not any

more, though.

That is because the region is attracting major players, evidenced none other by former BP chief Tony Hayward's \$2.1bn deal for oil assets in the region. Around 40 foreign companies from 17 different countries are committed to investing some \$10bn in the energy sector.

But does Kurdistan need Iraq? Iraq has control over pipelines that allow for oil to be exported more efficiently. Exporting oil via tanker trucks, although inefficient, is still feasible, but at some point a pipeline will be needed if Kurdistan is to become a viable exporter able to manage its huge reserves. So far, though, Kurdish energy ambitions have not been impeded by Baghdad's control of the pipelines and its messy politics.

Baghdad also provides additional revenues, which allow for better basic services, infrastructure, education and a better equipped military – for the Kurds. In addition to their own resources and revenues – which Baghdad is unable to audit and benefit from – the KRG gets 17% of the annual Iraqi budget, worth, at the very least, almost \$10bn a year.

Ultimately, it is about keeping any enemies in the making close; that is, have a foot in Baghdad, be aware of behind-the-scenes developments and have constant access to the political elite, providing an opportunity to promote regression.

Of course, the Kurds do not have to be part of Iraq and could declare independence tomorrow. There is little that Turkey and other neighbours like Iran could do, given their billions of dollars worth of trade with Kurdistan, domestic problems and the general volatility in the region, as well as the impossibility of invading and occupying Kurdistan's cities.

However, the Kurds will not declare independence because they have a good thing going for them. It makes little sense to sacrifice this when any unilateral declaration of independence would put them "in the wrong", perhaps land-lock them and justify counter-responses from Baghdad and regional neighbours.

Instead, they want to declare independence as part of a sustainable and regional framework, and so long as this framework gives them Kirkuk. In the meantime, the Kurds will continue to operate in the interests of the Kurds and Kurdistan, and that means exploiting Baghdad for all it has got – a price Iraq and Iraqis have to pay to keep the country intact.

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Kurds Step Into Syria's Protest Mix

Killings of Leader and Mourners Spark Demonstrations That Threaten to Bolster Opposition, Complicate Regional Picture

By NOUR MALAS

Syrian Kurds protested for the second day Sunday as the killings of a prominent Kurdish opposition leader and several mourners at his funeral appeared to be drawing the country's largest ethnic minority into the heart of ongoing protests.

The growing ranks of Kurds in Syria's streets could bolster opposition to President Bashar al-Assad, activists said. But it could also complicate the tepid response to Syria's crisis among other countries in the region, primarily Turkey, which has its own large and restive Kurdish population.

Members of Syria's Kurdish population, who account for some 10% of the country's 23 million people, have staged sizeable protests in Kurdish-majority areas in the northeast, and in Kurdish quarters of the capital Damascus, since protest broke out in March against President Assad. But Kurds have largely been absent as an organized political force in the protests.

Among the exceptions was Mashaal Tammo, a 53-year-old who founded the Kurdish Future Movement and was one of a handful of Kurdish leaders to represent Syria's Kurds in a newly formed opposition coalition.

Mr. Tammo was gunned down in a private residence Friday. On Saturday, security forces opened fire during his funeral procession in Qamishli, on the border with Turkey, killing at least five people and drawing out larger crowds across Syria in protest of the violence, activists said.

Large numbers of Kurds turned out again Sunday for continuing demonstrations in northeastern cities, in what appeared to be the largest Kurdish demonstrations this year. Seventeen people were killed during protests across Syria on Sunday, according to activist network the Local Coordination Committees.

Mr. Tammo had been in hiding for months before gunmen stormed a home he was staying in, according to activists who knew him. Kurdish activists said he escaped an assassination attempt last month, after refusing to join a call for negotiations by President



A still from an online video shows what is characterized as protesters fleeing gunfire at Mr. Tammo's funeral in Qamishli, Syria, on Saturday.

Assad.

Syria's government said over the weekend that Mr. Tammo had been killed by armed terrorists—rogue groups that Syrian authorities have largely blamed for the violence in the country.

Turkey's foreign ministry condemned what it called a "heinous assassination." Syria closed one of its border gates with Turkey after the clashes between security forces and protesters, reopening it Sunday, Turkey's state news agency said.

The U.S. and European Union also condemned Mr. Tammo's killing, the latest in a wave of what activists describe as targeted assassinations that have added to a civilian death toll the United Nations now estimates at 2,900. At least 49 people have been killed in protests across Syria since Friday, according to the Local Coordination Committees.

Syria's Kurds have long complained of discrimination by the government, and several Syrian Kurd leaders have expressed aspirations for autonomy similar to that enjoyed by Iraq's Kurdish population.

But the country's Kurds have also enjoyed relative security, with President Assad wary of turning a large and well-organized minority sharply against him. Even in 2004, when security forces responded violently to a wave of Kurdish protests and violence that killed dozens, the president's response was seen to have been swift and mild, as the unrest was followed by promises of citizenship and the release of Kurdish prisoners.

As protests picked up this year, Mr.



Kurds gather Saturday near the parliament building in Erbil, northern Iraq.

Assad responded much the same. In April, marking an early concession, he offered Syrian citizenship to thousands of Kurds in the country's east and opened negotiations with their leaders. Kurds have been among the protesters, but community leaders never formally threw their weight behind the opposition movement, nor publicly called for Mr. Assad's ouster.

That appears to have changed after Mr. Tammo's killing. "The slogans were pretty clear and unified this weekend, and that's that we want to the downfall of this regime," said one young protest organizer in Ain Arab, a Kurdish area near Syria's second-largest city, Aleppo.

But Syria's Kurds could also prove divisive to an opposition movement already struggling to overcome various ideological strands, while representing the country's patchwork of religions and ethnicities. Activists are already lobbying for recognition of specific Kurdish demands for representation within a pluralistic, democratic post-Assad Syria.

Regionally, a powerful Kurdish force in Syria's antigovernment movement could temper Turkey's support for the opposition out of wariness for its own Kurdish population.

The killing appears to have infuriated Syrians abroad, who turned violent as they stormed three Syrian diplomatic missions in Germany and Switzerland.

Protesters stormed Syria's embassy in Berlin late Saturday. Early Sunday, another group smashed windows and broke into offices at the consulate in Hamburg, the Associated Press reported. In Geneva, five men were arrested and later released after forcing their way into Syria's mission to the United Nations late Saturday, the AP said.

On Syria's streets, Kurdish activists united to condemn the killing of a widely-respected figure. But within Kurdish political parties and Syria's broader opposition, it brought out divisions on why the government would target such a high-profile figure after

months of seeming restraint against the Kurds.

Most activists blamed regime forces for the killing, saying the government was trying to splinter the opposition by stoking tensions between Kurds and Arab Syrians in the sensitive northern region. They say the government has appeared successful in recent months in its effort to pit Sunnis and Alawites against each other in the central province of Homs.

"Mashaal Tammo was a loud voice from within Syria that was asking for

the downfall of the regime, and that's why he was killed," said Jomaa Akach, a young Kurdish activist in Dubai. Mr. Akach and other Kurdish activists echoed the argument that Syria's government could be using the threat of Kurdish unrest along the Turkish border to warn Turkey against sharpening its anti-Assad position.

Syria's foreign minister on Sunday delivered two warnings to Turkey, first threatening action against governments that recognize the Syrian National Council—an opposition group founded

in Istanbul, of which Mr. Tammo was a member—and promising to respond to potential Turkish sanctions against Syria.

"We will adopt strict measures against any country which will recognize the illegitimate council," Walid Moallem said in a televised news conference in Damascus. Asked about plans for sanctions against Syria announced by Turkey's prime minister, Mr. Moallem said: "Syria will not sit with arms folded, and we will respond in the same way we're treated." □

Rudaw.Net 12 October 2011

Syrian Kurdish Opposition Skeptical Despite Kurdish Rights Declaration

RUDAW

Some Kurdish leaders have praised a leading Syrian opposition group's declaration recognizing Kurds, but others warn that the deep Kurdish mistrust of Arab and Islamic factions has not waned.

Nearly eight months after anti-government protests Syrian Kurdish factions and leaders remain divided over whether to participate in the demonstrations and in a broad-based coalition of opposition factions known as the National Council. The council, which primarily meets in Istanbul, has emerged as the most powerful Syrian opposition group and is planning for the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime.

In a meeting in Istanbul earlier this month, the council said it would recognize Syria's Kurdish minority in a post-Assad Syrian constitution – a key demand of Kurds who have long faced discrimination in Syria.

The decision eased some Kurdish leaders' concerns that the Arab-led council was not taking Kurdish demands seriously. Several Kurdish leaders have boycotted the council, although the body also includes many top Kurdish figures such as Michel Tamo, who was gunned down in his home last week.

Abdulbaqi Yusuf, a National Council member from the United Kurdish Party in Syria, said the recognition was an important feat for Kurds.

The National Council declared at the



Members of the Syrian opposition at the Syrian National Council meeting. Photo AFP

conference, held October 2-3, that the Kurds are an important component of the Syrian community and that their rights must be protected in the new Syrian constitution.

Mahmood Muhammad, who is also a leader from the United Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria, told Rudaw, "The Kurdish movement's demand that Kurds be recognized as the second largest community in Syria and that their political and national rights be protected. We live in Syria and are different from the Arabs."

However, he remained skeptical of the council, saying, "The goal of the Syrian National Council meeting in Istanbul is to tell the world that the Kurdish role in this revolution is weak and that the future new rule of Syria will be in the hands of Muslim Brotherhood."

Muhammad maintained that he was happiest with a declaration by a Syrian secularist group, the Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians that called for the Kurdish right to self-determination in Syria. The coalition was created in

Paris in September as a rival to the National Council over concerns that the council was led by Islamists.

Yusuf asserted that the council's recognition by powerful western nations such as the United States, France, Canada and the United Kingdom was a turning point for the body and helped bring together divergent groups, even though the opposition remains fractured. He said groups focused on reconciliation with the regime have pulled out of the body, which aims to topple the Syrian regime.

Abdulbasit Hamko, a Kurdish leader living in Germany who is participating in the opposition council, believes the body is generally successful but that secularists and tribal representatives "disagreed with the Muslim Brotherhood's attitude, especially in deciding the number of representatives in the council. So they participated in the council but weren't entirely happy. But in order to achieve the recognition of the international community, they had no choice but to follow the National Council's decisions." □□□

Sanctions are taking heavy toll on Syria

BEIRUT

Economic distress is felt across society and poses biggest threat to regime

BY NADA BAKRI

The Syrian economy is buckling under the pressure of sanctions by the West and a popular uprising, posing the greatest challenge to President Bashar al-Assad's government as the pain is felt deeply by nearly every layer of Syrian society.

With Syria's currency weakening, its recession expanding, its tourism industry wrecked and sanctions squeezing most essential sectors, the International Monetary Fund now expects Syria's economy to shrink this year by at least 2 percent.

Through nearly seven months of protests and a crackdown that has killed more than 2,900 people, Mr. Assad and his political supporters have demonstrated a cohesiveness that has surprised even his critics. Differences that may exist have stayed inside a ruling clique that draws on Mr. Assad's own clan and sect, and the security services have yet to fracture.

But analysts in the region and officials in Turkey and the United States say the faltering economy presents a double blow to a government that had once relied on its economic successes as a crucial source of legitimacy.

American and Turkish officials say that a collapse is not imminent and that the government can probably survive through the end of the year. But they now believe it is possible that the toll of the sanctions and protests could bring down Mr. Assad in 6 to 18 months.

"We're all waiting for the thing that will crack them," an Obama administration official said. "And it will be the economy that will wake everybody up, both those who support him, and Assad and his circle."

Meanwhile, as many Syrians, poor and rich, feel the effects of the revolt in their daily lives, a sense of desperation is echoed in the streets, even in Damascus and Aleppo, the country's two largest cities and economic centers. While neither has risen up like other Syrian cities, complaints are growing, and American and Turkish officials say they believe that the



MUZAFFAR SALMAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The lack of business in places like the old city of Damascus reflects the economic distress in Syria's most essential sectors, which have been squeezed by international sanctions.

merchant elite in both cities will eventually turn against Mr. Assad.

"I can no longer afford to buy anything for my family," said Ibrahim Nimr, an economic analyst in Damascus, the capital. "I am not making any more money. I am facing difficulties, and I don't know what to do."

A Damascus businessman, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, said: "People are not buying anything they don't need these days. Just barely the necessities."

Revenue from oil and natural gas exports, which account for as much as a third of state revenue and are the single biggest source of foreign currency, will dry up at the start of November, when the European Union's ban on imports will fully come into force.

The unrest has paralyzed the tourism industry, which had generated about \$7.7 billion a year. Several hotels in Damascus said they did not have any bookings, and some hotel owners said that they closed in the summer because they could no longer afford to pay salaries and bills.

An owner of a small candy shop in Souk al-Hamidiyeh, an old market in the heart of Damascus, said he had not seen a single tourist since March, when the uprising began against Mr. Assad. "And it doesn't look like we will see tourists anytime soon," the owner added.

Dik al-Jin, one of the oldest restaurants and the most popular site for weddings and parties in Homs, a central Syrian city where the uprising has the semblance of a civil war, also shut down soon after the demonstrations broke out because of a lack of customers.

But uncertainties persist over the international strategy to put pressure on the Syrian economy. American and European officials have debated whether the sanctions will end up hurting average Syrians more than the leadership.

For now, and despite the fraying economy, the government itself seems buoyed by a sense of confidence over

having blunted some of the mass protests this summer in cities like Hama and Deir al-Zour. Syrian officials also received a lift last week when China and Russia vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution that condemned the violent oppression of anti-government demonstrators.

The Obama administration official said, "I do agree that they're more confident now than before."

In recent months, Syrian officials in the Ministry of Economy and Trade and the Ministry of Finance have dismissed in published remarks the effects of sanctions on the economy and foreign currency reserves.

In September, Finance Minister Mohammad al-Jleilati said Syria had \$18 billion in foreign currency reserves, enough to secure imports for two years. Though most experts disputed the figure, they added that given the lack of transparency, it was hard to determine the actual amount.

But the economic impact appears greater than in past crises, and officials in Turkey, once a crucial trading partner with Syria, are preparing to impose their own sanctions. The Syrian government's own figures underline a waning sense of faith in the economy.

Recent statistics published by the Syrian Investment Agency, a state-run firm that oversees investment in Syria's infrastructure, transportation and agriculture sectors, pointed to a decrease in consumer and investor confidence. The agency reported that 131 licenses for private investment projects were issued in the first half of the year, a decrease of 40 percent compared with the first six months of last year.

Assets in Syria's five largest banks dropped by nearly 17 percent in the first half of 2011, while deposits in Lebanese banks operating in Syria are down by 20 percent from 2010, according to a report released by Byblos Bank, which is based in Lebanon.

So far, Syrian officials, who appear to be bewildered by the uprising and how to cope with it, have announced a series of measures that most experts say are likely to deepen the crisis. Among these steps was a decision last month to ban imports of many consumer goods to protect Syria's foreign currency reserves. The step created such a domestic and regional uproar over price increases that the government revoked it a week later.

Another decision was approving a budget of \$26.53 billion, a 58 percent increase over last year's budget and the highest in Syria's history.

"Where are they going to bring that money from?" asked Nabil Sukkar, a former World Bank official who now runs an independent research institute based in Damascus. "That is a big question mark. We now have less revenues. No one outside is going to help us. We

have reserves, but they are being drawn down."

There were unconfirmed reports from inside Syria that employees in some public institutions were asked to contribute the equivalent of \$10 every month to a special fund that goes to the government.

For years, Mr. Assad portrayed himself as a modernizer, and a newfound consumerism in Damascus and Aleppo seemed to mark a break with the drearier years associated with his father's three decades of rule. In April, only a

"I can no longer afford to buy anything for my family. I am not making any more money. I am facing difficulties."

month after the uprising started, the International Monetary Fund forecast growth rates of 3 percent for 2011 and 5.1 percent for 2012. Now, Syrians can no longer use credit cards.

"We were on our way to move toward a strong economy," said an economic expert in Damascus, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "We started seeing an increase in foreign and local investments. The momentum was on until we were hit by crisis. Unfortunately, I am very pessimistic."

Anthony Shadid and Hwaida Saad contributed reporting.

Herald Tribune OCTOBER 12, 2011

U.S. says it foiled plot by Iran to kill Saudi envoy

WASHINGTON

BY BRIAN KNOWLTON

Federal agents have disrupted what they said was an Iranian-linked plot to attack the Saudi and Israeli embassies in Washington and assassinate the Saudi ambassador, U.S. officials announced Tuesday.

They said the plot involved two men, one of them an Iranian-American, Manssor Arbabsiar, 56, who was arrested on Sept. 29, and another man now at large in Iran.

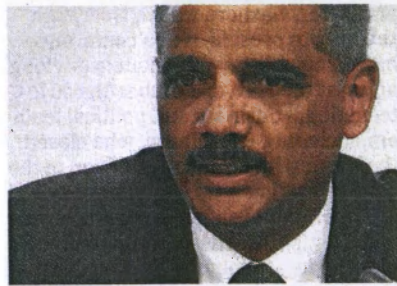
"The complaint alleges that this conspiracy was conceived, sponsored and directed from Iran," Attorney General Eric Holder said at a hastily convened news conference. "It constitutes a flagrant violation of U.S. and international law.

"The United States is committed to holding Iran accountable for its actions."

Iran issued what CNN called a "vehement and sometimes mocking" denial.

Mr. Holder said that Manssor Arbabsiar, 56, the Iranian-American, would face charges including conspiracy to murder a foreign official — Ambassador Adel al-Jubeir, who is close to the Saudi royal family — and committing an act of international terrorism.

Mr. Holder linked the plot to senior members of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. He



ANDREW BURTON/AP

Attorney General Eric Holder linked the plot to senior members of the Quds Force.

would not say that senior members of the Iranian government knew of the plot.

Mr. Holder said that since his arrest, Mr. Arbabsiar had confessed to participation and "provided valuable information about elements of Iranian government's role." He said the plotters had wired payments totaling nearly \$100,000 to a bank account controlled by the F.B.I.

Asked what steps the Obama administration would take, he said further steps against Iran would be announced soon.

A White House spokesman, Tommy Vietor, issued this statement: "The president was first briefed on this issue in June and directed his administration

to provide all necessary support to this investigation. The disruption of this plot is a significant achievement by our intelligence and law enforcement agencies."

The F.B.I. and Drug Enforcement Agency disrupted the plot, officials said. They said the alleged plotters had discussed bomb attacks against the Saudi and Israeli embassies in Buenos Aires. Argentine officials have asserted that Iran was behind a deadly attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992.

U.S. officials said that the case began in May when Mr. Arbabsiar approached an informant of the drug agency to request assistance from a Mexican drug cartel in assassinating the Saudi ambassador. The Iranian-American allegedly believed his contact worked for the feared Zetas Mexican drug organization.

Mr. Arbabsiar reportedly claimed he was being "directed by high-ranking members of the Iranian government."

U.S. officials said that Mr. Arbabsiar met with the drug agency informant twice in July in Reynosa, Mexico, across the border from McAllen, Texas. They said he offered to pay \$1.5 million for the assassination of the Saudi ambassador.

Mr. Arbabsiar allegedly wired two payments of \$49,960, one on Aug. 1 and one on Aug. 9, to a bank account under F.B.I. control after his return to Iran.

Ebullient Turkey ignores critics in Iran and Syria but worries about Kurds

The National / UAE

Thomas Seibert

ISTANBUL // As it bursts with self-confidence about its growing role in the Middle East, Turkey is unlikely to change its policies in the region as a result of sharp criticism from Syria and Iran. But Ankara is concerned about efforts by its neighbours to stir up Kurdish unrest, officials and analysts say.

"Our country's prestige is growing by the day," Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, said in a speech yesterday, adding he had witnessed that development himself during his recent trip to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, where he enjoyed enthusiastic receptions and "indescribable affection", as he put it.

Mr Erdogan shrugged off last weekend's rebukes from Damascus and Tehran. The government of Bashar Al Assad, the Syrian president, warned its neighbours against recognising a Syrian opposition group that was established in Turkey, while Iran said the Turkish government should stop promoting its own version of a secular Muslim state and market economy as a model for Arab Spring countries.

In a veiled reference to those complaints, Mr Erdogan said during his televised speech to parliamentary deputies of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) that he was sorry to see that Turkey was the target of "unjust criticism", but that his country would stick to its policies.

"Turkey will do what its own

principles and national interests call for and will continue along this path without diverting from its agenda," Mr Erdogan said. He underlined that undemocratic regimes in the region could not count on Turkish support. "In our book, there can be no legitimate government that is not based on the people and that uses violence."

But despite Mr Erdogan's robust defence of Turkey's unique approach to Middle Eastern issues, Ankara is watching statements from Iran and Syria very closely because it is concerned that governments there could try to stoke the flames of the Kurdish conflict inside Turkey.

"There is a fear that Syria will support the PKK," said Semih Idiz, a foreign policy columnist for the Milliyet newspaper. He was referring to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a rebel group that has been fighting for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey since 1984. Syria gave shelter to the PKK leadership in the 1990s.

Officials in Ankara are also doubtful about Iran's role in the Kurdish conflict. A Turkish newspaper reported yesterday that Iran had recently captured Murat Karayilan, a top PKK commander wanted by Ankara, and set him free after two days instead of extraditing him to Turkey. Idris Naim Sahin, Turkey's interior minister, said the government would comment on the report "when the time comes", the NTV news channel reported.

Frustrated by the continuing violence in Syria and by what it sees as the regime's rejection of political reform, Mr

Erdogan's government is preparing to announce a package of bilateral sanctions against Damascus, a former partner. Last month, Mr Erdogan publicly accused Mr Assad of lying to him.

"We cannot remain bystanders for much longer," Mr Erdogan told Turkish reporters during a visit to South Africa last week. The prime minister had been scheduled to visit camps for Syrian refugees in southern Turkey last weekend, but cancelled the trip after his mother died last Friday. No new date for the visit has been set. According to news reports, Mr Al Assad was among foreign leaders calling Mr Erdogan to express their condolences.

Turkey has begun to implement some measures against Syria, such as a ban on all arms shipments to Syria via Turkish airspace or territory and an increased support for Syrian opposition groups. Representatives of the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) have asked for a meeting with Turkish foreign ministry officials, the Today's Zaman newspaper reported yesterday. Such a meeting would help the SNC, which was formed in Istanbul in August, to gain international status, a development that Damascus wants to avoid.

Turkish foreign ministry sources said yesterday they could not confirm whether the meeting would go ahead. The SNC unites major opposition factions, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Local Coordination Committees and Kurdish and secular activist groups

While Syria is concerned about

Turkish support for the SNC, Iran is uneasy about Mr Erdogan's promotion of the Turkish brand of secularism to the countries of the Arab Spring.

"Turkey is a democracy," a senior foreign ministry official said when asked for his response to the Iranian criticism. Mustafa Akyol, a newspaper commentator and the author of a newly-released book, *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*, said in a Twitter message that Iran had slammed Turkey "for all the good reasons".

Mr Idiz, the foreign policy columnist, said he did not expect Turkey to stop extolling its own model because of Iran's complaints. Mr Idiz told The National yesterday that Turkey was not particularly concerned that memories of Ottoman rule in the Middle East could be used to undermine its present-day policies as following "imperial intentions" in the region.

"What they have been promoting for Egypt and Syria are very much European values," such as secularism and individual freedoms, Mr Idiz said about Turkish government officials. Only Arab nationalists were likely to try to play the Ottoman card against modern Turkey, he said.

Les Occidentaux intensifient leurs contacts avec les opposants syriens

Alain Juppé et le secrétaire d'Etat britannique Alistair Burt ont rencontré des figures du CNS

Le mot « reconnaissance » n'est pas prononcé, ni l'expression « représentants légitimes du peuple syrien », mais dans la gamme des gestes destinés à soutenir l'opposition syrienne, les Occidentaux viennent de franchir un palier : celui des premiers contacts au niveau ministériel, assumés publiquement. Après l'échec de la tentative de résolution à l'ONU, bloquée le 5 octobre par un double veto russe et chinois, cette stratégie de soutien politique prend une importance particulière.

Une manifestation pro-Assad à Damas

« L'armée et le peuple avec toi, Bachar Al-Assad », « la Syrie notre pays et Assad notre président » : sous ces affiches placardées sur la place des Sept-Fontaines, dans le centre de Damas, une manifestation de soutien au président syrien a rassemblé, mercredi 12 octobre, plusieurs dizaines de milliers de personnes. L'événement était destiné à dénoncer la formation, début octobre, du Conseil national syrien regroupant l'opposition. Le même jour, en réplique à cette initiative du pouvoir, des milliers de Syriens sont descendus dans la rue dans d'autres villes, pour appeler à la chute du régime : à Idleb, Homs, Deraa, Deir-Ezzor, Lattaquié. Le pouvoir n'avait pas mobilisé ses supporteurs depuis plusieurs mois. Depuis le début de la contestation, dont la répression a causé 2 900 morts en sept mois selon l'ONU, les manifestations anti-Assad n'ont pas gagné la capitale syrienne. — (AFP.)

Lundi 10 octobre, à Paris, le ministre des affaires étrangères Alain Juppé s'est rendu au Théâtre de l'Odéon, où se réunissaient des groupes anti-Assad, pour leur apporter un message de soutien. Il s'est entretenu en aparté avec deux figures du Conseil national syrien (CNS) basées à Paris, le professeur Burhan Ghalioun, qui fait office de président du CNS, et la chercheuse Bassma Kodmani, sa porte-parole. Un soutien qui apparaît comme un pied de nez au régime syrien, qui a menacé de « représailles » tout pays « qui reconnaîtrait » le CNS.

Mercredi 12 octobre, le secrétaire d'Etat britannique pour le Moyen-Orient et l'Afrique du Nord, Alistair Burt, faisait une démarche similaire en venant rencontrer les mêmes, à Paris, après un entretien au Quai d'Orsay pour se coordonner avec la partie française. Cet officiel britannique s'était déjà entretenu, voici une semaine, à Londres, avec d'autres émissaires du CNS basés en Syrie.

Le CNS, formé le 2 octobre lors d'une réunion à Istanbul et regroupant une large palette de groupes anti-Assad – les comités locaux de coordination, des représentants des minorités, et les Frères musulmans, dont nombre d'exilés aux Etats-Unis – est clairement l'instance de l'opposition que les Occidentaux entendent privilégier dans leur bras de fer avec le régime Assad.

Dans un entretien au *Monde*, Alistair Burt a expliqué mercredi à quel point Londres appréciait que le CNS ait « réussi à rassembler », et à incarner la vague de protestation qui agite la Syrie depuis sept mois, « de manière identifiable et inclusive ». « Nous envoyons le signal que

nous les considérons comme une voix alternative au régime », commente M. Burt, distinguant cette démarche d'une véritable « reconnaissance ». Le choix des dirigeants de demain en Syrie doit relever des seuls Syriens, souligne-t-il.

Interrogé lundi sur la question de la « reconnaissance », Alain Juppé a déclaré que « la question n'était pas posée » : les opposants syriens n'en demandent pas tant. Pas à ce stade, en tout cas.

A défaut d'une résolution à l'ONU, l'Union européenne, qui a « salué » l'avènement du CNS, poursuit sa stratégie d'étouffement des réseaux financiers du pouvoir de Bachar Al-Assad. « Quatre-vingts entités et cinquante-six individus sont frappés de gel d'avoirs et d'interdiction de visas », énumère M. Burt. Les sanctions pétrolières sont d'une importance particulière, relève-t-il : « 25 % des revenus de la Syrie proviennent des hydrocarbures, et 90 % de ce pétrole était exporté vers l'UE. »

A défaut d'une résolution à l'ONU, l'Union européenne poursuit sa stratégie d'étouffement des réseaux financiers du pouvoir de Bachar Al-Assad

Le CNS est d'autant plus « privilégié » par les Européens comme interlocuteur crédible qu'il est « amené à s'élargir », y compris à des groupes qui semblaient auparavant lui être hostiles, espère-t-on à Paris.

Depuis des mois, l'opposition syrienne peinait à se structurer, « il y avait un manque ». En se donnant un profil « incluant les forces de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur », cette lacune est comblée, et « cela donne une perspective » à tous ceux qui veulent rejoindre le mouvement anti-Assad.

Le souhait des Occidentaux d'accompagner ce regroupement des oppositions syriennes a pu prendre des formes maladroites. Ainsi, des membres du Comité national pour le changement démocratique (CNCD), une structure concurrente du CNS formée le 17 septembre à Damas, disent avoir été empêchés

de donner une conférence de presse au Centre d'accueil de la presse étrangère (CAPE), mardi 11 octobre, à Paris pour « raisons de sécurité ».

Une mesure interprétée comme une brimade, voire des représailles au fait que le porte-parole du CNCD, Hassan Abdel Azim, avait salué les veto russe et chinois à l'ONU, au grand dam des chancelleries occidentales. La plupart des membres du CNCD vivent en Syrie, ce qui explique peut-être leur prudence et la discrétion maintenue sur leurs rencontres avec des responsables occidentaux.

« Certains, au sein du Quai d'Orsay, voudraient forcer le destin », en favorisant le CNS à l'exclusion de tout autre regroupement, explique une source proche du ministère des affaires étrangères.

En attendant, les Occidentaux veulent conforter le message pacifique du CNS, alors que certains signaux, ces dernières semaines, faisaient craindre des dérapages vers une militarisation. « L'opposition ne peut gagner que si elle reste pacifique. Le CNS sait que sa crédibilité se joue là-dessus », observe-t-on de source diplomatique française. ■

CHRISTOPHE AYAD
ET NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

Révélation sur la militarisation du nucléaire iranien

L'AIEA dispose des preuves pour inciter les États à muscler leurs sanctions.

ISABELLE LASSERRE

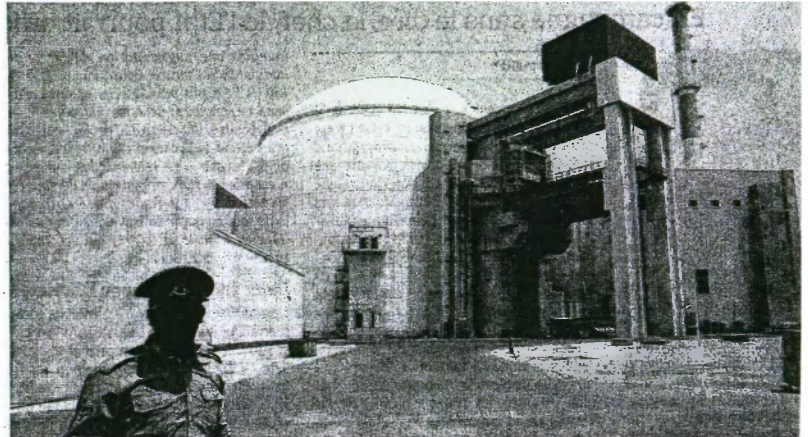
PROLIFÉRATION Ce devrait être le rapport le plus dur et le plus complet jamais écrit par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique sur l'état d'avancement du programme nucléaire iranien. Restée pendant des années ambiguë, puis prudente, l'AIEA, à l'occasion de son prochain conseil des gouverneurs, le 17 novembre à Vienne, s'apprête, selon les informations obtenues par *Le Figaro*, à dénoncer, preuves à l'appui, le caractère militaire de ce programme qui vise à doter l'Iran de la bombe. « *Ce rapport sera l'un des plus importants sur le sujet* », affirme un spécialiste proche du dossier.

Le contexte diplomatique et géopolitique explique également le changement de ton de l'AIEA

À Paris et dans les chancelleries qui s'inquiètent du développement de la prolifération nucléaire, le caractère militaire du programme iranien est depuis longtemps un secret de Polichinelle, alimenté par des photos satellites, des rapports d'experts ou des confessions de dissidents. Mais l'agence de l'ONU, tout en s'inquiétant publiquement des activités d'enrichissement de l'Iran, ne l'a jamais affirmé aussi clairement qu'elle s'apprête à le faire le mois prochain. Pourquoi maintenant ?

D'abord parce que, malgré la contestation politique qui a placé le régime sur la défensive depuis 2009, l'Iran persévère dans sa marche rapide vers la bombe. Installations de nouveaux fourneaux, création de centrifugeuses supplémentaires, poursuite des activités d'enrichissement...

Rien de neuf sous le soleil, diront les spécialistes du dossier, dont certains estiment que l'AIEA aurait pu et dû frapper du poing sur la table beaucoup plus tôt. Mais le départ de Mohamed ElBaradei, qui a quitté la tête de l'agence fin 2009, aurait selon eux libéré la parole des spécialistes de l'agence et



Le réacteur nucléaire de Bouchehr en 2010, sur les rives du golfe Persique, à quelque 1000 kilomètres au sud de Téhéran. REUTERS

permis l'arrivée d'équipes nouvelles, plus professionnelles. Le patron égyptien de l'AIEA a en effet longtemps été soupçonné de minimiser le programme nucléaire iranien, voire d'en dissimuler certains éléments (voir *Le Figaro* du 29 janvier 2011).

Course contre la montre

Mais le contexte diplomatique et géopolitique explique également le changement de ton de l'AIEA. Dans les capitales occidentales, on est persuadé qu'il faut agir sur le dossier avant 2012, année d'élections très importantes. À Moscou d'abord, où le retour annoncé de Vladimir Poutine à la présidence pourrait se traduire par un durcissement de la position russe vis-à-vis de l'Occident. Alors que des tensions se profilent en amont du sommet de l'Otan à Chicago sur la défense antimissile, le pouvoir russe devrait être tenté, pensent les diplomates, de jouer

la carte iranienne pour faire valoir ses positions. À Washington, où les difficultés rencontrées par Barack Obama pourraient contraindre le président américain à se détourner momentanément de certains dossiers internationaux au profit de la scène intérieure. À Paris, où l'éventualité d'une défaite de Nicolas Sarkozy, qui a fait du dossier iranien l'une de ses priorités internationales, risquerait d'affaiblir la détermination de la France vis-à-vis de Téhéran. À Pékin enfin, où l'arrivée au pouvoir de la cinquième génération du Parti communiste chinois, couplée aux élections législatives et présidentielle de Taïwan, pourrait faire disparaître le

dossier iranien de l'agenda. À cela, s'ajoute la conviction de certains observateurs que les sanctions internationales prises à l'encontre de Téhéran commencent à avoir des effets, même si les conséquences économiques sont encore camouflées par le pouvoir.

Il s'agit donc d'une course contre la montre, engagée depuis plusieurs mois déjà par l'ensemble des capitales occidentales afin d'atteindre le pouvoir iranien avant qu'il ne soit trop tard et tant que le contexte géopolitique le permet.

Pour arriver à leurs fins, les nations ont fourni de nombreux documents relatifs au programme nucléaire iranien à l'AIEA. Elles planchent également sur de nouvelles sanctions, destinées à faciliter un éventuel effondrement du régime. Car si certains experts estiment qu'il est peut-être trop tard pour empêcher Téhéran de se doter de la bombe, ils redoutent par-dessus tout que la nucléarisation de l'Iran ait lieu sous le régime actuel. Ils aimeraient également éviter qu'Israël ne décide de lancer des frappes préventives contre les centrales iraniennes, avec les lourdes conséquences qu'aurait une telle action sur la région. ■

LE FIGARO

14 octobre 2011

Washington avertit Téhéran qu'il devra rendre des comptes

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

LA PRESSION monte contre Téhéran, après la mise au jour d'un complot présumé impliquant deux Iraniens dans une tentative de tuer l'ambassadeur d'Arabie saoudite dans un restaurant de Washington. Même si le Pentagone écarte, à ce stade, toute « réponse militaire », les États-Unis ont prévenu hier que l'Iran devrait « rendre des comptes », tandis que son allié saoudien envisage de prendre des mesures « décisives » contre la République islamique.

Dans l'immédiat, Washington va chercher à « mobiliser l'opinion publique pour continuer à isoler (les Iraniens) et à punir leur comportement », a assuré le vice-président Joe Biden, peu après que Barack Obama se soit entretenu au téléphone avec le roi Abdallah d'Arabie Saoudite. Outre l'inculpation mardi des deux ressortissants iraniens accusés d'avoir projeté d'assassiner Adel al-Jubeir, un proche d'Abdallah, à court terme, la réponse devrait viser au renforcement des « pressions diplomatiques et financières » contre un régime déjà



Le roi Abdallah d'Arabie saoudite et Barack Obama en juin 2010, à la Maison-Blanche. P. SOUZA / WHITE HOUSE

sanctionné pour ses activités de dissimulation en matière nucléaire. Les États-Unis ont d'ores et déjà engagé des réunions individuelles avec les ambassadeurs des pays membres du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

Tensions accrues dans le Golfe

« C'est une très grosse affaire, nous a affirmé hier un ministre européen des Affaires étrangères, les Américains semblent avoir des biscuits, mais il va falloir qu'ils livrent des preuves ». L'Arabie, habitué aux actions subversives des Iraniens, a

condamné cette « tentative odieuse et immorale » de tuer son ambassadeur outre-Atlantique. « Nous les rendrons responsables pour toute action qu'ils prendront contre nous », a juré le chef de la diplomatie, Saoud al-Fayçal.

Pour les autres monarchies du Golfe, ce complot présumé va nuire « sérieusement aux relations » avec l'Iran. Celles-ci sont déjà tendues. Ajoutées aux craintes de voir leur voisin sur l'autre rive du golfe Persique se doter de l'arme nucléaire, Riyad, comme Abu Dhabi, Koweït ou Bahreïn, accusent l'Iran de fomenter des troubles parmi leurs populations chiïtes.

En privé, les monarques du Golfe n'ont pas de mots assez durs pour dénoncer l'entrisme iranien dans leurs affaires : « Il faut couper la tête du serpent », disait l'an dernier le roi Abdallah, selon un télégramme diplomatique révélé par WikiLeaks, montrant l'appui tacite saoudien à une offensive militaire contre Téhéran. La tension s'est encore accrue au printemps lorsque ces monarchies ont décidé d'envoyer un millier de soldats protéger le roi de Bahreïn contre les manifestants de la majorité chiïte du pays.

Pour l'Iran, qui se considère comme le défenseur des chiïtes à travers le monde, une ligne rouge venait d'être franchie. Depuis, les spécialistes se demandaient comment Téhéran pourrait riposter, leur préférence allant à des représailles en Irak ou en Afghanistan, zones où l'Iran règle ses comptes, via des « proxy » (sous-traitants). Hier, Téhéran a demandé à Riyad de « ne pas tomber dans le piège » américain. « Ce scénario pathétique est tellement maladroit que même les médias et les cercles politiques américains et leurs alliés le regardent avec doute », estime Ali Ahani, vice-ministre des Affaires étrangères et prochain ambassadeur d'Iran en France. ■

ÉDITORIAL

Par Pierre Rousselin
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L'escalade iranienne et ses périls



L'Iran entretient depuis longtemps des relations étroites et bien documentées avec le terrorisme. La tentative d'assassinat de l'ambassadeur saoudien à Washington est très maladroite pour des services aussi aguerris. Elle paraît toutefois bien réelle et témoigne d'une grave escalade dans la campagne maléfique menée par un régime qui se radicalise à mesure qu'il s'affaiblit de l'intérieur et rencontre ses limites à l'extérieur. L'agressivité nouvelle de l'Iran remonte à 2009, lorsque les mollahs, bien avant le printemps arabe, avaient réprimé dans le sang les aspirations démocratiques des Iraniens. Depuis, les gardiens de la révolution ont profité du chaos des rivalités internes pour imposer leurs méthodes expéditives dans la guerre que mène l'Iran contre l'Occident. Les révoltes dans les pays arabes n'ont guère profité à Téhéran, qui a poussé les feux à Bahreïn en y attisant la colère des chiïtes.

Cela a suscité l'entrée en scène de l'Arabie saoudite, désormais en conflit ouvert avec la République islamique dans le Golfe, mais aussi en Syrie où le meilleur allié de l'Iran est menacé. Il en résulte une exacerbation de la guerre larvée ayant pour autres théâtres d'opérations l'Irak, l'Afghanistan, le Liban et la Palestine.

Le complot découvert à Washington s'ajoute à tout cela et laisse présager une nouvelle période de tension sur le dossier nucléaire iranien alors que l'AIEA dispose désormais de preuves d'un programme militaire iranien.

Abondamment critiqué pour avoir en vain tendu la main au régime d'Ahmadinejad en 2009, Barack Obama ne peut plus se permettre la moindre faiblesse à l'égard de Téhéran, s'il veut être réélu en novembre 2012. Dans un Moyen-Orient traversé par une puissante vague de déstabilisation, un Iran aux mains de ses éléments les plus radicaux peut vouloir l'escalade. C'est un jeu très dangereux dont il va falloir se méfier. ■

Le complot présumé ravive la rivalité irano-saoudienne

L'AFFAIRE DU COMLOT iranien présumé contre l'ambassadeur saoudien à Washington, Adel Al-Jubeir, qui n'appartient pas à la famille royale – comme c'est souvent le cas à ce poste – mais est un très proche conseiller du roi Abdallah, ne peut qu'exacerber la rivalité, déjà explosive, entre Riyad et Téhéran. Réagissant aux informations divulguées par Washington et niées par Téhéran, l'Arabie saoudite s'est dite déterminée à « s'opposer résolument à toute tentative de fragilisation de la stabilité du pays, à toute menace contre sa sécurité et à toute propagation de la sédition parmi sa population », dans un communiqué publié mercredi 12 octobre, qui lie explicitement les menées iraniennes à l'étranger et à l'agitation intérieure au Royaume.

Début octobre, des troubles survenus à Awamiyah, dans la province orientale où est concentrée la majorité des chiites saoudiens, ont relancé les accusations saoudien-

nes de manipulation par l'Iran de cette communauté. Très sensible au sort des chiites du Bahreïn, majoritaires dans l'archipel mais dont le mouvement de contestation a été sévèrement réprimé en mars, les manifestants qui protestaient contre des arrestations auraient piétiné des effigies du roi de Bahreïn, un obligé du royaume saoudien.

La traditionnelle rivalité entre Téhéran et Riyad, qui a éclaté au grand jour depuis l'invasion américaine de l'Irak, a été ravivée par les révolutions arabes, qui ont rebattu les cartes des jeux d'influence régionaux.

Isolement croissant

Les deux camps se font désormais face sur une multitude de fronts et non plus seulement en Irak, où l'Iran a profité du vide laissé par la chute de Saddam Hussein pour avancer ses pions, et au Liban, où le Hezbollah au pouvoir relaie l'influence iranienne.

Désormais, l'Égypte, Bahreïn et la Syrie sont le théâtre d'une lutte d'influence à peine masquée. Ainsi, la chute, en février, du président égyptien Hosni Mubarak, vu comme un allié de l'Arabie saoudite, a été saluée par la République islamique, qui a voulu voir dans la révolution égyptienne une répétition de la chute du Chah, malgré d'évidentes différences. En outre, le lâchage d'Hosni Mubarak par l'administration Obama a fait craindre à Riyad un isolement croissant.

