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IRAQ: TWO OFFICERS OF THE IRAQI BORDER GUARDS KILLED BY A TURKISH DRONE

Since the reopening of the borders with Iran last May, both Iraq and Kurdistan are experiencing a dramatic increase in the figures of the pandemic... But both the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Government are caught between health constraints and economic requirements... On 1st August, the KRG authorised the controlled resumption of international flights

to the Region from several countries, while conversely, Turkey stopped flights to the Region. Passengers leaving the Region must show a negative COVID test of less than 48 hours before boarding. As of 4th August, the number of coronavirus cases in Iraqi Kurdistan was 14.816 confirmed cases, 574 deaths and 9.413 recoveries. On the 5th, when the KRG announced 357 new cases (including 218 in Erbil province) and 12 deaths, the Ministry of

Health called on cured patients to donate their plasma for patients developing severe forms of the infection. After more than twenty cases appeared, two villages in Akre district (Dohuk) were placed under total confinement. At the same time, Iraq announced more than 5.000 deaths since March, the beginning of the epidemic: it is the highest mortality rate per inhabitant in the Arab world. On 11th August, 653 new cases were reported in Kurdistan, the

highest daily increase ever observed. On the 12th, Suleimaniyeh had 9.500 cases, against 7.300 in Erbil and 1.400 in Dohuk... The increase continued on the 13th with 3.841 new infections, while Iraq as a whole approached 165.000 cases for 5.641 deaths (*Kurdistan-24*). On the 14th, Kurdistan broke a new "record" with 667 new cases including 411 in Erbil. The total number of cases was then 20.002, including 8.262 hospitalizations. The next day, the figure was almost the same with 658 new cases. The day before, the governor of Erbil had attributed the surge to the lack of compliance with the barrier measures.

On the 21st, the province of Erbil lifted travel restrictions with the other provinces by removing the requirement to obtain prior authorisation on the internet, while maintaining the ban on group tourist travel. Mosques were also allowed to reopen for Friday prayers, but with precautionary measures, as were restaurants (*Rûdaw*). On the 24th, the KRG Ministry of Health announced the highest mortality since the beginning of the pandemic with 27 deaths and 458 new cases. The rapid increase of cases in the province of Dohuk, ahead of Erbil with 199 cases against 127, caused concern (*Kurdistan-24*). On the 25th, the WHO opened an office in Kurdistan for faster operations and a better monitoring of the situation. On the same day, the Iraqi Ministry of Health warned of a second epidemic wave, with 4.000 new cases and 77 deaths in 24 hours, for a total of 6.596 deaths in the country. Here too, the worrying evolution of the epidemic situation was attributed to the lack of compliance with barrier measures. The next day, the country had 3.837 new cases and 72 deaths, and on 27th August, 3.651 new cases and 72 deaths.

On 31st August, Kurdistan Region recorded 25 deaths and 591 new cases, including 234 from Dohuk, 169 from Erbil, 115 from Suleimaniyeh and 30 from

Halabja. The total number of deaths in the Region at that time was 1.074. With the highest number of cases, Dohuk also had the lowest number of deaths (46), which led WHO to congratulate the authorities of the province (*Kurdistan-24*).

In this tense sanitary context, discussions continued between the KRG and the federal government to try to reach a budgetary agreement, while Baghdad had suspended payments to Erbil from the federal budget since the end of April... At the end of the first week of the month, Kurdish parliamentarians announced an agreement: in exchange for the revenue from the sale of 250.000 barrels of oil per day and 50% of customs revenue, Baghdad would pay the KRG its share of the federal budget plus the salaries of its civil servants. According to the announcement, a KRG delegation would visit Baghdad during the week of the 10th to continue the discussions. After mid-week statements by both sides highlighting their differences, KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani announced on the 15th that Baghdad had agreed to a "partial restoration" of the KRG's share of the federal budget: "I am pleased to announce that Baghdad has agreed to pay 320 billion dinars per month [about US\$270 million] as a partial restoration of our share of the federal budget", he said. "We agree on the constitutional rights and duties of both parties, and the dialogue will continue" (*Kurdistan-24*). Indeed, many other points of disagreement remain, from the control of border crossings to the governance of the disputed territories...

On the 24th, the KRG Prime Minister said in an interview that the agreement with Baghdad was an interim agreement valid for three months only, and that both sides hoped to reach a comprehensive budget agreement after this period. He added that discussions on the "security vacuum" in the disputed

territories, exploited by ISIS's terrorists, were continuing, and that the KRG was also continuing to work towards the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. But on the 30th, the Secretary General of the Pechmergas Ministry, Jabar Yawar, said that while in 2020 there had been nearly 150 ISIS attacks resulting in 650 deaths, while general negotiations were continuing to reach a three-year budget agreement, there was still no timetable for the resumption of security talks... (*Kurdistan-24*) Earlier this month, the "White Flags", a terrorist organisation partly originating from ISIS, and also active in the disputed territories, broadcast a video showing the beheading of a Kurdish man kidnapped in 2019, and on the 27th, the bodies of two young Kurds kidnapped the day before by ISIS at a fake checkpoint were found near Khanaqin...

Another point of contention between the KRG and Baghdad concerns the attempts by former Arab settlers from the time of the Ba'hist regime to return to the region. New incidents occurred in early August, when residents of a Kurdish village between Daquq and Kirkuk, Guli Tapa, prevented about 15 Arab families from entering the village. The Iraqi federal police intervened. The mayor of Daquq said that there were still unresolved land disputes between Arabs and Kurds in the area, describing the Arabs concerned as not belonging to the "colonising" groups but originating from Kirkuk. However, since the takeover of these territories on 17th October 2017 by the federal forces, many Kurds have denounced attempts to "re-Arabise" the area. On the 5th, Harem Kamal Agha, deputy and vice-president of the PUK bloc in the Baghdad parliament, declared in *Rûdaw* that Baghdad was setting up a "new Arabisation process" and that in the face of this, UPK and PDK had to "put their differences aside" in order to act. For his part, Kamal Kirkuki, a member of the KDP political

bureau, said the issue had to be resolved at the state level and according to the law and the constitution. The Iraqi presidency has announced the formation of a committee comprising both parliamentarians and members of the government to examine the problem.

In the Kurdistan Region, the non-payment of civil servants' salaries has led to social movements for several weeks, and there have been recent demonstrations, particularly in Suleimaniyeh. In the north, in Dohuk, other demonstrations have started to protest against a military intervention and Turkish air strikes that have recently become extremely violent and have caused many civilian casualties. The KRG reacted by banning rallies, cutting off the Internet and even "putting pressure" on journalists, *Reporters Without Borders* said. Based in Kurdistan, the *METRO Center for Journalist Rights and Advocacy* has recorded 88 violations against 62 journalists and media in the first six months of 2020 and says it has noted a further stiffening since June... (AFP)

The Turkish military strikes and ground movements launched as part of Operation "Claw-Tiger" have indeed taken on increasingly deadly proportions in recent weeks. Although the Turkish General Staff claims to be targeting the PKK, Turkish military activities in Iraqi Kurdistan have resulted in dozens of civilian casualties and forced thousands more to be displaced. After strikes in the previous

months had hit Sinjar, where the Yazidi had already been badly hit by ISIS, and the Makhmur refugee camp, Turkey launched multiple strikes in the first week of the month on the province of Suleimaniyeh in the Asos region. In particular, the Turkish army announced that it had detected the presence of the PKK near the town of Mawat, 50 km north of Suleimaniyeh, near the Iranian border, where crops were burned (*Al-Monitor, Rûdaw*). On the 7th, Turkish planes destroyed a vehicle near the village of Qamesh (Suleimaniyeh), and on the 10th, the PJAK, a Kurdish party in Iran close to the PKK, announced the death of seven of its fighters and two of its supporters in Turkish strikes using drones. Turkey also bombed targets in Dohuk.

But this month's most serious incident, also on the 7th, occurred when a Turkish drone destroyed a vehicle carrying two senior officers of the Iraqi border guards in the Soran district (Erbil), who were killed with their driver. The attack elicited strong protests from Baghdad. The two officers had just returned from a meeting with PKK fighters following clashes between them and Iraqi forces in the morning. According to local sources, the meeting targeted by the drone had been organised in emergency to try to calm tensions. In reaction, Baghdad cancelled the visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister, scheduled for the 14th, and announced the summoning – for the third time since June – of the Turkish ambassador to Baghdad, Fatih Yildiz. The Iraqi presidency, for its part, denounced "a dangerous violation of Iraq's sovereignty", calling on

Ankara to "cease all military operations". On the 13th, Baghdad announced that it had contacted its neighbours (notably Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) and the Arab League "to reach a common position and force Turkey to withdraw" its troops from Iraq. The same day, as a new Turkish strike killed three PKK fighters, Ambassador Yildiz published on Twitter a statement accusing Iraq of "turning a blind eye while members of the terrorist PKK are on its soil" (AFP). The next day, like several Arab countries, France announced its condemnation of the Turkish strike and renewed its support for the respect of Iraqi sovereignty (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). On the 17th, the PKK announced it had shot down a Turkish helicopter, which crashed along the border, as was confirmed by the mayor of a nearby village. Also according to the PKK, another aircraft was hit ten minutes later and forced to turn back. The PKK also mentioned that one of its commanders was killed along with the two Iraqi officers. As Turkey launched new strikes after these, the Iraqi government, denouncing them, reacted by banning Turkish citizens from entering its territory, cancelling all planned official Turkish visits and deploying new border guard units in the North. On the same day, an Iraqi delegation including representatives of the KRG arrived in Washington, ahead of a meeting between Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi and US President Donald Trump (WKI).

On the 19th, Turkey carried out new strikes on a village near Akre.

ROJAVA:

KIDNAPPING, TORTURE, RAPE, MURDER... EVIDENCE OF THE CRIMES OF THE TURKISH OCCUPATION FORCES IS ACCUMULATING



On 30th July, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham revealed that the US Treasury Department had authorised a

contract between the Kurdish-dominated Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria (AANES) of the Party of Democratic Unity (PYD) and a

little-known US oil company, *Delta Crescent Energy*. It is no coincidence that Graham made the announcement: he was the one who persuaded the American

president last October to maintain American troops east of the Euphrates, in Hassakah and Deir Ezzor, “where the oil is”, in the words of Donald Trump (*Kurdistan-24*). The agreement provides for the supply of two refineries capable of producing 20.000 barrels a day, which will meet the needs of the AANES-administered region (Syria’s current production is 60.000 barrels, compared with 360.000 before the civil war). Such an agreement would not have been possible without the State Department’s approval, and by saying that “reaching an agreement has taken a little longer than we had hoped”, Mike Pompeo implied that his department had played a role in its negotiation. While officially it is a question of avoiding the risk of ISIS regaining control of these oil fields, it is likely that by thus prohibiting access to the oil fields by the Damascus regime and its Russian and Iranian allies, the US administration will be able to try to impose a military break with Iran and its militias in Damascus (*Asharq al-Awsat*).

An AANES official called the agreement a mark of “recognition” by the United States, with “immense political significance”, and it is clear that it puts the Kurdish administration, for a while time, in a better position to negotiate its future with Damascus. Conversely, the regime was quick to denounce on 2nd August an “agreement signed by the SDF militia and a US oil company to steal Syrian oil [...] with the support of the US administration”, “an attack on Syrian sovereignty”. The next day, as could be expected, Ankara followed suit, denouncing an “unacceptable” agreement that amounts to “financing terrorism”. On the 13th, in response to criticism, the US envoy to Syria, Jim Jeffrey, said at a press

conference that the US would not benefit from Syrian oil and that “[...] the people of North-East Syria control the oil region; no one else”, adding: “The only thing we have done is to grant a licence to this company” to escape the sanctions imposed on the regime (*AFP*).

On the 26th, Russia, Turkey and Iran issued a joint statement denouncing the agreement again. To ease tensions with Russia, an AANES delegation led by Ilham Ahmed visited Moscow the same day and met several officials including Foreign Minister Serge Lavrov (*WKI*). On the ground, tension was palpable throughout the month: on the 17th, a joint patrol of the SDF and the US military killed a Syrian soldier and wounded another near Qamishli when returning fire from Syrian military. This is only the latest of several recent incidents. At the end of the month, a collision caused by a Russian column injured a GI in a US patrol. Again, this incident followed several others.

If the conclusion of this oil agreement strengthens the position of the Autonomous Administration of Rojava, it still faces international exclusion. Regarding the ongoing peace negotiations under the aegis of the UN, Sinam Mohamad complained on the 21st in the *National Interest* that AANES had not received an invitation for the “Constitutional Committee” in Geneva, scheduled for the 24th: “We represent an important part of Syria and should have a say in the future of the country” she told. One third of the Committee is appointed by the regime, one third by the United Nations and the third one by an opposition coalition, supported by Turkey. According to Mohamad, there have indeed been discussions between UN representatives and several civil

society organisations based in the AANES, but to no avail. Moreover, Damascus is blocking almost all progress. This meeting is the first since the one in November 2019, which ended without any significant advance.

At the same time, the jihadist factions used as mercenaries by Turkey continued their attacks throughout the month against Kurdish villages on the borders of the so-called “security zone” they control, particularly near Girê Spî. At the end of July, one civilian was wounded and several houses damaged, then new attacks hit Girê Spî on the 13th and Manbij on the 16th, while Turkish drones wounded two civilians near Ain Issa. AANES issued a statement criticising Russia for not playing its role as guarantor of the ceasefire with Turkey (*WKI*). Furthermore, pro-Turkish groups controlling the Alouk pumping station continued to regularly cut off drinking water to the inhabitants. On the 14th, the head of the Hassakah water agency, Mahmoud Ukla, accused the “Turkish occupation forces and their mercenaries [of...] endangering the lives of a million people”. According to a UN report, the water supply from the plant, which supplies the town of Hassakah and the Al-Hol camp, among others, was interrupted at least 12 times between February and July. According to the agreement negotiated under Russian mediation, in exchange for Alouk water, the Kurds provide electricity to the territories occupied by Turkey, but the pro-Turkish factions keep cutting off the water under the pretext of asking for more electricity. At the same time, Turkey has reduced the flow of the Euphrates, while the risk of a pandemic requires more washing and cleaning... (*Kurdistan-24*). Finally, after interminable negotiations, the Kurds finally retaliated on the 13th

by cutting electricity to the territories occupied by Turkey. The latter is clearly trying to use water to destabilise the AANES among the inhabitants (AFP). Damascus accused Ankara on 24th of using water as “a weapon against Syrian civilians”. The UN had warned as early as March about serious health consequences. On the 25th, AFP published several testimonies of Hassakah inhabitants who, after 21 days without water during August, accused Turkey of “strangling” them.

On the 21st, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II Karim declared in an open letter to the UN Secretary General: “These voluntary cuts in drinking water are human rights violations. [...] This unethical act is especially harmful to children, the elderly and the vulnerable, in a country that is already suffering greatly from the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact is keeps continuing makes it a crime against humanity” (*La Libre Belgique*).

In fact, the pandemic, after several months during which the Rojava had managed to isolate itself quite effectively, finally made its way into the territory, affecting an estimated 30 people on 2nd August. AANES pointed out the responsibility of the regime, which it accuses of not having taken the necessary precautionary measures with regard to the passengers arriving at Qamishlo airport, which it controls (WKI). In other provinces of Syria, many cases were indeed found to involve travellers returning from the capital... AANES tried to avoid further spread by restricting travel with Iraq and territories controlled by the regime and then imposing a 10-day confinement from 31st July, closing restaurants and banning collective prayers in mosques. But after a first explosion of cases on 1st August, 12 new cases and 2

deaths were announced in a single day, on the 7th, in the Jezira region, bringing the number of cases to 66 with 3 deaths. The situation is extremely worrying in camps such as Al-Hol, where members of ISIS are literally crammed together and cannot apply (or refuse) the distancing measures (*Rûdaw*). On the 18th, the number of confirmed cases reached 210 with 14 deaths, while Damascus announced 1.677 cases in the territories under its control (WKI), a number probably very underestimated according to the UN: already at the beginning of August, the deputy director of health for Damascus area mentioned around 100 deaths per day and deducted 100. On the 30th, *Le Monde* accused the regime of remaining “in denial” after inter-Syrian peace talks were nearly interrupted on the 24th when four members of the Damascus delegation tested positive on their arrival in Geneva! At that time, there were 394 confirmed cases in Rojava. An MSF doctor pointed out that out of the limited number of screening tests that are carried out, half of them come back positive, indicating a very high transmission rate. Syria and Rojava are clearly at risk of a serious crisis.