Le même mois, la montée d'une contestation très majoritairement chiite visant la monarchie bahreïnienne a renforcé le complexe obsidional saoudien. Riyad y a vu une tentative de Téhéran de renverser un régime considéré comme acquis dans sa propre zone d'influence. La réaction saoudienne a été violente : le 14 mars, des troupes du Conseil de coopération du Golfe (CCG), à large majorité saoudienne, pénétraient dans le petit

royaume, prélude à la répression.

Cette rivalité, qui s'étend jusqu'à l'Afghanistan et au Pakistan, a désormais pour terrain privilégié la Syrie, dont le régime est allié à l'Iran depuis 1981 et avec qui il est lié par un accord de défense signé en 2008. Téhéran, accusé par l'opposition syrienne d'envoyer à Damas des conseillers militaires et des spécialistes de la cyber-répression, fait tout pour sauver un régime qui lui donne accès au conflit israélo-palestinien, via le Hamas palestinien et le Hezbollah libanais.

L'Iran use également de son influence sur le premier ministre irakien Nouri Al-Maliki pour qu'il soutienne Bachar Al-Assad. À l'inverse, Riyad, qui a rappelé son ambassadeur à Damas, accueille le cheikh salafite syrien Adnan Al-Arouf, connu pour ses prêches télévisés antialaouites, la minorité chiite dissidente à laquelle appartient la famille Assad. ■

CHRISTOPHE AYAD ET GILLES PARIS

Ralliement de la Turquie au projet de bouclier antimissile de l'OTAN

La Turquie a semblé hésiter. D'abord réticente, par crainte de froisser son puissant voisin iranien, elle a finalement accepté, le 14 septembre, de se rallier au projet de bouclier antimissile de l'OTAN. Selon l'accord signé à Ankara avec l'ambassadeur des États-Unis Francis Riccardone, l'un des puissants radars du dispositif commun sera installé sur le sol turc, sur la base militaire de Kürecik, près de Malatya (centre-est de la Turquie). A environ 500 km de la frontière iranienne.

La décision turque a suscité de vives critiques en Iran, pays contre lequel le système d'alerte antimissile est implicitement dirigé. « C'est une erreur stratégique. Si le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan poursuit dans cette voie, il aura des comptes à rendre, non seulement au peuple turc mais aussi aux pays voisins », a averti le général Yahya Rahim-Safavi, le conseiller militaire du Guide suprême de la révolution iranienne, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei. « L'attitude des dirigeants turcs est condamnable. Ils agissent ainsi, je pense, pour servir les intérêts de l'Amérique », a poursuivi ce haut gradé iranien. Téhéran menace de réviser à la baisse ses projets de coopération avec la Turquie, notamment dans le domaine économique. Les deux pays ont déclaré en septembre vouloir porter le montant des échanges de 11 milliards à 20 milliards de dollars par an.

L'année dernière, à pareille époque, les pays occidentaux s'inquiétaient des réserves d'une Turquie occupée à séduire ses voisins orientaux, l'Iran et la Syrie en tête. Ankara avait fait part de ses hésitations avant le sommet de l'OTAN à Lisbonne, en novembre 2010, insistant pour qu'aucun pays ne soit officiel-

lement désigné comme une menace. Le gouvernement turc a également insisté pour que les renseignements obtenus grâce aux radars ne bénéficient à aucun pays non membre de l'OTAN, à commencer par Israël. La Turquie a temporisé pour ne compromettre ni son alliance stratégique avec l'OTAN, dont elle est membre depuis soixante ans, ni sa politique de « zéro problème » avec le voisin iranien. Finalement « la Turquie est rentrée dans le rang », estime un diplomate occidental.

Le ralliement turc au bouclier de l'OTAN a également soulevé les protestations d'une partie de l'opposition en Turquie. Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, le chef du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP), parti kémaliste, qui défend des positions « souverainistes » en termes de politique étrangère, a dénoncé le ralliement du gouvernement « au bouclier israélien » de l'OTAN, destiné, selon lui, à protéger Israël d'une éventuelle attaque iranienne. Plusieurs petits partis de la gauche « anti-impérialiste » turque ont organisé une manifestation mi-septembre, rassemblant plus de 5 000 personnes sur le futur site du radar, près de Malatya.

Le ministre des affaires étrangères, Ahmet Davutoğlu, a tenté de minimiser la portée de l'accord avec l'OTAN, qui sera « réexaminé tous les deux ans et pourra être révoqué à tout moment ». « Il est impossible d'activer le système ou de transmettre des informations sans en avertir la Turquie », a-t-il précisé. Et un général turc sera détaché en Allemagne auprès du centre de commandement. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER
(ISTANBUL, CORRESPONDANCE)

AFP

PKK: La Turquie et la France signent un vaste accord sécuritaire

ANKARA, 7 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE ET LA FRANCE ont signé vendredi, lors d'une visite du ministre français de l'Intérieur Claude Guéant, un vaste accord de coopération sécuritaire, visant notamment à lutter contre les membres du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui ont repris le combat contre Ankara.

L'accord signé à Ankara devant la presse prévoit que les deux pays s'engagent dans une "coopération opérationnelle de lutte contre le terrorisme", ce qui devrait permettre aux forces de sécurité turques et françaises de mener une lutte commune sur le terrain, a indiqué M. Guéant.

Il a fait part de "la détermination totale, indéfectible (de la France) à lutter aux côtés de la Turquie contre le terrorisme du PKK".

La France accueille une importante communauté de Kurdes de Turquie, où sont actifs des militants du PKK.

"Notre lutte ne se relâchera pas, car nous savons le montant des souffrances qui s'accumulent sur la Turquie du fait des agissements des organisations terroristes reconnues par l'Union européenne", a poursuivi M. Guéant, qui a dit que l'accord signé "va bien au delà des accords que la France signe habituellement dans le domaine de la sécurité".

Il a expliqué qu'en 2010 et 2011 respectivement, 38 et 32 membres du PKK avaient été arrêtés sur le sol français.

La justice française doit se prononcer le 2 novembre sur le sort de 18 Turcs, arrêtés en 2007 et soupçonnés d'appartenir au PKK.

L'accord, a-t-on souligné de source turque, ne prévoit pas à priori une extradition des membres du PKK vers la Turquie. Mais M. Guéant a indiqué que les deux pays avaient néanmoins décidé de travailler ensemble "afin de préparer des extraditions dans les meilleures conditions".



Le ministre français a tenu à préciser qu'il était venu en Turquie à la demande du président Nicolas Sarkozy afin d'achever les discussions sur cet accord sécuritaire, attendu de longue date par les deux pays.

Le PKK figure dans la liste des mouvements terroristes de bon nombre de pays et de l'UE. Il a intensifié sa lutte contre les forces turques, depuis le début de l'été.

M. Guéant et son homologue Idris Naim Sahin ont été confrontés aux questions insistantes des journalistes leur demandant de réagir aux propos de M. Sarkozy, qui, en visite en Arménie jeudi, a souhaité que la Turquie reconnaisse dans un délai "assez bref", avant la fin de son mandat en mai 2012, le "génocide" arménien de 1915, sous l'empire ottoman.

"Il convient de s'en tenir strictement aux propos du président de la République sans les interpréter", a dit M. Guéant.

Il a affirmé que M. Sarkozy "n'a pas évoqué de délai" pour qu'Ankara reconnaisse le massacre des Arméniens comme un génocide, ce que la Turquie refuse catégoriquement de faire, mais ce que la France a fait en 2001.

Interrogé sur le point de savoir comment réagirait la France si la Turquie décidait de reconnaître "le génocide des Algériens", M. Guéant a répondu: "Le président de la République française est allé en Algérie, il a eu des propos extrêmement forts sur ce moment douloureux de notre passé entre l'Algérie et la France. Il a tourné la page".

Son homologue a pour sa part souligné qu'il n'"était pas possible de façonner l'avenir" des rapports turco-français en se tournant vers le passé.

LE FIGARO • 18 octobre 2011

Explosion d'une mine en Turquie : cinq policiers et trois civils tués

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie) - Cinq policiers et trois civils ont été tués mardi dans le sud-est majoritairement kurde de la Turquie par l'explosion d'une mine, posée, selon les autorités, par des rebelles kurdes, a annoncé le gouverneur local.

L'incident s'est produit dans un hameau situé près de la petite ville de Guroymak, dans la province de Bitlis, a précisé Nurettin Yilmaz, gouverneur de la province, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

L'explosion de la mine a été déclenchée à distance au pas-

sage d'une voiture de police, a dit le gouverneur à Anatolie.

Il s'agit d'une technique fréquemment utilisée par les rebelles kurdes, que les autorités locales ont rendu responsables de cette attaque.

Un précédent bilan faisait état de la mort de cinq policiers et de deux civils, une fillette de deux ans et son père.

Un des quatre villageois blessés s'est par la suite éteint à l'hôpital, a ajouté M. Yilmaz, soulignant que les trois autres étaient dans une unité de soins intensifs.

Les attaques des rebelles du



Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) se sont multipliées depuis le début de l'été dans l'est et le sud-est de la Turquie, peuplés en majorité de Kurdes, certaines opérations se soldant par la mort de civils.

Face à cette recrudescence de ces violences, la Turquie menace de déclencher une offensive militaire contre les bases du PKK dans le nord de

l'Irak, où seraient retranchés environ 2.000 combattants de ce mouvement qualifié de terroriste par de nombreux pays.

Le Parlement turc a reconduit début octobre l'autorisation d'un an donnée à l'armée d'intervenir en Irak.

Le PKK a pris les armes en 1984. Le conflit a fait 45.000 morts.(AFP)

Protesters storm 3 of Syria's diplomatic missions in Germany, Switzerland

By Associated Press

BERLIN — Syrian protesters stormed three of their country's diplomatic missions in Germany and Switzerland in what appeared to be a protest against the killing of a Kurdish opposition leader, police said Sunday.

Syria's embassy in Berlin was stormed late Saturday, and another group of protesters took on the consulate in the northern port city Hamburg hours later early Sunday, causing damage to the buildings and tagging walls with slogans denouncing President Bashar Assad's autocratic regime, police officials said.

In Switzerland, five men were arrested after forcing their way into Syria's mission to the United Nations in Geneva late Saturday, police spokesman Patrick Pulh said.

The men, who had been among a small group protesting outside the building, have since been released.

Friday's killing of opposition leader Mashaal Tammo caused international



outrage and drew up to 50,000 mourners into the streets of Kurdish-dominated Qamishli in northeastern Syria on Saturday, sparking also protests abroad.

Berlin police spokeswoman Claudia Elitok said 24 Syrians who had protested in front of the embassy eventually tore down the fence late Saturday and managed to enter the building where they damaged paintings, furniture and sprayed slogans like "Free Syria" on walls.

The ambassador, who lives in the building, called German police for help. Several officers entered the embassy and urged protesters to leave the grounds,

which they did peacefully. Nobody was arrested, she said.

Security appeared to have been beefed up on Sunday, with police cars seen standing outside the embassy.

In Hamburg, some 30 protesters turned out in front of the Syrian consulate early Sunday, with some of them starting to tag the building's walls, eventually breaking ground floor windows and forcing their way inside, police spokeswoman Karina Sadowsky said.

Protesters smashed windows, tagged walls and broke also into office rooms on the office building's first floor, but they did not reach the consulate's rooms higher up in the building, she added.

Four Syrians were arrested and were still detained early Sunday pending verification of their visa situation, Sadowsky said.

Tammo, a 53-year-old former political prisoner, was a spokesman for the Kurdish Future Party. He was also a member of the executive committee of the newly formed Syrian National Council, a broad-based front bringing together opposition figures inside and outside the country in an attempt to unify the deeply fragmented dissident movement. □



OCTOBER 11, 2011

By the CNN Wire Staff

Two prominent Iraqi Kurdish officials blamed Syria on Monday for the death of a leading Kurdish figure in Syria who was part of the opposition's Syrian National Council.

Mashaal Tammo was "murdered by Syrian security," Barham Salih, prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, said in a tweet. "Lesson from Iraq; repression cannot defeat free will of Syria's people."

Tammo, a spokesman for the Kurdish Future Party, was shot dead Friday at a private residence in the northeastern city of Qamishli.

Mahmoud Othman, an outspoken Iraqi Kurdish member of parliament, tweeted that Tammo's assassination is a "clear example" of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's "unwillingness to reform and bloody crackdown. Demos continue till democracy is born."

Syria denies any involvement in the killing.

Iraqi Kurds blame Syria for official's death



Kurdish protesters hold pictures of Mashaal Tammo at a demonstration in Arbil, northern Iraq, on October 8, 2011.

State-run news agency SANA reported Monday that "tribes and social figures in Hasaka governorate denounced the assassination of nationalistic opposition figure Mashaal Tammo and the injuring of

his son at the hands of an armed terrorist group in Qamishli on Friday."

Throughout the Syrian uprising -- part of the larger Arab Spring that has swept through the Middle East and North Africa

-- Syria has denied cracking down on protesters, insisting its efforts are against armed terrorist gangs.

SANA also reported Monday that Foreign and Expatriates Minister Walid al-Moallem "affirmed that a terrorist group assassinated the opposition figure Mishael Tammo because he rejected the calls for foreign interference."

"His assassination aims at igniting sedition in Hasaka Province, which remained throughout the crisis an example for coexistence and tolerance," al-Moallem said, according to SANA.

The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that after Tammo's funeral, more than 50,000 people joined a mass demonstration demanding the overthrow of al-Assad's government. It said two people were killed.

The group said a 14-year-old was killed in Damascus province and 14 others were injured when security forces shot into a

funeral procession for protesters killed Friday.

The Local Coordination Committees LCC of Syria reported a different toll. It said five people were killed in Qamishli, two died in Hama, one in Douma, and one in the Damascus suburb of Dumair.

Salih told CNN Monday, "We're deeply concerned about the turn of events in Syria, the continuing murder of civilians and activists." He said violence cannot stop the "free will of the Syrian people."

Over the weekend, Catherine Ashton, the European Union's foreign affairs chief, condemned Tammo's assassination.

"Mr. Tammo's death follows other targeted assassinations in the past days, which are totally unacceptable. These appalling crimes further add to the EU's grave concern over the situation in Syria. All those responsible for and complicit in these crimes must be held accountable," she said in a prepared statement.

Tammo had previously spent more than three years as a political prisoner for his criticism of the Syrian government, the statement added.

The Turkish government also put out a statement saying it was "deeply saddened by the heinous assassination."

"We are deeply concerned by and strongly condemn the attempts to subdue the opposition in Syria and the rise in the number of assaults targeting leading opposition figures," the statement added. "A pluralist and democratic society can only be achieved through diversity of opinions. Turkey expects the Syrian administration to realize as soon as possible that the acts of violence designed to suppress the opposition in Syria, which strives to express its views through peaceful means, cannot turn back the course of history."

□□□



Iraqi Kurdistan eyes 1 mln bpd output end-2015

ARBIL, Iraq, October 13, 2011 (Reuters) - By Aseel Kami

IRAQ'S SEMI-AUTONOMOUS region of Kurdistan has an ambitious plan to produce 1 million barrels of oil per day by the end of 2015, the Kurdish ministry of natural resources said on Thursday.

The near future plan is to have the capacity to produce 200,000 bpd by the end of 2011, the ministry said.

Iraq's Kurdistan regional government has signed several agreements with foreign companies since 2007, including Norway's DNO and Turkey's Genel Enerji and China's Sinopec.

"In the space of four years we have increased production from a standing start to about 200,000 barrels per day by the end of this year," said Saad Sadollah, the ministry commercial adviser.

"We are on track for our, I guess, ambition of reaching 1 million barrel per day by 2015 and we believe we have the investments and the ability to achieve that," said Saad, addressing investors and businessmen during a financial conference held in Arbil, the capital of Kurdistan region.

In addition to the plans to increase oil production, the region also has plans to upgrade its infrastructure to cope with the production increase.

"We have two main refineries within Kurdistan producing about 60,000 barrels per day, and they are in line to reach 160,000 bpd by the end of next year," Saad added.

"Today we have at least 42 PSCs in Kurdistan; 20 companies from about 17 countries show I guess the international appetite for Kurdistan," he said.

Iraqi Kurdistan's oilfields saw little development during the Saddam Hussein era.

Since the dictator was ousted in 2003, companies from countries ranging from Turkey to China to the United States have moved into the region, even though the risks still exist.

"Over the last four years we have over 40 exploration wells and as a result of this activity we believe we have at least 45 billion barrels of oil and 100 to 200 tcf of gas which make us probably one of the top 10 or top 20 oil reserves in the world," Saad said.

The figure has not been independently verified, but if accurate, it would mean Kurdistan has more oil than the North Sea has produced over the past 40 years.

Semi-autonomous since 1991, Kurdistan has enjoyed more security than the rest of Iraq, where the central government is still fighting insurgents and militia more than eight years after the U.S. invasion that toppled Saddam.

The Kurds and Iraqi Arabs have a long territorial dispute over areas of northern Iraq, and Baghdad and the KRG still disagree over the legality of contracts signed with foreign firms and over revenue-sharing.

Peaceful Kurdistan is the envy of the rest of Iraq

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

By Anne-Beatrice Clasmann

Erbil, Iraq - In the northern Iraqi city of Erbil, a fancy shopping complex stands alongside a dusty, rubbish-strewn highway.

Family Mall has a tackily colourful dome, granite floors scrubbed to shine. Turkish fast-food restaurants and stores selling household appliances.

A group of beefy men is sitting on a bench under an artificial palm tree in the hulking emporium. They look impressed - and a bit envious.

Clad in old-fashioned trousers and jersey polo shirts, the Iraqi Arabs from Baghdad were surprised that Iraqi Kurds - once mocked as uneducated hillbillies - have created a secure society with a halfway decent infrastructure in their autonomous region.

Iraqi Kurdistan is an island of relative peace and prosperity in a country in the throes of violence and protests.

Kurdistan has also seen sporadic Arab spring-inspired protests demanding more democracy in recent months, but the rallies were never big enough to challenge the - sometimes brutal - security forces.

The local press is not allowed to operate freely, but it is not harassed as much as the press in Baghdad.

Erbil is the capital of the Kurdish autonomous region, which comprises three provinces in northern Iraq.

Many foreign companies fearing, car bombings and kidnappings in Baghdad, have opened their Iraq branch office in the greater Erbil area.

Erbil now boasts signs of international presence, such as a German school and housing complexes with names like Italian Village or American Village.

Corruption is present also in this part of Iraq, which has ranked for years as one of the five most corrupt countries in the world.



But a significantly larger portion of revenues from the country's state-run oil industry are spent on the public good in Iraqi Kurdistan than in other parts of Iraq, such as Baghdad or Karbala.

'Politicians in Baghdad pocket 85 per cent, while here it is only 40 per cent,' a young academic said in Erbil.

City Mayor Nihad Qoja, who lived for more than 20 years in Germany, knows that Iraq's Kurdish government has democratic deficits.

But he is happy that Iraqi Kurdistan has largely distanced itself from developments in the rest of the country, where terrorism and religious intolerance rule the day.

'Unfortunately, civil liberties are sometimes the price we pay for our security here in the Kurdish territory,' he said.

Few people in Iraqi Kurdistan believe that Iraq's borders will be the same in 10 years' time.

Many Kurdish politicians expect the country to disintegrate gradually into three parts after the last US soldiers withdraw at the end of this year: a Kurdish north, a Shiite south stretching to Baghdad and heavily influenced by Iran, and a Sunni-settled area encompassing territories from the Jordanian border in the west all the way to Baghdad.

Most Kurds would not shed a tear for the breakup of a centralized state if they could be sure that their national territory incorporated a sufficient number of oil fields.



'When it comes down to it, the current Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, has the same ideas and behaviour as former dictator Saddam Hussein,' said Kardo Mohammed, head of the opposition Goran (Change) faction in Iraq's Kurdish parliament.

The United States, which invaded Iraq in 2003 under the presidency of George W Bush, would see a partition of Iraq as a political defeat it inadvertently helped to bring about.

And neighbouring Turkey, which maintains excellent contacts with Iraqi Kurdistan, has reservations about a breakup eventually resulting in a rise in Kurdish nationalism in view of its own large and restive Kurdish population.

Many Iraqi observers, however, believe that Washington and Ankara can only delay - but not prevent - a partitioning of the country.

☆☆☆

Thousands of Iraqi Kurds rally in disputed city to demand right to raise Kurdish flag

YAHYA BARZANJI - Associated Press

KHANAQIN, Iraq — Thousands of Iraqi Kurds demonstrated in this northern city Sunday to demand the right to raise the Kurdish region's flag over government buildings.

The protest in Khanaqin illustrates the nagging problem over the future of the "disputed" territories — areas claimed by both the Kurds in the north and the central government in Baghdad. It illustrates one of the many serious difficulties facing Iraq, with U.S. troops set to pull out at the end of the year.

Khanaqin is in Diyala province and falls under Baghdad's authority, but a large number of the residents are Kurds and would prefer to ally themselves with the Kurdish regional government, which controls three other provinces in northern Iraq.

The right to fly the Kurdish flag is a deeply emotional issue for many who see it as a sign of independence against both the deposed Saddam Hussein regime and the current Arab-dominated government in Baghdad. In contrast, many Arabs see such attempts to fly the Kurdish flag in Khanaqin and other places as creeping expansion of Kurdish power and influence.

Thousands of people marched through the streets of Khanaqin, 90 miles (140



Iraqi Kurds carry the Kurdish region's flags in Khanaqin, 90 miles (140 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad, Iraq, Sunday, Oct. 16, 2011. Thousands of Iraqi Kurds demonstrated in this northern city Sunday to demand the right to raise the Kurdish region's flag over government buildings. (AP Photo/Yahya Ahmed) (Yahya Ahmed)

kilometers) northeast of Baghdad, waving Kurdish flags and shouting anti-government slogans.

"Khanaqin remains Kurdish," they shouted.

Sunday's demonstration was against what the protesters and the regional government said was a recent order from the central government to take down flags.

Maj. Ghalib al-Karkhi, spokesman for Diyala province police, said Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office ordered the removal of Kurdish flags from the government buildings in Khanaqin because the city does not belong to the Kurdish autonomous region. They said the order arrived about two weeks ago.

Al-Karkhi said the order was not implemented because of the protests.

An Iraqi government spokesman, Ali

al-Moussawi, would not confirm or deny the order's existence but said raising the Kurdish flag in Khanaqin is against the constitution and could increase tensions.

Schools, shops, markets and government institutions were closed. Kurdish flags could be seen on walls and flying from rooftops of houses, shops and government institutions. Police and army vehicles, taxis, buses and other vehicles were covered with Kurdish flags.

"Thousands of Kurds were martyred for the sake of this flag, so we are ready to defend this flag with our blood," said Mahmoud Sangawi, a member of the Kurdish PUK party.

A man tried to burn himself during the protest, but the crowd managed to put out the fire. □

TODAYS ZAMAN 11 October 2011

ORHAN KEMAL CENGİZ
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Can Kurds rely on the Turkish state?

The Kurdish question and the positions of political parties with regard to the conflict are becoming increasingly confusing and complex with every passing day

Is it the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that killed the peace process by suddenly increasing the violence? Or is it this government that is blocking the peace process by not having taken the bold steps needed to make real progress? As happens in all long, sustained battles and disputes, these questions have no simple answers.

In this article, though, my intention is to look at something deeper: the psychological make up of many Kurds in Turkey that creates popular support for the PKK. This psy-

chological factor also creates one of the biggest obstacles in the peace process. I think this is a question as to the reliability of the Turkish state in the eyes of the Kurds.

I have thought long and hard on this and it suddenly popped into my mind again as I was reading a long letter written by Murat Karayılan, a PKK leader, to Ahmet Altan, the editor-in-chief of the Taraf daily. Karayılan, in the middle of his letter, states: "In every stage of history, the fooling and deception of the Kurdish people by the hands of the state have practically become fate. As such, is not the saying I heard from the elders in my village when I was very young very interesting? "Dewlet be ker be jî xwe lê mekê" (don't mount the state, even if it is a donkey). We can also never forget the words of Seyit Rıza, the leader of the Dersim rebellion, the last Kurdish rebellion before our time: "I wasn't able to cope with your deception so let this be a lesson to me, and I did not kneel before you, so let that be a lesson to you." These words have formed the conclusion derived from life experience as well as the Kurds' being continually deceived by the state."

Karayılan is trying to explain why the PKK is not willing

to lay down its arms. To be honest, I do not think this is the only reason for the PKK to resist disarmament. It has quite different reasons as well. The hawks of the PKK feed themselves with all these conflicts.

I think what Karayılan said goes much further towards explaining popular support for the PKK. Kurds do not have confidence in the Turkish state, and this lack of confidence has a long history in Turkey. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, no Kurdish demand has been taken into consideration and Kurds have only come to attention when they stage uprisings, all of which have been suppressed in quite a bloody way.

Look at the last three decades in Turkey. Kurdish villages were burnt down. Their children were kidnapped and killed. Their loved ones went missing. Thousands upon thousands of Kurds were tortured. Do we now see a state that confronts this past openly and honestly? Do we see a state that apologizes to its citizens for all of these terrible things that happened? I do not have the slightest suspicion of the goodwill this government has towards solving the Kurdish question, and I have welcomed all the positive steps they have undertaken.

However, I do not think this government has ever appreciated the gravity of this problem of trust. What Karayılan refers to is the collective subconscious of the Kurdish people of Turkey, who have always felt abused and deceived. Unless a government does something about this collective subconscious, there will never be basic trust in the state, which is the most basic foundation of any peace process in any country. Because of this collective subconscious, the PKK will never completely lose support from the Kurdish people, no matter what kind of terrible things they do.

So, what we basically need to change is the relationship between the state and the Kurds in Turkey. A first step would be an honest, open apology to all Kurds for all of the terrible things they have suffered. This apology should be followed by justice in which the perpetrators are tried for their true crimes: destroying villages, kidnapping, torture and the other endless crimes they committed. Without healing these wounds, we will always be prone to disruptions of the peace process in Turkey.

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Hurriyet
DailyNews

OCTOBER 16, 2011

Turkey's first Kurdish dept opens amid political tension



Artuklu University also founded the first Kurdish department offering post-graduate work in 2009 as part of the Living Languages Institute located in a historic building.

İşıl Eğrikavuk

ISTANBUL- Hürriyet Daily News

The beginning of Turkey's first undergraduate Kurdish program has been welcomed but the development comes amid charter-related tension

Artuklu University also founded the first Kurdish department offering post-graduate work in 2009 as part of the Living Languages Institute located in a historic building.

After years of efforts, a number of rejections and strong debates, Turkey's first undergraduate-level Kurdish language and literature department is welcoming students for its first class today in the southeastern province Mardin's Artuklu University.

The beginning of the first undergraduate-level Kurdish program, which many consider a positive development,

comes at a time of recent tension over discussions on Turkey's new constitution, which are about to commence between the ruling and oppositional parties, including the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which is primarily focused on the Kurdish issue.

While tension among the delegates is expected to rise especially on the first three articles, which discuss "the characteristics of the Republic," an academic move to officially integrate Kurdish culture into Turkey's education system is already regarded as a sign of development.

"When we established the School of Eastern Languages, I had planned to set up a Kurdish Language and Literature Department and kept re-applying to YÖK [Higher Education Board]. This city is the center of upper Mesopotamia, and Kurdish [culture] is a major part of this," Artuklu University Rector Serdar Bedii

Omay said.

Employment questions

Twenty-one students have enrolled in the four-year undergraduate program, which was established at the School of Eastern Languages and Literatures.

As the academic season starts, department head Professor Kadri Yıldırım said there had been a considerable number of applications from students who have shown interest in the program. Many of them, however, are concerned about what will happen once they graduate.

"Students who have applied to the program are all keen on studying Kurdish, yet they have questions on how they will find employment opportunities," Yıldırım said.

Yıldırım said the students would likely be able to get jobs with the university as it offers Kurdish as an elective class to all students.

"There will not be any problems in employing the first-year graduates, and I also think that as other universities start opening Kurdish-language classes and once Kurdish is used in the primary education system, this department will become more popular," Yıldırım added.

Indeed, several other universities in the eastern region of Turkey such as Hakkari, Muş, Tunceli and Bingöl have also started offering Kurdish-language classes in recent years. Istanbul's Bilgi University has offered a Kurdish course since 2009 as well.

Classes such as this one are part of a wider debate in Turkey – a country in which the Constitution decrees that only

Turkish is permitted as a language for primary education. But members of other ethnic groups, especially Kurds, have been increasingly challenging this law, demanding that their native tongues also become a language of instruction.

Artuklu University founded the first Kurdish department offering post-graduate work in 2009 as part of the Living

Languages Institute.

Lack of textbooks

In the first year of Kurdish education, students will take a grammar course, a Kurdish folk literature, history of the Kurdish language and a course on Kurdish poetry. Four of the five faculty members in the program will teach the Kurmanji dialect, which is the most widely spoken

Kurdish dialect in Turkey; one professor will teach Zazaki.

Still, Yıldırım said the department lacked the necessary textbooks for the classes. "We are preparing our own books. We finished the grammar and folklore books, and for others we will go through our class notes," he said. □

Los Angeles Times

October 30, 2011

Iran praises Iraq as U.S. withdrawal nears

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says the pullout will constitute 'golden pages' in Iraq's history and credits the Iraqi people's 'unified resistance' for leading to the planned U.S. exit

By Ramin Mostaghim and Patrick J. McDonnell, Los Angeles Times

Reporting from Tehran and Beirut—

The war of words between Tehran and Washington intensified Sunday, with Iran's supreme leader crediting the "unified resistance" of the Iraqi people with having forced the U.S. military out of Iraq.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the U.S. withdrawal would constitute "golden pages" in Iraq's history, reported Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency.

"Despite the U.S. military and political presence in Iraq, and Washington's pressures on the country, all Iraq people ... said, 'No, to U.S.,' " Khamenei declared in a Tehran meeting with Massoud Barzani, president of Iraq's Kurdish region.

President Obama has announced that all 39,000 remaining combat troops in Iraq will be withdrawn by Dec. 31. Washington sought to leave some troops behind, but Baghdad refused to bow to U.S. demands for legal immunity for any remaining combat forces.

The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, ordered by then-President George W. Bush, ousted President Saddam Hussein, a secular Sunni Muslim and archenemy of the theocratic, Shiite-run Iran. Hussein's fall paved the way for the rise in Baghdad of a Shiite-led power bloc with close ties to Iran.

The withdrawal from Iraq after almost nine years has now become a political issue in the United States.

Some Republicans and others have said

Children gather around a U.S. soldier standing guard outside a public school in the town of Iskandariya, south of Baghdad, where American troops were donating books and other supplies to students. (Ali al-Saadi, AFP/Getty Images / October 30, 2011)



the move opens the door to further meddling by neighboring Iran. The Obama administration denies that the withdrawal represents a geopolitical defeat and has issued several thinly veiled warnings to Iran against interfering in Iraq's affairs.

"The message to Iran and everybody else that might have any ideas there is that the U.S. is going to have a presence in the region for a long time to come," Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said last week.

But Panetta's admonitions and other declarations by Washington have been greeted with ridicule in Tehran. The Iranian defense minister, Ahmad Vahidi, said Sunday that Panetta's comments were an effort to conceal "U.S. desperation and its failure."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's announcement last week that Washington would create a "virtual embassy" to reach out to Iranians was denounced by Iran's parliamentary speaker, Ali Larijani, as "mistaking diplomacy with a toy."

The escalating rhetoric over Iraq appears to reflect the heightened ten-

sions between adversaries Iran and the U.S., which have been at ideological loggerheads since the 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the shah of Iran, a longtime U.S. ally.

This month, U.S. authorities linked Iran to an alleged assassination-for-hire plot to kill Saudi Arabia's U.S. ambassador, with the help of Mexican drug hit men. Tehran has denied involvement in the alleged conspiracy and derided the charges as implausible. Washington is seeking European support for a new round of sanctions against Iran in response to the alleged plot.

The Obama administration has called for Iran's close ally, Syrian President Bashar Assad, to step down after months of antigovernment demonstrations and a government crackdown there. Iran has stood by Assad and denounced what it calls foreign plotting against Syria.

Tehran and Washington have also clashed over Iran's nuclear aims. Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes and has denied Western charges that it is trying to develop a nuclear weapon. ○

AFP

Une licence de langue et littérature kurdes pour la première fois en Turquie

ANKARA, 17 octobre 2011 (AFP)

UNE UNIVERSITÉ du sud-est de la Turquie, zone peuplée en majorité de Kurdes, a ouvert lundi une licence de langue et littérature kurdes, une première qui s'inscrit dans le cadre des efforts du gouvernement d'octroyer plus de droits à cette importante minorité.

"Aujourd'hui (lundi), nous commençons des cours de licence (quatre ans) en langue et littérature kurdes", a indiqué à l'AFP le professeur Kadri Yildirim, chef de ce département à l'Université Artuklu, dans la province de Mardin.

Vint-et-un étudiants --huit femmes et 13 hommes-- sont inscrits pour cette licence, la première en Turquie.

Des cours optionnels de kurde ont été ouverts dans le passé par plusieurs universités en Turquie, notamment dans le sud-est, mais aucune université n'avait encore créé une licence de langue et littérature kurdes.

Le gouvernement turc a ces dernières années octroyé d'importants droits aux 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, dans l'espoir de mettre fin à une rébellion armée, et pour augmenter les chances de la Turquie d'intégrer l'Union européenne (UE).

Le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu



de la mouvance islamiste) a promis d'élargir les libertés individuelles par des réformes législatives, tout en luttant avec des moyens militaires contre les séparatistes kurdes.

Mais le conflit kurde a repris de plus belle depuis l'été après une accalmie, avec une multiplication des attaques des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Le Point 24 octobre 2011

Des soldats turcs entrés en Irak se dirigent vers des camps du PKK

DIYARBAKIR-(AFP) — Des unités de l'armée turque ont pénétré lundi dans le nord de l'Irak pour se diriger vers des camps des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), ont annoncé des sources sécuritaires à Diyarbakir, dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Une vingtaine de chars et une trentaine de camions militaires sont entrés en Irak à partir du village de Siyahkaya et se dirigeaient vers les bases des séparatistes kurdes de Turquie situées dans la vallée d'Haftanin, ont précisé ces sources.

Des hélicoptères de l'armée turque ont parallèlement transporté des soldats vers la région de Zap, selon les mêmes sources.

L'armée de l'air turque a bombardé la région d'Haftanin, où sont supposés se trouver les repaires d'environ 400 rebelles du PKK, un centre de commandement, des unités logistiques et des dépôts de munitions des séparatistes, a-t-on ajouté.

Les forces turques veulent aussi atteindre la région de Sinaht, limi-



trophe de celle d'Haftanin dans le nord de l'Irak, où se trouvent, selon Ankara, d'importantes bases du PKK.

L'agence de presse Firatnews, un média à travers lequel le PKK s'exprime habituellement, a confirmé lundi que l'armée turque était passée en Irak à partir de la région de Siyahkaya et que, pour progresser, les soldats turcs avaient fait passer des ponts mobiles sur une rivière, l'Hezil.

Cette offensive de l'armée turque en territoire irakien constitue une riposte aux attaques multiples menées par plus de 200 rebelles mardi soir contre des postes militaires turcs situés à la frontière de l'Irak, qui ont coûté la vie à 24 militaires turcs et en ont blessé 18.

Il s'agit des plus lourdes pertes de

l'armée turque depuis 1993 dans sa lutte contre les séparatistes kurdes.

Environ 10.000 hommes sont engagés dans l'opération actuelle de l'armée des deux côtés de la frontière turco-irakienne, selon les sources sécuritaires turques.

Vendredi, l'armée avait annoncé dans un communiqué avoir mis hors d'état de nuire 49 rebelles kurdes. Aucun autre bilan n'a été publié depuis.

Une intervention de l'armée turque en territoire irakien était évoquée depuis l'été dernier lorsque le PKK, considéré comme "terroriste" par bon nombre de pays, avait repris les armes après une période d'accalmie.

Le conflit, qui a démarré en 1984, a fait plus de 45.000 morts.

La dernière grande intervention de l'armée turque dans le nord de l'Irak en territoire kurde, largement autonome des autorités de Bagdad, remonte à février 2008.

□ □ □

L'opposant syrien Michel Kilo s'inquiète de la désintégration qui guette son pays

Cet intellectuel respecté, incarcéré à plusieurs reprises, préfère la « réforme » à la « guerre civile »

Rencontre

Michel Kilo est un opposant indépendant. Indépendant du pouvoir syrien, qui l'a emprisonné à deux reprises de 1980 à 1983 puis de 2006 à 2009, autant que des partis d'opposition qu'il fréquente tous sans adhérer à aucun. A 71 ans, il est un intellectuel écouté et respecté, d'autant plus qu'il vit à Damas, où ses prises de position peuvent lui valoir de retourner en prison, et qu'il est chrétien, communauté dont il dénonce la passivité et la complaisance – surtout celles de la hiérarchie religieuse – envers les exactions du régime du président Bachar Al-Assad.

De passage à Paris, M. Kilo a accordé un entretien au *Monde* dans lequel il décrit « une situation bloquée où le peuple demande la chute du régime, mais n'a pas les moyens de le faire partir, et où le régime veut faire rentrer les gens chez eux, mais n'en a pas les moyens non plus ». Ce bras de fer mortifère pourrait conduire le pays à une « destruction de l'Etat » et à « une guerre civile », s'inquiète-t-il alors que 9 personnes ont été tuées, dimanche 16 octobre, et que la mobilisation contre le régime a connu un regain ce week-end.

Mais Michel Kilo estime que le pouvoir porte seul la responsabilité de cette situation et que, « s'il ne fait pas de vraie réforme, il finira par tomber. Ce qui se passe depuis sept mois n'est pas le fait d'un parti ou d'un complot, c'est la société tout entière qui a pris son sort entre ses mains pour proclamer son indépendance ».

Inlassable défenseur d'un changement pacifique, M. Kilo a pu paraître dépassé alors que 3 000 Syriens sont morts depuis le 15 mars du fait de la répression, selon les Nations unies, et que les incidents armés se multiplient avec l'accroissement des désertions dans l'armée. Ce qui guette

désormais son pays est une désintégration dont ni le pouvoir ni les Syriens ne profiteront, selon lui.

M. Kilo est mieux placé que quiconque pour savoir combien le régime baasiste répugne à se réformer. Acteur majeur du « printemps de Damas », qui a suivi l'arrivée au pouvoir du président Bachar Al-Assad après la mort de

« C'est la société tout entière qui a pris son sort entre ses mains »

Michel Kilo

son père, en juin 2000, il a vu la porte se refermer sur les doigts des démocrates, qui avaient osé croire aux promesses de libéralisation et de lutte contre la corruption lancées par le jeune chef de l'Etat. En 2005, le régime ne lui a pas pardonné d'avoir contribué à la rédaction de la Déclaration de Damas, une plate-forme signée par un large spectre de l'opposition syrienne, y compris les Frères musulmans, que M. Kilo, ancien communiste et tenant de la gauche laïque, ne voit pas comme un danger.

Jeté en prison de 2006 à 2009 malgré son âge avancé, Michel Kilo n'a pas abandonné sa foi dans le dialogue. A tel point qu'il a pu être taxé de naïveté quand, en 2005, il a discuté, au moment du dernier congrès du parti Baas, des réformes à entreprendre.

Au début de la crise actuelle, M. Kilo a rencontré Bouthaina Shaaban, la conseillère du président Assad. Il lui a dit : « Vous êtes comme un homme sous une cascade qui essaie de vider l'eau avec une petite cuillère. » Chaque réforme annoncée – le multipartisme, l'abolition de l'état d'urgence – a été suivie d'une escalade dans la répression. Quand, en juin, le pouvoir a invité une partie de l'opposition à un « dialogue national », sans retirer les chars ni l'armée qui conti-



Michel Kilo, le 11 octobre à Paris. LIONEL BONAVENTURE/AFP

naient de tuer quotidiennement, il a refusé de servir de couverture à « l'option militaire ».

Alors que le président Assad annonce une nouvelle Constitution d'ici quatre mois, il maintient sa ligne nuancée consistant à « parler avec tout le monde et à travailler avec tout le monde ». N'est-ce pas trop tard ? « Si la Syrie va à la guerre civile, je préfère la réforme, même limitée. Mais une réforme qui prépare une transition, c'est-à-dire qu'il faut qu'elle assure la liberté de la presse, l'abolition de l'article 8 de la Constitution [qui donne au Baas un rôle dirigeant dans la société], la redistribution de la richesse nationale et, bien sûr, avant tout, le démantèlement de l'Etat sécuritaire. » Mais il n'écarte pas, dans cette proposition, la possibilité d'une opération de relations publiques destinée à conforter la position de plus en plus malaisée de la Russie, dont il dit « ne rien attendre », et de la Chine, depuis leur veto à une résolution au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU.

Tout en rejetant la responsabilité de l'internationalisation de la crise syrienne sur le régime, Michel Kilo s'inquiète des débats en cours

sur des sanctions internationales. « Je ne veux pas que les Syriens perdent le contrôle de leur pays et de leur indépendance », déclare celui qui, durant son séjour français, dit n'avoir prévu aucun rendez-vous avec des diplomates. Une prudence dictée par le fait qu'il a l'intention de rentrer dans son pays.

A égale distance entre les deux principales instances de l'opposition – le Conseil national syrien et le Comité national de coordination pour le changement démocratique, qui s'accusent mutuellement d'être inféodés aux islamistes et à l'étranger pour le premier ou à Damas pour le second –, Michel Kilo ne veut appartenir ni à l'une ni à l'autre afin de conserver sa liberté. « L'opposition de l'extérieur a adopté le slogan de la chute du régime, ce qui n'est pas encore le cas de celle de l'intérieur », souligne-t-il. Lui désire « la chute du régime baasiste et sécuritaire dans ses institutions et ses symboles. Ceux qui ne partagent pas cet objectif doivent partir. Ce n'est pas une question de personne. Le Baas continuera de jouer un rôle dans la Syrie de demain. » S'il n'est pas trop tard. ■

CHRISTOPHE AYAD

Lawyer: Ocalan Can Convince PKK to Disarm

By HEMIN KHOSHNAW / RUDAW

A lawyer for Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) founder Abdullah Ocalan maintains that if the jailed Kurdish leader is transferred from a prison on Imrali Island, he will be able to disarm the rebel group.

Aysel Tugluk, who is also an MP from the Peace Democracy Party (BDP), recently wrote in an article in the Turkish newspaper Radikal, "If Ocalan is transferred to house arrest, he will order the PKK to lay down their arms," she argued that the step would help peacefully solve the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Nursel Aydogan, another BDP MP, asserted that Ocalan's freedom is vital in solving the Kurdish issue.