Turkey and its Syrian mercenaries do not limit their abuses against civilians to drone strikes, attacks on villages and water cuts. Increasingly worrying reports and testimonies are accumulating about the situation in Afrin and its region, which has been controlled by these groups for the past two years. As a result of the work of the *Missing Afrin Women Project*, which compiles information on violations affecting women in Afrin from media reports or local associations, it can no longer be ignored that since 2018, at least 161 women and girls, sometimes very young, have been abducted

by these criminals to be tortured, raped and sometimes murdered or to die from their bruises. Information is difficult to obtain, as families often remain silent for fear of reprisals, and outside observers or journalists are forbidden in the area. However, the data obtained gives a frightening picture of the situation. The figure of 161 covers cases where the name of the victim is known, but local associations speak of several hundred kidnappings. According to *Kurdistan au Féminin*, out of the 132 cases for which the kidnappers are armed groups or belong to the so-called “security forces” installed by Turkey, 34 are attributed to the military police, 17 to the civil police and 15 to the Turkish military police and the *al-Hamza* Division. One female survivor testified to the almost systematic rape of the youngest girls: “Many of those abducted committed suicide and others were killed in cold blood and their bodies thrown into the forests near the villages of Azaz, Al-Bab, Afrin and Jerablous”. Several testimonies, some of them broadcast on video, corroborate each other and refer to the discovery at the end of May, after intra-Jihadist clashes in Afrin, of the secret prison where the *al-Hamza* Division kept its victims...

The US State Department finally took alarm at the extreme gravity of the acts described in the information received, which is echoed in a report made public on 4th August (*Operation Inherent Resolve, Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress, April 1, 2020-June 30, 2020, (<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Aug/04/2002470215/-1/-1/1/LEAD%20IN%20SPECTOR%20GENERAL%20FOR%20OPERATION%20INHERENT%20RESOLVE%20APRIL%201,%202020%20-%20JUNE%2030,%202020.PDF>)*).

Significantly, the investigators were told there was no evidence that the “Interim Syrian Government”, the political entity used by Turkey as a cover for its occupation, had attempted in any way to investigate on those responsible for these despicable acts. But the aforementioned report also notes that the United States did not punish these groups for their abuses either. Regarding Afrin, the State Department said that, not being present on the ground, it could not directly confirm information on abuses against women, but that “many of them appear credible” (*Al-Monitor*). Meghan Bodette, founder of the *Missing Afrin Women Project*, denounced on *Kurdistan-24* the fact that not only is the international community turning a blind eye and remaining silent on Turkish abuses in Syria, but that many states continue to assist this country militarily as a member of NATO.

The list of Turkish exactions in Syria, however, does not end here. *Kurdistan au Féminin* reported on the 5th a piece of news from ANHA that a 16-year-old Kurdish teenager, Khalil Nihad Sheikho, from Afrin, had been shot and wounded by Turkish gendarmes while trying to flee to Turkey. He was hospitalised on the Turkish side in Kilis and died in hospital. When his relatives recovered his body, they found, as a video shows, that his organs had been

stolen. On the 15th, the *US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)*, expressed in a tweet its grave concern about the fate of the Kurdish Christian teacher Radwan Muhammad, imprisoned by the pro-Turkish faction *Failaq Al-Sham* and accused of apostasy: “USCIRF calls on Turkey to intervene, to order its allies to release Radwan, and to prevent them from committing such acts”. USCIRF leader Nadine Maenza told *Kurdistan-24*: “We are concerned about these reports of apostasy charges in Afrin. There is further evidence that the conditions of religious freedom have changed drastically in the areas that Turkey has occupied, compared to the period when they were governed by the AANES”. The teacher is facing execution; *Failaq Al-Sham*, affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood so dear to the Turkish president, is already involved in multiple abuses in Afrin, such as the assassination of a Yezidi, Nuri Jammu Omar Sharaf, on 13th August, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR): Sharaf was shot dead for refusing to give money to the members of the group who had forced his door.

The Yezidi are still particularly targeted by pro-Turkish jihadist or Islamist groups, who are thus fulfilling the programme of demographic change desired by their Turkish masters. The Human

Rights Organisation of Afrin has reported that mercenaries have colonised a vast area stretching from the village of Tirindê in central Afrin to the province of Shêrawa, and during the first fortnight of August set up cantonments for them and their families in several Yezidi villages such as Bafflonê (Shera) and Afraza (Mabata), after having expelled their inhabitants. In Jindires, members of the *Nureddin Zenki* faction sold a whole street to *Ahrar Al-Sharkiya* for US\$25.000. And besides, the felling of olive trees and the burning of farmland still goes on... (*RojInfo*).

The situation is unprecedented: a NATO member country is directly covering up or carrying out crimes against humanity of the kind ISIS committed, while using its membership of the Alliance to silence its “allies” and continue to act with impunity. After all the crimes committed on its own territory, the Turkish government is now exporting them to the territories it has conquered. What *La Libre Belgique* wrote this month about the water cuts East of the Euphrates can also be applied to all the other abuses we have just reported: “This is another crime by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan around its southern borders for which the West turns a blind eye”. Have we entered a new period of “crime of silence”?

TURKEY: ABUSES AGAINST WOMEN ARE ON THE RISE

While the Turkish government is considering leaving the Istanbul Convention protecting women's rights, Turkey is the target of increasing criticism for its inaction in this regard and has even been compared by some

groups to a “women's slaughterhouse”. For example, the platform *We Will Stop Femicide (KCDP)* in early August recorded at least 36 murders of women during July, compared to 26 in June, plus 11 “suspicious” deaths. According to the group's report, 92% of the

murdered women were victims of their husbands, friends or former companions. Some cases are hardly believable, such as the one of this young Yezidi woman kidnapped at 16 years old in Shengal (Sinjar, Iraq) during the genocide of 2014, and found at the beginning of

August, after six years of ordeal, in the house of a member of ISIS in Ankara! Bought on the internet, Zozan was delivered thanks to the action of her family, refugees in Australia. Reduced to slavery, suffering from malnutrition, she had been constantly tortured and raped (*Duvar*).

Such a story speaks volumes about the complacency of the current Turkish authorities towards ISIS and anti-women abuses. They do not hesitate to resort to the weapon of rape themselves, as shown by the information coming from the areas under Turkish occupation in Rojava. But these methods are neither recent nor limited to the occupied territories outside: on the 18th, a young Kurdish girl, Ipek Er, kidnapped and raped for twenty days by a Turkish army sergeant, Musa Orhan, died in Batman hospital after a suicide attempt. She left a letter incriminating her torturer and the *Mezopotamya* agency has made public the report of the forensic medical institute attesting to the rape. Arrested after a complaint from the family, although accused of “qualified sexual abuse”, Orhan, who denied everything, was... released six days after his imprisonment. The case was made confidential by order. As for the Batman Prosecutor General, he opened an investigation... against the publisher of the newspaper *Jiyan Haber*, İdris Yayla, for publishing information about the case!

On the 5th, the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published a report drawn up following the visit of a delegation to Turkey from 6th to 17th May 2019. The delegation visited numerous prisons, police stations and gendarmerie barracks, including the prison

island of Imralı, where the historical PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and three co-prisoners are incarcerated. While the CPT noted “generally satisfactory” conditions of detention for the co-detainees, it also stated that it had “recorded [in the other prisons visited] a considerable number of allegations of excessive use of force and/or physical ill-treatment by police officers and gendarmes”. The report “reiterates” the wish that “a clear and firm message of ‘zero tolerance’ of ill-treatment be sent to all law enforcement officials by the highest political level, namely the President of the Republic”, who is thus directly taken to task... The CPT also calls upon Ankara to allow visits by relatives and lawyers of the detainees of Imralı. Indeed, most of the hundreds of requests filed by Öcalan’s lawyers to meet with their client no longer even receive a response from the court, and their last request at the end of July was rejected. Their last visit was more than a year ago (7th August 2019), and that of the prisoner’s family six months ago (March 2020). The prisoner had previously remained isolated for more than eight years... (*AFP*)

The announcement on 27th August by the *People’s Law Firm of the death* in an Istanbul hospital of Kurdish lawyer Ebru Timtik, after 238 days on hunger strike, sent shockwaves throughout Turkey and internationally. Tried in September 2018 along with 18 other lawyers including her younger sister Barkin, Timtik was sentenced to more than 13 years in prison for “membership of a terrorist organisation”. During the preliminary hearings, the judges had initially decided to release the defendants until the trial, but reversed their decision the day after hearing an anonymous witness. In reality,

her trial had been totally fabricated and was aimed at her work as a lawyer and her progressive convictions: originally from Dersim province, she had defended among others several Kurdish dissidents. On hunger strike for 238 days to demand a fair trial, Timtik was transferred to hospital on 30th July after her condition worsened.

On 27th August, dozens of people gathered in front of the forensic institute where her body had been brought, and rallies were also held in front of Turkish embassies across Europe. The next day, the President of the “Conférence des Bâtonniers” (*Conference of the Bar presidents*), Hélène Fontaine, paid homage to him during the organisation’s summer school, saying: “There are no borders when you are a lawyer”. A member of the Progressive Lawyers’ Association (ÇHD), Timtik accompanied his fellow lawyer, Aytac Ünsal, also a member of the ÇHD, on hunger strike; he is still detained in hospital. In February 2020, Turkey became the country with the highest number of imprisoned lawyers: 411 convicted between 2016 and 2020 according to *Arrested Lawyers*. Judges who did not deliver the “right” verdicts are also charged and imprisoned.

In July, a court in Istanbul rejected Timtik’s release despite the fact that the application was accompanied by medical reports warning of the risk to his life. This refusal undoubtedly caused the death of the lawyer. The anger provoked by this preventable death was all the greater because just a few days before, Sergeant Musa Orhan, previously mentioned, was released six days after his imprisonment despite medical reports establishing his guilt in the rape of his victim and then her suicide.

On the 3rd, a Turkish official warned that the pandemic was likely to be “much worse” in the south, i.e. in the Kurdish regions. Officially, the COVID has already caused 5.765 deaths, but this figure seems to be very underestimated and contested in particular by the Union of Chambers of Physicians of Turkey as well as by the Turkish opposition parties.

The pro-Kurdish opposition is still the victim of systematic repression by the government. In another judicial scandal, the individual who had attacked an HDP office in Istanbul at the end of July was released on the 10th, while the police imprisoned several members of the HDP youth. In Van and Urfa, provincial governors again banned political activities such as marches, meetings and press conferences. On the 14th, other HDP members were arrested, eight in Hakkari, including the head of the human rights association IHD for Semdinli, four in Adana, five in Sirnak, an HDP official at Aydın and the HDP co-president for Muş, Abdulbari Yiğit. Five other people were also arrested in Bursa for messages on social networks. On the 18th, the former mayor of the district of Yenişehir in Diyarbakir, Ibrahim Çijek, elected in March 2019 but prevented from taking up his post, then replaced by a pro-AKP administrator, was arrested. Finally, on the 31st, the HDP co-chair for the district of Bağlar in Diyarbakir, Fatma Kavmaz, was imprisoned on charges of “membership in a terrorist organisation”. On the 30th, two individuals perpetrated another attack on an HDP office, this time in Ankara (WKI).

On the 22nd, during a visit to Van, former Prime Minister

Ahmet Davutoğlu, who left the AKP to create his own party, the “Party of the Future”, said: “If the Kurds are unhappy, none of us can be at peace”. Two days later, he received a scathing response from HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan from Bursa, where she was speaking at the party’s “Programme of Struggle for Democracy”: “Kurdish votes are not for sale”, she said. “While you do not say a single word when Selahattin Demirtas, Figen Yüksekdağ, Idris Baluken, Sebahat Tuncel, Gültan Kisanak and dozens of other friends of mine whom I cannot name all are imprisoned, while you say nothing to those who run this country with administrators, while you have nothing to say to those who have turned this country into a country of isolation, you come here to talk about the Kurdish question! [...] The Kurdish votes are not for sale. The Kurdish votes are the votes of people who are fed up with all your lies and your oppressive mentality based on the denial [of their existence]”. Buldan also referred to the government’s announcement of the discovery of natural gas in the Black Sea: “They will make new tenders [...] and make the society pay for the cost of these gas reserves.... Then] they will transfer the revenues to their own companies and to pro-government companies” (*Bianet*).

In addition, racist attacks against Kurds, but also against all “deviant” identities, are increasing. A young man from Kars called Osman Özçalımlı, who was doing his military service in Izmir, died suspiciously after repeatedly informing his family and friends that he was threatened and accused of being a “traitor to the

homeland” because he was a Kurd. The versions of his death are contradictory, falling from a window or having a heart attack. The family of Özçalımlı refused the presence of soldiers and the Turkish flag on his coffin at the funeral. Suspicious deaths of Kurdish conscripts are frequent; they are presented to the families as “accidental deaths” or “suicides”. The human rights association *Mazlum-Der* has calculated that 90% of conscript “suicides” involve Kurds...

After the state flooding of the historic Kurdish town of Hasankeyf, another project has aroused the opposition of the inhabitants of Dersim: the tourist development project of the Munzur springs, which are sacred to the Alevis, with bridges and car parks. Indignation was aroused as much by the content of the project as by the fact that it had been prepared without any consultation. Other victims of the attacks on Kurdish culture were the university departments of Kurmançî or Zazakî language and literature, five of which had been opened as a result of the political détente between 2011 and 2012 in four provinces with a Kurdish majority. They had attracted large numbers of students, until the government resumed its repression of the Kurdish language and culture. But after the collapse of the “peace process” in 2015, the enrollment numbers declined dramatically as young Kurds in Turkey worried about the lack of career prospects (*Ahval*). The latest blow to these university courses is the recent ban on teaching or writing master’s theses in Kurmançî or Zazakî: the Turkish language is being imposed everywhere.

IRAN: MASS TWITTER CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE KILLING OF KOLBARS, CALL FOR THE ACQUITTAL OF A KURDISH TEACHER

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to spread in Iran although the authorities continue to try to conceal its extent. On 1st August, according to the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) estimates, the virus killed more than 80.700 people in 347 cities across the country. Among the regional figures on that date were: 3.205 new cases in Lorestan, 2.412 in Western Azerbaijan and 1.600 in Kurdistan. By the 9th, the number of deaths calculated by the PMOI had risen to more than 85.500 in 373 cities, compared to an official figure of only 14.400. Various officials admitted at that time that the health system was overwhelmed, particularly the intensive care units. For example, Minou Mehrnaz, from the scientific committee of the National Coronavirus Control Centre, told the IRNA agency that Khomeiny hospital was receiving 120 coronavirus patients a day. The next day, the BBC published data obtained from an anonymous source close to the Ministry of Health, which gave a death toll of 42.000. This is still probably an underestimate as it takes in accounts the number of deaths in hospital only. Moreover, BBC data from the 10th placed the first case on January 22nd, almost one month before the "official" start of the epidemic. As a result, all the single-digit numbers of deaths published by Tehran up to the end of February became difficult to accept... The credibility of the PMOI estimates, which are based on the compilation of various provincial data that are themselves published, was thus strengthened.

President Rouhani again blamed the Iranians for their negligence, but it could be argued that by hiding the seriousness of the situation from them, the regime has hardly encouraged them to be cautious... Against the advice of health officials, Rouhani also reiterated the need to maintain Moharram's mourning ceremonies, even if it meant reducing the number of participants, while admitting that the epidemic "could continue for another six months or even a year" (NCRI).

On 24th August, an appeal signed by many academics, including linguist Noam Chomsky and sociologist Ismail Beşikçi, called for the annulment of Zara Mohammadi's conviction and her outright acquittal. Co-founder of the *Nojin* cultural association, Mohammadi, accused of constituting a "danger to national security", was sentenced on 14th July to ten years in prison by an "Islamic Revolutionary Court" for teaching the Kurdish language to children. Based on several articles of the Iranian constitution, the petition also calls for an end to Iran's discriminatory policy against languages other than Persian. The text first notes that the "Islamic Revolutionary Courts" are in no way constitutional, since according to Article 61 of the Constitution, "the judicial power is exercised by the Public Courts of Justice". On the other hand, Article 15 explicitly authorises the teaching of non-Persian local languages. This makes the verdict against Mohammadi "a clear example of the Islamic Republic's policy of duplicity towards non-Persian languages since the Islamic Revolution of 1979" (*Kurdistan-24*).