"In order to continue talks with Qandil (the PKK's base) and other relevant parties, it's necessary to transfer Ocalan to house arrest in the future," Aydogan said.

Aydogan, who is a Turk, argued that from his solitary confinement in Imrali Ocalan can't easily work on settling Kurdish issues.

Last summer, former Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani suggested in an interview with the Turkish media that open negotiations should be conducted with Ocalan and that he should be transferred from the isolated prison where he is being held. In addition, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani told Kurdish



Aysel Tugluk.

Leyla Zana during her visit to Kurdistan region last month that it is important to change Ocalan's prison conditions.

Regarding transferring Ocalan to house arrest, Aydogan maintained, "It isn't just the BDP's suggestion; it is instead the recommendation of civil rights organizations, the Turkish National Security Council and democracy advocates."

Turkish authorities have always made the disarmament of the PKK a condition for talks with the group, while PKK leaders have insisted on a political agreement and peace pact before laying down their weapons.

Roj Welat, a leading member of the PKK, told Rudaw that disarmament is the "final step" in peace talks.

Welat said, "The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has solved all of the Kurdish problems verbally, but practically speaking they haven't taken a single step, and they keep

asking for the PKK's disarmament."

Welat likened Turkey's demand for the PKK to disarm to that of Iraq's former ruler Saddam Hussein, who announced amnesty for the Kurdish Peshmarga but jailed, tortured and killed many rebel fighters.

Regarding Tugluk's article in the Radikal on changing Ocalan's prison conditions, Welat agreed that changing his current situation would be a good step, but the AKP government must also consider Ocalan's recommendations for peace.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim Karagul, an expert on Kurdish affairs and columnist for Yeni Safak, believes the PKK has always been an obstacle to improving Ocalan's conditions.

He noted that the PKK turned to violence in June, shortly after Ocalan and the Turkish authorities were making progress in peace talks. Turkey, which along with the United States and the European Union considers the PKK a terrorist organization, has denied widespread reports that it was communicating with Ocalan.

Karagul told Rudaw, "Just when the peace talks between Ocalan and high-level Turkish officials had reached the peak, PKK launched the Farqin attacks (on the Turkish army) and ruined everything."

Karagul argued that transferring Ocalan from prison to a house in the countryside would stir anger among the public, which is virulently anti-PKK.

"The public has to be prepared for such a step," he said.

Ocalan said in July, that he had spoken with government officials about a transfer. ■



U.S., Iraq at impasse over troops

BAGHDAD, October 17, 2011 (UPI)

WASHINGTON AND BAGHDAD haven't reached any breakthrough on issues related to immunity for U.S. military trainers, a military official said.

Washington is making preparations to withdraw the estimated 40,000 troops remaining in Iraq by the end of December.

A senior U.S. military official in Iraq told CNN on condition of anonymity that a combat brigade was returning to the United States early in part because of issues related to legal immunity.

Iraqi officials had said they opposed immunity after Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was given the authority to negotiate for a continued military presence to help train Iraq's armed forces.

Officials said a majority of the discussions with Iraq are over but Pentagon spokesman George Little was quoted as saying that talks regarding the final decision on the U.S. military role in Iraq "are ongoing."

A protester in the eastern Iraqi city of Khanaqin set himself on fire, but lived, to protest orders from Baghdad to remove the Kurdish flag from government institutions. Diliar Hassan, a Kurdish lawmaker on the Diyala provincial council, told the Voices of Iraq news agency about 20,000 people across the country turned out to protest the central government's decision.

Arabs, Kurds and ethnic minority groups sprinkled throughout Iraq's north are squabbling over access to oil, autonomy and the disputed territories, a swath of land stretching from Sinjar in the northwest to Khanaqin in the north of Diyala province.

Le PKK relance la guerre contre l'armée turque

GUÉRILLA Au moins 24 soldats ont été tués par les rebelles kurdes hier à la frontière irakienne.

Ce sont parmi les plus lourdes pertes en une seule journée infligées à l'armée turque par les combattants du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), qui mènent la lutte armée contre Ankara depuis 1984 dans le sud-est du pays, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Au moins 24 soldats turcs ont été tués et 18 autres blessés hier dans huit opérations menées simultanément par la guérilla kurde contre des postes de l'armée surveillant la frontière avec l'Irak dans les montagnes de la province de Hakkari. L'armée turque a aussitôt lancé des opérations de poursuites pour tenter d'intercepter les rebelles se repliant vers leurs sanctuaires dans les monts de Qandil. Selon les communiqués de l'état-major, une quinzaine de combattants kurdes ont été tués par les commandos d'interception et les bombardements.

Choc. «Personne n'oubliera cela, ceux qui nous ont infligé cette douleur connaîtront une douleur encore plus grande»,



a martelé le chef de l'Etat, Abdullah Gül. Le choc est d'autant plus fort qu'il s'agit de la plus sanglante attaque du PKK depuis 1993, lorsque les rebelles avaient fusillé 33 soldats désarmés. Le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a clamé à nouveau sa détermination à combattre le terrorisme et à mener «des opérations d'envergure au-delà de la frontière, comme l'autorise le droit international». Mais le leader charismatique de l'AKP, parti islam-conservateur au pouvoir depuis 2002, a aussi souligné la nécessité de continuer le processus de démocratisation. «La Turquie peut sortir de cette polarisation par une nouvelle Constitution basée

sur la tolérance», a insisté Cemil Cicek, président du Parlement.

«La Turquie peut sortir de cette polarisation par une nouvelle Constitution basée sur la tolérance.»

Cemil Cicek président du Parlement

L'opposition de gauche du CHP, par la voix de son leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, appelle pour sa part très clairement à trouver une solution politique et à reconnaître des droits collectifs – langue, culture, décentralisation, voire autonomie – aux 13 millions de Kurdes de ce pays de 70 millions d'habitants. Les diverses promesses «d'ouverture kurde» lancées par l'AKP sont jusqu'ici restées lettre morte et plus de 4 500 militants et élus kurdes sont actuellement sous les verrous.

Revendiquée par le PKK qui menace de frapper «encore plus fort», cette attaque risque d'accélérer l'escalade,

alors même que les affrontements entre la guérilla et l'armée se sont intensifiés depuis l'été. En juillet, les très discrètes négociations entamées par Hikmet Fidan, le patron des services secrets turcs et proche d'Erdogan, avec des représentants du PKK et leur leader historique, Abdullah Ocalan, emprisonné depuis 1999, avaient finalement capoté. Le PKK a décidé en septembre de rendre publics ces contacts au plus haut niveau commencés en 2006, alors que le gouvernement affir-

mais qu'il était hors de question de discuter avec les terroristes.

Nuisance. Recep Tayyip Erdogan a reconnu les faits et affirmé qu'il

était prêt à reprendre de telles discussions. C'est un tournant important, alors que les élus kurdes du BDP, considéré comme la vitrine politique de la guérilla, ont fait leur retour au Parlement. Mais la rébellion intensifie ses opérations pour rappeler son pouvoir de nuisance et être en position de force. Le «modèle turc», mêlant dynamisme économique et démocratie, serait singulièrement écorné en cas de nouvel embrasement de la question kurde.

MARC SEMO

AFP

Irak: tensions à Khanaqine, ville au coeur du conflit arabo-kurde

Khanaqine (Irak), 16 octobre 2011 (AFP)

DES CENTAINES de personnes ont protesté dimanche dans la ville de Khanaqine (150 km au nord-est de Bagdad) contre un arrêté gouvernemental bannissant le drapeau kurde de ses bâtiments officiels, dans une zone où les tensions entre Arabes et Kurdes sont vives.

Khanaqine fait partie d'une vaste portion de territoire irakien que se disputent les autorités centrales du pays et celles de la région autonome du Kurdistan. Ce conflit latent est souvent présenté par les Américains comme l'un des principaux risques pesant sur la stabilité à long terme de l'Irak.

Environ 700 manifestants ont défilé depuis le centre-ville jus- qu'aux bâtiments des autorités locales, en criant "Vive le Kurdistan !" ou "Khanaqine est kurde !", selon un journaliste de l'AFP sur place.

Ils brandissaient des drapeaux de la région kurde et exigeaient que les bâtiments officiels de la ville soient omés des drapeaux irakien et kurde. Ils réclamaient aussi des excuses de la part du Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, qui a signé l'interdiction du drapeau kurde.

La municipalité, qui a reçu mardi l'arrêt gouvernemental interdisant l'utilisation des drapeaux kurdes, se refuse à l'appliquer, a indiqué le maire de Khanaqine, Mohammed al-Mullah Hamed.

Samedi, le président du Parlement kurde, Kamal Kirkuki, a pour sa part jugé "inacceptable de violer le caractère sacré du drapeau kurde".

Les autorités du Kurdistan irakien souhaitent intégrer Khanaqine et une vaste bande de terre connue sous le nom de "territoires disputés" dans leur région, ce à quoi s'oppose Bagdad. Le conflit remonte à leur arabisation forcée au début des années 1990 par l'ancien président Saddam Hussein.

Les tensions ont connu un pic fin février lorsque des peshmergas (combattants kurdes) ont fait avancer leurs forces vers la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk (nord), disant vouloir protéger la ville alors que des manifestations secouaient tout le pays. Ils se sont finalement retirés fin mars.

Des attaques du PKK tuent 24 soldats en Turquie

En réponse, une opération terrestre d'envergure est imminente dans le Kurdistan irakien.

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

RÉBELLION L'assaut d'hier est le plus meurtrier depuis quasiment deux décennies. Les attaques du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) contre des positions militaires dans la province de Hakkari, le long de la frontière avec l'Irak, ont tué 24 soldats turcs et fait 18 blessés. Selon les premières informations, une centaine de rebelles kurdes a pris d'assaut dans la nuit sept casernes et postes militaires, situés dans cette zone en altitude difficile d'accès, et les combats à l'arme automatique ont duré jusqu'au matin. L'armée turque a annoncé avoir tué quinze rebelles dans

la région. Les F16 de l'armée stationnés dans le sud-est du pays ont immédiatement décollé et bombardé les montagnes du Kurdistan irakien où sont installés les camps du PKK.

Selon les autorités turques, des soldats ont franchi la frontière à la poursuite des attaquants qui regagnaient leur base. Des commandos ont également été hélicoptérés à 8 km à l'intérieur de l'Irak. En tout, un demi-millier de militaires serait engagé sur le territoire irakien.

Ce bilan sanglant a mis Ankara en état d'alerte. Le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, qui revient d'une tournée à la frontière turco-irakienne pour remonter le moral des troupes, a assuré que « la ven-

4 168
militants
kurdes
ont été arrêtés
ces six derniers
mois



geance (serait) terrible ». Annulant un déplacement au Kazakhstan, le premier ministre a convoqué plusieurs membres du gouvernement et de l'état-major pour une réunion de crise. Ceux qui soutiennent « les terroristes (...) sentiront le soufflé de l'État sur leur nuque », a menacé Recep Tayyip Erdogan à la sortie. Il n'a cependant pas cédé à une surenchère va-t-en-guerre, indiquant qu'une opération terrestre d'envergure dans le Kurdistan irakien était imminente : « Si quiconque échoue à maîtriser sa colère (...), l'organisation terroriste atteindra son but. Nous ne perdrons ni notre calme ni notre patience. » Mardi, le KRG, le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien, a commencé l'évacuation des ci-

vils des zones de Kakurk et de Qandil, sous contrôle du PKK. La mesure est perçue comme un signe d'une intervention turque.

Au mois d'août, le ministère des Affaires étrangères avait déclaré que des grandes manœuvres au sol pouvaient être « lancées à tout moment ». Active depuis 1984, la rébellion autonomiste kurde a repris les armes contre l'État turc à la mi-juin. Ses attaques sont quasi quotidiennes. Mardi, cinq policiers et trois civils

ont trouvé la mort lorsqu'une mine télécommandée a explosé, dans le Sud-Est. Depuis août, les bombardements turcs se sont également intensifiés dans les montagnes irakiennes.

« Les dernières attaques, coordonnées et simultanées, montrent une énorme faiblesse de la sécurité et du renseignement turcs, qui ont été incapables de repérer l'infiltration de cent combattants », relève Kadri Gürsel, journaliste au quotidien Milliyet. Pour ce spécialiste du PKK, l'organisation rebelle montre « une attitude jusqu'au-boutiste et pousse la Turquie à s'engager dans une opération terrestre, qui serait très risquée ». Le PKK, via l'agence pro-kurde Firat, a revendiqué les attaques aux confins du pays, expliquant qu'il s'agissait d'une réponse aux agressions de l'armée turque contre ses combattants et à la répression visant le mouvement kurde en Turquie. Ces six derniers mois, 4 168 militants kurdes ont été arrêtés. Si l'armée turque s'engage massivement dans le Kurdistan, elle sera « frappée encore plus fort », a déclaré Ahmet Deniz, un porte-parole du PKK. ■



Irak: la province de Salaheddine vote pour son autonomie

TIKRIT (Irak), 27 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE CONSEIL PROVINCIAL de la région de Salaheddine, à majorité sunnite, a voté jeudi en faveur de son autonomie administrative et économique, sur le modèle du Kurdistan, selon un communiqué du Conseil.

Cette décision doit toutefois être soumise à un référendum populaire dans cette région du nord de Bagdad.

"Nous annonçons que la majorité du Conseil provincial a voté en faveur de la proclamation de Salaheddine comme région administrative et économique", a déclaré le secrétaire général de l'institution Niyazi Oglou, cité dans le communiqué.

Pour Ahmed Abdallah, le gouverneur de la province, ce vote est avant tout un

vote de contestation, après des arrestations menées par les forces de sécurité irakiennes.

"La raison principale de cette décision, ce sont les arrestations menées par le gouvernement central contre les fils de la province, sans coordination ni consultation avec nous", a-t-il déclaré, accusant également le gouvernement central de priver la région de ressources financières.

Selon la police de Tikrit, les forces de sécurité irakiennes ont arrêté dimanche soir 30 membres présumés du parti Baas de l'ancien président Saddam Hussein, dans un coup de filet mené dans plusieurs régions.

L'article 119 de la Constitution irakienne garantit qu'un ou plusieurs gouvernements ont le droit de s'organiser en région en s'appuyant sur une requête qui doit être approuvée par référendum.

Seul le Kurdistan (nord), qui regroupe les provinces d'Erbil, de Dohouk et de Souleimaniyeh, a actuellement le statut de région autonome en Irak.

Tehran's foes, unfairly maligned

Mujahedeen Khalq should be removed from the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations.

Louis J. Freeh

WASHINGTON As the United States tries to halt Iran's nuclear program and prepares to withdraw troops from Iraq, American voters should ask why the Obama administration has bent to the will of Tehran's mullahs and their Iraqi allies on a key issue: the fate of 3,400 unarmed members of the exiled Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen Khalq who are living in Camp Ashraf, north of Baghdad.

The government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, has brazenly murdered members of the Mujahedeen Khalq. Mr. Maliki justifies his attacks by noting that the group is on the United States' official list of foreign terrorist organizations.

In April, Iraqi forces entered Camp Ashraf and fatally shot or ran over 34 residents and wounded hundreds more. Mr. Maliki has now given the Mujahedeen Khalq until Dec. 31 to close the camp and disperse its residents throughout Iraq.

Without forceful American and United Nations intervention to protect the camp's residents and a decision by the U.S. State Department to remove Mujahedeen Khalq's official designation as a terrorist group, an even larger attack on the camp or a massacre of its residents elsewhere in Iraq is likely.

This situation is the direct result of the State Department's misconceived attempt to cripple the Mujahedeen

Khalq by labeling it a terrorist organization, beginning in 1997. At the time, I was director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I concluded that this was part of a fruitless political ploy to encourage a dialogue with Tehran. There was no credible evidence then, nor has there been since, that the group posed any threat to the United States.

Tragically, the State Department's unjustified terrorist label makes the Mujahedeen Khalq's enemies in Tehran and Baghdad feel as if they have a license to kill and to trample on the written guarantees of protection given to the Ashraf residents by the United States. And Tehran's kangaroo courts also delight in the terrorist designation as an excuse to arrest, torture and murder anyone who threatens the mullahs' regime.

For better or worse, the State Depart-

ment often makes politically motivated designations, which is why the Irish Republican Army was never put on the list (despite the F.B.I.'s recommendation). Similarly, Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army in Iraq and the Haqqani terrorist network in Pakistan — both of which have murdered many Americans — have successfully avoided being listed.

During my tenure as F.B.I. director, I refused to allocate bureau resources to investigating the Mujahedeen Khalq, because I concluded, based on the evidence, that the designation was unfounded and that the group posed no threat to American security.

I did, however, object to the State Department's politically motivated insistence that the F.B.I. stop fingerprinting Iranian wrestlers, and intelligence op-

eratives posing as athletes, when the wrestlers were first invited to the United States in a good-will gesture.

And the F.B.I. did try, unsuccessfully, to focus the Clinton administration on the threat posed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, which exported terrorism and committed or orchestrated acts of war against America, including the 1996 Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 American airmen. We learned from prosecu-

For better or worse, the State Department often makes politically motivated designations.

tors on Tuesday that a unit of the corps plotted to murder the Saudi ambassador in Washington.

Some critics call the Mujahedeen Khalq a dangerous cult. But since leaving office, I have carefully reviewed the facts and stand by the conclusion that the Mujahedeen Khalq is not a terrorist organization and should be removed from the State Department's list immediately.

Many of the most knowledgeable and respected terrorism experts in the world have come to the same conclusion. (Though I have on some occasions received speaker's fees or travel expenses from sympathizers of the Mujahedeen Khalq, my objective analysis as a career law enforcement officer is the only basis for my conclusions.)

Britain and the European Union have already acted on the evidence, removing the Mujahedeen Khalq from their sanctions lists in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

The British court reviewing the Mujahedeen Khalq dossier went so far as to call the terrorist designation "perverse."

The Mujahedeen Khalq is now led by a charismatic and articulate woman, Maryam Rajavi, who enjoys significant support in European governments. In 2001, the Mujahedeen Khalq renounced violence and ceased military action against the Iranian regime. And in 2003, the group voluntarily handed over its weapons to American forces in Iraq and has since provided the United States with valuable intelligence regarding Iran's nuclear weapons program. By the State Department's own guidelines, Mujahedeen Khalq should be delisted.

Yet Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the White House have balked at delisting the group and protecting its members at Camp Ashraf, despite bipartisan calls for action.

Incredibly, as our duty to protect the camp's residents reaches a critical stage, the State Department offers only silence and delay. The secretary is still "reviewing" the designation nearly 15 months after the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington ruled that the department had broken the law by failing to accord the Mujahedeen Khalq due process when listing it as a terrorist group. Mrs. Clinton has not complied with the court's order to indicate "which sources she regards as sufficiently credible" to justify this life-threatening designation. The reason is clear: there is no evidence.

LOUIS J. FREEH was director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1993 to 2001.

Take in Erbil, Iraq's Dubai

The National / UAE
Mariwan Salihi

Why Erbil?

Erbil is the Iraq you don't know about from the news. Spared from the carnage seen elsewhere in the country, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region calls itself - with a mix of aspiration and optimism - "the second Dubai", because of the many new shopping malls, five-star hotels and skyscrapers under construction.

But, unlike Dubai, humans have lived here for nearly 10,000 years, making it one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. Erbil has also been capturing the world's attention for all the right reasons, with National Geographic and The New York Times both listing Kurdistan as a top travel destination for 2011.

The city's heart is Erbil Citadel (www.erbilcitadel.org), sited on a naturally defendable 10-ha plateau, which explains why the Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Sassanids, Medes, Romans, Abbasids, Ottomans and others have all based themselves here. The citadel is undergoing renovation with assistance from Unesco, ahead of a projected World Heritage Site listing, but parts remain open to tourists.

A comfortable bed

The latest entrant in Erbil's five-star market is the Park Hotel (www.divan.com.tr; 00 964 750 128 5908) opposite Sami Abdulrahman Park on Gulan Road. Scheduled to open next month, it will be home to QH 21 Sushi and Grill Bar (the first of its kind in Iraq), Seasons World Cuisine (with live cooking stations), Chopin Piano Bar and Saray Pastries, among others. It will also house the biggest in-hotel spa and gym in Iraq.

Rooms are projected to cost from US\$255 (Dh937) per night, including taxes.

Nearby is the Erbil Rotana Hotel (www.rotana.com; 00 964 66 210 55 55); its restaurants offer international, Italian and Lebanese cuisine, a piano bar, and a swimming pool for the summer months. Prices start from \$410 (Dh1,506) per night.

For those on a tighter budget, the three-star Dim Dim Hotel on 30 M Street (00 964 750 445 8372) is close to the ancient citadel. Double rooms cost from \$117 (Dh671), including breakfast, internet and taxes.

Find your feet

Most of the city's downtown area is easily explored on foot. After seeing the citadel's main attractions, including the Kurdish Textile Museum (www.kurdishtextilemuseum.com), head to the Qaysari Bazaar in the downtown area, which has been recently reconstructed using traditional architecture, for organic Kurdish cheese or honey and to buy souvenirs such as kalash (hand-made white Kurdish shoes). Cool down at the fountains in the Parki Shar (City Park), then visit the famous Machko Chaykhana, the historic teahouse located at the foot of the citadel, which has been a traditional meeting point for the city's intellectuals and journalists.

The city's rich history is chronicled in the small Erbil Civilization Museum on Salam Barzani Street (admission free; open from 9am to 1.30pm, closed on Friday). Frustratingly, the 3,500 artefacts are housed in inadequate display cases, often with mislabelled and misspelt English labels. The staff act bored and appear ill-informed.



The city's newly renovated downtown area, with the ancient Erbil Citadel in the background. Mariwan Salihi for The National

On the way to the airport is the suburb of Ainkawa, with a predominantly Assyrian Christian population who speak neo-Aramaic, and an Assyrian museum.

Meet the locals

Erbilis love to picnic in their city's many large parks. The sprawling Sami Abdulrahman Park, with rose gardens, lakes, restaurants, cafes, a large public library and several large statues of famous Kurds, is one of the most beautiful in the Middle East. Minaret Park (named after the ancient Mudhafaria, or Choly minaret, located inside the park) is a place to share a cabin on the Erbil Teleferique (cable car) with the residents and head to the adjacent Shanidar Park. A one-way ride costs around \$7 (Dh26) per cabin and takes only 15 minutes - enough to learn some Kurdish phrases.

Book a table

Erbil's multi-ethnic population is reflected in its dining, with specialist restaurants spanning the culinary spectrum. Kurdish-Iraqi food is itself a mix of influences from Turkey, Persia, India, Greece, Lebanon and Syria. Erbil considers itself the kebab capital of Iraq, and you can judge the veracity of that at Abu Shahab City (near Naz City, on Gulan Road), a large complex with several buildings that offer fast food and local

cuisine. Its Iraqi grill (kebab, chicken tikka and more) is delicious, but nothing beats their famous speciality, quzi sham, a biryani dish with meat and chicken, all covered with a layer of fried pastry. A meal for two usually costs around \$50 (Dh184).

Shopper's paradise

Retail-therapy options range from the 13th-century bazaar to five swanky, Dubai-style malls. Family Mall on 100 M Road has Iraq's first Carrefour hypermarket, while the newly built Majidi Mall (www.majidimall.com) on Koya Road has the broadest range of international brands. Another 20 malls are planned for Erbil, which aspires to be one of the top shopping destinations in the Middle East.

What to avoid

Erbil is secular and liberal, and probably one of the more tolerant areas in the wider Middle East. But, as throughout the region, it's still wise to dress modestly.

Don't miss

Surprisingly for many first-time visitors, Erbil offers an unforgettable nightlife experience in Ainkawa. Order shisha and drinks at the Mamounia Sky Bar at Noble Hotel (www.fairouz-group.com) while taking in the breathtaking night panorama of Erbil's modern and ancient skyline. □

Syria's Kurds Growing more restive

THE assassination on October 7th of Mashaal Tammo, a Kurdish activist, in Qamishli, a town in northern Syria, has outraged Syria's Kurdish population. Mr Tammo was a founding member of the Syrian National Council and a respected opposition figure who, like many, had been jailed by the Syrian regime.

A video (this contains graphic images) of Mr Tammo's body has been uploaded on YouTube. "One, two, three, four bullets," counts a Kurdish voice off-screen. Switching into Arabic, the speaker points to Mr Tammo's wounds. "You and your mob are not worth a hair on Tammo's head", he continues, castigating the Syrian president, Bashar Assad.

Syria's Kurds were initially reluctant to join the uprising that has rocked the country since March, concerned that the regime might



crackdown on them with particular ferocity. Conscious that Kurdish involvement could divide the opposition, some have discouraged and dispersed any rallies.

Kurdish participation in protests has been growing but last week's demonstrations mark a turning point. One Kurdish human-rights activist, Azad

Dêwanî, says, that Mr Tammo's death "will fuel protests in Damascus, Aleppo and Darra."

The regime is doing all it can to prevent more widespread demonstrations. The Kurdish districts of Damascus and Aleppo have been blockaded by the Syrian security forces. At the same time the government has made various concessions to Kurds, including promises of citizenship for undocumented individuals.

The demonstrations in Qamishli and other Kurdish towns have highlighted the sense of solidarity that has characterised Syria's uprising, with Arabic slogans chanted as well as Kurdish ones. Mr Tammo's death could unite the popular and political opposition groups within Kurdish society. That in turn could provide crucial support for those Syrians who have been protesting for so many months. But further violence from the regime is also likely as its opposition grows more united.

Turkey and Europe An uncertain path

Faltering membership talks are reducing the European Union's influence
ISTANBUL

WITH Turkey vaunting itself as a model for the Arab world, the tendency is to see its 50-year-old goal of joining the European Union as dead. When you have a booming economy, secular democracy and new regional clout, goes a common refrain, "who needs Europe?" The membership talks that began in 2005 have all but stopped, because of rows over Cyprus and the resistance to Turkish membership by some EU countries. No new chapters have been opened for a year; none will be unless Turkey opens its ports to Greek-Cypriot vessels, which is unlikely.

The impasse was noted in this week's European Commission report on Turkey's progress towards membership. Resorting to litotes, it said "the accession negotiations with Turkey have regrettably not moved into any new

areas for a year." The ruling Justice and Development (AK) party seems unworried. As the Europe minister, Egemen Bagis, likes to claim, "the EU needs Turkey more than Turkey needs it." Relations with Europe seem to be souring, even though polls show popular support for EU membership holding up. The German Marshall Fund, an American think-tank, found 48% of Turks were in favour this year, up from 38% in 2010.

Meanwhile, Turkey's mercurial prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is hinting at war over Greek-Cypriot drilling for gas off Cyprus's southern coast, prompting a sharp rebuke from the Americans. He has accused Britain and France of having "neocolonialist" designs over Libya and claimed that an unnamed German foundation is financing the Kurdish-separatist PKK. And his government plans to introduce

Arabic as an optional language in primary schools, still spurning the Kurds' demands for the teaching of their mother tongue

Some of this reveals the EU's waning influence. Yet Turkey continues to become more democratic. The commission report notes the army's declining clout. Some properties confiscated from Christians are to be returned. The government plans to reduce pre-trial detention periods of as long as ten years for terror suspects. Most important, the government is consulting the opposition over a planned new constitution to replace the one drafted after a military coup in 1980.

The commission still found much to criticise. More journalists are in jail in Turkey (64 now) than in any other country; violence against women is among the worst in the world; a renewed clampdown on the Kurds has seen over 3,000 people arrested, including 12 elected mayors and six Kurdish members of parliament. Only this week prosecutors sought 150-year sentences for three female Kurdish parliamentarians. Turkey still has much modernising to do.□□□

Iran, Saudi Arabia Tensions Spur Fears of a Proxy War

By MARGARET COKER And
FARNAZ FASSIHI

Rising tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are raising concerns that a renewed proxy war between the two powers could break out in Iraq, where the expected withdrawal of at least some U.S. military troops at the end of the year is expected to leave a new vacuum of power.

One of the side effects of the Arab Spring uprisings has been an upending of the regional equilibrium between Saudi-backed and Iranian-backed governments and political actors. Riyadh blames Tehran for much of the political instability on its borders in Bahrain and Yemen, while Iranian officials have watched its popular support in the region falter amid support for Syria's crackdown on anti-regime protesters there.

Iraq, a border state for both Saudi Arabia and Iran, is a likely new location for such a confrontation given the two powers' recent history in supporting sectarian warfare in that country and their current drive to shore up their political and military might at a time when each feel vulnerable, say Iranian and Arab analysts.

The Obama administration has expressed its concerns about Iran's attempts in recent months to expand its influence in Iraq and the broader Middle East.

"Iran is looking for an opportunity to use the cards it has lined up in the region—the Revolutionary Guards refer to it as their 'grand bargaining strategy,'" said Mohsen Sazegara, a founder of the Revolutionary Guards who is now a vocal opponent of Iran's regime.

Last week's announcement that Iranian figures were accused of hiring a Mexican hitman to kill the Saudi ambassador to Washington sent shock waves across the Arab world, where Sunni Arabs are already weary of Shiites Iran's influence in places like Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

In Washington on Sunday, Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.), the Senate Intelligence Committee chairman, said the Obama administration should put

sanctions on Iran's central bank in response to the alleged plot.

Iran has denied the U.S.'s charges, saying they are aimed at creating tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia. But Saudi officials have used the accusation to bolster their contention that Iran has for years been trying to encircle the Sunni kingdom with unfriendly—and non-Sunni—governments.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has tried—and failed—to stanch Iran's influence in Syria and Lebanon. Still, Riyadh felt that the large U.S. military presence in Iraq was enough of a bulwark to contain Tehran there, amid the rise of a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad.

The alleged terror plot comes at a bad time for Iran's diplomacy. As it tries to improve relations with Arab countries, it has suffered a series of setbacks from the Middle East to Africa and now the West.

The ongoing uprising in Syria has presented a particularly tough challenge for Iran's foreign policy because if Iran supports the Syrian opposition it risks losing a key ally in the Middle East but its support for President Bashar Assad is costing Iran public opinion on the Arab street.

Arab youth activists, the backbone of the pro-democracy uprisings, have accused the Quds Force—the most elite and secretive branch of the Revolutionary Guards—of aiding Mr. Assad in its crackdowns against dissent. They say the force has offered tactical training and internet monitoring capabilities to Syria.

Iran's unpredictable diplomacy—from allegations of domestic terror plots to its meddling in Iraq—stems from its shadow system of governance, where the foreign ministry's strategies can be undermined and overridden by the Quds Force and where diplomatic contacts are kept secret. This complicates negotiation attempts by the West and Arab world.

The Quds Force, for example, have complete control over Iran's policy and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to Iranian diplomats. "The footsteps of the Quds Forces can be traced any where in the world where Iran

has a presence and this creates a real dichotomy in Iran's foreign policy because often even the foreign minister is kept in the dark," said Mohamad Reza Heydari, a defected Iranian diplomat in Norway.

A report by the Associated Press on Saturday that the U.S. could drop its plan to keep thousands of troops in Iraq under a new security deal with the Iraqi government has raised fresh alarms in Saudi Arabia about Iraq become a pawn in Iran's battle for influence in the region.

Iran "is a direct and imminent threat not only to the [Saudi] kingdom, but to Sunnis across the region," said a Saudi official familiar with regional policy-making. "They have shown this time and time again, in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. If Washington can't protect our interests in the region, we'll have to do it ourselves."

Washington has been trying for months to broker a new military arrangement in Iraq amid fears that Iran-backed militias in the country will fill the security vacuum and threaten the nation's sizable Sunni and Kurdish minorities. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who governs over a coalition of Iranian-backed Shiite parties, apparently can't convince hard-line Shiites to accept an extension of U.S. military presence.

At the height of Iraq's sectarian civil war in 2006 and 2007, Saudi Arabia viewed the country as one of Iran's most daring attempts to gain influence in what has historically been Saudi Arabia's diplomatic backyard. To counter it, Riyadh was actively funding Sunni Iraqi fighters, while Saudi citizens traveled to Iraq in large numbers to fight against Iranian-backed Shiite militias.

Those clashes died down, amid the U.S. security surge and an agreement by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad to give Sunnis more spots in the new national security apparatus and political landscape.

Arab officials believe that the pipeline of funds and aid from Iran to Iraqi Shiites is even stronger than five years ago, and the network of support to Iraqi Sunnis from Saudi Arabia is easy to restore, especially if U.S. troop presence diminishes, as Riyadh has been wary of being blamed for supporting militants who cause American military casualties.

"Take [U.S. troops] out of the equation and you're looking at a possible new field of play," says one Arab diplomat. □□□

Turquie: pourquoi ces nouvelles violences au Kurdistan?

Par Catherine Gouëset

Alors que l'armée turque vient de lancer une vaste offensive contre le PKK après la mort de 24 soldats tués par les rebelles mardi, des dissensions se font jour au sein de la population kurde.

L'armée turque a lancé jeudi une opération d'envergure -10.000 hommes- dans le nord de l'Irak, contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Ces opérations sont une réponse aux attaques menées par plus de 200 rebelles mardi soir contre des postes militaires turcs, qui ont tué 24 soldats dans le sud-est de la Turquie.

Qu'est-ce qui explique cet engrenage? Pourquoi le PKK a-t-il lancé ces attaques? Pour les rebelles, il s'agit d'une réponse à la répression du mouvement kurde, notamment les arrestations de Kurdes soupçonnés de faire partie du KCK, la branche urbaine du PKK, et aux bombardements de l'aviation turque visant les bases du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak.

Trahison

Pour Sabri Cigerli, auteur de *Les Kurdes et leur histoire*, "le PKK s'est senti trahi" quand, après des négociations discrètes avec le gouvernement, les autorités d'Ankara ont refusé au dernier moment de signer l'accord qui venait d'être conclu, et ont repris leur politique d'arrestations des militants autonomistes kurdes.

Un ancien dirigeant des services secrets turcs, Mahir Kaynak, interviewé par Euronews s'interroge, lui, sur le motif qui a conduit le PKK à mener l'attaque de mardi. Le groupe ne pouvait ignorer que "cette attaque ouvrait la voie à une opération militaire de la Turquie dans la région". D'autant que le PKK est de plus en plus isolé. Mahir Kaynak rappelle que lors de la précédente incursion massive de l'armée turque en Irak, en févri-

Les obsèques, à Ankara, d'un des 24 soldats turcs tués au Kurdistan mardi lors d'une attaque du PKK. REUTERS/Umit Bektas



er 2008, le président de la région autonome kurde d'Irak, Massoud Barzani, avait déclaré que le nord de l'Irak serait la "tombe des Turcs". Mais cette fois, les autorités kurdes d'Irak ont condamné l'opération du PKK et ne se sont pas prononcées contre l'opération de représailles turque.

Sur le plan politique, un espoir d'apaisement se dessinait pourtant ces derniers jours entre le gouvernement et les députés kurdes du Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP), principale formation pro-kurde de Turquie. Ces dernières, qui boycottaient les sessions parlementaires depuis les élections en raison de l'emprisonnement de certains de leurs camarades élus, sont revenus à l'Assemblée où ils ont prêté serment.

L'interruption d'un processus politique

Est-ce ce processus que le PKK a voulu court-circuiter? C'est l'avis de Mesut Ülker, interrogé par Euronews: les attaques visent à interrompre le "processus positif" engagé pour la mise au point "d'une nouvelle constitution à travers des négociations au parlement". Il rappelle que ces attaques sont intervenues deux ans précisément après la "reddition symbolique" des militants du PKK en Turquie, par le poste de frontière de Habur. Ces 34 militants étaient entrés en Turquie depuis l'Irak à l'appel du chef historique du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, en prison à vie depuis 1999. Ce geste était un défi adressé au président Erdogan qui avait annoncé au cours de l'été précédent vouloir résoudre la question kurde de manière pacifique, mais

n'avait alors pas fait de geste concret, expliquait alors La Croix. Mais le gouvernement turc n'est pas parvenu à instaurer un dialogue national. Et le gouvernement, comme ses prédécesseurs, a laissé la gestion du problème aux seuls policiers et militaires.

Dès le début de l'été, le PKK a de son côté accentué ses opérations armées. Au total, au moins 50 membres des services de sécurité ont été tués par les séparatistes depuis le mois de juillet. En face, le gouvernement turc est poussé au durcissement de sa position par une opinion publique dont le désir de vengeance croît à mesure que les obsèques de soldats font la "Une" des médias, comme nous l'indiquions en septembre. Et mardi, la police a arrêté près de 150 personnes soupçonnées de liens avec les rebelles dans différentes provinces du pays.

Baisse d'audience du PKK ?

Pourtant, selon certains observateurs, la population kurde elle-même -15 millions de personnes dans l'ensemble du pays est lasse de cette militarisation de la question kurde - La guerre débutée en 1984 a causé 45 000 morts.

Et les actions menées par le PKK commencent à être rejetées par une partie des Kurdes eux-mêmes. "Les dommages collatéraux de ces opérations sont excessifs, même pour une population qui jusqu'à présent soutenait le PKK", estime la correspondante d'El Pais en Turquie. Ainsi mercredi, cinq soldats et trois civils, dont une fillette de deux ans, ont été tués par l'explosion d'une bombe dissimulée

sur le bord d'une route dans la province de Bitlis.

L'audience du PKK se rétrécit selon El Pais, en particulier au sein de la population qui a quitté les montagnes kurdes pour s'installer dans les grandes villes comme Istanbul. La journaliste cite par exemple la campagne "Guérillero, ne tue pas, ne meure pas en mon nom" initiée par quatre jeunes activistes kurdes sur internet pour récolter des signatures appelant à la fin de la violence. Et l'écrivain kurde

Kemal Burkay, interrogé il y a une semaine par le quotidien Hürriyet, estime que le gouvernement turc accorde trop d'importance aux rebelles. "Le PKK devrait déposer les armes (...) mais l'Etat ne doit pas attendre le silence des armes pour agir", c'est à dire pour accorder aux Kurdes les droits culturels qu'ils réclament: l'éducation dans leur langue et la gestion autonome de leur affaires.

Pour cet ancien dirigeant d'un parti socialiste kurde, rentré d'exil l'été

dernier, le PKK n'a pas fait avancer la cause du peuple kurde, mais n'a fait que compliquer la situation. "Des milliers de villages ont été dépeuplés" en raison du conflit armé, explique-t-il. Kemal Burkay est pourtant optimiste à moyen terme. "Nous en sommes au dernier obstacle de cette course de haies", rappelant qu'on est passé en Turquie de "la négation de l'existence d'une question kurde" à la question de "comment résoudre la question kurde".

Le Monde
19 octobre 2011

France-Turquie : poussée de fièvre

Les relations franco-turques connaissent une nouvelle poussée de fièvre et, comme à chaque fois depuis 2001, c'est sur la question du génocide arménien que les deux pays s'écharpent. En Turquie, élus politiques et commentateurs fustigent à l'unanimité « les leçons d'histoire » proférées début octobre par Nicolas Sarkozy, depuis Ervan à 40 km de la frontière turque. La Turquie doit « regarder son histoire en face », a lancé le président français : elle doit reconnaître le génocide des Arméniens, commis en 1915-1916 par le gouvernement nationaliste Jeune Turc, dans un Empire ottoman en pleine débâcle.

Cette sortie était préméditée : « Je vais lancer une grenade dégoupillée », avait prévenu M. Sarkozy dans l'avion. Mais elle n'a aucune chance d'être suivie d'effets positifs de la part d'Ankara qui, à chaque injonction, se braque un peu plus. Ce n'était de toute façon pas le but recherché, ces mots étaient destinés à un public franco-arménien. La reconnaissance par la Turquie doit intervenir dans un délai réduit, a exigé M. Sarkozy, le temps de la campagne présidentielle, en somme. « Si la Turquie ne le faisait pas, alors il faudrait sans doute aller plus loin », a-t-il poursuivi, faisant référence à une proposition de loi pénalisant la négation du génocide, votée par l'Assemblée nationale en 2005 puis enterrée par le Sénat.

Nicolas Sarkozy se rallie aujourd'hui au projet socialiste qui punirait toute personne reconnue coupable de négation du premier génocide du XX^e siècle. En avril 2007, à la veille de son élection, il avait déjà fait le serment de s'attacher « enfin à lutter en France contre toute approche négationniste du génocide arménien ».

Pourtant, un mois plus tard, le conseiller diplomatique de l'Élysée, Jean-David Levitte, envoyé en mission à Ankara, se montrait rassurant devant les responsables turcs : « M. Sarkozy s'assurera que la proposition de loi meure au Sénat », aurait-il déclaré, selon un télégramme diplomatique américain révélé en 2010 par WikiLeaks. C'est très concrètement ce qui s'est passé. Les organisations arméniennes de France se

Analyse

PAR GUILLAUME PERRIER
Correspondant à Istanbul

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sont estimées trahies. Dans la communauté, environ 450 000 personnes, ces nouvelles promesses de campagne sont donc accueillies avec la plus grande prudence.

Le but pour M. Sarkozy semble surtout de ne pas laisser le champ libre à son futur adversaire socialiste. A cet égard, François Hollande a un temps d'avance car son engagement en faveur de la reconnaissance du génocide arménien ne date pas de sa candidature à l'Élysée. Dès 1998, du temps où il occupait le poste de premier secrétaire du Parti socialiste, il avait convaincu Lionel Jospin, alors premier ministre, de laisser le Parlement légiférer.

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La Turquie doit « regarder son histoire en face », a lancé Nicolas Sarkozy. Autrement dit, elle doit reconnaître le génocide des Arméniens de 1915-1916
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La loi reconnaissant le génocide de 1915 fut votée en 2001. Sans surprise, le candidat socialiste à l'élection présidentielle soutient aujourd'hui le projet de pénaliser la négation de ce crime contre l'humanité, dans le prolongement logique de la loi Gayssot. Depuis ce temps, M. Hollande qui s'était rendu en Arménie en 2007, est resté très proche de la Fédération révolutionnaire arménienne, la FRA Dachnaksounioun, le parti nationaliste arménien (membre de l'International socialiste) qui structure, encadre la diaspora, et mène un lobbying agressif sur le terrain politique, pour faire avancer sa cause. « Nous avons avec lui des relations de proximité et d'intimité politiques exceptionnelles », a déclara-

ré Mourad Papazian, le dirigeant de la FRA Dachnak en Europe, qui a appelé à voter pour M. Hollande lors de la primaire du Parti socialiste.

Ce n'est pas la première fois que la « question arménienne » fait irruption dans une campagne électorale française. La grenade a, en fait, été dégoupillée dès 1998, avec le dépôt à l'Assemblée nationale d'une proposition de loi en faveur de « la reconnaissance du génocide de 1915 ». Sa ratification, en 2001, avait entraîné une campagne de boycottage antifrançais en Turquie. Le combat législatif avait alors été porté, à l'Assemblée comme au Sénat, par des parlementaires de tous bords, élus à Marseille, dans la vallée du Rhône ou dans la banlieue sud de Paris, tous issus de circonscriptions abritant une forte communauté arménienne. Non sans arrières-pensées électoralistes.