At the beginning of August, human rights activists in Iran for the first time launched a Twitter campaign in support of *kolbars*, those Kurdish porters who risk their lives to transport goods between Iran and Iraq. The regime's repressive forces do not hesitate to shoot them, even though most of them are unarmed. In 2019 alone, at least 76 were killed and 176 wounded, and between 2015 and 2019 there were 368 killed and 595 wounded, 77% of them shot dead... The trigger for this campaign was two events. Firstly, the announcement on 30th July of the death of a young *kolbar*, Vazir Mohammadi, shot dead near Nowsud (Kermanshah) when his group was ambushed by border guards. Then, the previous Twitter campaign, launched on 14th July with the *hashtag* "Don't kill" to denounce the confirmation of the death sentences of three young protesters from the November demonstrations, had been a huge success with more than 10 million re-tweets. The activists therefore decided to devote the next campaign to *kolbars*. In addition, the *Hengaw* organisation reported on 1st August that six new *kolbars* had been killed and 14 others injured in Iran in July.

Launched on Twitter on the 2nd at 9.30 pm with the *hashtag* "Don't kill *kolbars*", the campaign generated more than 120.000 messages in two days. It should be noted that an identical campaign on the *sukhtbars* of Baluchistan, the counterparts of the Kurdish *kolbars*, was launched at the same time.

Despite the campaign, the killings unfortunately continued. On the 4th, another porter was shot and

another wounded on the 7th, again near Nowsud. Many horses and loads were also confiscated. On the 13th, a 17-year-old *kolbar* was killed near Marivan, another in Piranshahr, and a third on the 15th in an attack on a group near Bradost in which two others were injured. On the same day, two businessmen working with *kolbars* were killed when their vehicle was ambushed by Iranian soldiers near Zanjan. The list unfortunately continues until the end of the month, with eight other porters injured in the last week of August, four more in Nowsud, four more in Chaldiran, Piranshahr and Sardasht. Finally, three traders using the services of *kolbars* were arrested in Marivan (WKI). In addition, the authorities do not hesitate to repress any support for the *kolbars*. For example, a group of 10 activists who had gathered peacefully in front of the office of the governor of Baneh in September 2017 to protest against the killing of *kolbars* by border guards were sentenced to a total of 30 months in prison, 250 lashes and a fine of 250 million tomans [€10,600] (CSDHI, *Radio Farda*).

At the same time, the Iranian regime continued its state terrorism by using drones and artillery to strike on 3rd August at targets belonging to opposition Iranian Kurdish parties in Kurdistan of Iraq. According to *Rûdaw*, the PDKI's pechmergas command, located near the border, was hit but suffered no casualties. Six weeks ago, Iranian artillery had already struck the border region of Haji Omran in coordination with Turkish drones.

Inside Iran, the campaign of repression against all Kurdish political activity also continued with imprisonments and convictions. Early this month trade union activist Bakhtyar Rahimi was sentenced in Marivan to two years in prison for

“collusion” against the Islamic Republic. In Sanandaj, five activists received prison sentences of two months to a year for “cooperation with a political party” against the state. Among them, Tariq Rahimpour received a one-year firm and four years suspended sentence. In addition, the KMMK Human Rights Association of Kurdistan reported that *Etelaat* (Iranian Intelligence) was putting pressure on the family of activist Afsheen Islamullah, resident in the United States but imprisoned during his last visit to his family in July and held incommunicado since then (WKI).

On May 3rd, *Amnesty International* issued an alert requesting urgent action regarding the Kurdish prisoner Arsalan Khodkam. Sentenced to death on 14th July 2018 after a trial lasting just 30 minutes based on confessions obtained under torture, Khodkam might be executed at any time. A native of Urumieh, he was convicted of “spying” for the PDKI, a political party that he said he left in the 1980s before joining the *pasdaran* as a non-commissioned officer. Tortured, he only signed a confession written for him when his wife and son were in turn threatened with torture. *Amnesty* reports that he denies any espionage, admitting that he once informed a relative of his wife that the *pasdaran* were preparing actions against peaceful demonstrators in Baneh in April 2018 (*Rûdaw*).

In Kamyaran, the death sentence of Hayder Qurbani, pronounced in October 2015 for “armed struggle against the Islamic Republic” was confirmed on the 4th. Qurbani is accused of participating in an attack against the *pasdaran*. In Urumieh, Kurdish activist Hamid Abdi was sentenced to 15 years in prison for

“undermining national security” and “assistance to a Kurdish opposition party”. In Piranshahr, two Kurds arrested last April, Nawed Mohamadi and Khalid Mohamadi, were sentenced to seven years in prison for “espionage for the benefit of enemy states”. On the 5th, three Kurds from Dalahu (Kermanshah) were arrested. On the 9th, a 17-year-old Kurdish man, Parsa Rostami, was arrested in Paveh: according to KMMK, being a member of a Kurdish opposition party, he was arrested on his return to Iran. In Saqqez, five Kurds, including three environmentalists, were arrested, as well as a lawyer protesting against his client's death sentence (WKI).

During the second week of August, several new arrests took place, one person in Saqqez and one in Oshnavieh on the 12th by the *Etelaat*, another in Bokan. In Sanandaj, the court confirmed the five-year sentence imposed on environmental activist Hajar Saedi. According to KMMK, this sentence is to be carried out in six years, and the convicted woman must until then report every four months to the local *Etelaat* office. In Tehran, the Kurdish political prisoner Arash Nasri, arrested in March 2019, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for “bearing arms against the state” and “illegal travel”. In the last week of the month, eight new Kurdish activists were arrested: four Kurds from Sardasht on the 27th, accused of “assisting Kurdish opposition parties”, a man from Javanrud and two Christian Kurds from Sardasht on the 29th. KMMK also reported the kidnapping of Khabat Kafakhari in Sanandaj by unknown persons allegedly belonging to the Security Services, who had contacted him before. Three other Kurds were also arrested, two in Marivan and one in Baneh (WKI).

On the 12th, activist Nasrin Sotoudeh announced in a letter to her lawyer that she was going on hunger strike to protest against “the injustice and illegal conditions to which political prisoners are subjected” in Iran, conditions made worse by the coronavirus epidemic. Arrested in September 2010 for taking part in the mass protests following the 2009 presidential elections, Sotoudeh was sentenced to 11 years in prison for “insulting the Supreme Leader” before her

sentence was reduced to six years. Released in September 2018 after three years in prison, she was re-arrested in June 2019 (*MEMO - Middle East Monitor*).

At the end of the month, several Kurdish farmers in Iraq sounded the alarm after Iran interrupted the flow of the Little Zab and Sirwan rivers when it launched a major irrigation project in its western provinces. These rivers feed the Dokan and Derbandikhan

reservoirs, which irrigate many plots of land and provide work for hundreds of farmers. On the 23rd, several of them said they feared a disaster, as the water level had been dropping for almost a week. The head of the Dams directorate of Iraq’s Kurdistan region, Akram Ahmed, told *Rudaw* that a water shortage could affect 90.000 people in the region, not only farmers, but also owners of fish farms, of which there are hundreds and which demand a lot of water.

KURDISH LANGUAGE, PUBLICATIONS

– *The Kurdish language will soon be available on Microsoft Translator.*

Indeed, on 20 August, Microsoft announced that it would quickly add the two Kurdish dialects, Kurmançî (Kurmandji) and Soranî, to its *Microsoft Translator* service. These two dialects are already available or will soon be available in the *Microsoft Translator* application, in *MS Office* and in the *Bing* translation service. Microsoft has also indicated that users of *Azure Cognitive Services Translator* will have translation between these dialects and more than 70 languages in their applications, websites and other tools. In particular, this new availability paves the way for easier Kurdish localizations for websites.

Kurmançî is already available since February 2016 in *Google translator*. To date, Soranî is still not there, but Kurdish volunteers have announced that they are working to have it included. Gradually, the different Kurdish dialects are becoming more visible online, which in turn makes it easier for Kurdish speakers to use the Internet.

– *Recently published*

The human rights organisation *Amnesty International* has just published a 57-page report (in English) entitled *Legacy of Terror, The Plight of Yezidi Child Survivors of Isis*: “Legacy of Terror, The Plight of Yezidi Child Survivors of Isis”, which gives an account of the terrible condition of the children who were abducted and imprisoned by ISIS in August 2014. *Amnesty’s* report details how these children remain deeply traumatised by what they experienced. They suffered indoctrination, sexual abuse, torture and malnutrition, slavery... Boys were forcibly incorporated into the army of the “Caliphate” while girls were “married”, also by force, to jihadist fighters. All of them had to drop out of school to follow the “teaching” of the jihadists, who forced them to abandon their faith for Islam and their language, Kurmançî Kurdish, for Arabic. Nearly 10,000 men and children were murdered and 7,000 women abducted. More than 70 mass graves were found after the retreat of the jihadist organisation. The UN has recognised ISIS’s treatment of the Yezidi as genocide.

But the suffering of Yezidi children did not always end with their release, says the *Amnesty* report: many of them discovered that their home communities, starting with their own families, were not ready to accept what they had experienced. As for the children born to Yezidi captives of jihadi fathers, the report explicitly states that “they have been largely denied a place in the Yezidi community” following the decision of the Yezidi Supreme Council to reject them on the basis that their parents are not both Yezidi. Moreover, the report notes, Iraqi law “provides that a child of an unknown or Muslim father must be registered as a Muslim”, which makes it even more difficult for him to be accepted in the community... Some mothers were forced to abandon their child in order to return to their family, while others made the opposite choice: to keep their child and live outside the community. Some feel reduced to suicide. As an *Amnesty* official told the *Irish Times*, “these women were enslaved, tortured and subjected to sexual violence. They should not continue to be punished”.

US Politically Recognizes Kurdish-led Administration

US President Donald Trump's approval for an American company to sign an agreement with the head of the Syrian Democratic Forces on oil investment in northeast Syria is a political step for "recognition" of a Kurdish self-administration in the region, a Syrian Kurdish official said.

The official considered that the US move would contribute to encouraging the Syrian Kurdish-controlled city of Qamishli to move further away from Damascus.

The agreement has a huge political significance," he said, considering it as a "recognition" of the Kurdish administration.

It also limits concerns on a possible surprise US pullout from east of the Euphrates," the official added.

Republican US Senator Lindsey Graham told the Senate on Thursday in the presence of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that SDF General Commander Mazloum Abdi informed him during a phone conversation that the SDF has signed the deal with the American oil company.

In response, Pompeo noted that "the deal took a little longer than we had hoped."

«We are now in implementation," he said. Asharq Al-Awsat learned that Abdi confirmed to Graham that the deal was made by Delta Crescent Energy LLC.

Graham had played a huge role in convincing Trump to keep US troops east of the



A US military vehicle near an oil well in northeastern Syria. AFP file photo

Euphrates after he announced a partial troop withdrawal from Syria last year.

Trump said in October that a small number of US troops would remain in the area of Syria "where they have the oil," a reference to oilfields in the Kurdish-controlled region.

Oil is secured," he said.

A few days later, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said: "We are now taking some actions... to strengthen our position at Deir Ezzor, to ensure that we can deny ISIS access to the oil fields."

Under the new oil deal with the SDF, the United States was going to supply two refineries to the area of the Euphrates to produce around 20,000 barrels of oil per day and satisfy part of the oil-rich region's needs.

Currently Syria produces around

60,000 bpd. Before the war that erupted in 2011, the country produced 360,000 bpd.

The US has expressed determination to stop both Damascus and Moscow from controlling oil reserves in northeastern Syria.

About 300 men working for a Kremlin-linked Russian private military firm were killed in US airstrikes in February 2018 near the Syrian town of Khasnam.

"I can promise you that the 300 Russians who were in Syria and who took action that threatened America who are no longer on this planet understand that, too," Pompeo told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Thursday.

Analysts believe that the Trump administration wants to use the oil deal in addition to its

latest sanctions on the Syrian regime to pressure Damascus and Moscow to accept several conditions, including "stopping support for terrorism and cutting military ties with Iran and its militias."

Other conditions include stopping aggression on neighboring countries, giving up weapons of mass destruction, implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2254 to allow for the voluntary return of Syrian refugees and holding accountable those responsible for war crimes.

The new oil agreement is expected to anger Turkey, which rejects the formation of a Kurdish entity in northern Syria. Damascus is also expected to express reservations on the deal because it would worsen its economic crisis and would give Kurds the upper hand in any negotiations between them and the Assad regime.

TURQUIE. Une femme yézidie sauvée à Ankara

Une femme yézidie qui a été enlevée à l'âge de 16 ans lors du massacre de 2014 à Şengal par l'Etat islamique, a été retrouvée dans une maison à Ankara / Sincan. La femme, qui était gardée comme esclave dans la maison d'un membre de DAECH, a été achetée et sauvée par ses proches.

rasoir sur le corps et a des problèmes dus à la malnutrition. (Via Duvar)

Il y a déjà eu d'enfants yézidis retrouvés en Turquie et il y a probablement d'autres enfants et femmes yézidis tenus par des islamistes en Turquie après qu'ils ont été capturés à Shengal, dans le nord de l'Irak.

Zozan K. (22 ans), qui était retenue prisonnière dans une maison du district de Sincan à Ankara, a pu être libéré grâce aux efforts de ses proches réfugiés en Australie. Zozan K. a été achetée sur internet amenée à Ankara il y a 10 mois. Zozan a subi le viol systématique, elle porte des brûlures de cigarettes et des coupures de

Le 3 août 2014, il y a six ans, DAECH (l'Etat islamique -EI) a commis un génocide et un féminicide à Shengal en massacrant des milliers de Kurdes yézidis et en capturant des milliers femmes et enfants réduits à l'esclavage. Un génocide qu'ils qualifient de « 74e فرمان (décret) » car ils ont été persécutés tout au long de leur



histoire, mais les plus importants des massacres des Yézidis ont été commis par les Ottomans à partir du seizième siècle. Aujourd'hui, c'est la Tur-

quie qui menace les Yézidis dans la tradition héritée de l'empire ottoman et découvrir des esclave yazidis en Turquie n'est pas un hasard.

SUNNY BEACH

1 Août 2020

L'attaque de la Turquie contre les Kurdes en Syrie trahit ceux qui se battent contre Daech - et meurent

Les États-Unis sauvent des Kurdes comme moi en Irak. Maintenant, Trump nous laisse massacrer au Rojava. Par Erevan Saeed, ancien correspondant de la Maison Blanche pour Kurdish Rudaw TV

L'appel téléphonique du 6 octobre entre le président Donald Trump et le président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a provoqué une catastrophe pour les Kurdes du nord de la Syrie. Les Kurdes sont les alliés les plus puissants des États-Unis dans la lutte contre le groupe

militant de l'État islamique depuis 2014 et contrôlent la partie la plus pacifique et démocratique de la Syrie, connue sous le nom de Rojava, depuis le début de sa guerre civile en 2011. Néanmoins, Trump a tacitement donné son feu vert à Erdogan pour lancer une invasion militaire contre les Kurdes, qui a commencé quelques jours plus tard.

Mes compatriotes kurdes et moi sommes choqués par l'indifférence de l'administration Trump envers son partenaire le plus fiable dans la lutte contre l'Etat islamique.

L'assaut militaire turc, qui est soutenu par certaines forces rebelles syriennes ayant des liens douteux avec les groupes terroristes al-Qaïda et Jabhat al-Nusra, a déjà déplacé plus de 130 000 Kurdes, Arabes, Yézidis et chrétiens et tué au moins 38 civils et blessé des centaines plus.

Ankara a déclaré cette guerre aux Kurdes sous prétexte de «problèmes de sécurité» le long de sa frontière avec la Syrie, affirmant que les combattants kurdes des YPG en Syrie sont liés au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK)

basé en Turquie - qui est en conflit avec Ankara depuis au cours des trois dernières décennies et lancé des attaques dans des villes comme Istanbul. Mais il n'y a jamais eu d'attaque depuis les territoires sous contrôle kurde en Syrie vers la Turquie. Au contraire, le Rojava a été une zone tampon empêchant les combattants extrémistes de lancer des attaques en Turquie et, à plus grande échelle, dans les pays européens.