Depuis que le sujet est à l'agenda parlementaire, plusieurs historiens, dont Pierre Nora qui préside l'association Liberté pour l'histoire, se sont élevés contre les « lois mémorielles » qui, selon eux, risquent de verrouiller tout débat historique. Pour Hubert Védrine, « ce n'est pas par des lois ou des injonctions que l'on fera changer la Turquie ». Les défenseurs de la loi opposent à cet argument une position éthique, une reconnaissance inconditionnelle de la réalité du génocide arménien, comme c'est le cas pour la Shoah.

Une hiérarchie de fait s'est installée entre les différents génocides du XX^e siècle. Or, au nom du principe d'égalité devant la loi, les citoyens français d'origine arménienne réclament une protection légale. Mais, à l'évidence, la réflexion doit d'abord se dégager de tout opportunisme électoral, sous peine de perdre toute crédibilité. Elle doit bien sûr s'écarter de toute pression, qu'elle émane d'Ankara ou des groupes politiques qui contrôlent la diaspora arménienne, sans apparaître comme une sanction contre la Turquie. Elle doit surtout s'effectuer dans une meilleure compréhension des dynamiques qui traversent la société turque, où le mot génocide n'est plus totalement tabou. ■

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Turkey pushes into Iraq after Kurd militant raids kill 24 troops

The Turkish offensive across the Iraqi border after the two dozen soldiers were killed and an additional 18 wounded includes helicopter gunships, ground commandos and fighter jets, authorities say.

By Patrick J. McDonnell

Reporting from Beirut—

Turkey launched land and air assaults into neighboring Iraq on Wednesday after Kurdish militants killed at least 24 soldiers and injured 18 in the latest in a series of deadly strikes near the border, authorities said.

The Turkish offensive across the Iraqi border included helicopter gunships, ground commandos and fighter jets, authorities said.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan canceled a foreign trip and labeled the operation a legal "hot pursuit" of terrorists operating out of Iraq's Kurdish region. The overnight attacks were blamed on the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers Party, which has long used mountain bases in rugged northern Iraq to stage guerrilla-style attacks into Turkey, Erdogan said.

The PKK, which seeks what it calls equal rights for Turkey's Kurdish minority, and Ankara have been locked in a decades-long struggle that has left tens of thousands dead and has recently heated up anew. Public anger in Turkey about the escalating violence has been mounting, putting pressure on Erdogan and other leaders for a robust response.

"Those who think they can subjugate us through such heinous assaults are bound to realize that we will take our revenge," declared Turkish President Abdullah Gul. "These terrorist acts will be reciprocated."

In recent months, Turkish authorities say, PKK militants have killed dozens of security personnel and civilians inside Turkey's embattled Kurdish heartland. Turkey has already launched a security crackdown, but



Turkish military veterans argue with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's bodyguards during a demonstration outside his office in Ankara, the capital, protesting the latest attacks against the Turkish military by Turkish Kurd militants. (Umit Bektas / Reuters / October 19, 2011)

Erdogan has been hinting that Ankara would strike back even harder.

The offensive Wednesday was believed to be Turkey's largest cross-border ground operation into Iraqi territory since a 2008 onslaught against the PKK.

It remained unclear how far Turkish troops planned to advance inside Iraq, and how long forces would remain. Reuters news agency cited sources as saying that about 500 Turkish troops had moved up to five miles into Iraqi territory.

The Turkish attack did not appear to be as massive as the 2008 incursion, which was said to have involved as many as 10,000 Turkish troops.

Turkey and its allies, including Washington and the European Union, have labeled the PKK a terrorist group. The U.S. ambassador in Ankara denounced the latest PKK attacks, as did the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which includes Turkey among its members.

Massoud Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan, condemned the Turkish raids as a "criminal act," Reuters reported.

Iraq's Kurdish power structure, with close ties to Washington, controls the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Barzani and other Iraqi Kurdish leaders navigate between public sympathy for their Turkish kinsmen and a disinclination to alienate Turkey, a regional powerhouse.

Ethnic Kurds are a significant minority throughout the region and have also complained of second-class status in Iran and Syria.

Officials in Washington have long worried that the Turkish-PKK struggle could heighten instability in Iraq as U.S. troops pull out of the country. American forces led the 2003 invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein and are scheduled to leave Iraq at the end of this year.

Syria's Kurds: Are They About to Join the Uprising

By Piotr Zalewski

"I AM sick. I cannot sleep," says Hervin Ose, fighting back tears as she remembers her friend and fellow Syrian Kurdish activist Mashaal Tammo. "Till now I cannot believe he is not here. Sometimes I even try to call him. Sometimes I wait for him to call me."

On Friday, Oct. 7, Ose met Tammo at a friend's house in Qamishli, a Kurdish-majority town in northeastern Syria, just across the border from Turkey. "He had a sadness about him," she recalls, speaking via Skype. Tammo, one of the few Syrian Kurdish leaders to have openly called for the overthrow of President Bashar Assad, had recently escaped an assassination attempt. Now he spoke as if he were going away on a long trip. "My message is finished in this life," he told her. Before taking his leave, Tammo even snapped a few pictures of his friend. "I wondered," says Ose. "He'd never taken a photo of me before." (See pictures of Syria's ongoing protests.)

It was the last time she saw him alive. Hours later, according to reports, masked assailants gunned down Tammo inside his Qamishli home, leaving his son and another Kurdish activist wounded. Ose, who insisted on being quoted by her real name — "I am a wanted person already ... I am tired of being afraid," she says — has no doubts as to who ordered her friend's murder. "Bashar," she says. "He made this decision."

The day of the funeral, after going to see Tammo's body at the morgue, Ose joined tens of thousands of people — as many as 100,000, she says, though most observers put the figure at 50,000 — in the streets of Qamishli. It was, by any count, the largest protest in the northeast since the beginning of the popular uprising against the Assad regime. It too ended in bloodshed, when Syrian security forces began to spray the mourners with gunfire, killing at least two people.

Although protests have been taking



Syrian antigovernment activists display wreaths and framed photos of slain activist Mashaal Tammo during a protest, as Egyptian army soldiers secure the surrounding area of the Syrian embassy in Cairo on Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011

place in the north since the early spring, they now show signs of escalating, observers say. (Since Tammo's funeral, they have continued every day, one activist told me.) According to Henri Barkey, a Lehigh University professor and former State Department official, the fresh wave of demonstrations may well mark the Syrian Kurds' long-awaited entry into the popular revolt against Assad. "After Tammo's murder, [the Kurds] are now a party to the conflict," says Barkey. As he sees it, "increased mobilization" in the Kurdish northeast, one of the poorest and least developed regions of Syria, appears to be imminent.

Of course, were Syria's Kurds to rise en masse, the numbers of protesters would be much higher, acknowledges Ose. (Syria is home to 2 million Kurds — about 10% of its population.) What stands in the way, she says, is the disconnect between a number of local political parties and the people on the street, particularly young Kurds. "The young people understand the responsibility they have. They understand that the Syrian revolution needs their help," she says. "The normal people support. They have joined ... but the parties haven't made up their mind."

Earlier this year, the Syrian government managed to drive a wedge between the parties, promising to grant citizenship rights to 300,000 stateless Kurds descended from families who escaped Turkey after a series

of brutally suppressed Kurdish uprisings. Banking on these and future concessions, a number of Kurdish groups chose to remain on the sidelines rather than join the popular uprising against Assad. A telling sign came in the wake of Tammo's release in June after more than three years in prison. According to a source familiar with the details of the event, when Tammo reiterated his support for the anti-Assad revolution at a reception held in his honor, several Kurdish leaders left the room in protest.

Precedent may also have played a role. In 2004, when antigovernment riots swept through Qamishli as well as the Kurdish neighborhoods of Aleppo and Damascus, Syrian security forces responded not only by killing dozens of Kurds but also by deploying several Arab tribes against the protesters. Solidarity with the Kurds among Syria's Arab population was scarcely perceptible. The memory of the 2004 events, according to observers, has kept many Kurds wary of closing ranks with the Arab opposition.

Yet another obstacle, according to anti-Assad activists, is the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the militant group whose nearly 30-year conflict with Turkey has claimed over 40,000 lives. (On Oct. 19, the PKK staged a series of coordinated attacks in southeast Turkey, killing 24 soldiers.) Many Turkish analysts believe that Assad is using the PKK or one of its factions as leverage against the Turks, who have lost all faith in the Syrian government. "Even if Syria doesn't admit this, there is a link between them and the PKK," says Huseyin Yayman, a Turkish expert. "With Syria's backing, the PKK has room to operate against Turkey." The PKK has done little to dispel such suspicions. In a recent interview, Cemil Bayik, one of the group's leaders, warned that if Turkey were to intervene against Assad, the PKK would fight on Syria's side.

As far as Ismail Hami is concerned, the PKK serves yet another purpose for Assad: to keep the Syrian Kurds in check. Hami, whose Kurdish Yekiti Party openly sides with the Syrian opposition, wants nothing to do with the PKK. "They have pulled their party [the PYD, the PKK's Syrian branch] out of the negotiations with the other Kurdish parties," he says. "They have another attitude to what is happening in Syria. We cannot work together.

Les attaques de Hakkari ramènent la question kurde au premier plan de l'actualité politique turque.

Par Jean Marcou
22 octobre 2011

J eudi et vendredi, les funérailles des 24 soldats tués le 19 octobre dernier, lors d'une série d'assauts menés par des rebelles kurdes venus d'Irak, contre des positions militaires turques dans province d'Hakkari, ont provoqué une immense émotion en Turquie. Il faut dire qu'il s'agit de l'une des opérations les plus meurtrières et les plus spectaculaires conduite par le PKK contre l'armée turque, au cours des deux dernières décennies. L'organisation rebelle a réussi à mener une série d'attaques coordonnées contre huit poste-frontières, avant de se retirer en subissant des pertes réduites. Un tel événement survient en outre, après un été où les attentats et les embuscades n'ont pas cessé dans le sud-est de la Turquie, faisant en moyenne près d'une dizaine de victimes militaires et/ou civiles par semaine. La veille des assauts de Hakkari, cinq policiers et trois civils avaient encore été victimes d'un attentat à la bombe sur une route près de Guroymak, dans la province de Bitlis. Mais, alors même que ces bulletins macabres avaient tendance à devenir routiniers, ces derniers temps, l'ampleur des pertes provoquées par les attaques d'Hakkari font prendre conscience à la société turque que la guérilla, qui connaît une recrudescence dans les zones kurdes depuis un an environ, est en train de se muer en une véritable confrontation militaire. C'est en tout cas ce que pense Ahmet Altan,



l'éditorialiste du fameux quotidien «libéral» Taraf, qui estime que cette attaque «dépassé la notion d'acte terroriste et s'apparente à la guerre».

Cette nouvelle opération meurtrière du PKK a été largement condamnée par la communauté internationale. Le président américain, Barack Obama, notamment, a affirmé que son pays «continuerait à soutenir fermement la Turquie dans sa lutte contre la menace terroriste du PKK.» Le secrétaire des Nations Unis, Ban Ki-Moon a exprimé son «inquiétude», et estimé qu'il était «inacceptable que le territoire irakien soit utilisé pour organiser des attaques transfrontalières contre les pays voisins.» Le ministère des affaires étrangères français s'est dit «aux côtés de la Turquie» et a appelé les députés kurdes du BDP à se tenir à l'écart du PKK. Le Conseil de l'Europe, le gouvernement irakien et même la région autonome kurde d'Irak du nord ont sévèrement condamné les assauts meurtriers de Hakkari, Massoud Barzani



allant même jusqu'à les qualifier «d'acte criminel», contrairement aux «intérêts du peuple du Kurdistan.» On se souvient que depuis 2007, Ankara a noué des liens de plus en plus étroits avec les Kurdes irakiens, et que Recep Tayyip Erdoğan a même effectué un voyage officiel, à Erbil, leur capitale, au printemps dernier.

Si le président Gül, sans doute affecté par le fait que l'opération se soit déroulée sur les lieux mêmes où il avait effectué une visite inopinée «pour soutenir le moral des troupes», au cours du week-end dernier, a annoncé que «la vengeance sera terrible», le gouvernement turc semble se garder de basculer dans la surenchère nationaliste. Il faut dire que le parlement, où les députés kurdes viennent de mettre un terme à leur boycott, s'apprête à lancer l'élaboration d'une nouvelle constitution qui pourrait aborder la question kurde et chercher à lui apporter une réponse politique. Le président de la Grande Assemblée Nationale, Cemil Çiçek, tout en regrettant que ce «triste événement» intervienne au moment où les députés s'apprêtent à examiner la rédaction d'une nouvelle charte fondamentale, a affirmé qu'il ne remettrait pas en cause la poursuite de cet objectif. Le représentant de la Commission européenne en Turquie, Marc Piérini, a d'ailleurs encouragé le gouvernement turc en ce sens, en estimant que la réforme constitutionnelle constituait «une opportunité historique» pour s'atteler au règlement de la question kurde. Après avoir du annuler, pour sa part, un déplacement officiel au Kazakhstan et tenu plusieurs réunions ministérielles de crise, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, qui intervenait vendredi au Congrès du Syndicat pro-gouvernemental Hak-İş, a demandé à tous les partis à faire bloc dans la lutte contre le PKK en les appelant à s'inspirer de l'attitude adoptée par les forces politiques espagnoles à l'égard du terrorisme basque de l'ETA.

Cette attaque inhabituelle par son ampleur a également relancé les supputations sur la possible instrumentalisation de la question kurde par la Syrie et l'Iran, au moment où le ministre turc des affaires étrangères a reçu pour la première fois les représentants du Conseil national syrien et leur a apporté son soutien. Certains observateurs ont même vu dans la première réaction du premier ministre turc (adressée ceux «ceux qui soutiennent ouvertement ou secrètement la terreur», et qui doivent savoir que «le souffle de la République du Turquie se fera sentir dans le dos de chacun d'eux») une mise en garde voilée à ses voisins syrien et iranien. Pourtant Ahmet Davutoğlu a surpris tout le monde vendredi, en recevant son homologue iranien, Ali Akbar Salehi, à Ankara, et en évoquant un projet de réaction militaire commune turco-iranienne

contre le PKK et le PJAK. Dans le sillage de cette annonce, le chef de la diplomatie turque a émis des doutes sur l'implication de l'Iran dans la tentative d'attentat contre l'ambassadeur saoudien à Washington, alors même qu'il y a une semaine il avait jugé les

d'un dispositif important du bouclier antimissile américain dans le sud-est du pays et après les révélations de la presse turque sur l'arrestation-libération par l'Iran, au mois d'août dernier, de Murat Karayılan, le numéro 2 du PKK ; un épisode interprété par certains comme la démonstration administrée par Téhéran de sa capacité à instrumentaliser la question kurde contre la Turquie. Dans *Taraf*, après les attaques de Hakkari, Ahmet Altan s'interroge aussi, quant lui, sur les raisons du basculement du PKK dans une véritable guerre et sur ses liens avec la Syrie de Bachar el-Assad.

Plus que jamais donc la question kurde constitue l'enjeu majeur de la démocratisation et de l'approfondissement de l'Etat de droit en Turquie, et demeure au cœur d'un écheveau stratégique dont on a bien du mal à démêler tous les tenants et aboutissants.

Professeur de droit public à l'Institut d'études politiques de Grenoble, et pensionnaire scientifique à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul (IFEA), où il dirige depuis 2006 l'Observatoire de la vie politique turque (OVIPO).



preuves américaines «sérieuses» et appelé la République islamique à faire toute la clarté dans cette affaire. Cette rencontre turco-iranienne intervient de surcroît peu après les reproches acerbes adressés par Téhéran à la Ankara suite à l'installation



24 octobre 2011

L'activité économique entre Ankara et le Kurdistan

Malgré l'opération menée par Ankara suite aux attaques du PKK ayant causé la mort de 24 soldats turcs mardi, le commerce entre la Turquie et la région nord de l'Irak prospère. La Turquie est la principale source d'importations du Kurdistan irakien.

AFP - Les affaires demeurent florissantes dans le nord de l'Irak entre Turquie et Kurdistan irakien en dépit de l'offensive menée depuis plusieurs jours par Ankara contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK dans cette région.

L'armée turque a lancé la semaine dernière une opération "d'envergure" des deux côtés de la frontière turco-irakienne après la mort de 24 soldats mardi dans des attaques du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Le nombre des soldats impliqués dans l'ensemble de l'offensive est évalué à 10.000.

Mais cela n'empêche nullement les affaires de continuer: "Les actuelles relations économiques entre la région du Kurdistan (irakien) et la Turquie sont très bonnes", affirme Fathi Mohammed al-Moudaris, conseiller au ministère du Commerce et de l'Industrie de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien.

Mieux, elles se développent à grande vitesse et les deux entités envisagent même l'établissement d'une "zone industrielle et commerciale à la frontière", souligne-t-il.

Il ne croit nullement que la question du PKK puisse gêner ces échanges: "Non, ces problèmes politiques n'affecteront ni le commerce, ni l'activité économique entre la Turquie et la région" kurde d'Irak (KRG).

"Ceci n'est pas le problème du gouvernement régional kurde. (Notre) politique est de renforcer nos relations avec les pays voisins", explique-t-il.

Selon lui, 55% des entreprises étrangères opérant dans la région sont turques, et plus "de 800 compagnies turques sont déjà enregistrées auprès de notre ministère", a-t-il dit.

Les flux commerciaux entre Turquie et KRG ont atteint au moins 4 milliards de dollars en 2010, sans compter le pétrole et le gaz, qui sont gérés par le gouvernement irakien. "La Turquie est la principale source d'importations au Kurdistan irakien", souligne-t-il.

A Erbil, capitale de la région, les noms turcs et panneaux rédigés en turc sont omniprésents dans les magasins, banques et restaurants.

"L'Irak en général est l'un de nos trois principaux partenaires en termes de relations économiques. Et cette région est évidemment une priorité", souligne Aydin Selcen, le consul général turc à Erbil.

"Pour 2010, notre volume d'exportation total vers l'Irak est de 7,5 milliards de dollars. Nous estimons que 70% vont vers la région kurde irakienne", indique-t-il.

La Turquie compte selon lui 935 entreprises en KRG, dont beaucoup sont actives dans le secteur du pétrole et de la

construction. Elle lui fournit aussi beaucoup de biens de consommation courante.

Lui non plus ne croit pas que la question du PKK puisse nuire aux liens existants, rappelant que ce conflit est vieux de près de 30 ans.

"Je pense que la relation entre le KRG et d'autres pays du Moyen-Orient, surtout la Turquie (...) s'améliore constamment", juge le Dr Mohammed Salman Barwary, qui enseigne l'économie à l'université Salaheddine à Erbil.

Mais cette relation est "déséquilibrée", déplore-t-il. "Nous importons de Turquie, mais nous n'exportons pas vers la Turquie (...) nous importons tout de la Turquie et d'autres pays de la région".

Quant au conflit Turquie-PKK, il ne devrait pas affecter le commerce, estime-t-il. "Je ne pense pas que les hommes d'affaires et les politiques kurdes (...) vont réduire leurs rapports" avec la Turquie, dit-il.

"Cela ne se joue pas entre notre régime et celui de la Turquie: je pense qu'il s'agit d'une question interne à la Turquie. Oui, le PKK est kurde, mais je crois que ce n'est pas notre problème. C'est un problème turc", juge-t-il. □

Irak : plus aucun soldat américain en 2012

Barack Obama a annoncé hier le départ, fin décembre, de tous les militaires, ainsi que la « fin de la guerre » à Bagdad.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Neuf ans après l'envoi de 140 000 hommes pour chasser Saddam Hussein du pouvoir à Bagdad, plus aucun soldat américain ne devrait être encore en Irak au-delà du 31 décembre prochain. Barack Obama l'a annoncé hier, après s'être entretenu par visioconférence avec Nouri al-Maliki, le premier ministre irakien, qui a fait montre de fermeté dans les négociations menées avec Washington, ces dernières semaines.

« Je suis en mesure d'annoncer, comme promis, que le reste de nos troupes présentes en Irak (40 000, NDLR) rentreront d'ici à la fin de l'année, a déclaré Obama. La guerre menée par les États-Unis en Irak sera finie », a dit le président, lors d'une allocution à la Maison-Blanche. « Nous entrons dans une autre phase de nos relations », commentait peu après, depuis Bagdad, Nouri al-Maliki.

Crier victoire

Ces derniers jours encore, l'incertitude planait pourtant sur le maintien, réclamé par Washington, de 3 400 soldats américains au-delà de 2011. Maliki s'opposait catégoriquement à l'exigence américaine de leur préserver une totale immunité juridique. Le Pentagone tenait à les mettre à l'abri de toute poursuite judiciaire en Irak. « Question de souveraineté », répondait inlassablement le premier ministre, soutenu par l'immense majorité de la classe politique, et, en coulisses, par l'Iran voisin.

Cette question ultrasensible dans un pays attaché à recouvrer enfin sa pleine souveraineté était l'objet de surenchère de la part de certains dirigeants. Ainsi du leader radical chiite Moqtada Sadr

40 000
soldats
américains sont
actuellement
en Irak



Soldats américains de retour d'Irak à Fort Benning, en Géorgie (États-Unis), en 2010. Il ne reste plus que 18 bases à évacuer dans l'ancienne Mésopotamie. LESSER/ZUMA/REA

qui réclamait, en cas de maintien américain, le paiement d'une « compensation » financière à l'Irak.

Au contraire, les dirigeants kurdes, eux, n'étaient pas hostiles à ce qu'un contingent américain demeure en Irak.

Leur chef, Massoud Barzani, avait même proposé de les accueillir dans ses provinces autonomes du nord du pays.

Il ne reste plus que 18 bases américaines à évacuer ; 485 autres sites ont déjà été vidés de leur personnel, conformément à l'accord signé fin 2008 entre Bagdad et Washington. Depuis, les deux partenaires étaient tombés d'accord sur la nécessité de maintenir un contingent de 3 000 à 4 000 hommes pour des missions de formation de l'ar-

mée irakienne. En fin de compte, les États-Unis pourraient ne garder qu'une équipe de 150 à 200 militaires rattachés directement à leur ambassade à Bagdad. Plus de 4 000 soldats américains ont été tués en Irak, tandis que 100 000 Irakiens ont péri dans des violences diverses depuis 2003.

En respectant le calendrier prévu, Barack Obama et Nouri al-Maliki peuvent, chacun de leur côté, crier victoire. Plus aucun soldat américain ne tombera dans l'ancienne Mésopotamie où la démocratie est sur les rails et l'insécurité ramenée à un niveau bien inférieur à celui d'il y a quatre ans. À un an de la présidentielle américaine, c'est un bon point pour le candidat Obama. Quant à Maliki, il pourra se targuer d'avoir mis un terme à « l'occupation » américaine de son pays. ■

Turkey claims 49 killed in 'great revenge' against Kurdish rebels

By SUZAN FRASER - AP

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish troops have killed at least 49 Kurdish rebels in a valley near the Iraqi border, the military said Saturday, as hundreds of troops also pursued Kurdish fighters within northern Iraq.

The rebels were killed in offensives in the past two days in the Kazan Valley region, near the town of Cukurca that borders Iraq, the military said in a statement posted on its website. There was no confirmation of the deaths from the rebel group.

On Wednesday, Turkey launched anti-rebel offensives involving around 10,000 troops both in southeastern Turkey and across the border in Iraq. The military operations began hours after 24 soldiers were killed in Cukurca by the rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in the deadliest one-day toll against the military since the 1990s.

Turkey's conflict with the Kurdish rebels has killed tens of thousands of people since the insurgents took up arms to fight for autonomy in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast in 1984.

The military said it recovered the bodies of 35 rebels at the valley after it struck the area with artillery shells and airstrikes on Saturday. Seven other bodies were found inside a cave while seven more rebels were killed in separate clashes in the region.

"Operations launched in a few regions across the border and in two regions inside Turkey are continuing," the military

statement said, adding they were aimed at "preventing acts by members of the separatist terror organization against our units."

On Friday, the military said air and ground offensives were mostly concentrated within Turkey, in Cukurca, while operations were also under way "in a few areas" in northern Iraq.

The military has not revealed the number of soldiers that have crossed into Iraq. But the Haber Turk newspaper reported Saturday that 1,500 elite troops were involved in the ground operation against rebel hideouts in northern Iraq. The Vatan newspaper put the figure at 2,000.

The Turkish troops had penetrated three miles (five kilometers) into Iraqi territory, Haber Turk said, while military helicopters were ferrying elite troops in and out of other areas for "spot operations" against PKK rebels. Warplanes and drones were providing air support for the gunbattles.

The paper said the offensive was targeting seven suspected PKK bases along the border, where about 2,000 rebels are believed to be hiding.

The military said the operation includes commandos, special forces and paramilitary special forces — elite forces trained in guerrilla warfare. They are being reinforced by F-16 and F-4 warplanes, Super Cobra helicopter gunships and surveillance drones.

The Kurdish rebels meanwhile, said seven of their fighters, including three

senior operatives, were killed in Turkish air raids in northern Iraq on Oct. 10 and vowed revenge.

Turkey has launched more than two dozen air and ground incursions into northern Iraq over the 27 years of the insurgency, with mixed results. The rebels have returned to positions along the border soon after the troops have withdrawn. The current offensive was the largest attack on the insurgents in more than three years.

Turkey is seeking the cooperation of Iraqi Kurds, who control an autonomous region in northern Iraq, and of Iran for the latest offensive.

Hurriyet newspaper reported Saturday that Iraqi Kurdish security forces, the Peshmerga, were helping Turkish troops by providing intelligence.

Iraqi leaders have condemned the rebel attacks and promised to stop the PKK from using Iraqi territory for future attacks against Turkey. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry said both Baghdad and the regional Kurdish government in northern Iraq "are committed to securing the borders."

On Friday, Turkey and Iran vowed to collaborate against the PKK and its Iranian wing, the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PJAK, during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi. The PKK and PJAK have both been fighting for Kurdish autonomy in their respective countries and both are labeled as terrorist organizations by the United States.

The New York Times October 22, 2011

Turkey Says It Killed 49 in Battling Kurd Rebels

By SEBNEM ARSU
ISTANBUL

More than 49 Kurdish insurgents were killed in the first two days of a new Turkish military offensive against P.K.K. rebels in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, the military said Saturday.

The military began the operation, involving heavy air support and more than 10,000 troops, on Thursday, a day after an attack by the P.K.K., or Kurdish Worker's Party, killed 24 soldiers and injured 18 in the province of Hakkari, in one of the deadliest single-day attacks in recent years.

Part of the operation has extended into the autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, a mountainous border area where P.K.K. militants often take shelter. Turkey has staged cross-border operations or bombardment several times in recent years, and it is a thorny issue in

Turkey's relationship with Iraq.

"Operations that are conducted in several locations across the border and two locations in the country, and aim to prevent separatist terror organization actions against our units in the country and along borders, continue," the military's statement said. No predicted end date for the operation was given.

"The head of our armed forces and commanders have vowed not to return to their homes until this business is over," Bulent Arinc, the deputy prime minister, said Saturday, as quoted by the semi-official Anatolian News Agency.

The Wednesday attacks by the P.K.K., which is considered a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, were condemned by both the Iraqi national government and the administration of Iraqi Kurdistan, and they sent senior officials to Ankara for meetings with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

A Turkish parliamentary commission is drafting a new constitution that is expected to expand the rights of Turkey's ethnic minorities, including Kurds, who make up almost one-fifth of the country's population of 74 million.

Barzani considers war for Kurdish independence

Erbil, October 25, 2011 (AKnews) by Fouad Rahim

KURDISH PRESIDENT Massoud Barzani allegedly said in an interview with al-Arabiya TV that Kurds were ready for a war for independence.

He claimed the decision was not up to him, but a referendum would have to decide the fate of the Kurdistan Region as an independent state.

"We welcome and support the result of a referendum in which the people of Kurdistan decide," Barzani said. "And we are ready to pay the price even if it means war."

However, Barzani promised that Kurds will not take part in a civil war that he expects to take place in Iraq after the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Last weekend, Izzat Shabandar, a leader in the ruling State of Law Coalition (SLC), had suggested to found an independent Kurdish state and to put disputed areas under national control since "no satisfactory decision for both parties can be reached as

far as the disputed areas are concerned."

This idea was immediately rejected by the Kurdistan Blocs Coalition (KBC) yesterday. "The Kurdish leaders are not thinking now of this issue and we chose to stay within a federal unified Iraq and we are very keen to implement the Constitution and respect the unity and sovereignty of Iraq," KBC spokesman Muayyid Tayyeb said.

The debate about independence coincided with the arrival of a new delegation of Kurdish politicians in Baghdad for talks about outstanding issues between the federal government and the Kurdistan Region government (KRG) yesterday. One of the topics of the negotiations will be the fate of the disputed areas -- cities and areas along the border between the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, such as Kirkuk.

Earlier today, Barzani announced that he will pay a visit to Kirkuk before he heads to Iran next week.



TODAYS ZAMAN 25 October 2011

Barzani donates \$1 million for quake victims, help offers continue

TODAY'S ZAMAN, ANKARA

Massoud Barzani, the leader of northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish government, donated \$1 million to the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) on Tuesday for the victims of a deadly earthquake that hit eastern Turkey on Sunday.

News reports said a delegation from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Barzani, visited the Turkish Consulate in Arbil early Tuesday and expressed solidarity with quake victims in the eastern Turkish province of Van. The delegation presented the Turkish consulate general with a \$1 million check to be delivered to Kızılay.

Belgian Foreign Minister Steven Vanackere joined officials from all over the world on Tuesday in extending condolences and offering sympathy to Turkey. Saying that he was deeply affected by the earthquake's tragic toll

on Turkey, Vanackere said in a written statement that Belgium stands in solidarity with Turkish families who have lost loved ones in the disaster and also included a personal condolence message to his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Davutoğlu also received a call from Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kemal Ali Amr, who said that Egypt is ready to dispatch help to assist Turkey, and that Egypt shares the sorrow of Turkey at this difficult time, the Anatolia news agency reported on Tuesday.

Turkey and the Iraqi regional administration have recently vowed to strengthen their cooperation against the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which uses mountain bases in northern Iraq to launch attacks on Turkey.

A magnitude 7.2 quake killed at least 370 people and leveled more than 2,000 buildings in Van on Sunday.



Massoud Barzani, the leader of northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish government, on Tuesday donated \$1 million to Turkey. (Photo: Cihan)

Leaders around the world, including US President Barack Obama, conveyed their condolences and offered assistance, but Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey is able to cope for now. Azerbaijan, Iran and Bulgaria still sent aid, he added. Among those offering help were Israel, Greece and Armenia, who have all recently had problems in diplomatic relations with Turkey.

SLC leader calls on Kurds to form their independent state

Baghdad, October 22, 2011 (AKnews) - by Hussam Ali

Izzat Shabandar, a leader in the ruling State of Law Coalition (SLC), called on the Kurds to found their own state.

Shabandar said that the time has come to achieve the nationalist demand of the Kurds to form their independent state, now that the tensions between the federal government and the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) have risen again.

"I suggest putting the disputed areas under national control and forming international committees to discuss mechanisms to solve the problem of disputed areas according to international standards," Shabandar said, disclosing the catch of his announcement.

The fate of the disputed areas -- cities and areas along the border between the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region -- is the reason for an ongoing argument between Erbil and Baghdad.

Shabandar said he believes that most of the strategic problems between Baghdad and Erbil are solvable. However, "no satisfactory decision for both parties can be reached as far as the distribution of joint wealth and the issue of Kirkuk and the disputed areas are concerned. So I call on Kurdish leaders to declare their independent state and achieve their national dream."

Shabandar's statement comes only days before another delegation of Kurdish politicians will arrive in Baghdad to continue negotiations about the outstanding issues between Baghdad and the KRG.

The tensions between Baghdad and Erbil are sparked by a list of demands that the Kurds believe they are entitled to after they lent their support to Prime Minister al-Maliki after the last election: the integration of the Kurdish defense forces (the Peshmarga) into the Iraqi army, paid for by the Iraqi government; drafting a new hydrocarbon law; and the implementation of Article 140 into the Iraqi constitution -- which authorizes payments to Kurds who were forced from their homes under Saddam Hussein, a comprehensive census of ethnic groups and a referendum to decide if disputed areas should fall under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government.

Especially the recent incident, known as "Khanaqin flag order",



sparked Kurdish-federal animosities.

Khanaqin administer Mohammed Mala Hasan, a Kurd, claimed that he had been handed a written order from Maliki to raise only Iraqi flags on government buildings and lower the Kurdish flag, the official flag of the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) supported Hasan when he refused the order and referred to a previous agreement between Baghdad and Erbil after the U.S. invasion in 2003.

Government Spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh tried to deny responsibility, saying the order was "carried out by the local government at an inappropriate time" and the dispute was sparked by "external political parties and powers".

KRG and Baghdad also fight over a new oil and gas law. The Kurds accused the federal government of passing a draft law without taking the Kurdish opinion into consideration.

On the other hand, Baghdad criticized Erbil for signing contracts with international oil companies without the consent of the federal Oil Ministry.

Last month, Maliki supposedly gave his approval for all Kurdish demands, except one to finance the Kurdish Army, or Peshmarga, as part of the federal defense budget, according to Aref Tayfur, second deputy speaker of parliament and member of the Kurdish Blocs Coalition.

However, this was not the long awaited solution for the dispute, since Tayfur also claimed that Maliki's only condition was that the demands were not contrary to the constitution. This has always been Maliki's standpoint.

Kurds reject proposal of Kurdish state

Baghdad, Oct. 24 (AKnews) -by Hussam Ali

The Kurdistan Blocs Coalition (KBC) rejected the proposal of Izzat Shabandar, a leader in the ruling State of Law Coalition (SLC), who called on the Kurds to found their own state.

KBC spokesman Muayyid Tayyeb said that these statements aim to put pressure on the Kurds and affect the bilateral relationship between the Kurdistan region and Baghdad.

"The Kurdish leaders are not thinking now of this issue and we chose to stay within a federal unified Iraq and we are very keen to implement the Constitution and respect the unity and sovereignty of

Iraq," Tayyeb said.

On Saturday, Shabandar had suggested to found an independent Kurdish state and to put disputed areas under national control since "no satisfactory decision for both parties can be reached as far as the disputed areas are concerned."

The fate of the disputed areas -- cities and areas along the border between the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region -- is one of the main reasons for an ongoing argument between Erbil and Baghdad.

The debate about independence coincided with the arrival of a new delegation of Kurdish politicians in Baghdad for talks about outstanding issues between the federal government and the Kurdistan Region government (KRG) today.

Besides that, the tensions between Baghdad and Erbil are sparked by a list of demands that the Kurds believe they are entitled to after they lent their support to Prime Minister al-Maliki after the last elec-

tion: the integration of the Kurdish defense forces (the Peshmarga) into the Iraqi army, paid for by the Iraqi government; drafting a new hydrocarbon law; and the implementation of Article 140 into the Iraqi constitution -- which authorizes payments to Kurds who were forced from their homes under Saddam Hussein, a comprehensive census of ethnic groups and a referendum to decide if disputed areas should fall under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government.

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propriate time" and the dispute was sparked by "external political parties and powers".

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U.S. pullout sharpens Kurdish oil dispute

ERBIL, Iraq, October 26, 2011 (UPI)

The U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq is likely to exacerbate a potentially dangerous conflict between the Baghdad government and the semi-autonomous Kurdish enclave in the north over oil rights.

The dispute is made all the more critical since the minority Kurds, whose ultimate aim, though not publicly stated, is an independent state anchored on oil reserves, are sitting on what energy industry experts say are vast untapped oil fields.

Northern Iraq contains around one-third of the country's reserves of 143.1 billion barrels of oil.

The Kurds say the region run by the Kurdistan Regional Government, which covers three of Iraq's 18 provinces, could contain as much as 45 billion barrels.

This, says the Middle East Economic Digest, along with "the fact that Kurdish politicians are effectively kingmakers in Baghdad ... is making Erbil more powerful."

The Kurdish region, badly neglected during the rule of Saddam Hussein, is locked a long-running dispute with the federal government in Baghdad over oil contracts the KRG has signed with 20 foreign oil companies since 2006.

But Baghdad doesn't recognize the contracts and, since Iraq's fractious Parliament is unable to agree on a badly needed hydrocarbon law to regulate national energy resources and revenue-sharing, that's unlikely to change in the near future.

The Kurds oppose the current draft because it would give Baghdad greater control over Kurdish oil.

In September, the Kurds halted oil exports totaling some 160,000 barrels per day via the pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields to Turkey's Ceyhan terminal on the Mediterranean, apparently seeking to pressure Baghdad to review its position on the proposed oil law.

That didn't work, since the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad can easily make up the shortfall by boosting production in the Rumaila mega-field in the south.

In the meantime, the KRG continues to pursue its own ambitious -- and independent -- energy program, even though the new oil law, if it ever makes it to the statute book, would restrict this.

"In the space of four years we've increased production from a standing start to about 200,000 barrels per day by the end of this year," Saad Sadollah, commercial adviser at the KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources, said earlier this month.

The Erbil administration plans to raise that to 1 million bpd by the end of 2015, as well as expand its infrastructure.

"Major international companies are becoming interested in the development of Kurdistan's oil reserves and this is testament to the fact that we're pursuing an economically and legally viable way of developing those reserves," KRG Prime Minister Barham Salih told MEED.

But the most inflammatory issue in the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad is the city of Kirkuk and its oil fields.

The Kurds claim these are historically part of Kurdistan, which Saddam Hussein sought to Arabize as part of his effort to crush a long-running Kurdish rebellion, forcibly expelling Kurdish inhabitants and replacing them with Arabs.

Baghdad refuses to relinquish Kirkuk or the oil fields, which the Kurds want to provide the economic base of the independent homeland they've dreamed of for decades.

A referendum to decide Kirkuk's future was scheduled for 2007 but it has yet to be conducted because of fears it would trigger bloodshed.

Tension remains high there. Government forces and Kurdish fighters face each other along the boundaries between Kurdistan and Arab regions.

There were occasional clashes but the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq prevented large-scale fighting. Now those troops are being withdrawn under the U.S. pullout scheduled to end Dec. 31.

Frustrated by delays over the oil law, the KRG is driving to attract more foreign oil companies despite Baghdad's bitter opposition.

In the final analysis, the dispute between Baghdad and Erbil has wider ramifications that don't auger well.

Two-thirds of Iraq's known oil reserves lie in the south, where there have been rumblings for autonomy among the Shiite majority.

Although that seems to be on hold for the time being, if the southerners feel hard done by over the oil law that could change. They could even decide to pump their oil eastward through neighboring Shiite Iran.

And in Anbar province in western Iraq, which has a large Sunni population and where a new oil field was recently discovered, there have been calls for greater regional control of resources.

They do not support the protests." Ose goes a step further, accusing the PKK of having played a role in her friend's killing. "They had threatened Mashaal many times," she says. "They attacked my house in Damascus, and they told me, exactly, 'We will kill you and kill Mashaal ... not by night but by day.' " They warned her not to work with the mainstream Arab opposition, she says, telling her, "You are not good for what we want."

In May, during a protest in Qamishli, Ose recalls, the PYD did its best "to make this demonstration weaker, smaller and not important." Then, she says, it hoisted banners of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan as well as PKK flags. "We're against this flag," says Ose. "We're against any flag except the Syrian national flag. We are Syrian ... We don't want the Syrian regime to [be able to] say this is a message to Turkey. Our problem is with Bashar, not with anyone else."

In response to claims of involvement in Tammam's murder, Roj Welat, a PKK spokesman, noted via e-mail that the PKK condemned the assassination as well as "all attacks against all Kurdish politicians in all states." Most probably, he wrote, "the assassination [was] carried out by those who wanted to break up the unity of the Kurdish

opposition." The PYD, he added, "already said that this assassination against a Kurdish politician [was] carried out by Turkey. Turkey already has a very profound history record of political assassinations on the Kurdish people and other ethnic backgrounds, both in Turkey and in the region."

Asked to provide his position on the anti-Assad uprising, Welat acknowledged "great problems in Syria" but refrained from criticizing the Assad regime. The solution to Syria's problem lies in democracy and freedom, he wrote, as well as in "democratic autonomy for Kurds living in Syria."

The Kurdish protesters are clearly concerned with being identified as a separatist movement. Although Hami acknowledges that his party's ultimate goal may be Kurdish autonomy, he is quick to clarify, "We see the Kurdish areas as a part of Syria. We have no ideas about separation." Talking about autonomy, especially at this point, says Ose, "is a crazy idea."

Yet it is precisely this issue that has led the mainstream Arab opposition to keep the Kurds at arm's length, says Joshua Landis, a Syria expert at the University of Oklahoma. The

opposition, he says, is "leery of promising too much to the Kurds." Strategically, the Kurds would be an advantage, perhaps even a decisive one, Landis believes. Politically, however, they could be a liability. "The opposition understands that the Kurds are an important potential ally in weakening the government, but they're an ally that could easily become a Frankenstein," says Landis. "If they begin asking for autonomy and so forth, the government is going to be able to use that against the opposition."

Landis continues, "Once you stimulate the Kurds to make trouble for the government, the government will say, Look, these people are going to tear Syria apart." By raising the specter of another Iraq, he says, the government "will get the sympathy of people in Damascus and Aleppo who are frightened of the Jazirah [the predominantly Kurdish northeast]." For them, he says, "the Jazirah stands for poverty — and anger."

Reached by phone last Friday, Ore, her voice drowned out by antiregime slogans shouted into a loudspeaker, was attending another demonstration in Qamishli. □ □ □

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. OCTOBER 21, 2011

Iran Rebuts Aiding Kurdish Group in Turkey

By MARC CHAMPION

ISTANBUL—Iran's foreign minister paid an unscheduled visit to Ankara on Friday to pledge Tehran's cooperation in fighting Kurdish militants at war with Turkey, and sought to crush speculation that Tehran was conspiring with the group.

While in the Turkish capital, Ali Akbar Salehi was passed evidence, provided to Turkey by the U.S., concerning an alleged Iranian assassination plot against Saudi Arabia's ambassador in Washington.

"We don't believe that Iran would be engaged in such an act. But America says they have evidence," Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said at a news conference with his Iranian counterpart. "Governments should be transparent on such issues. Those who make the claims should also be clear about their claims, and Iran should answer to that."

Mr. Salehi called the evidence "insubstantial and empty," and continued to deny the accusations.

Foreign Minister Salehi's visit came as some 10,000 Turkish troops attacked positions of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in Turkey and northern Iraq for a second day. The assault, the largest in years, followed a major PKK attack Wednesday that killed 24 Turkish soldiers and police.

Speaking at a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart, Mr. Salehi denied reports from inside Iran and in the Turkish media that in August, Tehran had detained the PKK's top commander, Murat Karayilan, and then released him while agreeing a peace pact.

"We collected all information and we saw that this was not true. Karayilan was never captured by Iranians. If we had captured him, why would we have set him

free? This would have been a very good opportunity to help our Turkish brothers," Mr. Salehi said.

Mr. Salehi accused unnamed forces of using the reports to set Turkey and Iran against each other.

Mr. Davutoglu appeared to accept the Iranian denial and said Mr. Salehi's visit offered "the strongest message" of support for Turkey's efforts.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union, as well as by Turkey. It has been fighting the Turkish state since 1984, at a cost of an estimated 30,000 or more lives.

The reports in Turkish media of Mr. Karayilan's detention began with a statement in August from a mid-level Iranian official and have since been denied by all sides, including Mr. Karayilan, who did disappear from view for a period. But speculation has continued in Turkey that Iran and Syria made a deal with the PKK and were behind Wednesday's escalation of violence, as an effort to show to Ankara that there would be a price to pay for its stance against Damascus. Turkey has taken a hard line against Syria in the upri-

sing, though it hasn't followed up on threats of sanctions.

Yeni Safak, a conservative daily, alleged in a front-page article the day after Wednesday's PKK attack that the order for the attack was given by a Syrian Kurd—PKK commander Fehman Huseyin. (The PKK leadership in the past has had close ties to the Assad regime.) The newspaper cited an apparently intercepted conversation on his field radio. It wasn't possible to verify that claim. An estimated 1,500 of the PKK's 4,000 to 5,000 fighters are Syrian.

Earlier this month, Suat Kiniklioglu,

deputy chairman of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party's foreign-affairs committee, published a newspaper column giving credence to the reports on Iran's role.

"[Mr. Karayilan] seems to have been captured by our eastern neighbors and for sinister regional strategic calculations, let free after a substantial bargaining process about the behavior of... the PKK against Iran," Mr. Kiniklioglu wrote.

Speculation over Iranian and Syrian involvement with the PKK reflects an increasingly complex situation for Turkey, in part due to changes wrought by the

Arab Spring, said Bulent Aliriza, director of the Turkey project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

"Three of Turkey's most important agendas have begun to collide," said Mr. Aliriza, naming Ankara's relationship with Syria, its attempt to keep a mediating role between Iran and the U.S., and its efforts to marginalize the PKK.

"I can see why Tehran and Damascus might want to distract Turkey," using the PKK, said Mr. Aliriza, adding that it was impossible to know for certain whether they played any role. □

TheNational

October 26 2011

Turkish TV host derides Kurdish quake victims

The National / UAE
Thomas Seibert

ISTANBUL // Derogatory comments by a Turkish television host about Kurdish victims of last Sunday's earthquake in eastern Turkey have fanned ethnic and political tensions.

"First they throw stones [at police] and kill [soldiers] in the mountains. But when they are in trouble, they call for the army and the police to come to their aid," Muge Anli, a presenter for ATV, a private Turkish channel, said in comments during a live broadcast this week and posted on the internet by various groups. Her remarks referred to the clashes between rebels and security forces in predominantly Kurdish eastern Anatolia that preceded Sunday's earthquake there.

"Let's get some kind of balance here. People should know their place," she added.

Angered by Ms Anli's remarks and comments from nationalists in support of the TV presenter, dozens of survivors in the quake-hit city of Van yesterday hurled stones at journalists and police, the AFP news agency reported.

Ms Anli's comments also provoked an uproar of criticism

by commentators and in social media and drew a sharp rebuke from the Progressive Journalists' Association (CGD) because they appeared to describe the country's estimated 12 million Kurds as troublemakers and terrorists.

The CGD pointed out "news stories and comments that carry racism and discrimination" are punishable under Turkey's criminal code. Cevat Besi, a Kurd living in Istanbul, said in a Facebook message he and others were planning to take Ms Anli to court alleging incitement of racial hatred.

She told another ATV programme later her remarks had been misunderstood, but she did not offer an apology. ATV management was not available for comment yesterday.

A Facebook group titled "Dishonourable Muge Anli" had more than 6,500 supporters yesterday.

But there was also support for her. "I am applauding you for the first time. You have done the right thing for the first time," read one comment on Twitter yesterday. Turkish nationalists at a Facebook page called "The six percent share" said yesterday they were sending their condolences only to the six percent of voters in Van province



that had not voted for the main Kurdish party there.

Another comment, quoted by the news agency AFP, said the quake had been "God's wrath on Van ... God does what the Turkish Republic could not do". In Van, some journalists were hurt after being pelted by stones and police used pepper gas to disperse the angry crowd, according to the news agency.

The row erupted just a week after members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a group seen as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and the West, killed 24 soldiers in an attack in Hakkari province. Hakkari is a southern neighbour of the province of Van that was devastated by Sunday's earthquake.

Turkey's long-running Kurdish conflict, which started in 1984 and has cost tens of thousands of lives, has created deep divisions between Turks and Kurds. Turkish nationalists accuse Kurds of harbouring dreams of an independent homeland in the south-east,

and many otherwise well-travelled Turks in Istanbul have never been to the Kurdish area. At the same time, many Kurds complain about disadvantages on the job market and discrimination by the security forces.

Sunday's earthquake triggered a wave of aid from Turkey's western areas, where many people donated money, clothes and food. Several companies sent water and warm clothes while policemen donated blood for the victims, the Sabah newspaper reported yesterday. More than a thousand rescue workers from all over the country have been searching for survivors.

The CGD, the journalists' association, also chided another television speaker, Duygu Canbas, who had told her audience after the earthquake struck: "We feel sorry, even if it took place in Van." Ms Canbas, a presenter at Haberturk, a private news channel, has since apologised.

La question kurde en Turquie et la naissance du PKK

Par Nadir Djennad

Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a revendiqué les attaques de mardi 18 octobre 2011 contre des soldats turcs à la frontière avec l'Irak, faisant au moins 24 morts. Le PKK a été fondé il y a plus de trente ans et poursuit une lutte armée contre la Turquie depuis 1984.

La question de la présence kurde en Turquie est née principalement à la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale et la chute de l'Empire ottoman. Elle anime la vie géopolitique du pays depuis la naissance de la République turque en 1923. Les Kurdes représentent une importante minorité en Turquie (20 % de la population). Mais depuis la création de la République turque, le kémalisme, du nom du fondateur de la République laïque turque Mustafa Kemal, menace l'identité kurde notamment par le déni total de son existence, l'interdiction de la langue kurde ou les répressions permanentes par l'armée turque.

En 1978, Abdullah Öcalan fonde le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), union du nationalisme séparatiste kurde et du marxisme-léninisme. A sa création en 1978, le PKK voulait l'indépendance des territoires à population majoritairement kurde se situant dans le sud-est de la



Des partisans du Parti pour la paix et la démocratie, pro-kurde, brandissent le portrait du fondateur du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan lors d'un congrès à Ankara le 4 septembre 2011
AFP PHOTO / ADEM ALTAN

Turquie. Une région constituant une partie du Kurdistan. Mais à présent, les revendications d'indépendance du PKK se sont muées en demandes d'autonomie au sein d'un système fédéral. Avant tout, les Kurdes demandent la libération de leur chef historique, Abdullah Öcalan, en prison sur l'île d'Imrali depuis sa capture en 1999 par les services secrets turcs. Plus largement, le PKK réclame l'amnistie pour les 10 000 combattants qu'il revendique.

La logistique du PKK

Grâce à leurs bases arrières en Irak, en Iran, en Syrie, et en Europe, les rebelles kurdes de Turquie parviennent chaque année à réunir une centaine de millions de dollars, selon le site d'information Terrorwatch. Dans certains pays, toujours selon ce site, le PKK lève carrément l'impôt révolutionnaire au sein de la diaspora kurde. Et Ankara l'accuse même d'être impliqué dans des trafics de drogues et d'armes. Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan est d'ailleurs inscrit sur la liste des organisations terroristes des États-Unis, de l'Union européenne et du Royaume-Uni.

Lutte armée et cessez-le-feu

Depuis une trentaine d'années, 45 000 personnes ont trouvé la mort à

l'occasion d'affrontements entre rebelles kurdes et armée turque. 4 000 villages ont été détruits et au moins un million de Kurdes ont dû partir en exil. Depuis le début du conflit en 1984, le PKK a décrété plusieurs cessez-le-feu de manière unilatérale. Le premier est proposé par Abdullah Öcalan, alors en relation directe avec le président turc de l'époque Turgut Özal, puis entériné par le conseil présidentiel en 1993.

Le texte, qui suit les recommandations d'Öcalan, définit l'arrêt de la lutte armée comme la seule voie possible à la démocratisation de la Turquie et la résolution du problème kurde. Ont ensuite suivi les cessez-le-feu de 1995, 1998, 1999 et 2006 toujours dans le but, selon ses dirigeants, d'aboutir à la résolution du problème kurde par la voix du dialogue.

Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, le gouvernement turc refuse toute négociation avec le PKK qu'il accuse de terrorisme. Selon Didier Billion, directeur adjoint de l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS) et spécialiste de la Turquie, les militaires turcs n'ont pas réussi à éradiquer le PKK depuis 1984. D'après lui, plusieurs voix s'élèvent aujourd'hui en Turquie pour estimer que la solution au conflit est avant tout politique.

□ □ □

Les Etats-Unis comptent vendre des hélicoptères d'attaque à la Turquie

AFP

WASHINGTON, 28 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE PENTAGONE a révélé vendredi qu'il comptait vendre à la Turquie trois hélicoptères d'attaque AH-1 Super Cobra pour une transaction se montant à 111 millions de dollars, alors qu'Ankara vient de boucler une vaste opération contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK.

L'opération de l'armée turque dans le sud-est du pays a pris fin jeudi. Elle avait été lancée en réaction à la mort de 24 soldats dans les attaques du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) à la frontière avec l'Irak, la semaine

dernière.

Le Pentagone a informé le Congrès de la transaction qu'il compte mener avec Ankara après la fin de l'opération de l'armée turque.

Chose inhabituelle, les trois hélicoptères et leurs pièces de rechange proviendraient de la flotte des Marines. Avec l'argent de la vente, les Marines souhaitent acquérir de nouveaux équipements aériens, indique l'Agence de coopération sur la sécurité (DSCA) dans un communiqué.

La loi américaine oblige l'administration à informer le Congrès avant toute transaction de taille portant sur des armes.

Poursuite de l'offensive turque contre le PKK, 49 morts

Seda Sezer

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - L'armée turque a annoncé samedi avoir tué 49 activistes kurdes dans la vallée de Cukurca Kazan, dans le sud-est du pays, au troisième jour d'une offensive lancée après la mort de 24 soldats turcs dans des attaques des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

L'armée turque a déployé 22 bataillons pour des attaques terrestres dans cinq différents secteurs des deux côtés de la frontière turco-



irakienne. Des bombardements les accompagnent alors qu'un millier de soldats turcs sont présents sur le territoire irakien, où le PKK dispose

de bases arrière.

Trente-cinq activistes kurdes ont été tués tôt samedi dans la vallée de Kazan et les corps de 14 autres rebelles ont été découverts dans la même vallée, portant à 49 le nombre de rebelles tués en deux jours, a indiqué l'état-major turc dans un communiqué publié sur son site internet.

La dernière grande incursion de l'armée turque en Irak remonte à 2008, quand 10.000 hommes appuyés par l'aviation avaient franchi la frontière.

Le conflit armé dans le sud-est de la Turquie, qui remonte à 1984, a fait plus de 40.000 morts. □

AFP

Confusion autour de la présence de soldats turcs au Kurdistan irakien

Erbil (Irak), 25 octobre 2011 (AFP)

DES INFORMATIONS contradictoires circulaient mardi soir sur la présence de forces turques dans le nord de l'Irak pour y pourchasser les rebelles du PKK, alors qu'Ankara a de son côté démenti y avoir dépêché ses chars.

Deux responsables irakiens des gardes-frontières ont affirmé mardi à l'AFP qu'aucune incursion turque n'avait eu lieu sur le sol irakien. Mais un habitant a au contraire affirmé avoir vu "un grand nombre de militaires turcs" entrer mardi matin dans la petite localité de Ouri, puis en ressortir plus tard dans la journée.

"Il n'y a pas d'incursion turque de soldats ou de forces turques sur le sol irakien", a déclaré à l'AFP le colonel Hussein Tamer, commandant des gardes-frontières de la province de Dohouk, à l'extrême nord de l'Irak.

Le général Ahmed Fadheladin, commandant des gardes-frontières dans la province voisine d'Erbil a abondé dans son sens: "Jusqu'ici, il n'y a pas eu d'incursion", a-t-il dit.

Erbil et Dohouk sont les deux provinces de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien qui ont une frontière commune avec la Turquie.

Le PKK avait également initialement démenti toute incursion turque au Kurdistan irakien. Mais un de ses porte-parole, Dozdar Hammo, a implicitement reconnu dans la soirée que les Turcs étaient bel et bien parvenus jusqu'à Ouri, dans la province irakienne de Dohouk.

"Des accrochages se sont produits entre le PKK et l'armée turque, et par conséquent l'armée turque s'est retirée du village d'Ouri en direction de la frontière turque", a-t-il dit.

Cette déclaration est confortée par le témoignage d'un habitant d'Ouri, Fawzi Ibrahim Mohammed, 50 ans, qui avait déclaré avoir vu "un grand nombre de militaires turcs (arriver) dans notre village vers 11H30 (08H30 GMT)".

Ce témoin a également confirmé leur départ: "Oui, j'ai vu les soldats turcs se retirer du village d'Ouri", a-t-il dit dans la soirée.

De son côté, l'armée turque a démenti mardi des informations selon lesquelles ses chars seraient entrés en Irak pour y pourchasser les rebelles du PKK.

"Les informations parues dans la presse selon lesquelles nos chars sont passés au delà de la frontière (irakienne) sont erronées", souligne un communiqué en ligne, qui affirme que des tanks turcs ont effectué des manoeuvres dans des zones proches de la frontière turco-irakienne.

Lundi soir, des sources sécuritaires turques avaient affirmé que des unités de l'armée turque avaient pénétré ce même jour dans le nord de l'Irak pour se diriger vers des camps du PKK.

Une vingtaine de chars et une trentaine de camions militaires sont entrés en Irak à partir du village de Siyahkaya et se dirigeaient vers les bases des séparatistes kurdes de Turquie situées dans la vallée d'Haftanin, affirmaient ces sources.

Quelque 300 personnes, dont nombre de Turcs résidant en Irak, ont par ailleurs manifesté mardi à Erbil en soutien au PKK, a constaté l'AFP. Certains brandissaient les photos de personnes selon eux tuées par les forces turques et des drapeaux kurdes.

L'offensive turque à la frontière turco-irakienne a commencé la semaine dernière suite à des attaques multiples menées par plus de 200 rebelles mardi soir contre des postes militaires, qui ont coûté la vie à 24 militaires turcs.

Environ 10.000 hommes sont engagés dans l'opération actuelle de l'armée des deux côtés de la frontière turco-irakienne, selon les sources sécuritaires turques.

En Irak, une ville kurde transformée en "prison" par le conflit Turquie-PKK



SHILA DIZA (Irak) (AFP) - L'offensive menée depuis mercredi par l'armée turque contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le nord de l'Irak a transformé la petite ville de Shila Diza, à l'extrême nord du pays, en "prison", se désolent ses habitants.

Ankara cherche à venir à bout du PKK après la mort de 24 soldats turcs mardi et a lancé ce que le ministre de l'Intérieur turc Idris Naim Sahin a décrit comme "l'une des plus vastes opérations visant à en terminer avec l'organisation terroriste".

Environ 10.000 soldats d'élite seraient impliqués dans des opérations massives sur terre et par air dans le nord de l'Irak et en Turquie, même si, selon Ankara, le principal théâtre des opérations se trouve en territoire turc.

À la mi-août, l'aviation turque avait déjà lancé dans le nord de l'Irak une campagne de raids aériens contre des repaires de rebelles kurdes, les premiers depuis un an.

Pour les habitants de Shila Diza,

une ville d'environ 10.000 habitants dans la région reculée de Dohouk, à quelque 400 km au nord de Bagdad, les opérations turques signifient qu'ils ne peuvent plus traverser les montagnes situées au nord de la ville pour accéder à leurs fermes proches de la frontière.

"C'est comme si nous vivions dans une grande prison: on ne peut pas bouger", explique Nihad, un chauffeur de taxi de 36 ans. "Les gens restent en ville".

"Les Turcs (...) ne font pas de distinction entre les combattants et les civils", explique-t-il, appelant le PKK à quitter l'Irak afin que les villages frontaliers détruits ou abandonnés puissent être reconstruits et que la vie retourne à la normale.

Les belligérants sont présents à quelques kilomètres à peine de Shila Diza et des tirs peuvent être entendus certains jours, affirment les habitants.

La vie "s'en trouve affectée de multiples façons. Les gens ne peuvent pas sortir de la ville pour aller dans les montagnes", souligne Hajji, un vendeur de fruits et légumes de 40 ans.

"Pour l'armée turque, cela ne fait aucune différence de tuer un (membre du) PKK ou nous: nous sommes quand même des Kurdes", se lamente-t-il.

Abdallah, 33 ans, qui travaille comme apiculteur, a renoncé depuis de longues semaines à se rendre dans sa ferme, située à environ 20 km de la ville, à cause des frappes aériennes turques. Là-bas, "tout est brûlé et j'ai fait tous ces efforts pour rien", déplore-t-il.

La femme de son frère a été tuée par un précédent bombardement turc en 1994 sur Shila Diza, raconte-t-il. "Il n'y a aucune garantie que cela ne se reproduise pas à chaque fois qu'un avion de chasse passe", note-t-il.

Pour autant, relève-t-il, "la faute n'en incombe pas qu'aux Turcs". "Les Turcs, le PKK et le gouvernement local doivent trouver une solution à cela, à ce qui m'arrive à moi et à d'autres gens".

Souleiman, 24 ans, tirait son principal revenu de sa ferme, à 25 km de la ville, mais il n'a pu s'y rendre "depuis environ trois mois".

"Nous faisons face quotidiennement à des frappes aériennes derrière cette montagne", dit-il en désignant le nord. "Nous avons peur, nous ne pouvons pas y aller (...) Hier soir, ils ont bombardé jusqu'à deux heures du matin", souligne-t-il.

Malgré cela, il dit ne pas en vouloir aux combattants du PKK: "Les Turcs n'ont pas le droit de venir dans mon pays et de bombarder ma région. Ce sont les Turcs qui sont l'ennemi", lance-t-il.

"Je voudrais que ce problème disparaisse, par des négociations (...) Je voudrais juste que cela se fasse pour que tout le monde puisse retourner dans sa ferme". □

AFP

La Bulgarie refuse d'extrader un militant du PKK

SOFIA, 24 octobre 2011 (AFP)

La cour d'appel bulgare de Varna (est) a refusé d'extrader vers la Turquie un militant présumé du groupe séparatiste kurde PKK, selon un communiqué du tribunal.

Ramazan Gokalp, 31 ans, a un statut de réfugié en Autriche. Ce pays, ainsi que les Pays-Bas avaient déjà refusé son extradition vers la Turquie.

L'homme avait été arrêté à la fin août à l'aéroport de Varna sur la base d'un mandat d'arrêt européen. Il est recherché par les autorités turques pour son appartenance au PKK.

Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui réclame un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est de la Turquie, où les Kurdes sont majoritaires, est considéré par l'UE et les Etats-Unis comme une organisation terroriste.

Ankara vows 'immense revenge' for PKK attacks

ANKARA / Hurriyet Daily News

Turkish President Abdullah Gül says revenge will be 'very great' for attacks carried out by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants, while Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underlines the timing of the deadly attacks that came on the day the official works on a new constitution kicked off.

Ankara has promised "immense revenge" for at least 24 soldiers killed by Kurdish militants yesterday as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called an emergency meeting with senior aides over cross-border military action to counter the escalating wave of violence.

"Those who imagine that those attacks are shaking the state and bringing it into line will see that the revenge for those attacks will be immense and multifold. Sooner or later they will understand that waging a war against the Turkish state will lead them nowhere," President Abdullah Gül said.

"Those who might have gotten the idea that democratic progress in Turkey is gained by the way of terror are committing a great historic mistake," he said.

Erdoğan, who scrapped a visit to Kazakhstan after news of the attacks broke in the morning, announced that the military had launched "large-scale operations in the region, including hot pursuits in northern Iraq allowed by international law."

He put the death toll at 24 and said another 18 security personnel were wounded when militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) mounted simultaneous attacks early yesterday morning at several army and police facilities in the border province of Hakkari.

"Friends and enemies must understand that we will never bow down to any assault, either from inside or outside, that we will never step back and give away even the slightest chunk of the motherland's soil," Erdoğan said.



President Gül. AA photo.

The emergency meeting, chaired by Erdoğan, included Hakan Fidan, undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organization; Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay; Interior Minister İdris Naim Şahin; Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz, as well as the deputy chief of general staff and the gendarmerie's head of operations.

Fidan returned to Erdoğan's office for more talks in the afternoon, while many ministers either canceled their programs or cut short visits abroad to return to Ankara.

The leaders issued stern warnings to those who shelter and tolerate the PKK in messages that appeared directed primarily at Kurdish-run northern Iraq.

"The Turkish state will be on the back of the neck of anyone who is openly or covertly sheltering, supporting, abetting and tolerating terror, or turning a blind eye to it," Erdoğan told reporters after the emergency talks.

The prime minister also underlined the timing of the attack. "The treacherous attack that came on the same day as the works on a new, civilian and democratic constitution were to start will not retain us from a bright future," said Erdoğan. "We will at the same time fight against terror and work to destroy the background it has been exploiting to get support."

He argued that the recent escalation of PKK violence showed that "the terrorist organization is the tool of those who target Turkey's well-being, peace and sustained development"

and urged stronger international cooperation against terrorism.

Erdoğan appealed to citizens to stay calm and refrain from any retributive action.

"Those who fail to control their anger should not know that they will be helping the terrorist organization to achieve its objectives," he said, expressing commitment to democratic reforms. "We have seen in the recent past that democracy, freedoms and human rights are the antidote to terrorism."

Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, who cut short a visit to Macedonia, said the rough mountainous terrain in the southeast made it easy for the PKK to move around and smuggle weapons. He also admitted occasional shortcomings on the part of the government.

"Sometimes we lose grip of control, fall short on intelligence and remain out of the loop. This incident is one of them," Arınç said.

In further comments, Erdoğan issued a veiled rebuke to the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) for refusing brand the PKK as a terrorist group, charging that their calls for peace were insincere.

He also urged opposition parties to withhold any criticism of the government.

"Today we need solidarity rather than criticism, recriminations and provocations," he said.

Economy Minister Zafer Çağlayan said the bloodshed would not deter Ankara from efforts to improve the southeast and announced that he would go to Hakkari next week, together with business people, to consider fresh investment, trade and employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, several dozen demonstrators who attempted to march on the prime minister's office to protest the government for the attacks were stopped by police, who erected a barricade.□

Compiled from Doğan News Agency and
Anatolia News Agency stories by the
Hurriyet Daily



October 21, 2011

U.S. departure will leave Iraq on its own in a sea of conflict

By Roy Gutman
McClatchy Newspapers

BAGHDAD — The failure of the Obama administration to reach an agreement on a continued U.S. troop presence in Iraq will increase pressure from all directions on the government of Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, testing the resiliency of this country's fragile national institutions and a political class that had long relied on a U.S. safety net.

Even as President Barack Obama announced Friday that all U.S. forces would be home before the Christmas holidays, a speedup of the U.S. withdrawal that had been scheduled to end Dec. 31, Turkish forces were still fighting inside Iraq, retaliating for guerrilla attacks launched from the semi-autonomous Kurdish region — just one of the international entanglements that Iraq soon will be left on its own to contend with.

And there are any number of internal disputes that the U.S. has played a critical role in mediating for years that soon will be left only to Iraqis to sort out.

To be sure, no one can rule out the possibility that Iraqis will pull together to overcome disputes that for years have appeared insoluble. It is even conceivable that Iraq could become a beacon for democracy in a Persian Gulf region now ruled by a clerical regime in Iran and near-absolute monarchies in the Arab states.

Ahmed Chalabi, the Shiite politician who helped persuade the Bush administration to invade Iraq in 2003, on Friday welcomed the end of the U.S. presence, calling the U.S. decision to stop talking about staying "a very wise move." He portrayed the reality check Iraq is about to face as a positive development.

"Iraqi politicians can no longer expect the American safety net to contain their quarrels, and they must transcend being politicians to being statesmen, to deal with issues that they have to resolve

without the American presence," he told McClatchy.

But if things go badly, Iraq could come apart in ways that are sure to involve Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. All are major players in the region, all are neighbors of Iraq, and all have ethnic, sectarian, cultural or political ties to substantial elements of the population inside Iraq's multi-ethnic state.

An unfortunate turn of events also would affect the supply of oil from Iraq, which has enormous potential as a major player in the energy market, as well as Saudi Arabia and Iran, the first and second biggest producers.

Iraq's security problems come in three layers. Some challenges, like the absence of a national air defense and the need for better defense intelligence, are issues of national military preparedness that are resolvable with hardware purchases and training, given enough time. Iraq already has purchased one squadron of F-16s and is expected to order a second.

On top of the military inadequacy is a set of tough political issues, principally the disputes between Kurds and Sunnis over who will control places like Kirkuk, a dispute that has proved so complex that the U.S. military has been called on to manage periodic flare-ups of violence.

Then there is the potential threat from outside in a region where memories are still bitter over Iraq's role as bullyboy under Saddam Hussein and his wars against Iran and Kuwait.

For the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel, the biggest threat to Iraq comes from Iran. The giant Shiite Muslim nation, which uses its clout regularly with the friendly Shiite-led government in Baghdad, sustained hundreds of thousands of casualties in its eight-year conflict with Saddam's Iraq. No one can deny that Iran has a legitimate interest in Iraq being a good neighbor.

But heavy Iranian involvement in Iraq's elections and the formation of its present government, its reputed arming of

extremist Shiite militias in southern Iraq and Tehran's insistence that Baghdad's foreign policy bend to its wishes have aroused anxiety among practically everyone else in the region.

To Iraq's north, the continuing pro-democracy revolt in Syria presents an unsettling scenario. Iran, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, wants Iraq to support Assad, a member of the Alawite sect, which is related to Shiite Islam.

But Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia wants Assad overthrown and would be happy to see majority rule by Syria's long repressed Sunni population.

If the current unrest to the north evolves into full civil war, weapons will no doubt flow to either side through Iraq, and might easily revive sectarian war here.

A problematic internal issue is what to do about Kirkuk, an oil-rich province claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen. Saddam Hussein had sought to dilute the region's Kurdish population by moving thousands of Arabs there from farther south, but since the U.S. toppled the dictator, Kurds have streamed back.

Meanwhile, al Qaida and other Sunni Arab insurgents from nearby towns regularly provoke the different police forces that provide security in Kirkuk, some of which report to the central government in Baghdad and others to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Tahseen al Shaikhli, an Iraqi government spokesman, said last summer that no one in Iraqi politics wanted to come "within 100 feet" of addressing the Kirkuk problem. "The American troops are the balance of everything there," he told McClatchy.

That will soon be a memory. The U.S. military command for northern Iraq hauled down the U.S. flag on Thursday at a ceremony in Saddam's hometown of Tikrit. Now it will be up to Iraqi forces to maintain the peace and resolve the crises. □

END DATE FOR IRAQ

Obama's announcement that the last U.S. soldier would leave Iraq by year's end signals a welcome end to the war.

President Obama's announcement on Friday that the last American soldier will leave Iraq by year's end signals a welcome end to a war that was started under false pretenses and went on far too long — killing more than 4,400 Americans and many more thousands of Iraqis and costing \$1 trillion over nearly nine years.

When Mr. Obama took office, there were about 142,000 Americans fighting in Iraq. The president deserves credit for fulfilling his campaign promise to bring the conflict to a close.

Mr. Obama had wanted to leave several thousand troops behind, for a while longer, to keep training Iraqi forces and to help Iraq's democratically elected but deeply flawed government maintain security. But the Iraqis couldn't make up their minds, and the debate in Baghdad was growing increasingly bitter. With a Dec. 31 deadline for a full withdrawal — negotiated by President George W. Bush — approaching, Mr. Obama decided the best thing to do was to bring all the troops home. There is still talk between Iraqis and Americans about an ongoing military relationship and future negotiations that could continue Iraqi training in Kuwait, the United States or under NATO auspices.

We share concerns about Iran's growing influence, continued high levels of violence and doubts about the ability of Iraq's army and police. Those were reasons to keep a small military force there, with a carefully drawn mission, but only if Iraq agreed.

The problem was that even Iraqi officials who favored the United States and understand their country's vulnerabilities want the Americans gone. When Iraqi officials refused a demand from the United States to continue granting immunity from legal prosecution to American soldiers, there was no way the Pentagon could accept that.

The announcement triggered some foolish criticism from neoconservatives — who remain shamefully unapologetic for their role in unleashing this war — accusing Mr. Obama of abandoning Iraq now. Mitt Romney, a Republican presidential candidate, said Mr. Obama "unnecessarily put at risk" hard-won victories. Like most of what Mr. Romney says about national security, that was absurd. Would he have Washington ignore the desires of Iraq's democratic government and stay in Iraq forever?

Oil-producing Iraq is a major regional actor. The United States, which has an embassy with thousands of employees in Baghdad, must remain actively engaged diplomatically, through development and economic cooperation. But Iraq will be in the hands of Iraqis, as it should be.

Turkey vows to pursue Kurdish attackers

ISTANBUL

BY SEBNEM ARSU

Kurdish militants killed at least 24 Turkish soldiers in an attack near the Iraq border on Wednesday, one of the deadliest strikes in years, and Turkey's military responded by sending hundreds of troops into northern Iraq in a counterattack on Kurdish insurgent hideouts.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkish forces were pursuing the attackers, making it clear that his military was crossing the Iraqi border, which the Turks have done numerous times in their protracted effort to crush a resilient Kurdish insurgency movement.

"As of now, wide-reaching operations, including hot-pursuit operations, are continuing in the region within the framework of international law," Mr. Erdogan said at a news conference in Ankara. "We will combat terror on one front, and, on another front, we will continue our path to destroy the grounds that terror manipulates."

He spoke after having conferred with senior government officials at an emergency meeting about the deadly Kurdish militant attack, which the prime minister's office said had also left at least 22 Turkish soldiers wounded.

NTV, a private television network, said 600 Turkish ground troops chasing the attackers pushed 2.5 miles, or 4 kilo-

meters, into northern Iraq, where the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a militant separatist group known as the P.K.K., is based. The group has long battled the

Turkish government for autonomy in the predominantly Kurdish southeast.

The local news media also reported Turkish air deployments and artillery fire in the mountainous border area.

The militant strike, which started early Wednesday, mainly in Hakkari Province, lasted for about four hours. It came a day after a blast in Bitlis, another southeastern province, that killed five police officers and three civilians.

Using unusually harsh language, President Abdullah Gul vowed in an earlier speech that the country would strike back against the Kurdish militants. He had visited military bases in the region only days before.

"They will see that the revenge for these attacks will be massive and much stronger," he said.

The attacks came at a time when the country is drafting a new Constitution with greater rights for ethnic minorities. The effort is widely perceived as designed to end Kurdish separatist violence, which has claimed more than 40,000 lives since the 1980s.

"In today's Turkey when there is a better democracy to respond to the Kurdish needs, the P.K.K. terror is no different than Osama bin Laden's terror manipulating Islam in the way it manip-



ulates Kurdish ethnicity," said Ihsan Bal, a security expert at the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization.

The P.K.K. has escalated attacks in recent months in rural and urban areas. The Turkish military has responded with airstrikes and artillery attacks

against the group's bases in northern Iraq, killing as many as 160 militants, according to the Turkish military.

The Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, signaled during an official visit in Ankara last week that the Iraqi Army could join military efforts to eliminate P.K.K. bases in northern Iraq.

At the same time, however, the Iraqi government, as well as Kurdish officials in the northern Iraq, have expressed concern about unilateral Turkish military interventions in Iraq's territory.

The United States, along with the European Union, list the P.K.K. as a terrorist organization and have shared intelligence with Turkey on the group's movements since 2007.

Less U.S. soft power in Iraq

BAGHDAD

Fiscal limits and pullout of troops will sharply cut State Department's plans

BY TIM ARANGO
AND MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

Beyond the final withdrawal of troops that President Barack Obama announced on Friday, the United States' fiscal troubles are dictating a drastic scaling back of plans for diplomatic, economic and cultural programs once

NEWS ANALYSIS

deemed vital to steadying Iraq, building a long-term alliance and prying the country from Iran's tightening embrace.

As recently as this past summer, the U.S. State Department had planned to establish a 700-person consulate in the still-restive northern city of Mosul. And as recently as the spring, the United States was moving ahead with plans for a consulate in the ethnically divided and potentially explosive city of Kirkuk.

Those plans have now been shelved or indefinitely postponed, and pleas from some Iraqi leaders to open diplomatic offices in the Shiite-dominated south, where Iran wields outside influence, were summarily rejected.

Taken together, the shrinking of the United States' military and diplomatic ambitions underscores the reality that a post-America Iraq is taking shape more rapidly and completely than many Iraqis and Americans had envisioned. That has heartened many Iraqis and Americans, weary of more than eight years of war and occupation, but left others fearful.

"The United States should not turn its back on Iraq," Labid Abawi, the deputy foreign minister, said Saturday in an interview. "Iraq needs the United States, and the United States needs Iraq."

The shifting relationship comes at a delicate time for Iraq and the region.

The country finds itself surrounded by nations undergoing significant change. Iran, which has long sought to increase its influence on its neighbor, has been emboldened by the Arab Spring, which ousted or diminished several Western-leaning leaders. At the same time, Syria has been suffering through months of unrest that Iraqi leaders fear could spill over the border, reopening what was once a thoroughfare for fighters from Al Qaeda.

Domestically, many issues remain unresolved. Twenty months after a na-

tional election, the country's leading political blocs cannot agree on who should run the Defense and Interior Ministries. Parliament still has not passed legislation to determine how the country's oil and natural gas revenue should be divided — years after the Bush administration set such a law as a benchmark for progress.

The issue of whether Baghdad or the Kurdish region should hold sway over Kirkuk also remains unresolved.

U.S. officials emphasize that they still plan a major increase in diplomatic and cultural programs — the building blocks of so-called soft power — scattering branch offices across the country in the largest diplomatic mission since the Marshall Plan.

In an interview broadcast on Sunday, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton emphasized that ties that would remain — and she issued a clear warning to Iran not to seek to exploit the U.S. departure.

"Iran would be badly miscalculating if they did not look at the entire region and all our presence in many countries in the region, both in bases, in training, and with NATO allies like Turkey," she said on CNN. "We have a lot of presence in that region. No one, most particularly Iran, should miscalculate about our continuing commitment."

But the expansion of a diplomatic presence will be much smaller than imagined, a victim not only of budgetary constraints but also of a growing awareness that the decision to withdraw U.S. soldiers makes it much harder for diplomats to do their work safely. The State Department's more extensive plans were drawn up at a time when military officials were pushing to keep as many as 20,000 soldiers in Iraq next year.

Christopher R. Hill, a former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, worries that even a less-expansive presence might be risky.

"I and many other people have concerns of the sustainability of keeping so many diplomats in so many far-flung places," he said. "If you don't have freedom of movement, you do go back to the question of whether it is worth the outlay of the budget and risk and personnel for keeping these people there."

The reactions in Baghdad on Friday night and Saturday after Mr. Obama's remarks were muted, a possible reflection of the country's mixed emotions.

Many Iraqis — especially ethnic Kurds, secular intellectuals and Sunnis skittish about Shiite power — have expressed anxiety about what the country might become without a U.S. military presence.

"Obama's announcement to withdraw all U.S. troops is a victory for the Iraqis,

but we have to be aware of Iranian influences and their attempts to exert control over Iraq," said Haidar al-Mulla, a spokesman and lawmaker with Iraqiya, the political bloc that won the most seats in parliamentary elections last year.

But others, like those who recently celebrated the closing of a major U.S. base in Mosul, saw only possibilities in the increasing signs that the United States was definitively pulling back. Students, poets and local officials raised the Iraqi flag last Monday and held placards that read, "Congratulations to the city of Mosul on this great day, the last occupier soldier has left."

The discussions over the past year about the United States' future role in Iraq, both within the U.S. government and between the two countries, have laid bare the diminishing ability of the United States to shape outcomes in Iraq,



Iraqis taking part in a military demonstration after completing U.S. military training.

"I'm not surprised there is downward gravity about what we really want to see there."

as well as a relative lack of interest in a Congress consumed by domestic issues.

"I guess very thoughtful people believe there should be some residual presence in Iraq," said Mr. Hill, the former ambassador, who now runs the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. "But there are many Americans who don't want to hear the word 'Iraq' and are not really behind a continued presence."

Given that, Mr. Hill said, "I'm not surprised there is downward gravity about what we really want to see there."

The State Department's plans still need approval from the Iraqi government and financing from Congress. The department has requested \$6.2 billion to finance its operations for the 2012 fiscal year.

The plans for Mosul were among

those that fell victim not only to anticipated budgetary constraints but also to the reality that the military was pulling out. Without U.S. soldiers in the mix, the State Department realized that the vast majority of the 700-person staff would have to be contract security guards. Officials concluded that the cost of security outweighed the benefit of having a small number of diplomats and program officers in the field.

In Kirkuk — where the potential for violence had previously been the centerpiece of arguments by military officials for a longer troop presence — the State Department indefinitely postponed plans for a consulate. It will now rely on an office to be financed by the Pentagon to maintain a bare-bones diplomatic function.

An even earlier plan called for a branch office in Diyala Province, but

that was quickly abandoned. Two consulates have, however, been opened, in Basra and Erbil.

Other programs were also affected. State Department plans had called for nearly 350 contract workers for an ambitious police training effort, according to a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the plans were meant to be confidential. Now the figure is close to 100.

There will now be 10 Office of Security Cooperation locations, which manage the sale of weapons and training, while previous plans called for 15.

The stakes in Iraq remain clear, as do the inevitable questions about its future. Will a fragile government tilt toward authoritarianism and more violence, or become stable and democratic? Will the United States leave a positive legacy, a return of sorts for what it spent in lives

and dollars over the course of the war? That is a goal no number of troops could guarantee.

“There were never going to be enough to guarantee an acceptable outcome,” said Richard N. Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations. “It would have slightly increased the odds.”

Mr. Hill expressed similar misgivings about whether any amount of continued intervention could create the strong ally the United States hoped would be the legacy of a war that took so many American and Iraqi lives and strained the United States’ coffers.

“We can say it is an ally,” Mr. Hill said, “but an invasion is never a very good basis for forming an alliance.”



Rudaw.Net

18 October 2011

Once Again, Baghdad, Ankara and Tehran



HIWA OSMAN / RUDAW

Just about when the Kurdish delegation arrived in Baghdad, the Turkish Parliament supported the army's “right” to conduct cross-border operations and enter “Iraq” to chase the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK.) And one day after the delegation returned to Kurdistan, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced the creation of a joint Iraqi-Iranian committee aimed at ending the presence of the Kurdish rebel group the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) in the porous border between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan.

As far as I know, neither of the two events were subject of any meeting, discussion or declaration between the Kurdish delegation and Baghdad.

The timing of the two actions may not have been calculated around the delegation's visit to Baghdad, but they are indicative of the enormity of the challenge the Kurds are facing.

The Kurdish delegation will realize that their effort should not be focused on Baghdad alone. It requires a regional –

and, to an extent, an international Kurdish initiative -- to determine exactly what the Kurds can and can't get.

In Baghdad, the problem has become too substantial for experts and technocrats to solve alone. Although this is an important element of any negotiation, the prerequisite is Baghdad's perspective on fundamental Kurdish demands. So far, they seem to be at two ends of the spectrum on federalism, oil and gas, Article 140, partnership in government and other sticking points.

Looking at the situation between Baghdad and Erbil with one eye and the situation on the borders with Iran and Turkey with the other, one can find a link between the two. While perhaps the tie is remove and even farfetched for some, the clear explanation is that they are linked and are objectively feeding each other.

The continued operations along the Turkish and Iranian borders are aimed at ending the PKK and PJAK presence on their borders. The Kurds agree to this. But the question here is: How do they do it? Or how should it be done?

The Kurds stress the need for a peaceful struggle of the Kurds in Turkey and

shifting the battle from the mountains to the Parliament and government in Ankara. They should, however, be mindful of what is at stake if the PKK is removed from these areas.

The Kurds and the Turks need to make sure that if they forced the PKK to evacuate Kurdistan's Tora Bora, the real terrorists will not replace them.

Similarly on the Iranian borders, the Iranian shelling aims to undermine the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. All of these events are occurring as the crisis between Erbil and Baghdad escalates.

Last week, a “very close advisor to Maliki” explained part of the reason. He told an Iraqi media outlet that the reason the Turks and Iranians continue shelling the border is because they want the Iraqi army to control the border with the help of the Peshmerga. This would deal a massive blow to the Kurdish concept of federalism.

The Kurdish delegation and leadership could soon realize that Baghdad alone may not be the place to solve their problems. They may also need to go to Tehran and Ankara to convince them of the virtues of having a Kurdish region in the north that is able to stand on its feet and deserves the help it needs.

Dans l'est de la Turquie, un fort tremblement de terre fait plus de 200 morts

Le séisme a frappé Van, une ville de 400 000 habitants à majorité kurde. A Ercis, de nombreuses personnes sont ensevelies sous les ruines

Istanbul

Correspondance

Les sismographes se sont affolés à 13 h 41, heure locale. Un puissant séisme de 7,2 sur l'échelle de Richter a frappé la région de Van, dans l'est de la Turquie, dimanche 23 octobre après-midi, provoquant de très importants dégâts et une « grande panique », selon Bekir Kaya, le maire de la ville de Van, située au bord du lac du même nom. Plus de 100 répliques ont suivi, la plus importante, mesurée à 5,7, dans la

soirée, poussant une bonne partie de la population à passer la nuit dehors par crainte d'autres secousses, voire à quitter la ville.

Le bilan humain reste provisoire, mais atteignait 217 morts lundi matin, selon le ministre turc de l'intérieur, Idris Naim Sahin, qui a également donné un chiffre de 1090 blessés. Au moins 100 corps ont été retrouvés dans les décombres d'une dizaine d'immeubles dans le centre-ville de Van et 117 dans la localité d'Ercis, à une trentaine de kilomètres plus au nord. Des centaines de personnes, selon



le centre de crise du Croissant-Rouge, sont ensevelies sous les gravats et les ruines des bâtiments dans cette commune, la plus sévèrement touchée, où environ 80 bâtiments résidentiels ainsi qu'un dortoir d'étudiants se sont écroulés.