Pour des Kurdes comme moi, regarder les images d'enfants kurdes tués, blessés et dépla-

cés à la suite du fait que Trump donne à Erdogan une main libre n'est pas seulement déchirant et profondément décevant, c'est aussi choquant. Mes compatriotes kurdes et moi sommes choqués par l'indifférence de l'administration Trump envers son partenaire le plus fiable dans la lutte contre l'Etat islamique. Et nous sommes choqués par son indifférence à abandonner l'histoire la plus réussie des États-Unis dans le quartier le plus anti-américain du monde - un Washington a consacré tant de ressources à la protection et à l'éducation au cours des trois dernières années.

J'ai moi-même vécu les mêmes scènes terrifiantes que nous assistons en Syrie - de carnage et de destruction, de personnes fuyant la violence à pied pour se mettre en sécurité dans les montagnes voisines - lorsque ma propre famille a été attaquée en Irak. En effet, cette expérience de persécution violente est courante chez les Kurdes de Syrie, d'Irak, de Turquie et d'Iran, tous des endroits où les Kurdes ont été divisés de force et rendus apatrides depuis que les puissances européennes après la Première Guerre mondiale ont tracé les frontières des nations modernes du Moyen-Orient. Mais dans le cas des Kurdes irakiens, contrairement à ce qui arrive à nos frères syriens, les États-Unis au cours des trois dernières décennies nous ont aidés à échapper à l'effusion de sang.

À l'âge de 11 ans, en 1991, je suis déjà devenu réfugié pour la troisième fois. Nous avons fui vers l'Iran en 1987 avec des millions d'autres Kurdes fuyant les attaques brutales du dirigeant irakien Saddam Hussein. Ma famille a payé le régime irakien pour garantir notre retour en toute sécurité l'année suivante, seulement pour subir l'attaque chimique de 1988 dans ma ville natale de Halabja. Mon grand-père et quelque deux douzaines de membres de ma famille élargie figuraient parmi les 5 000 tués,

ce qui nous a incités à retourner en Iran. L'année suivante, nous sommes revenus dans le cadre d'une amnistie générale offerte par l'Irak à ceux qui avaient fui. Mais encore une fois, ce fut un court séjour.

Pendant la guerre du Golfe en 1991, les Kurdes d'Irak se sont soulevés contre Hussein, libérant les régions dominées par les Kurdes du pays tandis que la coalition dirigée par les États-Unis a chassé l'armée irakienne du Koweït. Cependant, les représailles du gouvernement irakien et sa tentative de reprendre les territoires kurdes une fois que les États-Unis ont conclu un cessez-le-feu avec Hussein ont déclenché un exode massif de Kurdes vers l'Iran, ma famille parmi eux, et une grave crise humanitaire similaire à ce qui se passe en Syrie actuellement.

La crise humanitaire a incité la France, la Grande-Bretagne et les États-Unis à lancer l'Opération Provider Confort pour établir une zone d'exclusion aérienne au-dessus de la région du Kurdistan irakien plus tard dans l'année. La zone d'exclusion aérienne nous a permis, pour la première fois dans l'histoire moderne, de construire une enclave pacifique dans le nord de l'Iraq avec un gouvernement démocratique qui fonctionne. Pendant la guerre d'Irak en 2003, les Kurdes ont poursuivi le processus de mise en place d'une démocratie autonome dans le nord du pays. Il s'agit sans doute du seul cas de construction de l'État réussi aux États-Unis depuis l'Allemagne et le Japon.

De même, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, avec des ressources très limitées et un embargo économique sévère de la part du régime Assad et de la Turquie, mais avec l'aide des États-Unis, les Kurdes ont établi une démocratie de représentation diversifiée fondée sur l'égalité des sexes. Les femmes kurdes ne sont pas seulement entrées sur le marché du travail des entrepri-

ses et des organes directeurs, mais ont combattu aux côtés des forces américaines dans la lutte contre l'Etat islamique. Le Rojava a eu ses lacunes, notamment une élite qui monopolise le pouvoir politique et limite la liberté de la presse. Mais il était en passe d'être une autre réussite américaine au cœur du Moyen-Orient.

Malheureusement, l'agression militaire de la Turquie risque non seulement de détruire le modèle de gouvernement démocratique pour la Syrie que les Kurdes ont établi, mais aussi d'annuler tous les gains réalisés contre Daech. Depuis 2014, plus de 11 000 Kurdes en Syrie ont donné leur vie dans cet effort, ainsi que la lutte contre l'extrémisme islamique en Irak. Cela a empêché de nombreuses victimes américaines, car les États-Unis ont principalement fourni une formation et un soutien matériel pendant que les Kurdes se rendaient sur les lignes de front.

Dans ma ville natale de Halabja, selon des ONG que j'ai rencontrées lors d'une visite là-bas, plus de 50 combattants kurdes ont perdu la vie en défendant notre liberté, y compris certains de mes amis d'école dont les affiches sont accrochées à la porte de la ville en ce moment même. Parmi les quelque 2 millions de Kurdes du Rojava, presque toutes les familles ont perdu ou connu quelqu'un qui est décédé en combattant les extrémistes.

Les Kurdes de Syrie se sont lancés dans la lutte contre l'Etat islamique, car elle constituait une menace non seulement pour leur existence mais pour leur mode de vie. Ils savaient que s'allier aux États-Unis contre l'extrémisme islamique dans cet environnement perfide signifierait que s'ils étaient abandonnés, ces Kurdes seraient massacrés par la Turquie et d'autres puissances régionales. Les Kurdes ne l'ont pas fait par naïveté mais par une conviction profondément ancrée que nos valeurs

culturelles de coexistence pacifique, de liberté, de droits des femmes et de démocratie sont étroitement alignées; par conséquent, les États-Unis et les pays démocratiques nous protégeraient au minimum de la Turquie, qui a longtemps voulu neutraliser le pouvoir des Kurdes.

Bien que nous ayons créé des enclaves autonomes ou semi-autonomes, les 30 millions de Kurdes répartis au Moyen-Orient n'ont pas leur propre État, manquant ainsi de souveraineté et de droit de légitime défense contre les pays dans lesquels ils résident. Les Kurdes peuvent pardonner le fait qu'ils n'ont pas leur propre pays, et même pardonner les trahisons de l'Occident; Les Kurdes voient ce dernier comme Trump - plutôt que comme Amérique - étant déloyal, car la décision n'a pas résulté d'un processus de délibération par l'équipe de sécurité nationale du Pentagone et de la Maison Blanche. Au lieu de cela, cela semble provenir du comportement impulsif et erratique du président contre les conseils de ses propres collaborateurs.

Mais rien ne justifie de garder le silence sur la crise humanitaire en cours créée par Ankara qui nous tue et nous déplace. Le président des États-Unis a la responsabilité d'empêcher la Turquie de massacrer les mêmes Kurdes qui ont aidé Washington à vaincre l'Etat islamique et à faire du monde un endroit plus sûr pour tout le monde.

Yerevan Saeed est chercheur associé au Middle East Research Institute et titulaire d'un doctorat. candidat à l'École d'analyse et de résolution des conflits de George Mason. Il était auparavant correspondant à la Maison Blanche pour Kurdish Rudaw TV.

1 August 2020

Iran: Coronavirus Update, Over 80,700 Deaths, August 1, 2020, 6:00 PM CEST

The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI-MEK) announced this afternoon, August 1, 2020, that Coronavirus has taken the lives of more than 80,700 in 347 cities across Iran.

The death toll in various provinces include: 6,063 in Khorasan Razavi, 5,695 in Khuzestan, 3,740 in Mazandaran, 3,628 in Isfahan, 3,205 in Lorestan, 2,496 in Sistan and Baluchistan, 2,490 in Alborz, 2,412 in West Azerbaijan, 2,355 in East Azerbaijan, 2,162 in Golestan, 2,110 in Fars, 2,070 in Hamadan, 1,600 in Kurdistan, 1,197 in North Khorasan, 890 in Bushehr, 855 in Markazi, and 522 in Charma-



View pictures in App save up to 80% data. Iran: Coronavirus Update, Over 80,700 Deaths, August 1, 2020

hal and Bakhtiari.

This is in addition to reports obtained from other provinces.

MorningStar

2 August 2020

Turkey becoming 'slaughterhouse for women' as femicides continue to rise

AS ITS government faces growing criticism over plans to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, Turkey has been accused of becoming "a slaughterhouse for women," with at least 36 femicides reported last month.

The We Will Stop Femicide Platform (KCDP) documented at least 36 murders of women in July, a rise from 26 reported in June, with 11 more found dead "in suspicious circumstances."

According to the group's report, which draws on police statistics and press reports, 92 per cent of the victims were killed by husbands, friends and former partners.

KCDP said that in 18 cases it had not been established why the women were murdered, which the group warned was "a consequence of the concealment of violence against women and femicide."

Mass protests have taken place across the country, triggered by the killing of 27-year-old Kurdish student Pinar Gultekin last month. Her former partner has been arrested and charged with her murder.

Women's organisations and the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) have led demands for Turkey not to pull out of the Istanbul Convention, a 2011 Council of Europe treaty that obliges signatories to tackle gender-based crime, provide protection and services for women and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted.

KCDP's July report shows that at least 50 per cent of the victims were killed in their own homes and another 17 per cent on the street. Six women were killed by their fathers, sons or other male relatives.

Of those killed, 24 women were shot, five stabbed, three strangled,

one beaten to death and another pushed out of a building.

"As long as it is not uncovered why and by whom women are murdered, perpetrators are not prosecuted and there are no deterrent penalties, prevention measures are not implemented, the extent of violence against women will continue to grow," KCDP said in a statement.

Turkey does not collate figures on femicide but, according to KCDP, at least 474 women were murdered in 2019. The researchers' figures are considered to be a conservative total, with one Turkish commentator reporting to the Star that 59 women had actually been murdered in the last 10 days. "Turkey is becoming a slaughterhouse for women," they said.

The ruling Justice & Development Party (AKP) is considering pulling

out of the Istanbul Convention, with pressure being exerted by conservative and Islamist elements of society that believe the treaty undermines family values.

The government has been accused of waging "war on women" with structural discrimination at all levels of society.

In a bid to silence women, the HDP co-chair system, which guarantees sex equality in all structures of the party, has been banned as an act of "terrorism."

Women's organisations and individuals have been targeted by security services with at least 54 detained in raids last month.

It is estimated that 3,000 women have been murdered since the AKP came to power in 2002.

Damas dénonce un accord pétrolier entre les Kurdes et une compagnie américaine

Damas a condamné dimanche un accord conclu entre une compagnie pétrolière américaine et l'administration semi-autonome kurde dans le nord-est de la Syrie morcelée par la guerre, dénonçant un «vol» et une atteinte à la souveraineté du pays.

L'immense majorité des champs pétroliers, dans l'Est et le nord-est du pays, échappent toujours à Damas. Ils sont contrôlés essentiellement par les Kurdes - soutenus par des troupes américaines sur place - qui en ont fait la principale source de revenus de leur administration semi-autonome.

Ni l'administration semi-autonome kurde ni les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) n'ont communiqué sur ce dossier, alors qu'à Washington, des responsables ont confirmé un accord «pour moderniser les champs pétroliers du nord-est syrien» sans plus de détails.

Le ministère des Affaires étrangères syrien a dénoncé un «accord signé par la milice des FDS et une compagnie pétrolière américaine pour voler le pétrole syrien (...) avec le soutien de l'administration américaine», dans un communiqué cité par l'agence officielle Sana.

Le texte dénonce «un accord

entre des voleurs qui volent et des voleurs qui achètent», y voyant «une atteinte à la souveraineté syrienne». Le communiqué fustige également «l'approche américaine hostile à la Syrie: le vol des richesses du peuple syrien et l'entrave des efforts de l'Etat à la reconstruction».

Jeudi, lors d'une audience au Congrès américain à Washington, le sénateur Lindsey Graham a assuré avoir évoqué l'accord avec le commandant en chef des FDS, Mazloum Abdi. «Apparemment ils ont signé un accord avec une compagnie pétrolière américaine pour moderniser les champs pétroliers du nord-est syrien», a-t-il dit.

Interrogé par M. Graham lors de cette audience, le chef de la diplomatie américaine Mike Pompeo a confirmé le soutien de Washington. «L'accord a pris plus longtemps que ce que nous espérions, nous en sommes maintenant à sa mise en oeuvre. Il peut être très puissant», a-t-il ajouté.

La guerre meurtrière qui dévaste la Syrie depuis 2011 a coûté des dizaines de milliards de dollars au secteur des hydrocarbures. Les combats ont parfois ravagé les infrastructures, cibles des convoitises des différents belligérants. Avant le conflit, la production de pétrole brut syrien atteignait près de 400.000 barils par jour. Aujourd'hui, elle s'est effondrée.

Kurdistan au féminin 2 août 2020

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

Mort suspecte d'un soldat kurde accusé d'être un « traître à la patrie »

Un jeune Kurde originaire de Kars a été retrouvé mort lors de son service militaire obligatoire à Izmir/Aliağa. Sa famille parle d'un meurtre raciste car Özçalımlı aurait été menacé par d'autres soldats qui l'accusaient d'être un « traître à la patrie ».

Le père d'Osman Özçalımlı a déclaré que son fils lui avait téléphoné deux fois et qu'il lui avait dit qu'il était menacé par d'autres soldats qui l'accusaient d'être un traître à la patrie car il était kurde.

Osman Özçalımlı effectuait son service militaire obligatoire à la prison d'Izmir/Aliağa. Il a



été enterré dans son village de Kocaköy (Naxçivan) à Kars/Digor. Sa famille a refusé la présence des soldats et le drapeau turc sur le cercueil de

leur enfant.

Le père d'Özçalımlı a déclaré que les autorités turques leur avaient dit que leur enfant était

mort suite à une crise cardiaque alors que selon le département médico-légal d'Izmir, Özçalımlı est tombé du troisième étage d'une section de la prison...

Déclarations contradictoires concernant la mort d'Özçalımlı

Osman Özçalımlı de la province de Kars effectuait un service militaire de courte durée pour l'armée turque dans une prison d'Izmir. Le samedi matin, il y a été retrouvé mort de manière suspecte. Il y a des déclarations contradictoires sur les circonstances de sa mort. Selon les autorités de sécurité de Digor, Özçalımlı aurait eu une crise cardiaque alors qu'il était en service à la

prison de haute sécurité d'Aliağa à Izmir vendredi soir. Son corps a été retrouvé à cinq heures du matin. Selon le département médico-légal d'Izmir, Özçalımlı est tombé du troisième étage d'une section de la prison.

Les proches du défunt ne croient à aucune des deux versions. «Un jour avant sa mort, Osman m'a appelé et m'a dit qu'il était menacé en raison de son identité kurde», a déclaré Ahmet Özçalımlı, le père du soldat décédé.

La nouvelle de la mort de son fils lui a été personnellement rapportée hier par le gouver-

neur du district de Digor, le chef de la police et le chef du commandement de la police militaire du district. Özçalımlı avait immédiatement fait savoir qu'il ne pouvait croire la théorie de la crise cardiaque, comme Osman lui avait répété à plusieurs reprises lors d'appels téléphoniques dans les deux jours précédant la découverte de son corps qu'il avait reçu des menaces de mort. « Il a dit qu'il était victime de discrimination, qu'ils l'ont traité de « traître à son pays ». J'ai ensuite appelé la prison et parlé à un sergent d'état-major nommé Abdullah. Je lui ai dit le contenu de la conversation avec mon fils et il a répondu que je

ne devais pas m'inquiéter. Le lendemain matin, on m'a dit qu'Osman était mort. »

Après la conversation entre Özçalımlı et les hauts fonctionnaires de Digor, ils ont manifestement changé de déclaration. Soudainement, le gouverneur du district a déclaré qu'Osman Özçalımlı aurait pu en principe mourir d'autre chose. «Un lieutenant, qui nous a également rendu visite, a déclaré qu'Osman aurait pu se cogner la tête. À ce moment-là, nous avons déjà mobilisé nos proches à Izmir et dans les environs, qui sont allés à la médecine légale. On leur a dit que mon fils était

tombé du troisième. J'ai rappelé l'agent Ahmet. Il m'a dit qu'Osman s'était évanoui et avait été transporté à l'hôpital. Il ne pouvait pas me dire de quel hôpital il s'agirait. »

Dans l'armée turque, il y a toujours des «décès accidentels» suspects de soldats ou des «maladies» aux conséquences mortelles. Cependant, la déclaration officielle la plus courante dans les cas de décès douteux est le «suicide». Selon une étude de l'Association pour les droits humains et la solidarité avec les opprimés (Mazlum-Der), 90% des conscrits qui se seraient suicidés sont des Kurdes.