Plus d'un millier de blessés ont été accueillis à l'hôpital public d'Ercis, encore debout, et des centaines d'autres dans des tentes dressées dans les jardins de l'hôpital de Van. Des milliers de sans-abri devront être pris en charge alors que des chutes de neige sont attendues mercredi.

Une bonne heure de flottement a suivi le séisme. Les premières données, livrées par le Centre d'études géologiques américain (USGS), annonçaient une magnitude de 7,6, soit une puissance équivalente au séisme d'Izmit, dans l'ouest de la Turquie, qui fit 17 000 victimes en 1999, un traumatisme encore frais dans le pays. Mais les mesures de l'Institut de sismologie de Kandilli, à Istanbul, n'indiquaient alors qu'une magnitude de 6,6, une différence considérable sur l'échelle de Richter. Les deux centres de recherche se sont

finallement mis d'accord pour évaluer la secousse à 7,2. La région de Van, une ville de 400 000 habitants à majorité kurde, est une zone rurale, relativement peu peuplée. Mustafa Erdik, le directeur de l'institut de Kandilli avait estimé, après le séisme, craindre un « bilan de 500 à 1 000 tués » et un « millier de bâtiments touchés ».

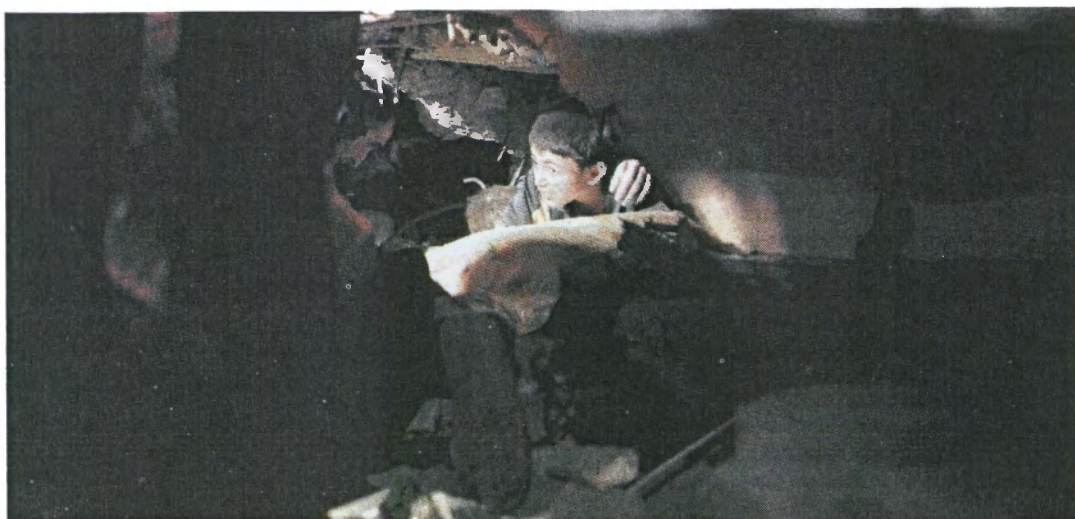
Convois humanitaires

Une fois prise la mesure de la catastrophe, plus de 2 000 secouristes ont été déployés dans la région, le Croissant-Rouge a dressé deux hôpitaux de campagne, près de 5 000 médecins, infirmiers et fonctionnaires du ministère de la santé, ainsi que 150 ambulances, ont été dépêchés sur place. L'armée a envoyé cinq cargos d'aide.

Les avions et les convois humanitaires commencent à affluer de toute la Turquie. Plusieurs pays étrangers (Etats-Unis, Grèce, Allemagne, Israël...) ont proposé d'envoyer des équipes de secouristes. Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, s'est rendu sans tarder sur les lieux du désastre, dimanche soir, alors que de nombreux habitants manifestaient leur mécontentement devant la lenteur des secours et le manque de moyens techniques pour fouiller les décombres. Les recherches se sont poursuivies toute la nuit, les sauveteurs, aidés des habitants, tentant de retrouver des survivants à l'aide de lampes torches.

La Turquie est traversée par plusieurs failles sismiques et connaît régulièrement des séismes importants. Dans la région de Van, le dernier, à Caldiran, datait de 1976 et avait fait 3 800 victimes. Les 15 millions d'habitants de l'agglomération d'Istanbul, située sur la faille nord-anatolienne, vivent sous la menace d'un tremblement de terre dévastateur qui pourrait survenir d'ici trente ans, selon les sismologues. La mauvaise qualité des constructions est régulièrement mise en cause. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



Lundi matin 24 octobre, à Ercis, un enfant vient d'être retrouvé vivant par les secouristes. UMIT BEKTAS/REUTERS

TURQUIE • Un séisme qui secoue les divisions ethniques

Le violent séisme du 23 octobre, qui pour l'heure a fait 264 morts et 1 300 blessés, s'est produit dans la région de Van, dans l'est de la Turquie, une zone peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes. Cette catastrophe, qui intervient alors que l'armée turque est engagée dans des combats avec les militants kurdes du PKK, sonne comme un appel à la réconciliation, affirme Milliyet.



▲ Les équipes de sauvetages s'organisent après le séisme de Van à l'est de la Turquie, 24 octobre 2011

Asli Aydintasbas / Milliyet

QUELLE période tragique ! En quelques jours, 34 soldats ont été tués dans l'est de la Turquie, et plus de 48 militants du PKK l'ont été à la suite de la contre-offensive de l'armée turque. Et, comme si cela ne suffisait pas, la région de Van vient d'être frappée par un tremblement de terre d'une magnitude de 7.2 sur l'échelle de Richter.

Dans la mythologie grecque, un séisme était considéré comme une punition infligée aux hommes par les dieux de l'Olympe. Le tremblement de terre de Van serait-il dès lors un avertissement qui nous est adressé, à nous qui ne parvenons décidément pas à faire taire les armes et à faire la paix ? Mon collègue de Milliyet, l'éditorialiste Can Dündar, avait très bien résumé la situation quelques

jours avant ce séisme. Alors que, après les attaques meurtrières du PKK, les médias turcs titraient à l'unisson sur "la Turquie qui pleure et dénonce le terrorisme", le journaliste avait en effet osé écrire ce que tout le monde savait, mais que personne n'osait dire. A savoir que toutes les manifestations dénonçant la violence terroriste du PKK – où le drapeau turc était omniprésent – n'ont jamais eu lieu dans les provinces du sud-est du pays [à majorité kurde].

La vérité c'est que, dans le Sud-Est, on ne descend les devantures des magasins et on ne marque le deuil qu'à l'occasion d'obsèques de militants du PKK tués dans des accrochages avec l'armée turque. Et Can Dündar de poser la question : "Notre incapacité à partager des sentiments communs dans des moments aussi tragiques ne traduit-elle pas crûment le fait que nous ne soyons pas dans

le même camp pour défendre la vie contre la mort ? On a en effet encore pu le vérifier à l'occasion de ce séisme où certains sur Facebook et sur Twitter ont même exprimé leur indifférence par rapport à un tremblement de terre qui s'est "de toute façon produit à Van" [c'est-à-dire en pays kurde]. C'est terrible, effarant et sans classe, mais c'est une réalité.

C'est donc à un moment où la violence gagne en intensité que le cataclysme de Van nous est tombé dessus. Ne soyons donc pas fatalistes face à cet événement en estimant qu'il s'agit là du résultat d'un jugement divin. Non, le temps est venu dans notre pays de réfléchir à panser les plaies et à arrêter le cycle de la mort. Qu'au moins la tragédie de Van serve à cela.

La région de Van est non seulement très belle, mais elle est aussi particulière. Majoritairement kurde, elle abrite des communautés turkmènes et arabes. Des Arméniens y vivaient autrefois. La ville de Van, située en bordure du lac, est plurielle aussi sur le plan politique et partagée entre le Parti pour la paix et la démocratie (BDP, prokurde), qui a obtenu 50 % des voix lors des élections législatives de juin 2011, et le parti de la Justice et du développement (AKP, au pouvoir), 40 %. Dans la petite ville d'Ercis, épice centre du séisme, c'est l'inverse : 48 % pour l'AKP, contre 42 % pour le BDP. Je cite ces chiffres parce que, depuis que ce séisme a eu lieu, ces divisions sont dans les circonstances exceptionnelles actuelles en train d'être surmontées, ce qui constitue un signe d'espoir. Il est sans doute encore trop tôt pour faire comme s'il ne s'était rien passé, mais, au moins, enterrons nos morts ensemble. Dans ce contexte, il incombe au Premier ministre Erdogan de faire un geste pour rapprocher l'ouest et l'est du pays. ■



30 octobre 2011 - xinhua

Deux policiers tués dans un attentat dans le sud de la Turquie

DEUX policiers ont été tués et un autre grièvement blessé vendredi dans un attentat soupçonné d'être effectué par le Parti des travailleurs kurdes (PKK, rebelle) dans la province de l'Osmaniye dans le sud de la Turquie, a reporté le journal local "Zaman" sur son site internet.

L'attaque s'est produite lorsque les policiers montaient la garde en dehors d'un dortoir public pour les étudiants, a indiqué le journal, ajoutant que les équipes de police qui sont à la chasse

des rebelles du PKK ont réussi à tuer l'un d'eux.

Le PKK a récemment intensifié ses attaques contre les troupes, les policiers et des civils en Turquie. Les responsables turcs ont juré de leur riposter avec une détermination absolue.

Considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, le PKK a pris les armes en 1984 pour créer un Etat ethnique dans le sud-est de la Turquie. Plus de 40.000 personnes ont été tuées dans des conflits impliquant le PKK au cours des deux dernières décennies.

ETA : la fin de la lutte armée ouvre une voie politique aux indépendantistes basques

Une nouvelle coalition entre Bildu et Aralar s'est constituée pour les législatives de novembre

Madrid

Correspondance

Dans les ruelles d'Hernani, petite commune proche de Saint-Sébastien et fief traditionnel des nationalistes radicaux de la gauche *abertzale* (patriote), l'annonce par l'organisation séparatiste basque ETA, jeudi 20 octobre, de la « fin définitive des activités armées », inspire des sentiments contrastés.

Tous les *abertzales*, ou presque, disent se réjouir du communiqué. Mais à présent, ils attendent une réponse du gouvernement qui confirmerait que la voie choisie – celle de la non-violence et d'une solution démocratique au « conflit basque » – est la bonne. Jon, 44 ans, affirme avoir eu des frissons en apprenant la nouvelle : « La lutte armée était un obstacle pour nos revendications, car le gouvernement l'utilisait comme excuse pour ne pas aborder le thème de l'indépendance. »

« A Madrid, on veut faire croire que le problème, c'est l'ETA et que, si elle disparaît, le problème aussi, mais il existe un vrai conflit politique dont l'ETA n'est qu'une partie », soutient le maire d'Hernani, l'indépendantiste Luis Intxauspe. Même la communauté internationale l'a reconnu, ajoute-t-il en référence à la conférence de paix de Saint-Sébastien, qui s'est tenue lundi 17 octobre, en présence de personnalités telles que l'ancien secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan.

Plus que la paix ou la fin des attentats, ce que l'on célèbre dans les *herriko tabernas*, les bars où se retrouvent les nationalistes radicaux, c'est une « ouverture » vers une « solution au problème basque » et le « début d'une nouvelle ère politique ». Une solution dans laquelle le projet indépendantiste aurait sa place, où la question de la reconnaissance d'Euskal Herria (le Grand Pays basque qui englobe aussi la Navarre et le Pays basque français) serait abordée.

« Si les politiciens n'acceptent pas de dialoguer, peu importe que l'ETA abandonne ou non la violence », soutient Pello, la vingtaine, entouré d'une bande de copains

devant un bar de la rue Juan-de-Bilbao, dans la vieille ville de Saint-Sébastien, où les drapeaux en faveur du rapprochement des prisonniers sont de plus en plus rares.

Jusqu'à maintenant, Madrid « utilisait [la lutte armée] comme excuse »

Un militant indépendantiste

Les langues se délient aussi, même si les badauds refusent toujours de donner leur nom. Isabel, dont le frère, membre de l'ETA, est mort en activant une bombe, s'insurge : « La fin de l'ETA est une très bonne nouvelle. Mais on verra ce qu'exige maintenant le gouvernement. Nous sommes sur le point de

faire le poirier pour obtenir la reconnaissance de nos droits ! »

Pour porter leur cause, les *abertzales* comptent sur le retour, sur la scène électorale, de Batasuna, vitrine politique de l'organisation séparatiste, interdite depuis 2003. Pour les élections locales du 22 mai, le Tribunal suprême avait interdit Sortu, nouveau nom de Batasuna. Mais il n'avait pu empêcher la coalition de partis indépendantistes Bildu de concourir. Coalition à laquelle participent les partis pacifistes et démocratiques Alternatiba et Eusko Alkartasuna, mais aussi des centaines de candidats « indépendants » et non « contaminés », en clair des membres de la gauche *abertzale* n'ayant jamais été sur les listes de Batasuna ni de ses avatars.

Or les résultats du scrutin ont dépassé leurs espérances. Alors

que Batasuna représentait environ 10 % des voix, Bildu a récolté 25 % des suffrages, devenant la deuxième force politique derrière le Parti nationaliste basque (PNV, centre droit). Mieux, elle a remporté, outre une centaine de villages basques, la mairie de Saint-Sébastien et la province de Guipuzcoa. « C'est un atout pour notre crédibilité », reconnaît Joseba Alvarez, ancien dirigeant de Batasuna.

Présent à la manifestation organisée samedi 22 octobre à Bilbao avec le slogan « Ce peuple veut une solution » – à laquelle ont participé 50 000 personnes –, M. Alvarez se veut pragmatique : « Le fait de finir avec cette lutte armée va ouvrir le spectre politique. Nous allons pouvoir sortir de l'impasse dans laquelle nous nous trouvons. Bildu est la preuve que la voie démocratique fonctionne. »

Aujourd'hui, les *abertzales* abordent la campagne des élections législatives espagnoles, qui auront lieu le 20 novembre, avec un regain d'enthousiasme. Ils y seront présents au travers d'une nouvelle coalition, baptisée Amaiur, qui regroupe les composantes de Bildu et le parti indépendantiste Aralar. « Nous avons consolidé notre unité. Et la société va voir dans cette coalition l'esprit de la résolution du conflit », estime M. Alvarez.

« Nous avons proposé au PNV de participer à cette coalition, mais il a refusé. Néanmoins, nous lui proposerons de faire front commun sur toutes les questions qui touchent aux droits des Basques », souligne l'ancien dirigeant *abertzale*.

Selon l'enquête Euskobarometro, réalisée au printemps auprès de 1 200 Basques, 36 % d'entre eux seraient en faveur de l'indépendance. « Il faut que le prochain gouvernement ait le courage d'affronter ce grand débat », affirme le député général de la province de Guipuzcoa, Martin Garitano. Les *abertzales* font confiance au temps. « Nous ne sommes pas suicidaires. Nous ne demanderons l'indépendance que si nous pensons qu'elle pourra être acceptée par la majorité de la population », affirme Joseba Alvarez. ■



A Bilbao, le 22 octobre, manifestation pour une solution pacifique et politique pour l'indépendance du Pays basque espagnol. RAFA RIVAS/AFP

SANDRINE MOREL

L'ambassadeur américain, menacé, quitte la Syrie

Représentant des Etats-Unis à Damas, Robert Ford avait manifesté sa solidarité avec les opposants

Beyrouth
Correspondance

Damas aura réagi sans attendre au départ de l'ambassadeur américain en Syrie. Quelques heures après l'annonce, lundi 24 octobre, du rappel provisoire de Robert Ford pour des raisons de « sécurité personnelle », le retour « pour consultation » d'Imad Moustapha, ambassadeur syrien à Washington, est rendu public.

Les autorités syriennes n'avaient pas commenté, lundi soir, les détails donnés par l'administration américaine pour expliquer le repli de son diplomate. Celui-ci serait l'objet de « menaces crédibles » qui n'ont pas été précisées. Le département d'Etat pointe également la responsabilité directe du pouvoir baasiste dans « la campagne médiatique » contre Robert Ford. Si celui-ci a quitté Damas au cours du week-end,

« pour une durée indéterminée », la représentation diplomatique reste ouverte. Plus tard, le département d'Etat soulignera qu'il s'agit d'un « rappel pour consultation », et non d'un « retrait ». Mais la décision témoigne de vives tensions.

La visibilité, inhabituelle pour un diplomate, de M. Ford lui vaut les éloges des uns, les critiques féroces des autres

Premier ambassadeur américain à Damas depuis 2005, en poste depuis janvier, M. Ford devait servir la politique de réengagement en Syrie voulue par le président Barack Obama. L'irruption de

la contestation contre le régime, le 15 mars, modifie la donne. Washington condamne la répression. Dès l'été, le diplomate est pris à partie par des supporteurs du président Bachar Al-Assad. Il est aussi mis en cause par les autorités syriennes qui voient derrière la révolte un « complot étranger », lié à son « ingérence » dans les affaires intérieures du pays.

Le 8 juillet, l'ambassadeur se rend à Hamâ, en geste de solidarité avec les habitants de cette ville au nord de la capitale, assiégée par les forces de l'ordre. Il y est accueilli par des pétales de fleur lancés par des manifestants. Son déplace-

ment, très médiatisé, déplaît fortement au pouvoir. Et ouvre la voie à une opération de dénigrement des Etats-Unis. A travers des rassemblements à Damas et à Alep pour réclamer le départ de Robert Ford. Puis, le 11 juillet, par des violences contre la représentation américaine, tandis que l'ambassade française est également assaillie par des partisans du régime. Washington exclut alors le rappel de son diplomate, insistant sur son rôle pour « comprendre » la situation « en l'absence de médias libres » et pour « nouer des contacts avec les Syriens qui exercent leur droit humain universel à s'exprimer sur le futur de leur pays ».

M. Ford continue de dénoncer la violence de la répression, qui a fait plus de 3 000 morts depuis le 15 mars selon les Nations unies. Il s'exprime sans détours, dans la presse ou sur la page Facebook de

l'ambassade. Sa visibilité inhabituelle pour un diplomate lui vaut les éloges des uns, les critiques féroces des autres. L'ambassadeur poursuit ses déplacements dans les lieux de rassemblement antirégime, et maintient ses contacts avec les protestataires.

Lors d'une visite à un opposant, le 29 septembre, le bureau où se déroule la rencontre est encerclé par des sympathisants du président, les véhicules de la délégation américaine caillassés. La police met deux heures à intervenir. L'incident n'a rien de spontané, relève l'ambassade. Tout comme, quelques jours plus tôt, les jets d'œufs et de pierres contre l'ambassadeur français, Eric Chevallier, dans la vieille ville de Damas. Washington et Paris protestent.

Au-delà des « menaces » avancées par le département d'Etat pour le justifier, le rappel de M. Ford a lieu dans un contexte de durcissement américain contre le régime syrien. Barack Obama a multiplié les appels au départ de Bachar Al-Assad. La secrétaire d'Etat, Hillary Clinton, a prôné des sanctions économiques contre la Syrie. Le pouvoir américain l'a redit, après l'annonce de la mort de Mouammar Kadhafi, à Syrte, le 20 octobre: le président syrien « a perdu sa légitimité ». Washington intensifie par ailleurs ses pressions contre l'Iran, allié de la Syrie. Toujours plus isolé, Damas a accepté la visite, mercredi, d'une délégation ministérielle de la Ligue arabe sous l'égide du Qatar, censée aider à un règlement politique à la crise. ■

LAURE STEPHAN

Turquie : début de polémique sur la gestion par Ankara du séisme de Van

Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, s'est résolu à accepter l'aide d'une trentaine de pays

Van (Turquie)
Envoyé spécial

La volte-face du gouvernement turc sur la gestion des secours après le séisme de Van, dimanche, fait polémique.

Sous la pression des critiques, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a finalement accepté, mercredi 26 octobre, l'aide humanitaire que lui proposaient une trentaine de pays. Dans les heures qui ont suivi le tremblement de terre, Ankara avait décliné les offres de nombreux pays étrangers, à l'exception de l'Azerbaïdjan et de l'Iran, s'estimant capable de « faire face à la situation tout seul ».

Un péché d'orgueil ? Trois jours après, l'ampleur de la catastrophe qui a fait au moins 523 morts, plus de 1 650 blessés et des dizaines de milliers de sans-abri, dans la province de Van à majorité kurde – l'une des régions les plus pauvres de Turquie –, a obligé les autorités d'Ankara à revoir leur stratégie.

La France devait envoyer, jeudi, un avion-cargo avec des tentes familiales, pour héberger les rescapés. Et Israël, dont les relations avec la Turquie se sont fortement

dégradées ces derniers mois, a été l'un des plus prompts à réagir : un premier avion est arrivé mercredi, acheminant des maisons préfabriquées pour les sinistrés.

La décision d'accepter l'aide extérieure peut paraître tardive. Quatre jours après le séisme, à Van et à Erçis, les deux villes les plus touchées, les équipes de sauveteurs ont quasiment terminé leur mission. Même si un étudiant a été extrait vivant des décombres 91 heures après le séisme, l'espoir de retrouver d'autres survivants dans les ruines des immeubles effondrés s'amenuise, estime Ozgür Mankut, un volontaire de l'Association de recherche et de secours (AKUT), installée dans l'hôpital de campagne d'Erçis.

L'urgence est maintenant de secourir les rescapés qui ont passé leur quatrième nuit dans le froid glacial. Là aussi, l'organisation et la coordination des secours ont mis du temps à se mettre en place. Envi-

ron 25 000 tentes ont été distribuées, a assuré mercredi Ahmet Lütüfi Akar, le vice-président du Croissant-Rouge, concédant que les besoins étaient beaucoup plus importants. « Dans les premières vingt-quatre heures, il y a eu des ratés, nous le reconnaissons », a admis, mercredi, M. Erdogan, la mine grave.

«Meurtriers»

Ce séisme, dans une région kurde, est survenu à un moment de forte tension entre Ankara et la

guerrilla du PKK, soutenue par une partie de la population. Le gouvernement se sait attendu au tournant. Dès lundi, l'aide a afflué de toute la Turquie, « l'Etat a mobilisé toutes ses institutions », a souligné le premier ministre. Les secours sont arrivés en nombre, avec des équipes, comme l'AKUT, formées aux catastrophes naturelles, ce qui n'était pas le cas après le séisme d'Izmit en 1999.

Mais ils se sont d'abord concentrés sur Van et Erzurum. Les villages, eux, se plaignent d'avoir été

oubliés. A Güveçli ou à Mollakası, ce sont les survivants qui ont déblayé les décombres. La distribution d'aide aux sinistrés y est plus aléatoire. Un convoi de camions du Croissant-Rouge a été pris d'assaut par des villageois, mercredi.

L'autre urgence est la reconstruction ou la sécurisation de milliers de bâtiments endommagés. Et, surtout, l'adoption de normes de construction antisismiques plus strictes. M. Erdogan a mis en cause les « meurtriers » qui sévissent dans la construction. Les des-

tructions ont montré la fragilité de plusieurs édifices, dont certains sous la responsabilité du gouvernement.

Les trois étages de l'école primaire de Gedikbulak qui était vide dimanche, se sont affaissés. La prison de Van a également subi d'importants dégâts. Mardi soir, après une forte réplique de 5,4 sur l'échelle de Richter et le refus de l'administration pénitentiaire de laisser sortir les détenus dans la cour, une mutinerie a éclaté. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

AFP

Irak: le Premier ministre critique la volonté d'autonomie d'une province

BAGDAD, 29 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE PREMIER MINISTRE irakien Nouri al-Maliki a vivement critiqué samedi le vote cette semaine par le Conseil de la province de Salaheddine (centre, à majorité sunnite) d'un projet d'autonomie administrative et économique inspiré du Kurdistan.

"Le parti Baas (ex-parti de Saddam Hussein, ndlr) veut que la province de Salaheddine soit un refuge sûr pour les baassistes, mais cela n'arrivera pas", a-t-il déclaré dans une interview à la chaîne Iraqiya, selon un communiqué de ses services.

"Le fédéralisme est une question liée à la Constitution", a-t-il souligné. "Le Conseil provincial de Salaheddine n'a pas le droit d'annoncer ceci".

Il aurait dû, selon lui, présenter une requête au gouvernement, qui l'aurait

transmise au Parlement.

L'article 119 de la Constitution toutefois ne fait pas mention de ces exigences: elle permet en revanche à des membres du conseil provincial ou à un groupe d'électeurs de demander l'organisation d'un référendum en vue de la création d'une région.

M. Maliki a par ailleurs souligné que 615 personnes de différentes provinces, surtout du centre et du sud du pays, avaient été arrêtées dans le cadre d'une campagne de lutte contre des membres de l'ancien parti unique Baas soupçonnés de comploter contre "la sécurité et la stabilité de l'Etat".

Le gouverneur de la province de Salaheddine, Ahmed Abdallah, avait qualifié le vote du Conseil provincial cette semaine de vote de contestation, après des arrestations menées par les forces de sécurité irakiennes "sans concertation" avec les autorités locales.

AFP

La question des rebelles kurdes du PJAK est "réglée" (Téhéran et Kurdistan irakien)

TEHERAN, 29 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE MINISTRE IRANIEN des Affaires étrangères, Ali Akbar Salehi, et le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, ont affirmé samedi que la question du PJAK, principal mouvement kurde de lutte armée contre le régime de Téhéran, était "réglée".

En juillet, Téhéran avait lancé une série d'opérations contre le PJAK. Les combats, incluant le bombardement de camps rebelles en Irak, avaient fait des dizaines de morts des deux côtés, dont le numéro deux du Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan (PJAK).

Le PJAK est responsable de nombreuses actions militaires et d'attentats dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran ces dernières années.

"Grâce à la bonne gestion de (Massoud) Barzani, nous avons pu traiter la question du groupe terroriste du PJAK et désormais nos frontières avec le Kurdistan irakien sont sûres", a déclaré M. Salehi, cité par le site internet de la télévision d'Etat.

"M. Barzani souhaitait des frontières plus sûres afin que les gens puissent voyager facilement et ne soient pas soumis à une quelconque insécurité (...) Nous considérons que cette question est réglée, a-t-il ajouté, lors d'une conférence de presse commune à Téhéran avec le président du Kurdistan irakien.

"La question du groupe terroriste du PJAK est réglée et nous espérons voir



une sécurité totale prévaloir à nos frontières", a déclaré de son côté Massoud Barzani, également cité par le site de la télévision d'Etat.

Téhéran avait accusé par le passé la région autonome du Kurdistan irakien d'abriter des bases du PJAK le long de la frontière.

En septembre, les Gardiens de la révolution avaient indiqué avoir "nettoyé" les zones frontalières au nord-ouest de l'Iran des groupes rebelles kurdes armés et tué 180 rebelles du PJAK.

La semaine dernière, la Turquie et l'Iran avaient annoncé qu'elles allaient lutter ensemble dans le cadre d'un "plan d'action commun" contre les rebelles kurdes qui ont des bases arrière dans le nord de l'Irak.

The hazards in Turkey's new strategy



Judy Dempsey

LETTER FROM EUROPE

BERLIN When fighters from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party killed 24 Turkish soldiers in the eastern province of Hakkari, the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, immediately ordered 10,000 soldiers to cross into Iraq and find the militants. "This is an operation to get results," Mr. Erdogan said.

Besides provoking one of the largest ground operations against the Kurdish fighters in recent years, the resurgence of the group, known as the P.K.K., shows the difficulties Ankara now faces in adjusting a foreign policy that was based on its ambitious "zero problems" strategy in the region.

"The zero problems strategy in practice meant dealing with autocratic regimes. So when the Arab Spring happened, it exposed the fundamental flaws of that policy," said Sinan Ulgen, chairman of the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, an independent research group in Istanbul.

"The zero problem policy was over-optimistic, almost naïve in the belief that difficult problems could be solved easily," Mr. Ulgen added.

Turkey may now be paying the price for its belated defense of human rights in the region, most notably in Syria and Iran. Ankara is abuzz with speculation that these countries may have been behind the P.K.K. attacks.

Syria and Iran are accused of supporting the P.K.K. right from the beginning in 1984, when the P.K.K. started fighting the Turkish state to have the 20-million-strong Kurdish population recognized as a minority within its own autonomous Kurdish region.

When Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party was elected in 2002, it developed a foreign policy aimed at realigning the country's role in a highly volatile region consisting of the Caucasus and the Middle East.

That zero problems policy was designed by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in order to build strong economic, political and social ties with Turkey's immediate neighbors.

In practice, that policy meant shifting away from Turkey's traditional reliance on the United States and its close military ties with Israel to a regionally based strategy aimed at Turkey becoming the main player in the neighborhood.

As a first step, Ankara improved ties with the Syrian regime. Human rights played no role between Damascus and Ankara even though Ankara has used that argument to champion the rights of the Palestinians.

Nothing came of an initiative to mediate between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights. The lack of success was due to Israel's bombing of the Gaza Strip in 2008-9, which angered the Turkish public, as much as to Ankara's overconfidence in its diplomatic overtures.

There were attempts, too, at negotiating a solution to the Iranian nuclear program, which is worrying the United States in particular.

Again, Ankara paid scant attention to the crackdown on the Iranian opposition, much to the disappointment of civil society movements in the region. This damaged Turkey's foreign policy credentials, according to analysts. Its Iran initiative proved to be unsuccessful diplomatically.

As for Turkey's attempts at normalizing relations with its neighbor Armenia, with whom diplomatic ties were severed in 1992, the zero problems policy has not lived up to expectations, either.

After secret talks in Switzerland, in 2009 a protocol was signed with the hope of restoring diplomatic ties and reopening of the borders.

The thaw ended soon. Azerbaijan, which traditionally has had very close ties with Turkey, was from the outset suspicious about any breakthrough. The Azeri authorities feared they would lose leverage over Armenia if restoring diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey was not linked to the resolution of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since 1994, Nagorno-Karabakh has been held by Armenia. The ethnic Azeri population has fled the enclave, while ethnic Armenians have mostly fled Azerbaijan.

As a result of Azerbaijan's conditions, the talks have stalled. Instead of trying to maintain the momentum even at the risk of poorer ties with Azerbaijan, Mr. Erdogan backed away.

"Turkey should have remain focused on the Armenian issue, which, after all, is its immediate neighborhood, instead of broadening its foreign policy," said Richard Giragosian, director of the independent Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, Armenia.

"Turkey did not have the capacity for resolving the conflict with Armenia," said Tom de Waal, a specialist on the Caucasus at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. "Turkey wanted to run before it could walk."

Then came the Arab Spring.

Suddenly, Turkey realized that it was running a serious risk of being shunned by the newly emerging democratic forces because it had paid so little attention to human rights in its zero problems policy. It quickly reinvented its strategy.

Turkey was one of the first countries to aid Libya's rebels, providing \$300 million in cash, and it was one of the first to call for the resignation of the former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak.

Its change of heart with Syria and Iran is even more radical. Turkey is now openly criticizing the Syrian regime. Its relations with Iran are also strained, especially as Ankara agreed last month to deploy part of the U.S. missile defense shield on its territory.

If Turkey continues to pursue a foreign policy anchored on human rights, it can win respect and support in the region. But no such policy can work, say analysts, if Turkey excludes the Kurds from it.

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Clashes with Kurds renew fears for Turkey's future

CIZRE, TURKEY

BY LIAM STACK AND SEBNEM ARSU

Thousands of people filled the streets of this dusty town near the borders with Syria and Iraq on Sunday to mourn the death of a local heroine, a commander in a mountaintop training camp for Kurdish militants seeking autonomy for the largely Kurdish southeast of Turkey.

The elderly leaned on knotted wooden canes as they marched, and children in balaclavas fashioned from T-shirts gathered stones to throw at police officers at dusk, when the sounds of percussion bombs echoed through deserted streets. Chants exulting the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., mingled with condolences for the family of Cicek Botan, a native of Cizre and the middle-aged P.K.K. commander who fought the Turkish state for more than two decades before being killed on Oct. 10 in a raid on a training camp in Iraq.

"The P.K.K. is the community, and we are the community," the crowd chanted as they awaited her body, which did not arrive in time for the funeral that quickly turned into a demonstration. "Oh martyr, your blood will not be spilled in vain! Every Kurd is a guerrilla!"

Although Turkey, the United States and the European Union consider the P.K.K. a terrorist organization, sympathy for both the group and its goals remains widespread in many towns in Turkey's rugged southeast.

Public opinion in the rest of the country runs in the opposite direction. In Istanbul on Sunday, in Taksim Square, thousands rallied against the P.K.K., whose fighters killed 24 soldiers and wounded 18 in a complex attack last week. In response, the Turkish military sent more than 10,000 soldiers backed by surveillance drones, helicopters and F-16 and F-4 jets into the southern province of Hakkari and over the border into Iraq, killing at least 270 militants and wounding more than 210, the Turkish military chief, Gen. Necdet Ozel, said Sunday in an interview with the news channel NTV.

In Istanbul, as she tied a headband in the colors of the Turkish flag around her daughter's head, Ayfer Ozcan, 38, said: "We will not tie our hands waiting for a political solution while they are killing our young."

The rebel attack and the government's response have provoked anxiety about the future, particularly because they follow several years of relative calm.

Turkey had appeared to be moving toward political reforms intended to address the roots of its conflict. At the center of the effort are draft constitutional

amendments that would give broader rights to Kurds and other minorities. Parliament is still drafting the amendments.

Violence has increased markedly here in the southeast since June, according to figures compiled by the International Crisis Group, with the death toll including 111 members of the security forces, 31 civilians and at least 80 P.K.K. fighters.

In the southeast, sympathy with the P.K.K. mingles with weariness over decades of conflict that have touched almost every family in a region that is poorer and less developed than the rest of Turkey.

The conflict began when the P.K.K. took up arms in 1984 to demand autonomy for the Kurdish region. Over the years, that goal expanded to include education rights in the Kurdish language and the release of imprisoned P.K.K. members like the leader Abdullah Ocalan. Turkey has refused to respond to the demands of the P.K.K. but recently approved public broadcasting in Kurdish. Kurds make up about a fifth of Turkey's total population, 74 million.

Residents say that protests and clashes between young men and the police are increasingly common in towns like Cizre, which was a hotbed of the national government's long war with the P.K.K. in the 1990s.

Turkish troops have pursued the P.K.K. across the mountainous border with Iraq over 25 times since the conflict began, but the military has not managed to subdue the militants or diminish their

"We need to keep searching for a resolution."

combat ability. Some of the military operations involved as many as 30,000 troops.

The road to a political solution has also been bumpy. The government has refused to recognize the P.K.K. as part of any official talks, although records of meetings between Turkish intelligence officials and the P.K.K. were leaked last month to the local news media. The dominant political party in the southeast, the Peace and Democracy Party, is widely considered to be the political wing of the P.K.K. and has been banned by court order eight times. It has resumed its operations each time.

Nevertheless, public opinion among both Turks and Kurds strongly supports a political solution to the conflict.

"No matter how grave our grievances are, we need to keep searching for a resolution and accept that there could be differing ideas on a resolution," wrote Nuray Mert, a columnist for the newspaper Milliyet. "Otherwise, we do not

get anywhere close to peace but will be doomed to live in a dark period, where different ideas and offers for resolution are either oppressed or punished."

U.S. envoy leaves Syria after threats to his safety

BEIRUT

BY ANTHONY SHADID AND STEVEN LEE MYERS

Robert S. Ford, who as the U.S. ambassador to Damascus has played a high-profile role in Syria since the uprising began there this year, has left the country after receiving "credible threats against his personal safety," U.S. Embassy officials said Monday.

The departure was just the latest turn in the tumultuous tenure of Mr. Ford, whose visits to restive cities like Hama and attendance at a funeral for a slain activist have made him a visible figure.

Syria responded later in the day by recalling its ambassador to Washington, The Associated Press reported.

Since the uprising erupted in March, Mr. Ford has been vocal in his criticism of the government crackdown, even posting statements on his Facebook page.

Haynes Mahoney, chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, said no date had been set for Mr. Ford's return and cautioned that his departure did not mean that the United States had formally withdrawn Mr. Ford. Mr. Mahoney will act in Mr. Ford's place while he is gone.

"We're focusing particularly on the incitement in the media, an incitement campaign, I should say, conducted by the Syrian regime, which we hope will stop," Mr. Mahoney said by phone. "At this point, we can't really say when he will return. I hope it will be soon. But it will depend on our assessment of the incitement and the security situation."

Mr. Mahoney declined to specify the threats, though Mr. Ford has frequently been a target of sharp government criticism in the state news media.

Mr. Ford, who arrived this year to fill a post that had been vacant since 2005, traveled to Hama in July, when government forces had withdrawn and demonstrations had begun. The visit apparently infuriated the government and, weeks later, a released prisoner said interrogators had sought the names of Syrians seen in videos escorting his car.

Syrian insurgents operating from Turkey

ANTAKYA, TURKEY

Ankara backs force in former ally's biggest challenge yet to Assad

BY LIAM STACK

Once one of Syria's closest allies, Turkey is the host to an armed opposition group waging an insurgency against the

government of President Bashar al-Assad, providing shelter to the commander and dozens of members of the group, the Free Syrian Army, and allowing them to orchestrate attacks across the border from inside a camp guarded by the Turkish military.

The support for the insurgents comes amid a broader Turkish campaign to undermine Mr. Assad's government. Turkey is expected to impose sanctions soon on Syria, and it has deepened its support for an umbrella political opposi-

tion group, the Syrian National Council, which announced its formation in Istanbul. But its harboring of leaders in the Free Syrian Army, a militia composed of defectors from the Syrian armed forces, may be its most striking challenge so far to Damascus.

On Wednesday, the group, living in a heavily guarded refugee camp in Turkey, took responsibility for killing nine Syrian soldiers, including one uniformed officer, in an attack in central Syria.

Turkish officials describe their relationship with the group's commander, Col. Riad al-Asaad, and the 60 to 70 members living in the "officers' camp" as purely humanitarian. Turkey's primary concern, the officials said, is for the physical safety of defectors. When asked specifically about allowing the group to organize military operations while under the protection of Turkey, a Foreign Ministry official said that its only concern was humanitarian protection and that they could not stop them from expressing their views.

"At the time all of these people escaped from Syria, we did not know who was who, it was not written on their heads 'I am a soldier' or 'I am an opposition member,'" a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on the condition of anonymity in keeping with diplomatic protocol. "We are providing these people with temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, and that will continue."

At the moment, the group is too small to pose any real challenge to Mr. Assad's government. But its Turkish support underlines how combustible, and resilient,



ED OU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Col. Riad al-Asaad, the commander of the Free Syrian Army, vowed Thursday during an interview in Turkey to fight the regime of President Bashar al-Assad "until it falls."

Syria's uprising has proved. The country sits at the intersection of influences in the region — with Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Israel — and Turkey's involvement will be closely watched by Syria's friends and foes.

"We will fight the regime until it falls and build a new period of stability and safety in Syria," Colonel Asaad said in an interview arranged by the Turkish Foreign Ministry and conducted in the presence of a ministry official. "We are the leaders of the Syrian people and we stand with the Syrian people."

The interview was held in the office of a local government official, and Colonel Asaad arrived protected by a contingent of 10 heavily armed Turkish soldiers, including one sniper.

The colonel wore a business suit purchased that morning by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, and at the end of the meeting, citing security concerns, the colonel and a Foreign Ministry official advised that all further contact with his group be channeled through the ministry.

Turkey once viewed its warm ties with Syria as its greatest foreign policy accomplishment, but relations have collapsed over the eight months of anti-government protests there and a brutal crackdown that the United Nations says has killed more than 3,000 people.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey was personally offended by Mr. Assad's repeated failure to abide by his assurances that he would undertake sweeping reform. Turkish officials predict that the Assad government may collapse within the next two years.

"This pushes Turkish policy further towards active intervention in Syria," said

Hugh Pope, an analyst with the International Crisis Group. He called Turkey's apparent relationship with the Free Syrian Army "completely new territory."

"It is clear Turkey feels under threat from what is happening in the Middle East, particularly Syria," said Mr. Pope, who noted that in past speeches Mr. Erdogan "has spoken of what happens in Syria as an internal affair of Turkey."

Turkish officials say privately that their government has not provided

Ankara says its interest is purely humanitarian.

weapons or military support to the insurgent group, nor has the group directly requested them.

Still, Colonel Asaad, who thanked Turkey for its protection, made it clear that he was seeking better weapons, saying that his group could inflict damage on a Syrian leadership that has proven remarkably cohesive.

"We ask the international community to provide us with weapons so that we, as an army, the Free Syrian Army, can protect the people of Syria," he said in the interview. "We are an army, we are in the opposition, and we are prepared for military operations. If the international community provides weapons, we can topple the regime in a very, very short time."

The words seemed more boast than threat, and with mass pro-government rallies and a crackdown that has, for now, slowed the momentum of antigovernment demonstrations, the Syrian government appears in a stronger position than it did this summer. Though

deeply isolated, Syria's government felt emboldened by the vetoes of Russia and China of a relatively tough resolution in the U.N. Security Council. Despite predictions otherwise, the military and the security services, in particular, have yet to fracture in the eight months of a grinding, bloody crackdown.

Colonel Asaad said he defected from the military and fled to Turkey after protests erupted in his home village, drawing a government crackdown that killed several relatives and in which his sister's house was shelled. The village, Ebdeeta, is in Idlib Province, which abuts Turkey in northwestern Syria.

He said all residents of the camp where he lives in Turkey were members of the Free Syrian Army. The camp includes a personal assistant and a "media office" staffed by about a half-dozen people. He said the group's fighters were highly organized, though only armed with

weapons they took when they defected or those taken from dead members of Syrian security and pro-government forces.

He would not specify the number of fighters, saying only that it is more than 10,000, and he was unwilling to disclose the number of battalions, claiming that the group had 18 "advertised" battalions and an unspecified number of secret ones. None of his claims could be independently verified.

"Our strategy for the future is that we will confront the regime in its weak places, and in the next period we hope to acquire weapons so we can be able to face the regime more strongly," Colonel Asaad said.

Though many analysts contend that defectors' attacks in Syria appear uncoordinated and local, Colonel Asaad claimed to be in full operational control. He said that he was in charge of planning "full military operations" while

leaving smaller clashes and day-to-day decisions up to commanders in the field. Nevertheless, he is in daily contact with the commanders of each battalion, he said, spending hours a day checking e-mail on a laptop connected to one of four telephones — including a satellite phone — provided to him by Syrian expatriates living in the United States, Europe and the Gulf.

Andrew Tabler, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the emergence of the fledgling group was crucial to the larger question of whether the opposition would stick to peaceful protest, as it largely has, or if it would "go down another path to fighting back."