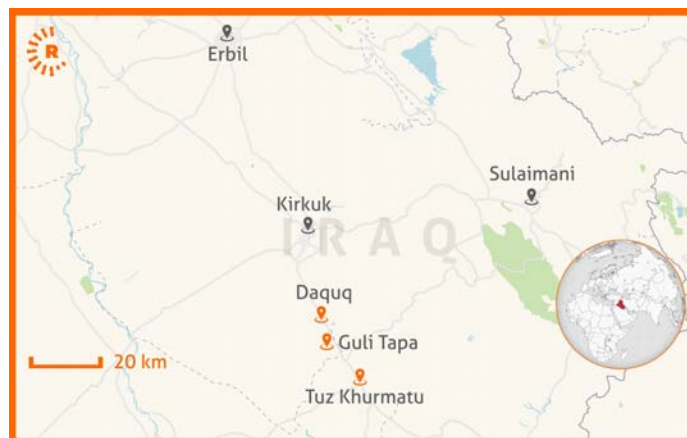
August 3, 2020
By Zhelwan Z. Wali

Kurdish villagers, resettled Arab families clash in Kirkuk disputed territory

Clashes erupted south of Kirkuk between Kurdish villagers and more than a dozen Arab families who once lived in the area over claims of land ownership in the volatile region, a local Kurdish official said on Saturday.

The clash took place in Guli Tapa, a village located between Daquq in Kirkuk province and Tuz Khurmatu in Salahaddin province, Mala Karim Shkur, a Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) official told Rudaw. The area is disputed by the governments of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.

"Nearly 15 Arab resettled families who have broken into a village located between Daquq and Tuz Khurmatu were confronted by the Kurdish inhabitants of the area," Shkur, based in Tuz Khurmatu, told Rudaw. Footage captured by Kurdish local Araz Dawoodi appears to show a crowd of Kurdish villagers carrying sticks and stones,



Graphic: Maps4news, Sarkawt Mohammed / Rudaw

with a group of Arab families stood in the distance. An Iraqi federal police vehicle is stood between the two crowds, while their personnel is seen moving villagers back. Dawoodi calls on the Kurds to stop throwing stones at the Arab families because there are women and children among them. Gunfire can be heard, but it is unclear from the footage where the fire is coming from.

Daquq mayor Luis Sheikh Fandi denied that there were any armed clashes taking place between Kurds and Arabs in the area, but he did say that "there are land ownership issues in Daquq which has remained unresolved between Kurds, Arabs and the Iraqi government." As part of its Arabization policy, Saddam Hussein's Baath regime constructed a village called Ma-

hawsh for Arabs relocated from elsewhere in Iraq in the 1990s on Guli Tapa land belonging to Kurdish villagers, Shkur said. Following the collapse of the Baath regime in 2003, the resettled Arabs were returned to their areas of origin further south in Iraq, with land returned to the original Kurdish inhabitants, he added, according to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution - designed to resolve disputes of territory claimed by Iraq's various ethnic and religious groups.

"They have now come back and want to once again invade the Kurdish farmlands," Shkur said. "We will move to this village to support the Kurdish inhabitants and farmers and will not allow the resettled Arabs once again to return to this region."

However, since since federal forces took control of disputed territories including Kirkuk on October 16, 2017, Kurdish locals have alleged that a "re-Arabization" of the area is underway.

Libya score-settling moves closer to Turkey's borders

Turkey's intervention in the Libyan war is driving its adversaries to retaliate beyond Libya in conflict zones along Turkey's own borders.

Turkey's regional rivals are going beyond Libya as they respond to the scale-tipping Turkish military intervention in the North African country. Having declared a red line at Sirte and al-Jufra on the Libyan battlefield, Egypt and its partners are stepping up efforts to impede Turkey on the diplomatic front as well as in Syria and Iraq.

While forging closer ties with Damascus, Egypt has at the same time focused on the Syrian Kurds, following in the steps of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. According to Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency, Egypt has now sent troops to Idlib, the rebel-held province where Turkey has built up a military presence to keep the Syrian army from advancing. Citing "reliable military sources," Anadolu reported July 30 that about 150 Egyptian soldiers, arriving via the military airport in Hama, had been deployed to front lines in Khan al-Asal in the western countryside of Aleppo and around Saraqib in southern Idlib, armed with light weapons and coordinating with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran-backed militias.

Kamal Amer, chair of the Egyptian Parliament's Defense and National Security Committee, denied the report and the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights said its local sources had failed to confirm the deployment.

The veracity of the report may be disputed, but such Egyptian assistance to Damascus would hardly be a surprise, given the



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) and Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj (L) hold a joint press conference at the Presidential Complex in Ankara on June 4, 2020. Photo by ADEM ALTAN/AFP via Getty Images.

course of events. Ample signs have already emerged that the Egypt-Emirati-Saudi axis is following a strategy to contain and distract Turkey in conflict zones in its proximity. The moves the three countries have been making and the ties they seek to develop are largely a response to Turkey and despite some gaps and discordance, they have complemented each other in terms of purpose.

Egypt's efforts to hinder Turkey began several years ago, with Ankara's patronage of the Muslim Brotherhood underlying the bad blood between the two. In November 2016, for instance, the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir* claimed that Egypt had dispatched 18 helicopter pilots to help the Syrian army and planned a larger military deployment down the road. The report followed a visit to Cairo by Syria's intelligence chief, Ali Mamlouk, the previous month. Once the intelligence chiefs of two key players in the Middle East take the stage, it's clear that overt or covert cooperation is in the cards.

For quite some time, Egypt has been trying to lay the ground for Syria's return to the Arab

League while working connections with Kurdish actors. It has allowed the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces to open an office in Cairo, facilitated dialogue between the Kurds and Cairo-based Syrian oppositionists and sought to be a bridge between the Kurds and Damascus.

League while working connections with Kurdish actors. It has allowed the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces to open an office in Cairo, facilitated dialogue between the Kurds and Cairo-based Syrian oppositionists and sought to be a bridge between the Kurds and Damascus.

Last fall, SDF commander Mazlum Abdi — also known as Mazlum Kobane — publicly hailed Cairo's criticism of Turkey's Operation Peace Spring that targeted Kurdish fighters east of the Euphrates. The offensive had a major diplomatic blowback for Ankara, with Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Cairo receiving SDF representatives. The delegations that went to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi were reportedly headed by Kobane himself.

Even more remarkably, Egypt has vocally slammed Turkey's ongoing military operations in northern Iraq and sought to make use of Baghdad's unease to boost bilateral ties and draw Iraq into the Arab fold as much as possible. Turkey's operations target the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has long used bases in Iraqi Kurdistan to sus-

tain its armed insurgency against Ankara. In Syria, Cairo's ties with the Kurds are not based on a dual agenda, unlike the Saudis, whose agenda overlaps to a certain extent with that of the United States. Since the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013, Cairo has steered clear of a regime-change agenda in Syria. Unlike in Libya, it has pursued a more individual approach that allows it to add military and intelligence dimensions to its relationship with Damascus. Tellingly, Egyptians were absent from a delegation of Saudi, Emirati and Jordanian military officials that met with SDF leaders in northeast Syria in May 2018.

Of note, Egypt's intelligence chief, Abbas Kamel, has stepped up contacts with Arab counterparts across the region. In February, he visited eastern Libya, Tunisia and Algeria in what was reportedly an effort to enhance intelligence collaboration against growing Turkish influence in the region. In early March, Kamel traveled to Damascus, where he met with Mamlouk — vice president since last year — to discuss "the war on terrorism in Syria" as well as regional developments, according to local media reports. Visiting Damascus at the same time was a senior delegation from eastern Libya that signed dozens of protocols with the Syrian government and reopened the Libyan Embassy in the city. The ground for the visit was laid by Egypt and the Libyans spoke of cooperation against Ankara's "expansionist" ambitions in the region.

On July 21, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had a phone call with the Saudi king,

followed by a flurry of Saudi diplomatic activity in the region. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan traveled to Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco after a July 27 visit to Cairo, where he reaffirmed Saudi support for Egypt in the Libyan turmoil. In sum, Riyadh is trying to strengthen Egypt's hand in Libya and weaken the Turkey-Qatar axis, but is cautious not to appear to be encouraging an

Egyptian-led war in the country.

Sisi and the king spoke a day after the Egyptian Parliament authorized a cross-border military deployment on "a western front" — a reference to Libya — to counter "criminal armed militias and foreign terrorist elements," after Cairo's June 6 appeal for a cease-fire and negotiations in Libya fell through.

The risk of a Turkish-Egyptian faceoff in Sirte may be frozen for now, but the tensions are taking on new dimensions as Turkey becomes the target of a containment strategy of sorts. The maneuvers of the Egypt-Emirati-Saudi axis could eventually fail to change the multi-factor equilibrium in Libya, but the trio might create serious troubles for Ankara by edging into restive areas along

Turkey's borders, primarily through ties with the Kurds. Up until the 1998 Adana accord, which averted the threat of Turkish military action against Syria for harboring the PKK, regional issues linked to Turkey's internal dynamics were of little interest to other Arab actors. This policy is gradually changing.

Kurdistan au féminin

La Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

3 août 2020

ROJAVA. Une première usine de produits alimentaires inaugurée à Kobanê

L'administration autonome du Rojava dirigée par les Kurdes a inauguré juillet dernier la première usine de produits alimentaires dans le canton de Kobanê, dans le nord du pays.

Le gouvernement syrien, sous le contrôle complet du parti Baas, a interdit les usines et les universités dans le nord à prédominance kurde du pays depuis 1960, jusqu'au déclenchement de la guerre civile syrienne en 2011 et la mise en place de l'administration dirigée par les Kurdes.

L'Autorité économique de l'administration autonome de la Syrie du Nord et de l'Est a ouvert une usine de produits alimentaires appelée Khairat Al-Furat dans le village de Qena, à l'ouest de Kobani.

L'usine qui emploie environ 60 ouvriers, dont la plupart sont des femmes est une coopérative appartenant au secteur public et fabrique de la confiture, de la mélasse, de la purée de tomates et de poivrons, en plus d'épices.

Le directeur de l'usine Kame-



ran Omar a déclaré à que la création de l'usine était une réponse à la crise économique et à l'énorme hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires dans la région, en particulier après l'effondrement de la monnaie locale.

«Nous avons ouvert cette usine pour alléger le fardeau des résidents, qui ont du mal à acheter des produits coûteux sur le marché», a-t-il déclaré.

«Malgré la courte période qui s'est écoulée depuis l'ouverture de l'usine, il est devenu clair pour nous qu'elle a un grand avantage pour les trava-

illeurs de l'usine et la population», a-t-il poursuivi.

Il a ajouté que le but de l'usine n'est pas de faire des profits, mais de bénéficier des ressources de la région et d'atteindre l'autosuffisance.

La plupart des travailleurs ont déclaré qu'ils étaient heureux d'avoir un esprit de coopération dans leur travail et un sens des responsabilités dans leur devoir humain de contribuer et de soutenir l'économie de la région.

Amina Ali, une ouvrière de l'usine, a déclaré qu'elle s'était jointe au travail pour fournir les

denrées alimentaires dont les habitants de la région avaient besoin.

« Nous travaillons avec tous nos efforts pour réaliser des progrès dans le domaine économique afin de trouver un équilibre entre l'offre et la demande, et nous cherchons avec le temps à exporter des denrées alimentaires hors de la région. »

La jeune ouvrière Fatima Bouzan a exprimé sa joie face à l'ouverture de l'usine.

«Ce projet est une étape vers le progrès et la prospérité, car il profite grandement aux travailleurs d'ici qui avaient un besoin urgent de travail», a-t-elle déclaré.

Pendant environ cinq décennies, le nord de la Syrie a manqué de projets économiques répondant aux besoins de la population. Actuellement, l'Administration autonome travaille sur des projets de sécurité et de stabilité pour débarrasser la région des cellules de l'EI et des groupes terroristes, ce qui signifie que les projets économiques peuvent parfois être une priorité de second rang.



August 3, 2020

Iranians Protest Killing Of Kurdish Porters By Border Guards

Iranian social media users pushed the hashtag created in support of Kurdish transborder porters (kolbar) to the top of trending hashtags in Persian on Sunday.

During the so-called "Twitterstorm" Sunday evening tweets with the hashtag "Don't Kill Kolbars" were retweeted more than 100,000.

The Twitter storm or protest by hashtags was spurred by several new reports about the killing of Kurdish porters by border guards in the mountainous border areas of Iran's Kordestan and West Azarbaijan provinces across from Iraq. According to Hengaw, a Kurdish human rights organization, 6 kolbars were shot dead and 14 others were wounded by Iranian border guards in July.

Thousands of impoverished Kurds engage in the deadly trade of carrying massive loads on their backs across the border with Iraqi Kurdistan through ext-

remely dangerous terrain in return for a small fee. Many get caught in snowstorms in the treacherous mountain paths and others are shot by border guards and patrols.

The practice developed as small-scale, cross-border transport of goods to evade import-export restrictions and customs duties, but after decades it is part of the local life and economy. Some have coined the term "human mules" for the kolbars.

Many Children Working As Porters Die On Iran-Iraq Border

Human rights organizations say authorization of the border guards to shoot-on-sight has led to the death of 79 kolbars and injury of 66 others in 2019. In December, Hengaw said in the same year twenty-one adolescents and children working as porters had died from soldiers' bullets or cold weather.

The Twitter campaign against what human rights organizations



Kolbar -- transborder porter who is employed to carry goods on their backs across the Iran-Iraq border -- carrying his load across western Iranian mountains.

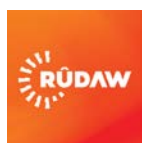
call "systematic killing of kolbars" followed an online campaign on July 14 with the "Don't Kill" hashtag in response to the confirmation of death sentences against three young men arrested at anti-government protests last November.

The hashtag in Persian trended on Twitter and posts with the hashtag were used more than ten million times and the campaign attracted global attention.

The hashtag was again used to protest to the Supreme Court de-

cision to uphold the death sentences issued against three young men for anti-government protests in December 2017 and January 2019.

Iranian authorities defend the border guards' killing of kolbars by resorting to the accusation of smuggling. Critics, however, say many kolbars engage in the dangerous profession due to the extensive poverty and very high unemployment rates in the regions where the discriminated against Kurdish-speaking population is in majority.



August 3, 2020

Iran strikes Kurdish opposition party base in Kurdistan Region territory

Unmanned Iranian drones and artillery shells struck a number of bases belonging to a Kurdish opposition group in Erbil province on Monday, an official affiliated with the group confirmed, with no casualties reported.

The strikes hit the mountainous Barbzin area of Erbil, close to the Kurdistan Region-Iran border, the head of the Kurdistan Peshmerga Command – affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) armed opposition group – told Rudaw.

The unmanned drones targeted our bases with missiles causing no casualties," said official Kawa Bahrami.

Monday's shelling comes six weeks after both Iranian artillery and Turkish drones struck Erbil province's Haji Omaran district bordering Iran – just days after Turkey launched its continuing air and ground campaign on suspected Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) bases within Kurdistan Region borders.

Since 2016, a number of the Iranian Kurdish parties including the PDKI have transferred their bases from populated areas of the Kurdistan Region to the border with Iran. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has called on armed Iranian Kurdish opposition groups not to launch attacks against neighboring countries from Kurdistan Region territory.

Local civilian Fakhir Taha told Rudaw via telephone that "a number of cowherders who are

out letting their animals graze are stuck."

brahim Nadir, a cowherder who had put his animals out to pasture in Barbzin, told Rudaw via telephone that he saw "Iranian artillery shells hit a [KDPI's] base."

"I saw a vehicle leaving the base. I'm not sure if it was rushing out the injured or not," Nadir said.

"We're safe and sound, but scared of the artillery shelling. We're stuck in hiding," he added.

Kurds Rebuild Ties with Washington to Even the Score with Ankara and Damascus

The cultural identity of the Middle East where peoples lived for century without statehood has given the Kurds a particularly strong incentive to carry on their struggle for independence over the last few decades, and American political strategists have taken full advantage of this. That is why the Kurds have been designated a place on the map to establish their own independent state of Kurdistan in America's plans for the Greater Middle East (MENA), which would serve as a new Washington-controlled ally with a population of 30 million, and would owe its existence to the United States. Yet being able to rely on US-funded Kurdish armed groups to deal with regional security issues would be just one of the tasks the White House plans to allocate to this Kurdish state, given that the Kurds have proven they are capable in combat and have demonstrated their commitment to achieving military objectives. The state could also be used to maintain a favorable power balance in the Middle East from Washington's point of view, between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and part of the Kurds' historical homeland in east Transcaucasia between the Kur and Araxes rivers, where they have lived for centuries.

In order to go about seizing Syrian and Iraqi territory where Kurdistan could be established in the future without violating international law, the US used their fight against DAESH (banned in Russia), which had taken the entire geo-cultural historical region traditionally inhabited by the Kurds in the Levant. Washington planned to sustain the Kurdish-Turkish conflict between the Republic of Turkey and various Kurdish insurgent groups fighting to gain independence for Northern Kurdistan in Eastern and South-eastern Turkey. Washington must surely have its own "Kurdish plan" for Iran like Turkey's, where Kurds make up 9% of the country's population.

After Saddam Hussein was deposed by the Americans in 2005, an autonomous Kurdistan Region was established in Iraq, and American political scientists drafted a new constitution for a "free Iraq", which assigned the presidential post to a Kurd. Since then, the President of Iraq has had to be an ethnic Kurd under the new power-sharing deal, although Kurds only make up 16 % of the population in Iraq.

After President Barack Obama sent US troops into Syria in 2015, the Kurds served as reliable allies for the United States in this country for some time, devoted to their cause in the fight against DAESH in the Levant. The US supplied the Kurds with weapons and training, and used them in the war against DAESH.

However, the Kurds have been betrayed time and time again throughout history as pawns in a game of political chess played by the "great powers", and history has repeated itself. All too often, the Kurds have been left to do most of the hard work, only to find that the next move will seal an inescapable fate, and they are to be offered up as a sacrifice with checkmate. This is exactly what has now happened following Trump's decision to withdraw US troops and leave the Kurds to be torn asunder by Turkey in Syria and Iraq.

However, the Kurds do objectively have a very important and "well-oiled" tool, which they are now able to use as leverage in the current situation to try and win back Washington's affection. It is no secret that Syria's oil and gas reserves have fueled the prolonged conflict in this country. And the regions with oil and gas reserves have recently passed from the hands of terrorists to the Kurds.

Given these circumstances, recent US operations in Syria have focused on stimulating Kurdish sep-

aratism with money from the illegal Syrian oil trade from crude extracted east of the Euphrates. Since May, the United States has been accelerating the transfer of military personnel and weapons to the region under the control of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and has been stepping up its work to create infrastructure for a Kurdish state, whose administrative center chosen by the Kurds is the town of Tabqa under Kurdish control, 40 km west of Raqqa. That is why the Pentagon has begun actively transferring military personnel, weapons and military equipment from Iraqi territory to the al-Hasakah Governorate controlled by the PYD. US forces are transferring armored vehicles accompanied by drones across the border at Bara (Iraq) and al-Hawl (Syria) to the airbase in Tal Baydar. The US military have also brought convoys of oil and gas specialists from Canada, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to northern Syria, who plan to maximize oil production, which will put Washington's plans into practice, enabling a "Greater Kurdistan" to be established on Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish territory. There have been numerous reports published by various media outlets, as well as satellite imagery from the Russian Ministry of Defense, which show Americans engaging in oil production on Syrian territory and the oil being subsequently taken away on tank trucks for export, which indicate that the United States is plundering Syria's natural resources on a mass scale through industrial mining in regions of the country that have been taken illegally.

The United States began drafting a special coordinating unit in Syria to guard the oil fields east of the Euphrates river, which included ethnic Arab fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance in the Syrian Civil War composed primarily of Kurdish, Arab, and Assyrian/Syriac militias,

the backbone of which is formed by the Kurdish People's Protection Units. On July 30, US Senator Lindsey Graham reported that political representatives of the Syrian Kurds signed a deal with an American oil company to modernize oil fields in parts in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic that are under the control of the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces in order to strengthen business ties with Washington.

While this was going on, the leaders of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) comprised of Kurdish paramilitary groups hired lobbyists in Washington in order to guarantee better protection from the Turkish Army Forces during their "Claw-Eagle" military operation, and to avoid falling under the "Caesar Act", which came into force in America in the summer, prohibiting all relations with official Damascus. According to the Foreign Lobby Report this is what motivated Kurdish leaders to sign a contract with prominent lawyer Ayal Frank and his company AF International to secure lobbying for their interests in Congress and in the administration of President Donald Trump. The deal reportedly includes consulting services, drawing up a plan for interaction with government agencies and the media in the United States, as well as organizing meetings and events with government officials and journalists.

The question remains whether these actions taken by the SDF to strengthen ties with Washington and the robbing of the Syrian people by United States will strengthen the authority of this Kurdish alliance, in a country where the Kurds expect to continue to live, even if it means continuing to endure the illegal US military presence. Or will we witness Washington abandoning its Kurdish allies yet again, once they have completed the task of helping America plunder



4 août 2020

Intolérable agression de la communauté arménienne

Des événements d'une extrême gravité se sont produits le 24 juillet à Decines (Rhône) alors que la communauté arménienne s'était rassemblée pacifiquement pour dénoncer la brutale agression militaire de l'Arménie par l'Azerbaïdjan.

Un groupe fasciste turc lourdement armé, s'inspirant des méthodes des Loups Gris et des djihadistes s'en est pris violemment aux manifestants et aux forces de l'ordre qui s'interposaient.

Les appels au meurtre contre les Arméniens et la négation du génocide deviennent désormais, par leur récurrence, intolérables. Ces exactions sont clairement nourries par l'extrémisme de la politique de R.T.Erdogan qui attise en Turquie mais également dans une partie de la diaspora un nationalisme exacerbé.

L'ambassade de Turquie à Paris coordonne ces opérations, encourage la violence des associations locales turques enrégimentées sous la bannière du dictateur d'Ankara. Leur ob-

jectif est de peser sur les décisions de la France par l'intermédiaire du Parti Egalité Justice (PEJ), officine de l'AKP en France.

Les organisateurs de ces violences n'en sont pas à leur coup d'essai. Ils ont, voici plusieurs mois, tenté d'empêcher une réunion publique de l'association France-Kurdistan. La multiplication des incidents montre qu'un palier a été franchi. R.T.Erdogan tente d'exporter en France la violence inouïe qu'il fait subir aux démocrates, aux assyro-chaldé-

ens, aux kurdes, aux arméniens ainsi qu'aux minorités religieuses.

Le Parti communiste français condamne ces violences et demande au gouvernement de mettre un terme au déchaînement d'agressivité de ces groupes factieux. Les responsables doivent être poursuivis pour les dégradations commises, les violences armées et la négation du génocide arménien. De plus, le PCF exige la dissolution du Parti Egalité et Justice (PEJ).

Kurdistan au féminin

4 août 2020

Le Rojava menacé par une vague d'infections dues au COVID19

Jusqu'à présent, les Kurdes du Rojava avaient réussi à faire face au coronavirus en fermant leurs frontières et en imposant des mesures de quarantaine strictes. Maintenant, une vague d'infection redoutable semble avoir atteint la Syrie du Nord et de l'Est. Mais ni l'OMS ni l'ONU ne semblent vouloir venir en aide au Rojava.

La Syrie du Nord et de l'Est a jusqu'à présent bien maîtrisé la pandémie du coronavirus grâce à des restrictions pour éviter la propagation du virus. Pendant des mois, les régions autonomes ont réussi à s'isoler, des frontières largement fermées et des conditions de quarantaine strictes ont protégé la région du virus. Mais maintenant, la vague d'infection tant redoutée semble avoir atteint la Syrie du Nord et de l'Est.

Ciwan Mistefa, coprésident du Comité de la santé de l'administration autonome de la Syrie

du Nord et de l'Est, estime que le gouvernement syrien a une responsabilité : « Le virus est introduit et propagé par les voyageurs [venus par avion à Qamishlo, dont l'aéroport est sous contrôle du régime syrien]. Nous avons déployé des efforts considérables pour mettre en œuvre des concepts de sécurité susceptibles de fournir une protection suffisante contre le virus Covid-19. Cependant, l'exploitant de l'aéroport national continue de se montrer peu soucieux de prévenir la propagation du virus. Nos enquêteurs ont montré que tous les patients chez lesquels nous avons détecté le coronavirus ces dernières semaines ont été infectés chez des voyageurs vivant dans les zones du régime. »

L'administration autonome avait déjà critiqué en avril que l'aéroport de Qamishlo était une faiblesse majeure dans les mesures de prévention contre le coronavirus et accusé

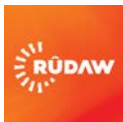
Damas de ne pas contribuer à la lutte contre la pandémie. À cette époque, même les contrôles antivirus effectués par les équipes de prévention de la pandémie du gouvernement autonome avaient été sabotés et les personnes entrant à Damas avaient été littéralement kidnappées par des employés de l'aéroport afin de ne pas être mises en quarantaine.

Actuellement, on estime qu'il y a 30 cas d'infection dans le nord et l'est de la Syrie (au 2 août). La plupart des personnes infectées vivent dans la région de Cizîrê, mais des infections ont également été détectées à Raqqa et Deir ez-Zor. « L'essentiel est maintenant d'empêcher le virus de se propager au-delà des zones touchées. Cependant, nous ne pouvons y parvenir qu'en prenant des mesures strictes. En tant que comité de santé, nous avons donc décidé de réintroduire des couvre-feux stricts dans toute la région de Cizîrê.

Nous voulons maintenir la stratégie d'isolement jusqu'à ce que plus aucune infection locale ne soit détectée », a déclaré Mistefa.

Pas de soutien de l'OMS

L'administration autonome du nord et de l'est de la Syrie n'attend pas de soutien de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) dans la lutte contre le coronavirus. « Après la révolution du Rojava, les hôpitaux de la région ont été équipés de matériel médical. Mais depuis le début de la pandémie, aucune aide de l'OMS n'est arrivée dans nos régions. Il n'y a de toute façon pas d'aide du gouvernement syrien pour les régions autonomes, car la distribution de l'aide humanitaire est coordonnée par les Nations Unies et l'OMS via Damas et le régime omet largement le nord et l'est de la Syrie. « L'OMS devrait fournir une aide directe si elle veut soutenir notre population », a déclaré Mistefa.



August 4, 2020

Tortured Kurdish prisoner ‘at risk of execution’ in Iran: Amnesty

Another Kurd convicted of espionage based on a confession obtained through torture in Iran is facing execution, Amnesty International has warned.

The human rights group issued a call for urgent action on Monday to halt the execution of Arsalan Khodkam, who was sentenced to death on July 14, 2018, “after a grossly unfair trial that lasted about 30 minutes and relied on “confessions” he says were obtained under torture.” Relatives were told in May that Khodkam could be executed at any time, Amnesty said.

Khodkam, a 47-year-old from Urmia, West Azerbaijan province, is accused of “spying” for the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), an armed opposition group based in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, while working for Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a low-ranking officer. Ac-

ording to Amnesty, the prisoner vehemently denies the accusations, saying he left the group in the eighties and was accused of the crime after being in contact with his wife’s relative, who is a member of the opposition group, on Instagram.

“On one occasion, Arsalan Khodkam had informed his relative, a member of the KDPI, that the Revolutionary Guards were preparing to send forces to crush a series of peaceful anti-establishment strikes and protests in Baneh, Kurdistan province, which started in April 2018,” reads the sample letter for Amnesty’s campaign which urges for his conviction and death sentence to be quashed.

Khodkam claims to not have shared any other sensitive information on the IRGC or its activities, but signed a confession admitting to having done so after enduring torture and threats to his family.



Arsalan Khodkam was sentenced to death on July 14, 2018. Photo : Hengaw

Following his arrest in Urmia, Arsalan Khodkam withstood days of physical torture, but signed the self-incriminating statements that the interrogators had prepared after they subjected him to psychological torture by detaining his wife on 28 April 2018 for two days and threatening to harm her and their son,” adds the letter.

Tens of thousands of political prisoners are jailed in Iran over

various charges including advocating for democracy and promoting the rights of women, workers, and ethnic minorities.

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



August 4, 2020

Yazidi children still traumatised by ordeal at hands of Isis

Iraqi Yazidi children kidnapped by Islamic State six years ago remain deeply traumatised by their ordeal, Amnesty International has said.

In a 57-page report, Legacy of Terror, The Plight of Yazidi Child Survivors of Isis, Amnesty says nearly 2,000 Yazidi children suffered indoctrination, rape, torture, starvation, and slavery at the hands of the terror group. Boys were forced to serve as

child soldiers and girls to “marry” Islamic State fighters. Children were denied schooling and compelled to abandon their Yazidi faith by adopting Islam, and to speak Arabic rather than their native Kurdish.

The UN has branded as genocide Islamic State’s seizure and treatment of Iraq’s ethnic Kurdish Yazidis, who practice an ancient monotheistic religion.

The massacre of Yazidis by Islamic State, also known as Isis,

began in early August 2014 in villages in the Sinjar district of north-western Iraq. In response 50,000 Yazidis fled into the Sinjar mountains where they were besieged without food or water.

While Turkish Kurdish fighters attempted to counter the Islamic State offensive, Iraqi army helicopters dropped supplies to the Yazidis. Then US president Barack Obama ordered air-strikes on Islamic State fighters. Safe corridors

were established by Turkish and Syrian Kurdish fighters, who escorted the Yazidis to Syria.

Some 10,000 Yazidi men and boys were murdered and 7,000 women and girls abducted. More than 70 mass graves have been found in the region.

“Many child survivors have returned from [Islamic State] captivity with debilitating long-term injuries, illnesses or physical impairments. The most com-

mon mental health conditions experienced by these children include post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression. Symptoms and behaviours often displayed include aggression, flashbacks, nightmares, withdrawal from social situations, and severe mood swings," the Amnesty report states.

"Survivors of horrific crimes, these children now face a legacy of terror. Their physical and mental health must be a priority in the years ahead if they are to fully reintegrate into their families and community," said Amnesty's response deputy director Matt Wells.

He urged the Iraqi government and international community to provide the children with the "support they desperately need to rebuild their lives as part of the Yazidi community's future". Live apart

The report says that former Isis child soldiers returned to their

Yazidi families are often forced to endure an isolated existence.

"Many find that their families are not willing to acknowledge what they have experienced in captivity or even deny it altogether."

Children fathered by Islamic State members have "largely been denied a place in the Yazidi community", it adds, due to rejection by the Yazidi Supreme Spiritual Council on the basis that they do not have two Yazidi parents.

Furthermore, Iraqi law "mandates that a child of an 'unknown' or Muslim father must be registered as Muslim," Amnesty reports.

Some women have been forced to abandon their children in order to return to their families; some have chosen to keep their children and live



Displaced children from the minority Yazidi sect, fleeing violence from forces loyal to the Islamic State. "Many child survivors have returned from captivity with debilitating long-term injuries, illnesses or physical impairments," according to an Amnesty report. Photograph: Rodi Said/Reuters

apart from their community; a few have threatened suicide.

"These women were enslaved, tortured and subjected to sexual violence," Mr Wells said. "They should not suffer any further punishment."

He called for mothers and children to remain together, future

separations to be prevented, and opportunities for international resettlement provided.

Although 350,000 Yazidis live in camps for the displaced in northern Iraq, they cannot return to their villages. Iraqi militiamen and Islamic State fighters continue to clash and Turkish war planes bomb Kurdish positions.