"They are organized and they are speaking to people outside," Mr. Tabler said. "But the question is to what degree are they receiving financial support from people outside, such as individuals in Turkey and Saudi Arabia."

REUTERS

Turkish forces target PKK Iraq camp: sources

October 25, 2011- By Elizabeth Piper,(Reuters)

ISTANBUL - Turkish warplanes struck Kurdish militant targets in northern Iraq overnight and some 500 soldiers have crossed the border with armored vehicles, military and security sources told Reuters on Tuesday, in an escalation of hostilities.

The Turkish forces were advancing toward a Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) camp at Haftanin, around 20 km (12 miles) from the Habur border post and north of the town of Dahuk.

The sources described it as the busiest military activity along the border since the Turkish army launched cross-border activities last week in response to a PKK attack on Turkish forces which killed 24 soldiers in Hakkari, bordering Iraq.

Warplanes bombed PKK targets at Haftanin and Hakurke, the sources said, adding that tanks and armored vehicles crossed into northern Iraq on Monday. Several hundred PKK fighters are believed to be based at Haftanin.

The remoteness of the camps' locations and the tricky terrain made it difficult to assess how close the Turkish forces had moved toward the camps but the militants reported the start of clashes.

"Around 1,000 Turkish troops infiltrated today the village of Haftanin, supported by Turkish fighter jets and helicopters," said PKK spokesman Roj Welat.

"Clashes erupted between Turkish troops and PKK fighters who tried to stop the Turkish forces," he said. There were no reports of casualties.

Haftanin is further west than the Zab valley region, across the border from Hakkari, where Turkish military operations took place last week. It is also far to the west of the Qandil area, where the main PKK camps are located, close to Iraq's border with Iran.

Several thousand PKK fighters are based in the mountains of northern Iraq, from where they launch attacks on Turkish forces in southeast Turkey.

According to a resident, about 1,000 Turkish troops were located around the village of Ure, less than 5 km (3 miles) from the



* Turkish soldiers patrol a road near Cukurca in the Hakkari province, southeastern Turkey, near the Turkish-Iraqi border October 22, 2011. REUTERS/Stringer

Turkish border and about 50 km west of Haftanin. Ure is a district of Zakho in Dahuk province.

The witness said the Turkish troops entered the village in the morning and were surrounding it but there had been no clashes. He said the troops were carrying rifles and were on foot, with no military vehicles in sight.

"They only spread out around the village. We are worried. We don't know what will happen. We are in our houses afraid to go out," he said, requesting anonymity.

A senior police official from Iraqi border forces told Reuters on condition of anonymity: "Yes we are aware of a Turkish military infiltration in the village of Ure. It is a remote and very difficult area. So we expect they will walk out from this area today."

Turkish air strikes have killed 250 to 270 Kurdish militants, wounded 210 and destroyed many arms stores in northern Iraq since August 17, news broadcaster NTV on Monday quoted armed forces head General Necdet Ozel as saying.

Ankara's reaction to one of the deadliest attacks on its security forces in a conflict that began three decades ago had fueled speculation that Turkey could move to a full-blown incursion to clear out PKK camps deeper inside northern Iraq.

More than 40,000 people have been killed since the conflict began in 1984. The United States, the European Union and Turkey designate the PKK as a terrorist organization.

TURQUIE • Le PKK veut la guerre, il l'aura !

Le 18 octobre, 24 soldats turcs ont été tués dans des attaques menées par des séparatistes kurdes du PKK. Les Kurdes tournent le dos à une solution politique, estime le quotidien indépendant Taraf.

Ahmet Altan / Taraf

L'ATTAQUE menée mardi soir par le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan [PKK] dans le sud-est du pays sur huit objectifs différents et qui s'est soldée par la mort de 24 soldats turcs dépasse la notion d'acte terroriste et s'apparente à la guerre. Avant de s'interroger sur les objectifs et les intentions du PKK, il convient tout d'abord de se demander comment une opération militaire aussi meurtrière a été possible. En effet, le PKK a attaqué au même moment huit objectifs différents, a infligé de lourdes pertes à l'armée turque avant de se replier sans subir de dommages importants. [L'armée turque a riposté en bombardant les bases arrière du PKK dans le Kurdistan irakien.] Pour réaliser une telle opération, ils ont dû pendant plusieurs jours déplacer des armes lourdes à dos de mule et les entreposer dans la région. Comment, avec tous ces drones, ces satellites et je ne sais quoi encore, les services de renseignements turcs n'ont-ils pas observé ces mouvements ? Comment se fait-il que des informations concernant la préparation d'un objectif aussi ambitieux ne soient-elles pas venues aux oreilles de nos services spécialisés ? Cela traduit en tout cas une grande faiblesse de la part de notre armée. Il est facile aujourd'hui de dénoncer le PKK et de se fâcher, mais il faudra aussi, plus tard, faire la lumière sur les circonstances précises qui ont



Des soldats turcs transportent les cercueils de leurs camarades tués dans l'attaque du PKK, 20 octobre 2011.

mené 24 de nos enfants à la mort.

Même s'il est encore loin de remporter une victoire militaire, le PKK a réussi ce qu'il voulait, à savoir relancer la guerre. Cela fait d'ailleurs longtemps que le PKK poursuit cet objectif. Mais dans quel but ? Certainement pour pousser la population kurde à la guerre et ainsi provoquer une guerre civile. Mais pourquoi ? Pour la démocratie ? Pour les droits du peuple kurde ? Il est difficile de croire qu'un PKK, qui dénonce les Kurdes syriens qui se sont opposés au dictateur Bachar El-Assad, se montre sensible à la démocratie et aux droits des Kurdes. A un moment où en Turquie on va jusqu'à débattre de questions telles que le statut d'autonomie et l'enseignement officiel dans la langue maternelle pour les Kurdes, le PKK tente de fomenter une véritable guerre civile au prétexte que "le gouvernement

AKP n'en a pas fait assez". Pourtant ce même PKK n'a aucun problème avec la dictature syrienne qui assassine des leaders kurdes et qui n'octroie même pas la nationalité syrienne à ses propres citoyens kurdes. Comment une telle incohérence est-elle possible ?

En fait, ce que le PKK veut, c'est un bout de territoire où il pourrait gouverner, non pas en vertu des règles démocratiques, mais par la force des armes. Sachant qu'il ne pourra l'obtenir tout seul, il espère que grâce à des provocations impliquant la population kurde dans cette guerre, il obtiendra ce qu'il souhaite. Dans ce contexte, le peuple kurde est le seul à pouvoir décider si cette option lui convient ou pas, s'il veut vivre ou non sur un territoire indépendant géré par le PKK. Il faudrait donc que les Kurdes puissent se prononcer librement sur la question. En effet, tant que les Kurdes ne pourront pas s'exprimer librement sur la question de l'indépendance, le manque de clarté régnera en maître et c'est le PKK qui en profitera.

A une époque où la lutte armée est devenue anachronique, 24 de nos jeunes ont encore été tués. Ils sont les victimes de ceux qui se nourrissent de cette incertitude. Il faut donc plus de liberté pour la Turquie et pour les Kurdes, seul moyen d'en finir avec ce conflit.■

Un ministre turc annonce la fin d'une vaste opération contre le PKK

AFP

ISTANBUL, 27 octobre 2011 (AFP)

LE MINISTRE TURC de la Défense Ismet Yilmaz a annoncé jeudi la fin d'une vaste opération militaire contre les rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans le sud-est de la Turquie, lancée en réaction à la mort de 24 soldats dans des attaques du PKK mercredi dernier.

"L'opération menée dans la vallée de Kazan en réaction à l'attaque contre Cukurca (...) est terminée. Mais notre lutte normale contre le terrorisme continue", a déclaré M. Yilmaz, cité par l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La vallée de Kazan s'étend entre la province turque de Hakkari et le nord de l'Irak. La localité de Cukurca a été l'épicentre d'une série d'attaques simultanées du PKK contre huit objectifs militaires dans la province de Hakkari, qui ont fait 24 morts et 18 blessés dans les rangs de l'armée.

L'armée turque a annoncé le 20 octobre avoir lancé en riposte à ces attaques "des opérations terrestres d'envergure, soutenues par l'aviation (...) dans cinq points du nord de l'Irak et en Turquie", impliquant 22 bataillons.

Les propos du ministre ne permettent pas d'établir clairement si l'armée a mis fin à l'ensemble de sa campagne ou seulement sur l'un des cinq théâtres d'opérations.

M. Yilmaz, qui répondait aux questions de journalistes à Ankara, a ajouté que le chef d'état-major des armées, le général Necdet Özel, avait quitté la zone après la fin de l'opération.

Les attaques du PKK, les plus meurtrières depuis presque vingt ans, ont provoqué une onde de choc en Turquie.

Le nombre de soldats impliqués dans l'ensemble de l'opération militaire était évalué à 10.000 hommes par la presse.

La Croix mercredi 26 octobre 2011

Le séisme au Kurdistan modère la vague nationaliste turque

► La secousse qui a frappé dimanche la région kurde de Van (lire *La Croix d'hier*) a modifié l'agenda politique de la Turquie, concentré alors sur la lutte contre le terrorisme.

► Hier, le bilan provisoire faisait état de 366 morts et 1 301 blessés.

Quel est le contexte politique ?

À 13 h 41 dimanche, lors de la première secousse, la plupart des chaînes de télévision retransmettaient en direct les défilés populaires organisés à travers le pays pour dénoncer

l'action du PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan). Ce groupe armé considéré comme organisation terroriste par l'UE et les États-Unis avait frappé les esprits en tuant il y a une semaine, 24 membres des forces de l'ordre à la frontière irakienne. Dans la foulée, l'armée avait engagé une vaste opération dans le nord de l'Irak et encerclé les fameux monts Kandil, où se trouve le quartier général du PKK.

Dimanche, des centaines de milliers de personnes ont défilé et pris à partie le parti prokurde BDP (Parti pour la paix et la démocratie). Cette formation refuse d'employer le terme de « terrorisme » au sujet du PKK, dont elle partage la base popu-

laire. Depuis la mort de ces soldats, des ouvriers kurdes ainsi que de nombreux bureaux du BDP ont été attaqués. Le séisme de Van a fait chuter cette vague de nationalisme et a déplacé l'émotion populaire. Le débat parlementaire prévu aujourd'hui sur le terrorisme, a été reporté.

Y a-t-il eu des réactions hostiles aux Kurdes ?

Une présentatrice de la chaîne de télévision privée Habertürk a fait part de la tristesse du pays, « même si cela se passe à Van ». Des centaines d'internautes se sont aussi réjouis de cette « justice divine » qui a frappé les Kurdes. Hier, le chef du parti nationaliste MHP Devlet Bahçeli a jugé ces réactions « indécentes » et « méprisables ».

Comment la classe politique réagit-elle ?

La gestion de cette crise est un enjeu de taille pour le gouvernement qui se dispute les

voix des Kurdes avec le BDP. À Van, il est arrivé au coude à coude avec ce dernier lors des élections législatives de juin. Dimanche, le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est immédiatement rendu sur place et le ministre de l'intérieur a assuré que « l'État est là ». Les représentants des formations nationalistes et kemalistes ont aussi fait le déplacement.

Le BDP a salué la vague de fraternité tout en critiquant les lacunes de l'aide gouvernementale. Le maire de Van (BDP) regrette « l'absence de coopération entre son parti et la préfecture ». Il expliquait lundi que les besoins en nourriture, eau et tentes restaient énormes notamment dans les villages. Hier, certaines victimes commentaient même à accuser les maires, aux mains du parti du premier ministre, de favoriser leurs électeurs dans la distribution de l'aide.

DELPHINE NERBOLLIER
(à Istanbul)

la Croix
26 octobre 2011

Les déserteurs syriens cherchent des armes et des munitions

► Dans le nord du Liban, les déserteurs de l'armée syrienne rejoignent les réfugiés civils.

► L'Armée syrienne libre s'organise en Turquie.

BEYROUTH

De notre correspondant

Il se fait appeler le « brigadier Kassim ». Petite moustache, sourire sibyllin, uniforme impeccable, il ne cache pas son ambition : repasser la frontière libano-syrienne avec une poignée d'hommes pour mener des opérations contre l'armée de Bachar Al Assad. Armée régulière dont il faisait partie, il y a deux mois encore. « Nous ne pouvions plus obéir aux ordres venus de Damas, explique-t-il simplement. Quand on vous demande de tirer sur la foule, soit vous oubliez votre humanité, soit vous dites "non" ». Cela fait huit semaines que Kassim se terre dans la région reculée de Wadi Khaled, à l'extrême nord du Liban. Là où la frontière entre les deux pays

semble de moins en moins poreuse.

Avant le début du soulèvement populaire en Syrie, en mars dernier, la région était une véritable passoire. Mais, depuis, l'armée libanaise s'est déployée pour limiter l'afflux de réfugiés civils. De l'autre côté, l'armée syrienne a fait de même, pour arrêter cette hémorragie et prévenir le trafic d'armes.

« Notre révolution doit aller jusqu'au bout, sinon nous sommes tous des hommes morts. »

Des armes et des munitions, Kassim souhaiterait en avoir, mais, pour l'instant, il ne voit rien venir. « J'entends parler de convois d'armement entrant en Syrie depuis le Liban, mais, moi, je n'ai rien entre les mains pour l'instant. Personne ne nous finance ou

nous équipe. Ni les pays étrangers ni les partis libanais. » Les versions contradictoires concernant les récentes incursions syriennes en territoire libanais – comme celle de mardi dernier dans le village frontalier d'Al-Qaa – ne le rassurent pas. Dans le nord du Liban, les informations sont difficiles à vérifier. Ce flou alimente la peur de la population libanaise et celle des réfugiés syriens civils.

La presse libanaise fait ainsi état de retours forcés de civils syriens, provoqués par l'armée libanaise ou par des « forces miliciennes ». « Il y a aujourd'hui 3 100 civils syriens dans la zone de Wadi Khal, logés chez l'habitant ou dans des écoles. Ces personnes ne peuvent pas circuler en dehors de cette zone, car elles sont considérées comme étant en situation irrégulière par les autorités libanaises », affirme Dana Sleiman, responsable des relations publiques du Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies pour les réfugiés (HCR). Mais, avec une vingtaine de personnes seulement

sur le terrain, le HCR et les ONG ne peuvent pas observer la région dans son ensemble. De son côté, le ministère libanais de l'intérieur assure ne plus effectuer de retours forcés depuis juin dernier.

À Wadi Khaled, le « brigadier Kassim » attend son heure. Il entend parler de l'Armée syrienne libre qui s'organise à la frontière turque, autour du colonel Riad Al Assad, et en territoire syrien où des groupes de déserteurs appuient les populations civiles contre l'armée régulière. Ils seraient près de 10 000 soldats à avoir rejoint l'Armée syrienne libre.

« Au Liban, nous sommes beaucoup moins nombreux, dit-il. Nous devons faire attention à ne pas trop nous exposer, car nos familles sont restées en Syrie, où le pouvoir peut s'en prendre à elles. Il faut renverser le régime, avec ou sans l'aide des pays étrangers. Notre révolution doit aller jusqu'au bout, sinon nous sommes tous des hommes morts. »

DAVID HURY

Atlantic

October 27, 2011

In Syria, Kurdish Groups Divided Over Taking Up Arms Against Assad



By Reese Erlich

Though the regime made an early effort not to anger the minority group, the killing of a top Kurdish leader has led some groups to support violent resistance

DAMASCUS, Syria -- The assassination of a major Kurdish opposition leader has highlighted sharp political divisions among Kurds here, raising questions about what role this ethnic minority will play in the protests wracking their country. Mashaal Tammo was killed on October 7 when masked men pulled him out of a house in Qamishli, where he was meeting with other activists, and shot him dead.

Opposition activists immediately accused Syrian authorities of carrying out the hit, though the government of President Bashar al-Assad denied responsibility. Tens of thousands of Kurds demonstrated during Tammo's funeral in the northeastern city of Qamishli.

Tammo was a leader of the Kurdish Future Movement Party, one of three Kurdish parties calling for the overthrow of Assad. The nine other Kurdish parties have not officially participated in the anti-government demonstrations.

The dispute among Kurdish political parties is part of a wider division among Syrian Kurds. Many worry that that Islamist opposition parties, should they come to power, would be worse for them than the current government.

Mohammad Farho, a Syrian Kurdish commentator and activist living in Erbil, Iraq, told me, "Kurds are afraid of the Arab opposition

parties because their agenda is not clear."

Kurds make up about 8 percent of Syria's 22.5 million people. Though Kurdish language and culture separates them from Arab Syrians, many have assimilated into Syrian society.

Assad's government considers the Kurdish-dominated northeast of the country strategically important because it borders Turkey and Iraq -- and because it contains most of the country's limited oil supplies. The government also fears that Syrian Kurds, like Kurdish groups in neighboring states, might seek independence. All Syrian Kurdish parties currently reject separatism, however, instead demanding greater rights within Syria.

Kurds have long faced government discrimination here. Some 300,000 have been denied full citizenship, fueling anger against the government. Schools are forbidden to teach the Kurdish language and Kurdish businesses have been forced to adopt Arabic names. Under pressure from the current protest movement, Assad recently restored citizenship to many of the effected Kurds and promised further reforms.

When mass demonstrations broke out seven months ago, and the military attacked such Arab cities as Homs, activists say the government

shrewdly decided not to attack majority Kurdish areas.

"The regime tried to neutralize Kurds," explained Hassan Saleh, leader of the Kurdish Yekiti Party. "In the Kurdish areas, people are not being repressed like the Arab areas. But activists are being arrested."

Younger Kurds have defied their traditional party leaders, however. Hundreds demonstrate each week, demanding the overthrow of President Assad.

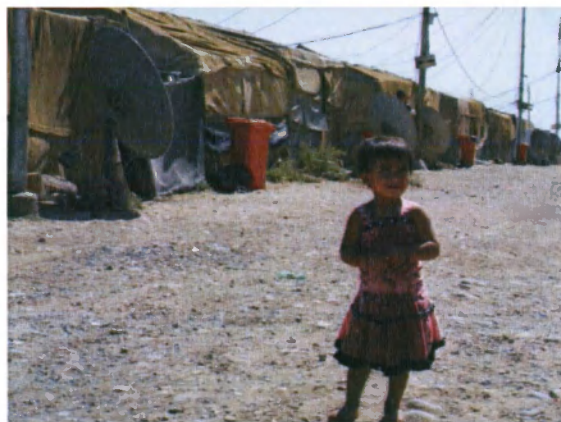
After seven months of frustrating protest and government violence, some Kurds now call for western military intervention to topple the government. Others plan to smuggle arms from nearby Iraqi Kurdistan to engage in armed self-defense.

Can Med, a leader of the Democratic Union Party, told me that he calls for limited foreign military intervention to protect civilians and topple Assad. He says his party is also preparing for armed struggle.

The Democratic Union Party is affiliated with the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) in Turkey, which the U.S. labels as a terrorist organization. The PKK describes itself as a legitimate national liberation group.

"If you want to get arms in the Middle East, it's easy," said Med. "We can do that."

But armed resistance and



Kurds at the Moqebleh Refugee camp in Iraq fled Syria in 2004 and 2005 and still live there today.

foreign intervention are still controversial topics within Syrian Kurdish communities. "I don't back such calls," Hozan Ibrahim told me. He is a spokesman for Local Coordination Committees of Syria and now lives in Germany. "It's the call of people under fire, so they need someone to rescue them. Unfortunately some feel that the regime can't be removed without armed action either from inside or outside."

Activists inside Syria report that Kurdish participation in demonstrations increased recently as fierce government repression spread in other parts of the country -- and particularly after Tammo's assassination.

"As the number of deaths increased, the number of demonstrations grew," said Ciwan Yusuf, a spokesman for the Sawa Youth Coalition.

Under current conditions, Yusuf does not favor foreign military intervention, he said, worrying that it would result in many deaths and that foreign powers could ultimately impose undemocratic leaders on Syria.

As an alternative, he urged Western powers to help find neutral countries for opposition leaders to meet and to increase economic sanctions against Syrian government officials.

Kurdish activists, like those throughout Syria, face difficult times in the months ahead. Government repression continues unabated. Some in the opposition movement are increasing violent attacks on government targets in a desperate attempt at regime change. For the moment, neither side seems able to win a decisive victory and Syria's turmoil seems likely to continue for some time. ■

Reese Erlich, a freelance reporter and the author of several books, has covered the Middle East for 25 years.

Iraqi Kurdistan's Barzani, Iran declare border PJAK rebel issue "over"

Erbil, October 29, 2011 (AKnews) - By Fuad Rahim

IRAQI KURDISTAN Region President Massoud Barzani and Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said they have resolved the issue of PJAK (Party of Free Life for Kurdistan).

Barzani arrived in Tehran today for a two-day visit at an official invitation from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Islamic Republic news agency (IRNA) said Barzani and Salehi held a press conference after meeting each other.

Salehi told the reporters Kurdistan region officials promised to protect the borders well so that the passengers from both countries can cross the borders easily and in peace.

As for the issue of Kurdish rebels who have found a safe heaven in Kurdistan region's borders, Salehi said 'with Barzani we could settle the issue of PJAK properly.'

Barzani told the reporters they are also trying to resolve the issue of PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) 'in the same way we settled the issue of PJAK).



Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi (R) and the president of the autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq at press conference in Tehran. October 29, 2011.

No details about the solution or the new agreement were disclosed to the media.

PJAK was formed in 2003 as the wing of PKK in Iran. The PKK has been fighting Turkey since 1984 for more ethnic rights to millions of Kurds in the country.

Kurdistan senior official also hoped for boosting relations with Tehran.

With the recent crackdown of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on PJAK fighters, several Iraqi Kurdistan citizens were killed and hundreds were displaced after the bombardments- Barzani condemned the attacks repeatedly.

Iraq's Maliki lashes out at Sunni province seeking autonomy

Laith Hammoudi
McClatchy Newspapers



BAGHDAD, Iraq — Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki Saturday lashed out at politicians seeking regional status for the mostly Sunni Salahuddin province, charging that they were seeking a "safe house for Baathists," the banned party of the late dictator Saddam Hussein.

Maliki spoke two days after the provincial council in Tikrit, Hussein's birthplace, voted 20-0, with eight members not present, to declare Salahuddin a region of Iraq. The province, north of Baghdad, would be only the second designated region in Iraq, after Kurdistan, but other Sunni provinces may follow suit.

Officials said the vote was intended to boost the province's share of federal

revenues and to protest the domination of Maliki's Shiite-led central government. Critics say it will weaken the fabric of the multi-ethnic Iraqi state, for under the Iraqi constitution, a declared region takes control over its own internal security.

Salahuddin officials said the timing of the vote was spurred by the recent fir-

ing of more than 100 professors at Tikrit University for alleged Baath Party connections, and by a nationwide roundup of Baathists in the course of this week.

Maliki told the semi-official Iraqiya TV that Salahuddin doesn't have the right to declare autonomy but has to follow the constitutional procedure of submitting a request to the Council of Ministers, which he heads, and the Iraqi national parliament, as well as other steps.

In actual fact, article 119 of the Iraqi constitution requires only that a referendum be held in a province following a request for regional status by one-third of the members of the provincial council, or one-tenth of the population.

Maliki, who reportedly had a shouting match with Saleh Mutlak, his Sunni deputy, earlier this week over a relat-

ed issue, Saturday cast the provincial council's move as Baathist-instigated. "The Baathists want to make Salahuddin province a safe house for them, but it will not happen because of the awareness of the people of Salahuddin," he told Iraqiya.

The acting head of the Salahuddin council, Sabhan Mulla Chyad, rejected Maliki's assertions and said the national parliament plays no role in a province's move to regional status. The outcome depends solely on the results of the referendum, set up by the Independent High Electoral Commission, said Chyad, who voiced confidence that regional status will revive the province's fortunes.

"If anyone saw the demonstrations and celebrations of the residents of the cities in Salahuddin province, he would be sure the decision of the provincial council to change the province into a region will be approved," Chyad said. As for becoming a safe house for Baathists, Chyad told McClatchy: "The people would not allow such a thing to happen."

Maliki's political opponents said the arrests of members of the disbanded Baath Party, which ruled Iraq for more than four decades, were illegal and done mostly without any judicial approval.

Maliki told Iraqiya that 615 Baathists, mostly from the central and southern provinces, had been arrested and that Iraqi security forces had followed all required legal procedures including obtaining warrants of arrest. Maliki said there was a great deal of information and evidence linking those arrested to activities that threatened the safety and security of the state.

"We should differentiate between the Baathists who work in the governmental establishments, harmonized with the political process and fought terror, and the Saddamist Baathists who cooperate with al Qaida and work to collapse the political process," Maliki said.

□ □ □

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

October 29, 2011

By REBECCA SANTANA / AP

BAGHDAD — Iraq's prime minister said Saturday that 615 people have been detained in a security sweep targeting members of the former ruling Baath party.

Arrests on this scale are likely to alarm Sunni Arabs, who consider use of the term "Baathists" by Iraq's Shiite-dominated government to be a coded way to refer to Sunni politicians, army officers, and other prominent members of their community.

Sunnis say that Baghdad sometimes uses crackdowns on Baathists as a tool to exert political pressure. The arrests coincide with a recent autonomy push by a mostly-Sunni province in north-central Iraq, the latest bone of contention between Sunni political blocs and the Baghdad government.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki revealed the size of the sweep in comments released Saturday by the state-run Iraqiya TV channel during which he defended the detentions.

He said officials had reason to believe the people arrested were a threat to security but he gave no further details. He did not say when the sweep took place, but a Ministry of Interior statement Thursday said about 500 people had been arrested in recent days.

"The recent arrests, which were carried out by the security forces and were based on information and evidence, were aimed at those who threaten the state security

Iraqi PM: 615 detained in anti-Baathist sweep

and the state stability. There were 615 detained people," al-Maliki said.

"The Baath Party is prohibited by the Constitution, because it is a criminal party that led to the fall of the national sovereignty and it targeted the Iraqi people through the mass graves, chemical weapons," he said.

The Baath Party ruled Iraq under Saddam Hussein but now is outlawed under Iraqi law, and the prime minister has often accused ex-Baathists of planning terrorist attacks across the country.

Many Sunnis, who were disproportionately represented in the party leadership, feel the attacks against Baathists are a thinly veiled way to go after Sunnis.

A leading Sunni lawmaker, Hamid al-Mutlaq, said the arrests would heighten tensions in Iraq and called the allegations of undermining security "science fiction." He called on the government to move forward instead of arresting people for their past connections to the Baath Party.

"Such acts by the government will anger a lot of people in Anbar, Salahuddin and other Iraqi provinces and this might even threaten the unity of the country and might revive the calls for dividing Iraq," he said, referring to Sunni-majority provinces in western and central Iraq.

"It is the worst time to make these arrests ahead of the U.S. withdrawal," he said.

All American forces are to leave Iraq by the end of this year. Many Sunnis are worried that they will come under increased pressure from the Shiite-led govern-

ment once the Americans, who they feel have often played a moderating influence, are gone.

De-Baathification, a concept started under the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority which ruled Iraq after the invasion, is an Iraqi government policy of trying to purge important government jobs and positions of former mid- and high-ranking members of the Baath Party. Sunnis have criticized the policy as a way to sideline them from policy decisions and prevent them from ever regaining power.

The prime minister also criticized officials in Salahuddin province, which is a mainly Sunni area north of Baghdad, for a vote they took pushing to establish an autonomous region.

Provincial officials Thursday voted to start the process of creating an autonomous region in Salahuddin, akin to the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq.

Provincial officials and residents have complained that their needs aren't being met by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and that they could do a better job providing for their own security.

The Iraqi constitution allows provinces to establish autonomous regions but it requires numerous procedural hoops making it unlikely the Salahuddin vote would be anything more than a ceremonial protest.

Al-Maliki said the Baath Party is trying to use Salahuddin province as a "safe haven." □

Jailed Kurd Leader at Conflict's Core

By MARC CHAMPION and
AYLA ALBAYRAK

QANDIL MOUNTAINS, Northern Iraq—Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of Turkey's outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, is known to some followers as the "Sea of Love." Among many Turks, he is "the baby killer." To Turkey's government, which has made him perhaps the most heavily guarded individual on earth since his 1999 capture, he is political poison.

Amid resurgent bloodshed between Turkey's government and its minority Kurds, some people who have long involvement with the Kurdish conflict say resuming talks with Mr. Ocalan may also offer the best hope of ending decades of bloodshed, a position the Turkish government rejects.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Mr. Ocalan directed a conflict that left 30,000 people dead. Turkey's government drew widespread approval in July when it cut Mr. Ocalan from contact with his lawyers and the outside world and relaunched a war against his armed movement, known as the PKK.

But the government, in mounting an attack designed to eliminate the PKK, could be sentencing Turkey to a new era of violence, these people say.

Ruthless, hyperactive and driven by an overweening ego, Mr. Ocalan makes an unlikely mediator. But he is revered by many Kurdish nationalists, these people say.

"If Apo said yes to peace, no one in the [PKK] organization would reject it," said Mr. Ocalan's younger brother Osman, employing the name for the leader commonly used by supporters. A former PKK member himself, Osman Ocalan fled after being tried for disputing his brother's strategy and given a suspended death sentence.

"To look for a peace settlement without Apo is not realistic," his brother said in a recent interview at his home in northern Iraq.



A man waving an image of Ocalan at a rally in Turkey in 2009. Reuters

Whether the jailed leader could deliver a disarmed PKK in exchange for peace is untested.

Tuesday's large-scale attack was "first of all about a split within the PKK, between hardliners on one hand and ...Abdullah Ocalan [and his supporters] on the other," said Henri Barkey, professor international relations and Turkey specialist at Lehigh University. The goal of the hardliners was to kill off any talks, he said. In July, Mr. Ocalan had complained that both the PKK and the government were using him as a "subcontractor."

But his hold on the imaginations of hardened PKK militants appears strong. High in the remote Qandil mountains of northern Iraq, Ronahi Serhat, a senior PKK member with 20 years of missions behind her, warned icily that the U.S. and the U.K. will "pay their share" if anything should happen to the leader while he is in jail.

Ms. Serhat spoke just days before the Turkish air force began bombing the area in August. Asked to describe Mr. Ocalan, she melted, recalling how she sat in a circle around him with 150 other PKK guerrillas in Syria's Bekaa Valley in 1995. He taught them about guerrilla tactics, women's rights and philosophy, she said.

"We female guerrillas, among ourselves, we call him the Sea of Love," she said.

Mr. Ocalan is being imprisoned on the island of Imrali in midst of the Marmara Sea, surrounded by hundreds of troops who guard him and

five other inmates.

In ordinary times, his lawyers make the six-hour return ferry ride to see him every week in a windowless room inside Imrali's fortress-like prison. They get searched six times per trip, can't bring a pen or paper, and can't touch Mr. Ocalan, said Ibrahim Bilmez, one of the lawyers.

Turkish officials record the meeting. Transcripts are sent the following day to the prime minister and security chiefs. The visiting lawyers transcribe Mr. Ocalan's words from memory, for distribution to Kurdish news agencies, according to Cengiz Candar, who wrote a report on the PKK issue released in June by Tesev, a think tank.

Mr. Ocalan has no TV or access to a phone. His radio receives one channel—the state-owned TRT, says Mr. Bilmez. Other than his middle brother Mehmet, the only other people who see him have been the government's negotiating teams, with whom talks ended in July.

He reads incessantly. On their last weekly visit before getting cut off, his lawyers brought him 11 books and magazines for the week, including: "Empire" by Harvard historian Niall Ferguson; "Women of Byzantium" by a University of North Carolina classics professor; and a volume of essays on the philosopher Max Weber.

"I don't know of any leader like him among other terrorist organizations. In prison he reads nonstop, mostly philosophy but also other subjects. He has developed an almost utopian outlook," said Cevat Ones, former deputy undersecretary of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization, who says he followed Mr. Ocalan closely.

"It is politically risky to meet and negotiate with Ocalan," he said. But "keeping up the dialogue is the right thing to do."

Turkey's Ministry of Justice declined to comment or provide access to the island, as did the National Intelligence Agency.

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Malaise du Hezbollah face à la Syrie

Sur les influentes chaînes satellitaires Al-Jazira et Al-Arabiya, la contestation du pouvoir royal à Bahreïn a disparu des écrans. La révolte syrienne contre le régime de Bachar Al-Assad est omniprésente.

À l'inverse, le canal du Hezbollah Al-Manar accorde une vaste place à la mobilisation bahreïnienne, essentiellement chiite mais aussi sunnite. La protestation en Syrie est absente. Ou plutôt, le visage des contestataires. La chaîne libanaise relaie la version des autorités baasistes et donne la parole à de simples citoyens, présentés comme des partisans du pouvoir. Les récits témoignant de la répression – plus de 3 000 morts depuis le début de la contestation le 15 mars, selon les Nations unies – y sont inexistantes.

Occultant l'ampleur des rassemblements, le Hezbollah dénie à la rue syrienne la légitimité octroyée aux autres soulèvements, de la Libye au Yémen. « Nous avons exprimé notre solidarité avec toutes les révolutions qui se sont opposées aux régimes alliés aux Américains », a expliqué le secrétaire général Hassan Nasrallah, lundi 24 octobre, sur la chaîne Al-Manar.

Pour l'organisation classée terroriste par Washington, le destin de la Syrie est crucial. Damas représente un partenaire stratégique, malgré des différends. Il permet l'acheminement d'armes destinées à la branche militaire de la formation chiite, de l'Iran vers le Liban. Il est surtout, pour le Hezbollah, un pilier de l'axe contre « l'alliance israélienne » dans la région, selon son numéro deux, Naïm Qassem.

Contrairement au Hamas palestinien, qui s'est fait discret sur la question syrienne, le Hezbollah a plusieurs fois affirmé son soutien au pouvoir. Lundi, Hassan Nasrallah a de nouveau motivé son appui par le rôle de la Syrie « dans la cause palestinienne » et sa « disposition » à entamer des réformes, dont il avait plus tôt reconnu le « besoin urgent ». Il a aussi montré les « menaces » provenant « d'Israël et des États-Unis », cherchant à instaurer un « nouvel ordre régional » basé sur le « confessionnalisme », ainsi que des extrémistes musulmans. « Parmi les fac-

Analyse

PAR LAURE STEPHAN

Beyrouth correspondance

teurs qui élaborent notre position, [il y a le fait que] ce qui se passe en Syrie va affecter notre pays, le Liban et toute la région », indiquait encore M. Nasrallah dès le mois de mai.

En fait, la crise syrienne a déjà des retombées au Liban. Le Parti de Dieu n'aura que peu de temps goûté pleinement à sa victoire politique : constituer la nouvelle majorité, après avoir renversé avec ses alliés le gouvernement de l'ancien premier ministre Saad Hariri, en janvier. Le succès a été estompé par l'irruption de la contestation en Syrie et la peur de perdre un sponsor. Le nouvel exécutif aura nécessité des mois de tractations avant d'être formé en juin.

Le soutien à Bachar Al-Assad accentue le dénigrement du parti, ainsi que la ligne de fracture confessionnelle

Si le Hezbollah est en position dominante sur le plan politique, des tiraillements fragilisent l'équipe au pouvoir. Le camp du « 14 mars », passé à l'opposition et affaibli, a trouvé avec la Syrie un terrain pour remonter à l'offensive. Il dénonce l'inféodation du gouvernement à Damas.

Sensible également pour le Hezbollah, l'écart qui se creuse entre son silence sur la violence contre la rue syrienne et l'attachement à la justice sociale qu'il revendique. Face à ses détracteurs, le parti islamique a su bénéficier, au-delà de la microsociété qu'il a contribué à modeler, d'un cercle plus large de sympathisants – des chiites pas toujours religieux, des membres d'autres confessions, adhérant à la « résistance » contre Israël et à la vision sociale du Hezbollah. Or, au sein de ce cercle, malaise et

critiques sont perceptibles alors que le sang coule en Syrie.

Le Hezbollah s'est longtemps défini comme « parti des masses », rappelle l'analyste Oraib Al-Rantawi, directeur du Centre d'études politiques Al-Qods à Amman, dans un entretien au site Middle East Mirror. Mais « en prenant position contre les masses » en Syrie, l'organisation a « renié son système moral » et est devenue à son tour « confessionnelle », poursuit l'expert, « aux dépens de son image, de sa crédibilité et de son influence dans le monde arabe ».

Le prestige gagné dans la région par la formation chiite armée, à l'issue du conflit de 2006, en tant que premier acteur arabe ayant tenu tête à Israël, semble en effet s'éroder. Il a déjà été abîmé par les conclusions du Tribunal spécial pour le Liban, qui a délivré cet été quatre mandats d'arrêt contre des membres du Hezbollah accusés d'avoir participé au meurtre de Rafic Hariri en 2005.

Le soutien à Bachar Al-Assad accentue le dénigrement du parti, ainsi que la ligne de fracture confessionnelle. Parmi les combattants libyens anti-Kadhafi, ou les révolutionnaires égyptiens que M. Nasrallah avait applaudis, la sympathie se tourne vers les protestataires syriens. Ces derniers sont en majorité sunnites, alors que le pouvoir alaouite (branche du chiisme) n'est plus cautionné aujourd'hui au Moyen-Orient que par l'Iran – dont le président a condamné les « morts » en Syrie – et le Hezbollah chiites. « Le sentiment anti-chiite existe, mais il est difficile à quantifier, assure Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, spécialiste du Hezbollah. La réputation du parti est sans doute entachée. Mais pour lui, le plus important est de sauvegarder son projet de résistance. »

Parmi les réfugiés syriens installés au Liban, les accusations d'implication de miliciens du Hezbollah dans la répression, apparues dès le printemps, continuent d'être formulées. Signe qu'il sait combien ces assertions peuvent lui être coûteuses, le Parti de Dieu a jugé nécessaire de les démentir à plusieurs reprises. ■

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SÉISME EN TURQUIE

DES MILLIERS DE SANS-ABRI DANS LE FROID ET LA PLUIE



© DIMITAR DILKOFF/AFP
A Erzurum, hier.

Il a passé près d'une centaine d'heures sous les décombres.

Un étudiant d'une vingtaine d'années a été retrouvé vivant hier à Erzurum, la ville la plus touchée par le séisme qui a frappé dimanche l'est de la Turquie. Un miracle, alors que le bilan officiel s'élevait hier à 535 morts et 2 300 blessés, et que l'espoir de retrouver d'autres survivants s'amenuisait. Les chutes de pluie et de

DIRECTMATIN.NET ■ 28 OCTOBRE 2011

neige compliquaient l'utilisation des équipements électriques par les secouristes et créaient des risques de noyade et d'hypothermie pour les personnes restées sous les décombres. L'aide humanitaire commençait à arriver, avec notamment des équipes israéliennes, malgré les tensions entre la Turquie et Israël. Car des milliers de sans-abri étaient confrontés à des températures glaciales. « Il fait de plus en plus froid et mes enfants toussent, témoignait une mère de famille. Je ne sais pas combien de temps nous devons rester ici ». ■



Toronto Sun
October 27, 2011

Travel International

48 hours in Arbil

Serena Chaudhry, Reuters

In a country that bears the scars from decades of war and economic sanctions, the city of Arbil in the heart of Iraq's northern Kurdish region is a popular holiday spot.

With its modern shopping malls and lush parks, Arbil is a welcome break for Iraqis still plagued by bombings more than eight years after the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

The city is also the proud home of the Citadel, one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world.

Arbil's blend of old meets new, from its mosques to its rollercoasters, appeal to both the young and old.

Reuters correspondents with local knowledge help visitors get the most out of a 48-hour visit to the city.

THURSDAY

8 p.m. Check into ChwarChra, one of Arbil's best known hotels, located near the Citadel and the Franso Hariri sports stadium. The hotel has a stately appearance and is suitable for business and pleasure. It has free wi-fi and a beauty center with a sauna and Turkish bath. (www.chwarchrahotel.com)

If you prefer to be closer to the airport, then a good alternative is the relatively new five-star Rotana hotel, which is also situated by the Sami Abdul Rahman Park. ([here](#))

9 p.m. After settling in, start your trip with dinner at ChwarChra's restaurant, a popular weekend spot for families, friends and business associates. Relax in the garden and enjoy a mix of fresh fruits and kebabs and drink traditional tea while being serenaded by local musicians. Alcohol is also served.

Or catch a cab to Iraqi Touch at the recently opened Tablo Mall. This chic, modern restaurant serves traditional Iraqi meals like dolma, which consists of vege-



Arbil Residents have fun at a pool in Iraq's northern province of Arbil, September 25, 2010. REUTERS/Azad Lashkar

tables and vine leaves stuffed with meat, rice and tomatoes. A rice and meat dish called Quozi is a tasty alternative. (iraqi-touch.com/)

FRIDAY

10 a.m. After a hearty breakfast of eggs, bread and cheeses at the hotel, head out for a tour of the Citadel before the heat of the midday sun.

The Citadel, believed to be 6,000 years old, is situated on a high artificial mound in Arbil and has breathtaking views of the city. Take your time to wander through more than 11 hectares of meandering alleyways, past mosques, graves and a maze of residential houses from the Assyrian, Akkadian and Babylonian eras.

A must-visit while at the Citadel is the Kurdish Textile Museum, which showcases woven tribal handicrafts. Entrance is free and the gift shop sells traditional jewelry and Kurdish clothes, including brightly-colored long dresses for women and handmade shoes. (www.kurdishtextilemuseum.com)

12 p.m. Take time out to freshen up and have lunch in your hotel around midday during the extended Friday Muslim prayers. ChwarChra's giant chicken sandwich is a good bet.

3 p.m. Sporting events are held regularly at the Franso Hariri stadium and if you're in town and a sports fan, watching a soccer game live in Iraq is a must. The atmosphere is as electrically charged as at any other stadium in the world.

Thousands of soccer fans from across Iraq descended on Arbil in September to watch Iraq take on Jordan in the second World Cup qualifying soccer match to be held at the stadium since the 2003 invasion.

Even though the Kurdish zone has been relatively autonomous for 20 years and was less affected than other parts of Iraq by the war, security checks are still

conducted, so get to Franso Hariri a couple of hours before kick-off to avoid hassles.

7 p.m. S&I Fast Food near the stadium is a good place for dinner after a game or to relax until the throng dissipates.

The restaurant has a variety of fast-food dishes like hamburgers and schawarmas, a wrap containing chicken or meat with salad. Smoke a traditional shisha water pipe while making use of free wi-fi to watch replays of the game.

10 p.m. Head downtown to one of the cafes at the foot of the Citadel for some chai (tea) or ice cream. The area is packed at night as people flock to see some of Arbil's many waterfalls.

SATURDAY

10 a.m. After breakfast, get a taxi to see the Mudhafaria minaret, Iraq's answer to Italy's leaning tower of Pisa. Around 800 years old, the minaret is the remainder of what was believed to have been a big mosque built by Arbil's sultan of the time.