August 5, 2020
Hiwa Shilani

COVID-19: Kurdistan announces 357 new cases; medical clinics to reopen

Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced on Tuesday over 350 new cases of the coronavirus, 12 deaths, and categorized 138 patients as having recovered over the previous 24 hours.

The health ministry mentioned in its daily statement that it had carried out 2,762 tests in the past 24 hours. According to the most recent government information, 357 of those tests came back positive: 218 in Erbil province, 83 in Duhok, 56 in Sulaimani, and none in Halabja.

The total number of individuals infected with the virus since its outbreak in the region has reached 15,173, including 586 deaths and 5,036 patients currently receiving medical care.

On Tuesday evening, the ministry urged those who have recovered from the coronavirus to donate their blood plasma to help save others now in serious condition.

"One of the treatment lines for patients with the COVID-19 virus is taking blood plasma of infected people after they have recovered

from the virus," the health ministry's statement read, calling on them to visit plasma donation clinics exactly 28 days after their infection had been confirmed.

At the same time, the Erbil Operations Room charged with managing the provincial response to combat the pandemic issued a decision that allowed the reopening of clinics and other medical facilities that had been previously closed, but that they must follow strict health regulations.

"Regarding clinics, medical centers, and complexes wit-

hin the borders of Erbil province and because of the health situation and the needs of people, the Operations Room has decided in consultation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior to reopen them."

The coronavirus has infected more than 18.4 million people worldwide and killed nearly 700,000 according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or underreporting.



10 août 2020
Elizabeth Hagedorn

Iran : Une campagne de défense des Koulbars se répand sur Twitter

La campagne « #Don't_Kill_Kulbars » (Ne tuez pas les Koulbars) a été lancée le dimanche 2 août 2020. Au moment de la rédaction du présent document, le hashtag a été utilisé 122 000 fois et a fait a été diffusé sur Twitter.

Les militants de la société civile ont attiré l'attention sur les Koulbars kurdes, qui sont persécutés, privés de leurs droits et même tués juste pour avoir essayé de gagner leur vie.

Rien qu'en 2019, au moins 76 Koulbars kurdes ont été tués et 176 blessés. Farhad Khosravi était l'un d'entre eux.

Le jeudi 30 juillet, la nouvelle est apparue que Vazir Mohammadi, un jeune Koulbar kurde, avait été tué dans la zone frontalière de Nosud à Kermanshah. Cela a été une nouvelle choquante, mais pas inattendue. Tous ceux qui suivent la situation critique des Koulbars, ces hommes kurdes qui transportent des marchandises à travers la frontière entre l'Iran et l'Irak, savent à quel point ils risquent leur vie, et pour très peu d'argent. Et la situation semble s'aggraver.

Depuis des années, les groupes de défense des droits humains font état des Koulbars et de la discrimination dont ils sont victimes. Ahmed Shaheed, ancien rapporteur spécial des Nations unies sur la situation des droits humains en Iran, a décrit la dure discrimination dont ils sont victimes dans son compte-rendu annuel du 3 mars 2012, qui fait état du « massacre systématique des Koulbars kurdes vi-

vant dans les régions frontalières de l'Iran. »

Encouragés par l'énorme succès de la récente campagne #Do_Not_Execute (elle est devenue le hashtag le plus populaire pendant deux heures à la fin du mois de juillet, et elle a été postée plus de 10 millions de fois sur Twitter), les militants iraniens ont créé #Don't_Kill_Kulbars pour informer le monde sur la communauté et la discrimination dont les Koulbars sont victimes. La campagne a démarré à 21h30, heure iranienne, le dimanche 2 août, et elle a été twittée plus de 122 000 fois jusqu'à présent, le hashtag le plus populaire en Iran.

En même temps, la campagne #Do_Not_Kill_Soukhtbars a également été lancée. Elle a permis de sensibiliser les soukhtbars, ces personnes de l'ethnie baloutche qui transportent des marchandises en voiture ou en moto à travers la frontière iranienne avec le Pakistan. Comme les Koulbars kurdes, les soukhtbars peuvent parfois être pris pour cible par les gardes-frontières, qui leur tirent dessus et les tuent parfois.

Il n'existe pas de statistiques précises concernant les victimes des soukhtbar, mais il existe un décompte des Koulbars tués ces dernières années. Au cours de la période de cinq ans allant de 2015 à 2019, un total de 368 Koulbars ont été tués et 595 blessés.

Pour la seule année 2019, au moins 76 Koulbars kurdes ont été tués et 176 blessés. En 2018, le total était de 231 per-

sonnes, ce qui signifie que le nombre de décès a augmenté de 8 % en une année.

Les mêmes statistiques révèlent que 50 Koulbars ont été tués et 144 blessés après avoir été abattus par des gardes-frontières iraniens, soit 77 % des personnes que les chiffres analysent. Un Koulbar a été tué par une mine terrestre que les forces de sécurité iraniennes avaient posée, et 11 ont été blessés et handicapés à vie par des mines. Sept des 50 morts étaient des enfants.

Plusieurs Koulbars sont morts de catastrophes naturelles ou d'accidents dus au terrain en 2019, dont des avalanches et des chutes de montagnes. Vingt-trois Koulbars sont morts de gelures, dont un enfant, et 19 autres ont souffert de graves gelures. Deux Koulbars ont été tués dans des accidents de la route ; deux autres ont été blessés dans les mêmes accidents. Les victimes étaient originaires des provinces de l'Azerbaïdjan occidental, du Kurdistan et du Kermanshah, respectivement.

L'organisation des droits humains Hengaw a rapporté le samedi 1er août que six Koulbars ont été tués et 14 autres blessés en Iran au mois de juillet. Parmi ceux-ci, cinq ont été tués et onze ont été blessés par des gardes-frontières iraniens qui leur ont tiré dessus. En juin, sept Koulbars ont été tués par les tirs directs des gardes-frontières iraniens, et 17 autres ont été blessés.

Le déni iranien

Mais alors que ces meurtres et ces décès, liés aux vies dangereuses et à leur travail, se poursuivent, les responsables gouvernementaux font très peu de choses pour améliorer la situation, en s'occupant des décès et des blessures de manière très sélective, voire pas du tout. En fait, ils communiquent souvent des informations trompeuses et peu concluantes sur les Koulbars et leur situation. S'ils signalent leur mort, ce sont les histoires de gelures et de chutes tragiques des précipices de montagne dont les gens entendent parler, et non les tirs délibérés des gardes-frontières.

Pourtant, ce n'est pas seulement ce déni et ces déclarations hypocrites qui posent problème aux Koulbars. Tout soutien de leur part est sanctionné. Ils sont persécutés s'ils protestent contre la façon dont ils sont traités, y compris si des familles se plaignent que leurs proches se font tirer dessus par des agents iraniens.

Le 2 juillet, un groupe de 10 militants civils de Baneh a été condamné à un total de 30 mois de prison, 250 coups de fouet et une amende de 250 millions de tomans [10 600 euros]. Ils ont été punis pour s'être rassemblés pacifiquement devant le bureau du gouverneur de Baneh en septembre 2017 en protestation contre le meurtre de Koulbars par les gardes-frontières. Actuellement, ils ont été libérés sous caution, mais on s'attend à ce qu'ils doivent purger leur peine.

La France veut livrer un Kurde à Erdogan

Mehmet Yalcin avait préféré l'exil à un procès en Turquie, où toute opposition est réprimée. Il observe une grève de la faim au centre de rétention de Bordeaux.

Arrestation de Mehmet Yalcin le 31 juillet devant le tribunal administratif de Bordeaux. Il est aujourd'hui menacé d'expulsion.

Mehmet Yalcin reverra-t-il ses enfants, âgés respectivement de 2, 4 et 6 ans, scolarisés en France ? Si rien n'est fait d'ici au 28 août, date donnée par l'administration française pour son expulsion du territoire et son renvoi en Turquie, la réponse est non. Si cela se produisait, il serait « accueilli » à l'aéroport d'Istanbul par les sbires de la police d'Erdogan, dont on sait le sort qu'ils réservent à tous les opposants démocrates, et notamment les Kurdes ; prison, torture et, souvent, disparition pure et simple.

Un démocrate prônant un dialogue pacifique Originaire de la ville de Varto, au Kurdistan turc, Mehmet Yalcin n'a jamais caché son engagement pour les droits de son peuple, militant dans des organisations kurdes prônant une solution démocratique et le dialogue.

Lorsque l'on voit que des députés du Parti démocratique des peuples sont aujourd'hui emprisonnés, on peut imaginer comment la gendarmerie turque traite de simples activistes. Il avait d'ailleurs été lui-même incarcéré en 2005 puis libéré en attente de son procès instruit pour fait de propagande en faveur d'une organisation terroriste. Ce qui, dans la Turquie d'Erdogan, désigne toute structure dénonçant la répres-



Arrestation de Mehmet Yalcin le 31 juillet devant le tribunal administratif de Bordeaux. Il est aujourd'hui menacé de l'expulsion.

sion contre les droits et les libertés civiles. Des procès qui se terminent inmanquablement par de lourdes condamnations. C'est pourquoi Mehmet Yalcin, à ce moment-là, a choisi la voie de l'exil et arrive en France, à Bordeaux, en 2006. Ses demandes d'asile, déposées à plusieurs reprises, sont rejetées par l'Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (Ofpra), le contraignant à une vie incertaine mais soutenu par la communauté kurde vivant en France. C'est donc tout naturellement qu'il participe à des initiatives de solidarité et à des manifestations.

Il ignorait certainement que, depuis 2011, les accords sécuritaires entre la France et la Turquie sont étroits. Ils visent officiellement à lutter « contre le terrorisme du PKK », le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, selon les termes du ministre français de l'intérieur Claude Guéant. Outre le fait que le PKK n'a jamais entrepris la moindre action violente dans l'Hexagone, toutes les accusations portées contre des mili-

tants kurdes sont le fait des... services turcs. Des dizaines d'entre eux ont ainsi été arrêtés, accusés de récolter des fonds pour le PKK sans qu'aucune preuve réelle n'ait jamais été apportée.

C'est ce qui est arrivé à Mehmet Yalcin. S'il revendique son militantisme, celui-ci est pacifique et respectueux de la démocratie. Il nie toute appartenance au PKK. Au terme d'un long procès, il est finalement condamné en janvier 2019 par la cour d'appel de Paris à deux ans de prison, dont un avec sursis. Il bénéficie d'un aménagement de peine avec le port d'un bracelet électronique. Mais sa nouvelle demande auprès de l'Ofpra est rejetée, cette fois à cause de la condamnation en France !

Le 24 juillet 2020, sa peine se termine. Lorsqu'on lui retire le bracelet, on lui signifie une convocation à l'hôtel de police de Bordeaux pour « notification d'une décision préfectorale », a expliqué la Cimade à l'Humanité. Il s'y rend le 28 juillet et se voit immédiatement interpellé

puis menotté dans le cadre d'une « mesure d'éloignement ». C'est-à-dire une expulsion vers la Turquie.

La préfecture de Gironde a déjà pris contact avec le consulat turc Mehmet Yalcin a été placé au centre de rétention de Bordeaux, victime d'une convocation déloyale puisqu'on ne lui a donné aucun motif.

Il s'y est pourtant rendu. Mais, pour la préfecture de Gironde, qui a déjà pris contact avec le consulat turc, Yalcin « n'allègue pas être exposé à des peines ou traitements contraires à la convention européenne des droits de l'homme en cas de retour dans son pays d'origine ». C'est pourtant bien pour cela qu'il l'a quitté !

Mehmet Yalcin a entamé une grève de la faim. Une action forte et déterminée, l'intervention d'élus nationaux peut encore empêcher la France de -honteusement- livrer un démocrate au dictateur de la Turquie, pays qui n'a plus rien d'un État de droit.

State Department remains concerned by Turkey's proxy fighters in northern Syria

The State Department remains concerned by credible reports of human rights abuses committed by Turkish-backed fighters in parts of northeast Syria seized during military operations against US-allied Kurdish fighters, according to a new inspector general's report.

The State Department has received reports of "arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, seizure of and resettlement of new populations in private properties, the repeated and deliberate shutting off of water access to half a million civilians, and transfer of arbitrarily-detained Syrians across an international border into Turkey," according to the Lead Inspector General report on Operation Inherent Resolve, the operational name for the US fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The report released Tuesday covers the period of April 1 to June 30.

"We have reiterated our expectation that Turkey, and the Syrian opposition, investigate alleged violations and abuses and promote accountability where appropriate," the State Department said.

The State Department told investigators it had no evidence that the Syrian Interim Government, a political body that operates in Turkish-controlled areas of northern Syria, "has consistently arrested, prosecuted, or otherwise held accountable any [Turkish-supported opposition group] members implicated in human



The statue of Kawa, the blacksmith who is a central figure in a Kurdish legend about the new year celebration of Nowruz, is seen April 26, 2018, after Ankara-backed forces destroyed it following the capture of the northern Syrian enclave of Afrin from Kurdish fighters. Photo by SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP via Getty Images.

rights abuses or violations of the law of armed conflict."

Turkey's military campaign against Kurdish fighters launched in October, which followed President Donald Trump's surprise decision to pull troops out of northeast Syria, garnered widespread criticism over the myriad rights abuses reportedly committed by the Syrian proxy fighters Ankara deployed to carry out its ground offensive.

The Turkey-supported Syrian National Army, which consists of both moderate Syrian rebels who once fought the regime and more extreme factions, was implicated in a series of disturbing videos documenting torture and extrajudicial kill-

ings. The roadside execution of prominent female Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf, which was blamed on the hard-line Ahrar al-Sharqiya faction, prompted widespread condemnation. The Syrian National Army condemned the killing of Khalaf and eight other civilians and said it would investigate.

The new report noted that the United States has not sanctioned any of the Turkey-allied groups for abuses. If certain criteria are met, the Trump administration has the authority to do so under the executive order used in October to briefly sanction Turkey over its incursion.

The situation in Afrin, a multi-

ethnic city embroiled in violence since Turkey and allied rebels seized control in March 2018, is of particular concern to the State Department. Rights organizations accuse rebels in Afrin of abducting hundreds of women and girls, at least 150 of whom have been identified. Yazda, a group advocating for the long-persecuted religious Yazidi minority, says nearly 80% of the Yazidi religious sites in Syria have been looted by, desecrated, or destroyed by the fighters, including 18 sites in Afrin.

With no presence on the ground, the State Department said it could not confirm the reports but said "many appear to be credible."

Un hôpital turc vole les organes d'un enfant kurde tué par l'armée turque à Afrin

Lundi, les gendarmes turcs ont blessé par balle un adolescent kurde de 16 ans près de la frontière turque, dans le canton d'Afrin occupé, et l'ont emmené à l'hôpital de Kilis. Après que ses organes ont été volés, ils ont envoyé le corps de l'adolescent dans un sac à sa famille.

Des sources d'Afrin ont confirmé au journaliste d'ANHA que la gendarmerie turque a tué lundi Khalil Nihad Sheikho du village de Farkan, du can-

ton d'Afrin occupé, avec trois balles à la frontière turco-syrienne dans le district de Shera alors qu'il tentait d'échapper à la barbarie des mercenaires de l'occupation turque qui ont envahi Afrin en 2018.

Adolescent blessé a ensuite été hospitalisé à Kilis, en Turquie. Plus tard, ses organes ont été volés et son corps a été remis à ses proches.

Des séquences vidéo filmées au moment où les proches de l'enfant ont reçu son corps



montrent que ses organes ont été volés.



5 août 2020

Le Conseil de l'Europe "exhorte" Ankara à autoriser les visites à Öcalan et ses codétenus

Le Conseil de l'Europe "exhorte" les autorités turques à autoriser les visites des familles et des avocats des détenus de l'île-prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest de la Turquie) parmi lesquels le chef historique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan, dans un rapport publié mercredi.

Le Comité européen pour la prévention de la torture (CPT) du Conseil appelle Ankara "à prendre les mesures nécessaires pour garantir que tous les détenus de la prison d'Imrali puissent effectivement, s'ils le souhaitent, recevoir la visite de leurs parents et avocats".

Le Comité exhorte également une nouvelle fois la Turquie "à procéder à une révision com-

plète du régime de détention appliqué aux détenus condamnés à la réclusion à perpétuité aggravée" et à réviser sa législation en ce sens.