11 a.m. Visit the Aqua Tarin water park and fitness center for some fun in the sun. The center has water slides, pools, gardens, cafes and parks. (aquatarin.com/index.php)

1 p.m. Head to the Sami Abdul Rahman park for some relaxation time. The park has numerous small lakes and cafes and is one of Arbil's most popular family-oriented parks.

4 p.m. Arbil has many shopping malls, but the main one to visit is the Family Mall. It has famous international clothes boutiques like Levi Strauss & Co., and main attractions include an ice skating rink and a gaming arcade.

7 p.m. Grab a pizza or try some Turkish food at Baydoner in the Family Mall's food court before venturing outside to an amusement park attached to the shopping center.

The Family Fun park is popular among locals and has lots of rides, including a Ferris wheel and dodgem cars. Indulge in candy floss and popcorn and be sure to try traditional Turkish ice cream. The park stays open until midnight.

Direct flights to Arbil are available from a number of European cities including Amsterdam, Athens, Munich, Stockholm and Vienna, as well as Istanbul, Dubai, Cairo, Abu Dhabi and Beirut. Allow plenty of extra time before your flight at Arbil airport due to security checks.■

For Kurds in Turkey, a Country's Conflict Rends Families

By LIAM STACK

SIRNAK, Turkey — Portraits of Mevlude Gungen's two eldest children hang just above the television, the only piece of furniture in her spare living room. On a recent day, the set was tuned to the station run by a Kurdish militant group, bringing her news of the conflict that has haunted her country — and her family — for years.

Her daughter Emine ran away to join the militants two years ago, at age 14. Her son Ramazan, now 20, was drafted last year into the Turkish Army.

That has left the family, like so many others in this Kurdish corner of the country, stuck in the middle — caught between a guerrilla movement fighting for minority rights and local autonomy and a central government that says it wants to make peace, but fears carving up the country.

"My other children do not understand where either of them are," said Ms. Gungen, 35, who has six younger children. "Sometimes I hear them saying, 'What happens if they face each other? Do you think Emine will kill Ramazan, or that Ramazan will kill Emine?'"

She chastises them for voicing such thoughts, but says she wonders herself. She at least hears from her son, who writes and calls. But she has not heard from her daughter since the day Emine ran away to a militant training camp with her distant cousin and best friend, Heybet Gungen, who was also 14. Heybet's brother Salih is also serving in the Turkish armed forces.

Ms. Gungen's anxiety rises and falls with the frequency of the clashes between the government and the guerrillas, known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K.

Fighting has increased since June, rising to a pitch recently when a particularly deadly militant attack led the government to send thousands of soldiers to hunt down the fighters. Ms. Gungen pictures her daughter in danger — and alone. In late September, she watched in horror as the P.K.K.'s Denmark-based TV channel broadcast news that her daughter's friend Heybet had been killed during a firefight with Turkish soldiers near the Iraq border, just an hour from home. She was 15.



Ed Ou for The New York Times

From left, Taubet Gungen; Mevlude Gungen; her husband, Selim; and her daughter Fatima. The family, like many in the region, has members fighting for the Kurdistan Workers' Party guerrilla movement and members fighting for the Turkish Army. Turkey and its Kurds have a long and acrimonious history.

"It was like I lost my own daughter that day, too," Ms. Gungen said. "They were always together."

Turkey and its Kurdish citizens have a long and acrimonious history. For decades, the central government, bent on a strict assimilation policy, cracked down on Kurds for expressions of their cultural identity, such as reading publications in Kurdish or listening to Kurdish music. That set the stage for an armed uprising that began in 1984, when the P.K.K. effectively declared war on the state.

Since then, more than 40,000 people have been killed in a series of militant attacks and government reprisals that drove hundreds of thousands of Kurds from rural villages. Turkey, the United States and the European Union designated the P.K.K. a terrorist group.

In recent years, the government — in an attempt to join the European Union — has made some concessions to the Kurds, but promised constitutional changes have yet to be made, and many people remain wary.

The struggle for Kurdish rights has been emotionally messy. Many in the Kurdish southeast are partisans of the P.K.K.; others remain sympathetic to the group and its ambitions but are, at the same time, weary of war and eager for a peaceful resolution.

Families find themselves similarly torn, especially since military service is mandatory for Turkish young men, including Kurds. The young men who feel the most passionate about the rebels run away to join them. Those who disagree with their methods, or are unwilling



to live their lives as fugitives, are forced to take up arms for a country from which many feel deeply excluded — and sometimes to take up arms against those they know, or love.

Some Kurdish nationalists and analysts claim that the government has chosen in recent years to deploy more Kurdish conscripts in their home region, where they are more likely to fight the P.K.K., in an attempt to prove the rebels are cold killers and to gain Kurds' support.

"In the past, posting Kurdish soldiers to the east was considered to be unsafe by the army because of the lack of trust in the minority," said Mithat Sancar, professor of law at Ankara University. "However, recently it has become almost intentional that young Kurds would be at the forefronts of the battle against the P.K.K., sending the message that the group also killed their own youth."

The notoriously tight-lipped Turkish military has refused to address the claims. But Taubet Gungen, 45, who lost her daughter, Heybet, needs no confirmation. "The state brings our children

face to face, and makes brothers kill each other," she said.

Since the day her daughter died, she has forbidden her seven other children to speak about it, afraid that the pain would overcome her.

Taubet Gungen and her distant relative, Emine's mother, say they had no inkling their daughters would run away. They still seem shocked, even as they describe the girls' childhoods in which bitterness was a constant.

Emine, the more political of the two girls, knew well the family history; four uncles served jail time for what her mother describes as "defending their rights."

Her mother, Mevlude, says she feels the government knows what changes could bring peace, but the slow pace of change makes her worry leaders are "ignoring the issues on purpose."

She often watches the P.K.K. channel, beamed into the country via satellite because its transmissions are banned in Turkey. The channel includes a steady diet of news of the mistreatment of Kurds in Turkey and includes tributes to P.K.K. "martyrs" who die in

battle, which is how Mevlude learned of the death of her daughter's friend.

Like many children in this mountain town, Emine participated in antigovernment protests from a young age and even took part in her first daylong hunger strike to support prisoners' rights when she was just 8.

"Like any mother, I would say to her, 'Please eat, you will get sick,'" Mevlude Gungen said. "But she would say 'No, I will do what everyone else is doing.'"

Here in Sirnak, residents say that the number of young people heading out to the mountains that surround the city to join the militants has grown in recent months as clashes between the guerrillas and the army have intensified.

According to figures collected by the International Crisis Group, which studies conflict worldwide, 111 members of the security forces have been killed since June, as have 31 civilians and at least 80 P.K.K. fighters.

This month, P.K.K. fighters killed 24 Turkish soldiers and wounded 18 more in a complex attack. In response,

the Turkish military sent more than 10,000 troops backed by surveillance drones, helicopters and fighter jets into the southern province of Hakkari, just 90 miles from here, and across the border into Iraq. The operation has killed at least 270 militants and wounded more than 210. Turkey's top military commander, Gen. Necdet Ozel, told the news channel NTV last week.

"Everyone's children are going to the mountains, not only ours," said Taubet Gungen. "There are thousands of mothers whose children are in the mountains. We are used to it, the same way our sons go away to the army."

If their other children choose to join the P.K.K., neither woman thinks they could stop them; the children would just run away like Emine and Heybet, they say.

"I want peace for both sides," Emine's mother said. "The men in the army are our children, but so are the ones in the mountains. My daughter is with the P.K.K., but I am a soldier's mother, too." ■

REUTERS Iraqi Kurdistan will be secure after US leaves-Barzani

October 26, 2011 - Reuters - by Mustafa Mahmoud

KIRKUK, Iraq — The president of semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, said on Wednesday his region's security would not be affected by the U.S. troop withdrawal but expressed concern for the rest of Iraq.

Barzani's comments were the first formal reaction from Kurdish authorities after President Barack Obama said on Friday that U.S. troops would leave by Dec. 31 according to the terms of a 2008 bilateral security pact.

Kurds have long favoured the continued presence of U.S. troops past the year-end deadline, warning of potential trouble in disputed areas claimed by both Kurds and Iraq's central government.

"Some people believe that the situation will get worse after the Americans' withdrawal by the end of this year," Barzani said during a visit the disputed city of Kirkuk.

"The Americans' presence or non-presence will not make a difference for the Kurdistan region," he said.

Kirkuk and other disputed northern areas are considered potential flashpoints for conflict after American troops leave, nearly nine years after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein.

In Kirkuk, a volatile mix of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen lives on top of some of the world's largest oil reserves. It is protected in part by joint patrols of Kurdish and Iraqi security forces under an experimental program set up by the U.S. military.

Long considered a potential time bomb, the city officially falls under the protection of the central government in Baghdad.

But Barzani, speaking to Kirkuk's governor and local officials, vowed the city would be properly secured after U.S. troops leave.

"We will not allow for terrorists to believe that Kirkuk has become an open field for conducting their terrorist operations," he said.

Iraqi Kurdistan has enjoyed virtual independence under Western protection since the end of the first Gulf War in 1991, and it is relatively stable compared to the rest of Iraq, which fell into sectarian warfare and a raging insurgency following the invasion.

But Barzani expressed concern about security in the rest of Iraq, plagued by daily bombings and other attacks by a still-lethal Sunni insurgency and Shi'ite militias.

"As far as we know, our sky is exposed, our sea and land borders are not fully protected, so the security situation should be studied profoundly to prevent any security breach," he said.

Violence has fallen sharply since the sectarian slaughter of 2006-2007. U.S. and Iraqi officials say Iraqi security forces can contain internal threats but need trainers to help build up air defence, maritime capabilities, intelligence gathering and conventional warfare tactics.

The United States currently has about 39,000 troops in Iraq.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said on Saturday Iraq would continue talks with Washington on how U.S. trainers can work with Iraqi forces after a complete withdrawal of American troops at the end of the year.





dimanche 30 octobre 2011

Un attentat-suicide fait deux morts et une douzaine de blessés dans l'est de la Turquie

Par RFI

Deux personnes ont été tuées et douze autres blessées, dont huit grièvement, dans un attentat-suicide perpétré samedi 29 octobre dans la ville de Bingöl dans l'est de la Turquie. Cette attaque, qui survient une semaine après un terrible séisme dont le bilan est d'au moins 582 morts, suscite le désespoir dans la région.

Cet attentat à la bombe attribué aux rebelles du PKK (le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), a été perpétré par une femme ce qui désole

Yavus Binbay, président du Centre d'action sociale à Diyarbakir. Il vient d'envoyer des psychologues dans la région du séisme pour venir en aide aux populations. « Les bombes multiplient les souffrances des gens ici, rapporte-t-il. Les habitants de cette région vivent maintenant dans un immense désespoir ».

Un désespoir d'autant plus profond que cette population, qui aspirait à la paix, se retrouve à nouveau plongée dans un climat de violence. « Les gens ici avaient retrouvé le moral et avaient à nouveau un espoir de paix, explique



Ankara a achevé jeudi 27 octobre une vaste opération de représailles contre les rebelles du PKK dans le sud-est du pays, après la mort de 24 soldats turcs à la frontière avec l'Irak.
Reuters/Stringer

Yavus Binbay. Après les élections, un climat de terreur s'est petit à petit installé. Chaque jour, il y a des dizaines de victimes civiles de la guérilla kurde et des dizaines de soldats tués dans les combats ».

Depuis les dernières élections, les affrontements ont repris entre les rebelles du PKK et l'armée turque. Ankara venait d'achever une opération de représailles contre les rebelles kurdes après la mort de 24 soldats dans des attaques de rebelles à la frontière avec l'Irak

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L'EXPRESS

30 octobre 2011

Heurts entre manifestants turcs et partisans du PKK à Paris

PARIS (AFP) - La police est intervenue dimanche à coups de gaz lacrymogènes place de la Bastille à Paris pour mettre fin à des heurts entre partisans du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et des manifestants turcs réunis contre "le terrorisme en Turquie".

Quelque 150 jeunes turcs, agitant des drapeaux de leur pays et entonnant des chants patriotiques, se sont rassemblés sur les marches et le parvis de l'Opéra Bastille pour protester contre "le terrorisme en Turquie".

Ils ont été attaqués à coups de projectiles par des groupuscules se réclamant du PKK, un parti rebelle tenu pour responsable de la mort de 24 soldats la semaine dernière en Turquie et considéré comme une organisation terroriste par de nombreux pays, selon un journaliste de l'AFP.

Les manifestants, proches du gouvernement d'Ankara, ont répliqué et la police a dû intervenir pour mettre fin aux heurts. La préfecture de police (PP) a indiqué que les jeunes kurdes avaient été dispersés à coups de gaz lacrymogènes.



La place de la Bastille occupée par des manifestants turcs, dimanche après-midi. ALEXANDER KLEIN / AFP

La place de la Bastille était jonchée de pavés et un abribus a été vandalisé, selon le journaliste de l'AFP.

Un organisateur de la manifestation, Hakan Fakili, membre d'une association d'échanges culturels entre la France et la Turquie a déclaré à l'AFP que "dix manifestants ont été blessés, lynchés par des terroristes du PKK venus du quartier de Strasbourg-Saint-Denis armés de projectiles et de bates de base-ball".

La PP, selon laquelle la manifestation



était "déclarée", n'a pas confirmé ce bilan.

Les manifestants pro-gouvernementaux ont déployé des banderoles proclamant: "tout le peuple contre le terrorisme", "tous unis contre le terrorisme", "les martyrs ne meurent jamais" ou "la Turquie ne se divisera pas".

Ils se sont dispersés dans le calme vers 16H30 et la circulation a repris place de la Bastille.

Cette manifestation intervient alors qu'Ankara vient de mener une vaste opération militaire contre les rebelles du PKK, lancée en réaction à la mort de 24 soldats mercredi dernier.

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TURKEY : Media Bares Its Anti-Kurdish Bias

ISTANBUL, October 28, 2011 - (IPS) - By Jay Cassano

Following the attacks by Kurdish rebels against the Turkish military last week, the Turkish press has openly struck a nationalist and militaristic tone.

Headlines in Turkish papers the day after the attacks were universally sensationalist and partisan.

Zaman, the most widely read daily in the country, condemned the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with "They Crossed the Line" as its front page headline. The article went on to state, "The PKK, which massacres soldiers, civilians, women and children, showed its barbaric face in Çukurca last night."

Habertürk referred to the attack as a "Crime Against Humanity" in large font in another front page headline.

The liberal daily Radikal ran "The Cursed Face of Terror" superimposed over a photograph of a crying woman hugging a young girl.

Posta, a tabloid with readership of nearly half a million, picked up on this theme with articles entitled, "Turkey is Full of Crying Mothers" and "How Long Will We Keep Suffering?"

The socialist daily BirGün ran the only non-provocative headline, "Peace is the Only Way." Various other papers described the attacks as "vicious" and the PKK militants as "treacherous" or "traitorous".

According to Garen Aram Kampril, coordinator of the Media Watch and Hate Speech Project at the Hrant Dink Foundation, "the media have a nationalist point of view and there is a militarist mentality in the headlines and articles."

Founded in 2007 in honour of assassinated Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, the Foundation directs much of its energy towards highlighting and exposing hate speech and bias in the media.

Most papers made the editorial decision to visually emphasise a selection of quotes from President Abdullah Gül's speech after the attacks, namely: "The revenge for these attacks will be great."

"This is the language of war," Kampril told IPS.

Furthermore, each publication used the Turkish and Arabic words for "martyrs" to refer to the slain soldiers. In contrast, the number of PKK guerillas killed was only mentioned further down in the article, referred to simply as "the dead."

Kampril believes that the use of the word martyr is "a religious saying, but even the so-called secular military is now using this term."

He takes this as a strong sign of bias "because one side is martyrs and the other is terrorists. No one cares about people dying on the other side. They are considered subhuman."

Two days after the attacks, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan convened a meeting with the five major Turkish news agencies and most of the national newspapers to discuss how best to cover the 'Kurdish issue'.

Because this media meeting was limited only to representatives of large publications, its end results are unknown. The joint statement released by the five major news agencies makes it seem that the government's aim was to curb the sensationalism in news reports.

The agencies present pledged not to "broadcast news that incites the public to violence, panic, chaos, hate or enmity."

However, many people have expressed concern about the goals of

this meeting.

Several newspapers critical of the government – ultra-secularist or far-left publications – were not invited to the meeting.

Kampril believes that "Erdogan excluded them because he thought that he could not control them and they would not obey. Erdogan wants a homogenous media. He wants one voice to control society and to create a common opinion on this issue. This is contrary to democracy."

After the meeting Erdogan announced "we have evaluated together the ways in which media will not serve the aims of terror by knowingly or unknowingly propagandising."

In another example of government control over citizens' access to independent information about the conflict, Firat News Agency's website remains banned.

Based in the southeast, Firat is the only agency that has ties to the Kurdish movements.

Because its primary website has been banned for some time, Firat established several mirror websites at different domains. The morning after the PKK attacks, none of the mirrors were accessible inside Turkey.

Following the attacks, much of the Turkish public retaliated with anti-PKK demonstrations. Some attacked the offices of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which supports equal rights for Kurds and is viewed by an overwhelming majority of Turkish society as a mouthpiece for the PKK.

BDP offices in Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Konya, Aydin, Adiyaman, Osmaniye, and Sakarya were vandalised amidst nationwide anti-Kurdish demonstrations.

Rather than report on the backlash against the PKK objectively, Turkish media made the decision to effectively fan the flames for further violence.

Hürriyet, the second most popular daily in the country, printed, "The rage has spilled over to the streets."

"The media provokes nationalism," Kampril told IPS. "Of course, these are people who are very ready to be provoked. But the media is contributing to the problem."

After the devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the seat of the Kurdish minority in the southeastern city Van, the effects of this partisan media coverage were clearly felt.

Habertürk news anchor Duygu Canbas opened a segment reporting on the earthquake by saying, "Even though this news comes from the East, from Van, it has really shaken and upset all of us in Turkey."

Müge Anlı, host of a daytime talk show, commented, "whenever they [Kurds] feel like it, they throw stones at soldiers and hunt them in the mountains like birds, but whenever something bad happens they say let the soldiers and police come to their rescue."

Kampril said he noticed trends of hate speech on social media such as Facebook and Twitter that have been spurred on by the media.

"There is a direct link between media coverage and hate speech because the people who are posting these tweets or creating these Facebook pages are the people in society."

"The media in a way reflects the tendencies in society but also produces stereotypes and nationalist tendencies," he added.

PKK card may exacerbate already strained ties between Syria and Turkey

AYDIN ALBAYRAK,
ANKARA / TODAY'S ZAMAN

Turkey launched an offensive against the PKK after they staged simultaneous attacks on military and police targets, killing 24 soldiers. The offensive has ended after killing some 270 terrorists.

The relations between Turkey and Syria might get even worse because of the latter's alleged involvement in supporting the recent surge in terrorist attacks by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The news stories and comments appearing in the press on Syria's probable link with the terrorist organization caused Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to warn Damascus sternly. In a statement he made while he was on an official visit in Qatar on Tuesday, Davutoğlu said: "Recalling the past, [Syria] should not even think of playing the PKK card. Everybody will see where such an act would lead."

Analysts as well as the Turkish public share the misgivings of Davutoğlu on Syria, a country with which Turkey had developed very close political and economic relations in recent years and was, just less than a year ago, taking steps towards economic integration.

Syria, which let Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, now in prison at İmralı, take shelter and direct the terrorist organization from within its borders for several until 1998, the year when Syria had to expulse Öcalan because of pressure from Turkey, seems inclined to play the PKK card against Turkey again since its neighbor in the north, taking a stern attitude, has criticized Damascus when it chose to crush the demonstrations calling for reforms by firing at the protestors.

Sedat Laçiner, former president of the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) and now the president of Çanakkale 18 March University, believes that Syria now perceives Turkey as an enemy. The reason is simple, in Laçiner's words: "President Bashar al-Assad and the Nusayris in Syria take the recent developments in the country as a life or death issue and label all those

who do not lend them support as an enemy." And Turkey, not only pressuring Syria to change, but also hosting the dissidents within its own borders and engaging in a dialogue with them, gets labeled as a country which is out to harm Syria. "For Syria, lacking the political, economic or military means to counter Turkey's attitude, the only card available to them is the PKK," Laçiner says.

Professor Doğu Ergil from Fatih University, a well-seasoned scholar in the Kurdish issue who has drawn up several reports and a book, "Kürtleri Anlamak" (Understanding the Kurds), since the 1990s, has something quite new to say on the issue of origin: "A Swedish researcher who lives in Arbil for the purpose of writing his thesis [on Tuesday] arrived at the university where I lecture. He has even been to Kandil [a mountain in northern Iraq where the PKK headquarters are situated], has met Osman Öcalan [Abdullah Öcalan's brother who is known to have severed his ties with the PKK] and has contacts with the Barzani family. And he says that 40 percent of the PKK's militants at Kandil are either of Syrian or Iranian origin."

What's most interesting in this account is that PKK terrorists from Iran and Syria, instead of fighting for the rights of Kurds in their own country, choose to fight Turkey, which is actually the country, as opposed to Iran and Turkey, which has taken giant steps in the past several years so that the Kurds may enjoy better rights. A transmission from Bahoz Erdal, real name Fehman Hüseyin, one of the leading personalities in the PKK and of Syrian origin, was recently intercepted by Turkish intelligence units while communicating with PKK militants, according to reports in the Turkish press, saying "do not get into any action that might put us on bad terms with Iran." The PKK, in the mean time, is said to have also cautioned the Kurds in Syria not to rebel against the Assad regime. It's exactly this state of affairs that analysts find strange. "On the one side, there is Iran, which denies rights to the Kurds, and Syria, where the Kurds are not even recognized as citizens, and on the other side Turkey stands in total contrast to its neighbors. The PKK, which has either stopped

fighting recently (in the case of Iran) or has never fought a war against these countries, is attacking Turkey for all it is worth. The picture being as it is, I wonder whether these militants are also there to represent the official circles of the countries in question. Not being involved in a fight against the state in their country of origin, it's a sign that, having reached an agreement with the countries concerned, the PKK is, in a way, acting because of the disagreements those countries have with Turkey," says Ergil.

According to Ergil, the reason behind the PKK's efforts in trying to establish an autonomous area in Turkey is to secure the cooperation between Syria and Iran in opposition Turkey by controlling the area. Reminding us of the Kurdish demands for an autonomous area, Ergil goes on to explain his theory: "They are trying to create a Kurdish area which at one end reaches Iran, and on the other stretches out to the Syrian border. This is also in accordance with the united 'Kurdistan' ideal. The aim would be the establishment of an autonomous 'Kurdistan', a dictatorship with close ties with Iran and Syria. And this, in turn, would secure the permanency of the regimes in Iran and Syria through the Kurds affiliated with the PKK."

A statement made recently by Osman Öcalan, which appeared earlier this week in the Sabah daily, is also revealing with regard to the role Syria and Israel might have had in the PKK attacks. In the news report Osman Öcalan draws attention to the fact that after Turkey's relations with Syria and Israel deteriorated the number of PKK attacks increased significantly. He also adds that Turkey is on its way to becoming a regional super power, and that is disturbing to some world powers, first and foremost the US and Israel. "Some are trying to put Turkey behind the eight ball through the PKK, in an effort to force a civil war in Turkey. Especially the PKK's connections with Syria and the Israel must be examined," says Öcalan. Laçiner believes that fighting a terrorist organization which finds shelter in three bordering countries will be a difficult task for Turkey, particularly when the acts of terrorism have no particular aim

After Iraq, U.S. plans to bolster Gulf presence

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

Pentagon hopes buildup and new partnerships will strengthen security

BY THOM SHANKER
AND STEVEN LEE MYERS

The administration of President Barack Obama plans to bolster the U.S. military presence in the Gulf after it withdraws the remaining troops from Iraq this year, according to officials and diplomats. That repositioning could include new combat forces in Kuwait able to respond to a collapse of security in Iraq or a military confrontation with Iran.

The plans, under discussion for months, gained new urgency after Mr. Obama announced this month that the last U.S. soldiers would be brought home from Iraq by the end of December. Ending the eight-year war was a central pledge of his presidential campaign, but U.S. military officers and diplomats, as well as officials of several countries in the region, worry that the withdrawal could leave instability or worse in its wake.

After unsuccessfully pressing both the Obama administration and the Iraqi government to permit as many as 20,000 U.S. troops to remain in Iraq beyond 2011, the Pentagon is now drawing up an alternative.

In addition to negotiations over maintaining a ground combat presence in Kuwait, the United States is considering sending more naval warships through international waters in the region.

With an eye on the threat of a belligerent Iran, the administration is also seeking to expand military ties with the six nations in the Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. While the United States has close bilateral military relationships with each, the administration and the military are trying to foster a new “security architecture” for the Gulf that would integrate air and naval patrols and missile defense.

The size of the standby U.S. combat force to be based in Kuwait remains the subject of negotiations, with an answer expected in coming days. Officers at the Central Command headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida declined to discuss specifics of the propos-

als, but it was clear that successful deployment plans from past decades could be incorporated into plans for a post-Iraq footprint in the region.

For example, in the time between the Gulf War in 1991 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the U.S. Army kept at least a combat battalion — and sometimes a full combat brigade — in Kuwait year-round, along with an enormous arsenal ready to be unpacked should even more troops have been called to the region.

“Back to the future” is how Maj. Gen. Karl R. Horst, Central Command’s chief of staff, described planning for a new posture in the Gulf. He said the command was focusing on smaller but highly capable deployments and training partnerships with regional militaries. “We are kind of thinking of going back to the way it was before we had a big ‘boots on the ground’ presence,” General Horst said. “I think it is healthy. I think it is efficient. I think it is practical.”

Mr. Obama and his senior national security advisers have sought to reassure allies and answer critics, including many Republicans, that the United States will not abandon its commitments in the Gulf even as it winds down the war in Iraq and looks ahead to doing the same in Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

“We will have a robust, continuing presence throughout the region, which is proof of our ongoing commitment to Iraq and to the future of that region, which holds such promise and should be freed from outside interference to continue on a pathway to democracy,” Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in Tajikistan after the president’s announcement.

During town-hall-style meetings with military personnel in Asia last week, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta noted that the United States had 40,000 troops in the region, including 23,000 in Kuwait, though the bulk of those served as logistical support for the forces in Iraq.

As they undertake this effort, the Pentagon and its Central Command, which oversees operations in the region, have begun a significant rearrangement of U.S. forces, acutely aware of the political and budgetary constraints facing the United States, including at least \$450 billion of cuts in military spending over the next decade as part of an agreement to reduce the budget deficit.

Officers at Central Command said that the post-Iraq era required them to seek more efficient ways to deploy forces and maximize cooperation with regional partners. One significant outcome of the coming cuts, officials said, could be a steep decrease in the number of intelligence analysts assigned to the region. At the same time, officers hope to expand security relationships in the region. General Horst said that training exercises were “a sign of commitment to presence, a sign of commitment of resources and a sign of commitment in building partner capability and partner capacity.”

Col. John G. Worman, Central Command’s chief for exercises, noted a Gulf milestone: For the first time, he said, the military of Iraq had been invited to participate in a regional exercise in Jordan next year, called Eager Lion 12, built around the threat of guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

Another part of the administration’s post-Iraq planning involves the Gulf Cooperation Council, dominated by Saudi Arabia. It has increasingly sought to exert its diplomatic and military influence in the region and beyond. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, for example, sent combat aircraft to the Mediterranean as part of the NATO-led intervention in Libya, while Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates each have forces in Afghanistan.

At the same time, however, the council sent a mostly Saudi ground force into Bahrain to support that government’s

The Pentagon has begun a rearrangement of U.S. forces.

suppression of demonstrations this year, despite international criticism.

Despite such concerns, the administration has proposed establishing a stronger, multilateral security alliance with the six nations and the United States. Mr. Panetta and Mrs. Clinton outlined the proposal in an unusual joint meeting with the council on the sidelines of the United Nations in New York last month.

The proposal still requires the approval of the council, whose leaders will meet again in December in Riyadh, and the kind of multilateral collaboration that the administration envisions must overcome rivalries among the six nations.

Iran, as it has been for more than three decades, remains the most worrisome threat to many of those nations, as well as to Iraq itself, where it has re-established political, cultural and economic ties, even as it provided covert support for Shiite insurgents who have battled U.S. forces.

“They’re worried that the American withdrawal will leave a vacuum, that their being close by will always make anyone think twice before taking any action,” the foreign minister of Bahrain, Sheik Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa, said in an interview, referring to officials in the Gulf region.

In the United States, some foreign policy analysts and Democrats — and a few Republicans — say the United States has remained in Iraq for too long. Others, including many Republicans and military analysts, have criticized Mr. Obama’s announcement of a final withdrawal, expressing fear that Iraq remained too weak and unstable.

“The U.S. will have to come to terms with an Iraq that is unable to defend itself for at least a decade,” Adam Mausner and Anthony H. Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote after the withdrawal announcement.



Le président syrien Bachar el-Assad (au centre) reçoit à Damas, le 25 février 2010, le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (à gauche) ainsi que le chef du Hezbollah libanais Hassan Nasrallah.

SANA/AFP

Le jeu ambigu de l'Iran en Syrie



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Chaque fois qu'Hassan reçoit un appel sur son portable, cet intellectuel damascène engagé dans la révolte contre le régime de Bachar el-Assad n'a qu'une crainte : que l'indicatif 98 ne s'affiche sur l'écran. « Cela veut dire que c'est un Iranien qui cherche à me joindre, mais je ne réponds pas. » Menaces ? Simples intimidations ? L'aide apportée par Téhéran à son allié syrien n'est plus qu'un secret de Polichinelle. « L'Iran n'a pas envoyé de très nombreux agents en Syrie, confie l'opposant Haytham al-Maleh. Mais ce sont des renforts bien spécifiques » : des bassidjis, ces miliciens qui furent à la pointe dans la répression des manifestations, après l'élection présidentielle truquée de 2009 en Iran, ainsi que des membres triés sur le volet de l'unité al-Qods, la branche des gardiens de la révolution (les pasdarans) en charge des sales besognes hors d'Iran.

Téhéran a également épaulé les services de Damas dans leur cyberguerre contre les insurgés. Enfin, des snipers seraient venus grossir les rangs des fossoyeurs de cette révolte populaire, qui menace le seul allié arabe de Téhéran au Proche-Orient.

A deux reprises, au printemps, des armes iraniennes à destination de la Syrie ont été interceptées par Israël, via l'aéroport turc de Diyarbakir d'abord, par mer ensuite. Pour contourner les obstacles, les deux alliés se sont entendus pour construire une base aérienne à Lattaquieh, sur la côte méditerranéenne, permettant d'acheminer directement l'aide logistique iranienne. Ce n'est pas un hasard si l'Union européenne a sanctionné trois dirigeants des gardiens de la révolution, accusés d'avoir fourni des armes à la Syrie : leur chef, le général Mohammad Ali Jafari, et ses deux adjoints, le général Qassem Soleimani, patron de l'unité al-Qods, et Hossein Tayyeb, le coordinateur du soutien logistique à Damas.

Mais, au fil des mois, devant l'incapacité de la Sy-

rie à régler pacifiquement la crise, le silence pudique du début a laissé la place à une certaine gêne, puis à l'expression de critiques à Téhéran. Dernières en date, celles, il y a dix jours, du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, qui a condamné « les morts et les massacres ». Depuis quelque temps, « la position de l'Iran est ambiguë », a récemment affirmé Éric Chevallier, l'ambassadeur de France en Syrie, au cours d'une audition à huis clos devant la commission des affaires étrangères de l'Assemblée nationale. « Les Iraniens ont conseillé aux Syriens de ne plus ouvrir le feu dans la rue, mais plutôt de repérer les meneurs les plus importants du soulèvement, avant de les arrêter durant la nuit », ajoutait M. Chevallier, selon deux députés présents.

L'ambiguïté iranienne est devenue publique fin août, lorsque Mahmoud Ahmadinejad et son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Ali Akbar Salehi, ont, coup sur coup, dénoncé l'usage excessif de la force, avant de presser Assad d'ouvrir le dialogue avec ses opposants. Dans le même temps, en coulisses, des responsables iraniens prenaient langue avec des représentants de l'opposition syrienne : des laïques à Paris et des islamistes, membres des Frères musulmans, au Caire. La priorité est de sauver le régime par une issue négociée à la crise, mais, pragmatisme oblige, il s'agit aussi de sonder les candidats à la succession d'Assad.

Après sept mois d'une répression qui a fait plus de 3000 morts, l'appui au régime syrien divise, en fait, les principaux pôles du pouvoir iranien. « Les gardiens de la révolution pensent qu'il faut soutenir la Syrie coûte que coûte, d'autres non », insiste un proche du chef de la diplomatie iranienne. Selon lui, « une ligne réaliste autour d'Ahmadinejad et Salehi fait valoir qu'il faut monter dans le train de l'histoire. Elle se dit que, même en perdant la Syrie, l'Iran n'héritera pas forcément d'un régime hostile, d'autant que la diplomatie iranienne a fait des ouvertures ces derniers mois pour se rapprocher de la nouvelle Égypte. »

Selon d'autres sources à Téhéran, les divisions entre Ahmadinejad et les pasdarans auraient conduit le numéro un du régime, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, à intervenir dans deux directions : que les diplomates iraniens en Europe et dans le monde arabe s'abstiennent de tout commentaire sur la Syrie, et que cessent les contacts que des proches d'Ahmadinejad ont noués avec l'entourage des anciens présidents Mohammad Khatami et Ali Akbar

Rafsandjani, en vue d'établir des passerelles avec les opposants syriens. « Nous entretenons de longue date des liens avec des amis de Khatami », confirme l'un de ces opposants. Tout en démentant de tels contacts, Ahmadinejad aurait exprimé son vif mécontentement de la manière dont les gardiens de la révolution « gèrent » la crise syrienne.

La Libye dans l'équation syrienne

Au sommet de l'État iranien, le soutien à Damas n'est pas la seule pomme de discorde en politique étrangère. Ces derniers mois, la guerre en Libye a également vu s'affronter le camp Ahmadinejad à celui du guide suprême, appuyé par les pasdarans. Selon des informations émanant de services de renseignements occidentaux et relayées cet été par la presse, Ali Khamenei aurait chargé la force al-Qods d'apporter une assistance militaire au colonel Kadhafi dans sa guerre contre les forces de l'Otan - et ce contre l'avis d'Ahmadinejad. Des transferts d'armes ont eu lieu, via l'Algérie et le Soudan, et des hauts gradés des pasdarans ont conseillé le régime libyen déchu en matière de surveillance des communications et de renseignements. « L'objectif aurait été de faire durer le conflit, de manière à détourner l'attention de la communauté internationale de la répression en Syrie », peut-on lire dans le récent rapport sur l'Iran de la commission des affaires étrangères de l'Assemblée nationale.

Anticipant la chute de Kadhafi, plusieurs douzaines de membres de la force al-Qods ont finalement reçu l'ordre cet été de quitter la Libye pour rejoindre le Soudan et la Syrie. « Certains en Iran s'accommoderaient tout à fait d'un nouveau gouvernement à Damas, voire d'un changement à la tête du régime », observe un diplomate français, qui suit le dossier. Selon lui, la République islamique cherche d'abord à éviter le démembrement de la Syrie et l'éclatement d'une guerre civile qui pourrait faire tache d'huile parmi ses minorités kurde et sunnite, rebelles au pouvoir central de Téhéran.

Au nom de ce réalisme, des responsables iraniens auraient même discrètement rencontré à deux reprises, fin août et début septembre, des représentants de l'Administration américaine, nous révèle un opposant syrien en exil. « Ils ont parlé de la mise en place d'un haut conseil militaire sur le modèle égyptien avec des généraux qui dirigeraient la Syrie et seraient responsables des grandes options straté-

giques », affirme cet opposant.

Être une puissance méditerranéenne

Pour les Iraniens, ce conseil permettrait de maintenir la stabilité dans la Syrie de l'après-Assad. Les Américains, de leur côté, ont insisté pour que l'Iran ne perturbe pas le départ, d'ici à décembre, de leurs 40 000 soldats d'Irak, et que la politique syrienne « change à l'échelle régionale », c'est-à-dire qu'elle cesse son soutien aux groupes terroristes, comme le Hamas palestinien. Interrompus avant l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU, le 20 septembre, ces contacts exploratoires n'auraient pas repris depuis.

Devant les députés, Éric Chevallier a parlé de l'Iran comme de « l'ami des mauvais jours pour la Syrie. Celui avec lequel Damas est obligé, en ce moment, de se concerter. Mais c'est une relation contre nature, les Syriens sont peu à l'aise avec les Iraniens », a insisté l'ambassadeur. Le réacteur nucléaire syrien, d'al-Kibar, qu'Israël bombardera en

2007, fut construit avec l'aide de techniciens nord-coréens et non pas iraniens. Et, depuis le début des violences, « ce sont les ministres syriens qui se déplacent à Téhéran, pas leurs homologues iraniens à Damas », observe le diplomate, pour mieux souligner que, dans ce mariage de raison, c'est l'Iran le plus fort. Entre Damas et Téhéran, seuls comptent, en effet, les intérêts. L'Iran a besoin de la Syrie pour être, grâce au Hezbollah libanais, « une puissance méditerranéenne ». Quant à la Syrie, son alliance avec l'Iran lui sert de contrepoids à l'animosité des pays arabes sunnites.

Face aux menaces, les deux partenaires ont même intensifié leur coopération, ces dernières années. Grâce à la technologie iranienne, Damas fabrique désormais des missiles balistiques M-600 d'une portée d'environ 250 kilomètres. En cas d'aggravation de la crise, leur rapatriement en Iran pourrait encore diviser les deux alliés. Depuis l'assassinat à Damas, en 2008, du chef militaire du

Hezbollah Imad Moughnieh, les Iraniens ont accru leur suspicion envers la Syrie. Vraisemblablement liquidé par le Mossad, grâce à une complicité locale, Moughnieh avait fini par prendre beaucoup de libertés et à devenir embarrassant pour Damas. Comme Mohammed Hassan Akhtari, ambassadeur iranien en Syrie pendant seize ans... aujourd'hui très actif aux côtés du guide suprême dans la définition de la politique syrienne de l'Iran. À son retour à Téhéran en 2007, Ahmadinejad avait tenté - en vain - de s'opposer à sa réintégration auprès d'Ali Khamenei.

Malgré des divisions au sommet, l'Iran est encore loin d'avoir lâché la Syrie. D'autant, constate le diplomate, qu'« Ahmadinejad est fragilisé depuis six mois face aux ultraconservateurs et au guide qui multiplie les pièges sous ses pieds ». ■

LE FIGARO 31 octobre 2011

Assad menace d'« embraser » le Proche-Orient

Le dictateur syrien prédit un « tremblement de terre » en cas d'intervention internationale.

PIERRE PRIER

SYRIE Le président syrien Bachar el-Assad, en butte à une insurrection populaire depuis sept mois, a menacé hier l'Occident d'un « séisme » en cas d'intervention internationale. Dans une interview à l'hebdomadaire britannique *The Sunday Telegraph*, le dictateur a lancé un avertissement sans précautions oratoires. « Voulez-vous connaître un nouvel Afghanistan ou même des dizaines d'Afghanistan ? La Syrie n'hésitera pas à embraser toute la région. » Selon lui, son pouvoir de nuisance dépasse de loin celui des autres régimes visés par

Ce n'est pas la première fois que Bachar el-Assad cherche à faire peur

les révolutions arabes : « La Syrie est complètement différente de l'Égypte, de la Tunisie ou du Yémen », a-t-il ajouté. La Syrie, a-t-il poursuivi, est « sur une ligne de faille et si vous jouez avec la terre vous risquez de provoquer un séisme ».

Ce n'est pas la première fois que Bachar el-Assad cherche à faire peur. En août dernier, déjà, il avait déclaré au ministre des Affaires étrangères turc qu'il pouvait « mettre le feu à la région en six heures, du Yémen à l'Irak », selon la presse turque. « Ce chantage montre qu'Assad n'a rien d'autre à négocier que la non-utilisation de ses capacités de déstabilisation », estime Ignace-Leverrier, ancien diplomate en poste à Damas.

Les risques sont connus. La Syrie a une longue pratique du terrorisme, directement ou indirectement. Damas pourrait déstabiliser le Liban, provoquer une guerre avec Israël à travers une variété d'alliés - Hezbollah, partis nationalistes pro-syriens, groupuscules palestiniens, voire des djihadistes sans frontières.

L'opposition syrienne s'en inquiète. « Les mots employés témoignent d'un jusqu'au-boutisme très inquiétant. Ils suggèrent que Bachar el-Assad n'est pas disposé à épargner le pire au pays », juge Bassma Kodmani, membre du Conûte exécutif, chargée des relations extérieures du Conseil national syrien (CNS), coalition d'opposition.

Jouer le coup d'après

Le nouvel accès de violence verbale du président syrien semblait destiné à doucher les espoirs de la Ligue arabe, qui souhaite toujours organiser une médiation avec des opposants de l'intérieur. À l'issue d'une réunion hier à Doha (Qatar), la Ligue a annoncé attendre aujourd'hui une réponse de Damas à un plan pour mettre fin à la violence. La suspension de la Syrie de la Ligue ne semblait pas à l'ordre du jour. « Il faudrait pour cela l'unanimité des États membres, et nous en sommes loin », reconnaît un diplomate.

La Ligue pourrait en fait jouer le coup d'après : constater son échec et renvoyer le dossier devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, espère le CNS. « Si la Ligue arabe se convainc que le régime refuse le dialogue, il deviendrait légitime qu'elle demande à l'ONU de gérer la crise », estime Bassma Kodmani. Cette



Des partisans de Bachar el-Assad ont affirmé, hier à Beyrouth, leur soutien au président syrien en manifestant devant l'ambassade de Syrie dans la capitale libanaise. AMRO/AFP

menace d'« internationaliser » le dossier syrien expliquerait la diatribe de Bachar el-Assad.

Mais les divisions des membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité ne faciliteront pas les choses. Hier, au siège de la Ligue arabe, au Caire, l'envoyé spécial de la Chine au Proche-Orient, Wu Sike, a haussé le ton, sans abandonner la position chinoise de refus de toute sanction contre la Syrie. « Le gouvernement syrien doit accélérer les réformes et

répondre aux aspirations du peuple », a-t-il déclaré. Sur le terrain, le risque d'une militarisation de l'insurrection s'est encore aggravé ce week-end. À Homs, des militaires déserteurs ont tué 47 soldats du régime, selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme. « Les militaires déserteurs, avec qui nous sommes en contact, nous disent qu'ils jouent leur rôle légitime, celui de protéger le mouvement pacifique du peuple syrien », dit Bassma Kodmani. ■