Dans son rapport, le CPT "se félicite" toutefois que le 2 mai 2019, Abdullah Öcalan ait "obtenu la première visite de deux de ses avocats depuis juillet 2011", précisant que, selon les autorités turques, "des visites d'avocats ont également eu lieu les 22 mai, 12 juin, 18 juin et 7 août 2019". Mais il déplore que depuis lors, "toutes les demandes (...) aient apparemment été rejetées".

Outre le leader du PKK, la prison de haute sécurité d'Imrali abrite trois autres prisonniers qui, selon le CPT, ont "indiqué être traités correctement par

le personnel" pénitentiaire.

Le service de santé de la prison a laissé "une fois de plus, une impression favorable" à la délégation du CPT qui s'est rendue du 6 au 17 mai 2019 en Turquie, le Comité estimant que "les conditions matérielles de détention sont restées globalement satisfaisantes pour tous les détenus" d'Imrali.

Toujours selon le rapport, la délégation qui s'était également rendue dans de nombreuses autres prisons, commissariats de police et casernes de gendarmerie à travers le pays a en revanche "enregistré un nombre considérable d'allégations de recours excessif à la force et/ou de mauvais traitements physiques par des policiers et des

gendarmes".

Parmi de nombreuses autres recommandations, le CPT "réitère" ainsi son souhait qu'un "message clair et ferme de +tolérance zéro+ des mauvais traitements soit adressé à tous les responsables de l'application des lois par le plus haut niveau politique, à savoir le Président de la République" turc.

Figure de la rébellion kurde en Turquie, Abdullah Öcalan, 72 ans, a été capturé le 15 février 1999, puis condamné à mort le 29 juin 1999 pour trahison et tentative de diviser le pays. Sa condamnation a toutefois été commuée en 2002 en réclusion à perpétuité après l'abolition de la peine de mort.

Kurdish student numbers dwindle as Turkey's crackdown curtails opportunities

Kurdish language departments in Turkey mushroomed with the so-called Kurdish opening but they are now struggling to attract students since the Turkish government reversed its stance and began cracking down on the Kurdish movement.

In the summer of 2009, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) launched the so-called Kurdish opening to address the long-running grievances of Turkey's Kurdish minority, which is struggling for greater cultural rights and limited regional autonomy.

The process evolved into the peace process in 2013 to end the decades-long conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which launched an armed separatist insurrection in 1984, and has since changed its objectives to focus on Kurdish rights rather than independence.

The government's efforts comprised a constitutional amendment allowing Kurdish language classes to be taught in schools. The use of Kurdish in public was banned by the military administration following the 1980 coup in Turkey, and it was decriminalised in 1991.

Five literature and language departments on Kurdish and the Zaza language, spoken by an ethnic group related to Kurds, were opened between 2011 and 2012 in four majority-Kurdish southeastern provinces.

Thousands of young Kurds, who wanted to receive their education in Kurdish and learn their mother tongue in an academic setting, applied to those departments.



But numbers have now dropped dramatically since the peace process broke down in 2015, because prospective students have realised that their career options have been severely curtailed.

"Our department was opened during the peace process; We were actually the fruits of it," Hasan Filitoğlu, a Kurdish language and literature graduate from Bingöl University, told Ahval. "[But] when we graduated, the peace process broke down and nobody even looked back at us."

Another graduate, Sabri Külter, has worked at several jobs but nothing related to his education. Now, he puts food on the table as a construction worker.

"I wanted to study gastronomy and then I heard that the Kurdish Language and Literature Department had opened. I was young and excited, and I saw this as an opportunity," Külter told Ahval.

"We thought we would live in a freer and more peaceful country and the political pressure would be over and the bans would be lifted. But the process fell victim to politics, and the restrictive mentality still continues," he said.

Since the breakdown of the peace process in 2015, Kurdish art centres, Kurdish language associations and many more institutions have been closed by the government. Kurdish names were removed from public parks and streets, and public billboards have been turned solely to Turkish.

Almost all Kurdish media outlets – even a Kurdish children's channel – have been shut down. Kurdish civil society organisations were closed by the government for allegedly supporting terrorist groups.

After young Kurds saw that Kurdish language graduates failed to find employment related to their education, the number of applicants has fallen severely.

When the courses were first launched, classes were at full capacity with an average of 60 students per class.

But, the number of students per class has typically dwindled to around 10, even though the entrance requirements for those departments were significantly lowered, according to Eylem Süleymanoğlu, a senior student at Bingöl University Kurdish Language and Literature, said.

"When I first began the department, the fourth grades were some 60 people. Forty-five people started during my term, but now there are 20 people. And, there are only 11 freshmen at the department," Süleymanoğlu said.

Yet, she still has hope.

"Whether I was appointed or not as a teacher when I graduate, I always dreamed of teaching Kurdish in front of the blackboard," she said. "I still dream of it, I am still hopeful."



August 5, 2020

COVID-19: Iraq reports over 2,800 new cases, 77 fatalities

Iraq's Ministry of Health and Environment announced on Wednesday that it had recorded over 2,800 new coronavirus cases for the second day in a row, as well as more than 75 fatalities in the past 24 hours.

Per a ministry statement, health workers had conducted 16,531 coronavirus tests during the same period, raising the total number of such tests to 1,076,150 given since the start of the pandemic.

The total number of cases rose by 2,834 to reach 137,556, according to the ministry. The ministry also reported 77 new deaths, bringing the total fatalities to 5,094.

On Tuesday, Iraq became the Arab-majority nation with the overall highest deaths rates from the disease as it surpassed 5,000.



A World Health Organization (WHO) volunteer assists a child in wearing a facemask effectively in Baghdad as part of a widespread anti-coronavirus awareness campaign. (Photo: WHO)

Egypt is the second highest Arab country in terms of fatalities that have recorded 4,912 deaths so far, according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, which shows that the coronavirus has infected more than 18.6 million people worldwide and killed over 700,000. The actual figures

could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or underreporting.

Taking the size of the population of each country into account, those figures become stark. The population of Iraq is nearly 40 million, while the population of Egypt is nearly 100 million—over twice as much.

Thus, while Iraq has slightly more coronavirus deaths than Egypt, which has the second-largest number of such deaths among Arab countries, Iraq has over twice as many per capita.

The start of the rise in Iraqi cases follows on the reopening in mid-May of Iraq's borders with Iran, the original epicenter of the disease in the Middle East.

Read More: COVID-19 spikes again in Iran, with regional implications

As coronavirus cases continue to rise on a daily basis, Iraqi authorities have intensified their efforts to spread awareness of the disease and the measures required to counter it through various public channels, including broadcast and social media.



August 5, 2020
By Hiwa Shilani

COVID-19: Kurdistan announces more than 400 daily infections

On Wednesday, Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Health announced 404 new infections, 11 deaths with the Coronavirus in the region within the past 24 hours.

Since the outbreak of the virus in the autonomous region in March, 15,577 people in total have been infected. Of these, 597 have died and 526 patients remain in medical care facilities where they are receiving treatment.

The health ministry's daily statement mentioned that it had conducted 2,296 tests in the last 24

hours, with 404 of them coming back positive. According to the most recent government data, 218 of these cases were in Erbil province, 101 in Duhok, 64 in Sulaimani, and 21 in Halabja. Until recent weeks, Sulaimani was the province within the Kurdistan Region most affected by the coronavirus, but Erbil and Duhok have since surpassed it.

Earlier on Wednesday, the health ministry also announced, "Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Masrour Barzani, decided to allocate one bil-

lion IQD (roughly \$833,000) from the emergency budget allocated to confront the coronavirus in Duhok province."

According to the KRG figures, Duhok has so far seen 801 individuals contract the highly-contagious disease, six of whom have died. Local health authorities in the province's district of Aqra recently quarantined two villages after more than 20 cases surfaced there.

Aqra official Sabah Zuhair stated

that the recent increase in cases across the district was due to "the recent easing of the movement between the district and the provinces, individuals entering the city through illegal means, and the lack of citizens' commitment to health regulations."

Also on Wednesday, Iraq's federal Ministry of Health and Environment in Baghdad announced that it had recorded over 2,800 new coronavirus cases for the second day in a row, as well as more than 75 fatalities in the past 24 hours.



August 5, 2020

US company obtains waiver to develop oil fields in northeast Syria

The US Treasury Department has extended a waiver allowing a little-known American company, Delta Crescent Energy, to develop oil fields in northeastern Syria.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R, South Carolina) first revealed on July 30 that the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the partner of the anti-ISIS Coalition in northeast Syria, had signed a deal with a US company to modernize oil-fields there.

Graham's remarks came during testimony from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the State Department's budget for the next fiscal year.

Pompeo affirmed his support for the oil agreement and seemed to suggest that the State Department had played a key role in arranging it. "We are," Pompeo replied, and Graham responded, "That would be a great way to help everybody in northeastern Syria."

"The deal took a little longer than we had hoped," Pompeo added, implying that the State Department had been involved in arranging it.

Al Monitor confirmed earlier this week that it involved the largely unknown US company Delta Crescent Energy. Iraq Oil Report has written that Delta Crescent is led by a mix of former diplomats and US military veterans: John Dorrier, Jim Reese, and James Cain.

Dorrier is the founder and former chief executive of Gulf-sands Petroleum, which had a contract in northeast Syria until it had to stop operations due to EU sanctions against the Syrian regime, according to Iraq Oil Report.

The news site also reported, "Cain is a lawyer with U.S. law firm Kilpatrick Townshend, which he rejoined following a four year stint as U.S. ambassador to Denmark. He appears to be instrumental in securing political support in Washington. Reese is the founder of the security firm TigerSwan, which has held contracts in Iraq."

TigerSwan, however, also held previous contracts in northeastern Syria.

The New Yorker reported in 2018 that TigerSwan, a private military contractor out of North Carolina, provided security for demining activities in Raqqa conducted by Tetra Tech, a construction and engineering firm based in California.

According to the company website, Tetra Tech has cleared areas of more than "7 million square meters in and around urban communities, including Manbij, Tabqah, and Raqqah" since 2016. As a result, it has been able to develop local contacts in northeastern Syria since these cities were liberated from the Islamic State by the SDF.

Moreover, Reese told the Washington Examiner as long ago as October that he and his two partners had filed an application to the federal government for a plan that would be a US-led effort to develop oil fields for the benefit of the Kurds and Sunni Arab tribes in the area, as well as the United States.

He argued this could also attract President Trump's support for an eastern security zone and address his "concerns that the U.S. gets nothing out of the Middle East apart from lost lives and depleted treasure."

Politico reported on Monday that Delta Crescent Energy has been in talks with the Kurds for more than a year but only received a license from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control for the work in April, citing a State Department official and a Syrian source familiar with the discussions.

After US President Donald Trump decided last year to withdraw US forces from northeast Syria following a phone conversation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Graham played a key role in convincing Trump to keep troops there in order prevent the oil fields from falling into the hands of Iran or the Islamic State.

As a result, there are still US troops in the Hasakah and Deir al-Zor, which contain the majority of Syria's oil resources even as the US withdrew from areas surrounding Kobani, Manbij, and Raqqah.

Nevertheless, neither the SDF nor the Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria (AANES) has confirmed that any agreement has been made. They were also reluctant to make any comments to the press on the deal due to the potential regional backlash.

The Syrian government quickly condemned the deal on Sunday as an attempt to "steal Syrian oil." Turkey did the same on the following day, claiming it would advance the "separatist agenda" of the SDF.

Both governments fear that any such deal could give more recognition to the Syrian Kurds that so far have received limited recognition for their sacrifices and defeat of the Islamic State in northern Syria and have been excluded from the Geneva peace talks.

Therefore, Abed Hamed al-Mehbash, the co-chair of AANES, was quoted by the local North Press news agency saying that the administration is still studying requests by "many Russian and American companies to operate in north and east Syria."

"The companies requested to invest in the service sector in the region," he added.

Thomas McClure, a Syria-based researcher at the Rojava Information Center, told Kurdistan 24 that this silence seems to indicate that they were not expecting this news to be made public right now fearing possible repercussions from Damascus or Turkey.

However, he underlined that the potential deal should not be made to sound bigger than it truly is, saying, "It's a small deal for two refineries to be made for a small portion of the region's oil to be processed, and potentially be transferred out of northeast Syria. This is what is being talked about here."

Nevertheless, he added that it could mark the beginning of a more constructive approach from the United States towards the oil question in northeastern Syria after several years of the "great inconsistency" of putting pressure on the local administration not to sell oil to the Syrian regime while at the same time restricting them from selling oil abroad through US sanctions.

"So it could be that this deal is the first tentative step towards the more healthy balanced relationship, which could bring great benefits for northeast Syria."



August 6, 2020

Pentagon watchdog says US could sanction Turkish proxies for rights abuses in Syria

Although the US State Department received several reports of human rights abuses committed by Turkish-backed groups, it did not sanction them despite having the authority to do so, a Pentagon watchdog said on Tuesday.

Turkey occupied the towns of Tal Abyad and Serekaniye in October 2019 after a major offensive against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) groups took control of Afrin in March 2018 and have been accused of multiple human rights abuses.

A Pentagon Inspector General (IG) report covering the second quarter of 2020 (April 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020) said the US Department of State (DoS) remained concerned over reports of abuses by Turkish-backed groups this quarter, among them “arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, seizure of and resettlement of new populations in private properties, the repeated and deliberate shutting off of water access to half a million civilians, and transfer of arbitrarily-detained Syrians across an international border into Turkey.”

The DoS also stated its concern regarding reports of human rights abuses in Afrin, “including desecration of several Yezidi shrines, kidnapping for ransom of Yezidi and Kurdish women, and looting and vandalizing of homes and archaeological sites.”

The US State Department continued to raise these alleged violations with Turkey and to press for credible and transparent investigations of the allegations and for those responsible to be held accountable.

However, so far, there was no



A Turkey-backed Syrian fighter loots a shop after they captured the centre of Afrin canton in Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) from US-backed Kurdish forces, March 18, 2018. (Photo: AFP)

evidence the Syrian Interim Government – that supposedly controls these rebel groups – or the Turkish government that controls the area have taken credible actions to hold accountable crimes committed by these groups, the report said.

Only one 19-year-old fighter has been imprisoned for a series of high-profile abuses, it added.

Furthermore, the Pentagon watchdog said the US has not sanctioned any of these Turkish-backed groups involved in crimes “although the Executive Order on Syria-related Sanctions provides authority to do so if certain criteria are met, according to the DoS.”

This raises questions that the US State Department may have refrained from sanctioning these groups so not to placate NATO ally Turkey.

“The international community has refused to hold Turkey or affiliated armed groups accountable. In fact, many states still provide direct military to Turkey through NATO, and the Syrian Interim Government, which oversees the SNA, is still repre-

sented in international negotiations,” Meghan Bodette, an independent researcher, and founder of the “Missing Afrin Women Project” that so far has documented over 150 cases of women that have disappeared or have been kidnapped under Turkish rule in Afrin.

“There is widespread impunity for rights violations targeting women, Kurds, and religious minorities in Afrin. Turkey will not hold SNA (Syrian National Army) groups accountable for these crimes because Erdogan’s government targets the same communities within Turkey—often with the same brutal tactics.”

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Commissioner, Nadine Maenza, told Kurdistan 24 that during a USCIRF Congressional Hearing in June, they heard a testimony that documented human rights violations including murder, kidnap, rape, and forced religious conversions in areas Turkey and its allies occupy.

“Genocide Watch has even called the actions of Turkey and its allies war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

She added that these actions “warrant sanctions, even if the perpetrator is a NATO ally.”

Sinam Mohamed, the representative of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) in Washington DC, who is originally from Afrin, said the US could do more to hold Turkish-backed groups accountable.

She suggested a neutral committee be created with support from the US to investigate “violations in Afrin to hold groups accountable for their crimes, including killing, theft, [and] the kidnapping of women.”

Mohamed also said the people of Afrin should be compensated “for all the losses” and that the return of displaced people back to their homes is ensured.

“Where are they? Are they dead or still in prison?” Mohamed said about the fate of kidnapped women from Afrin.

“These groups will not bring any peace and stability to Syria or any other region they control. On the contrary, they only create chaos and fear wherever they are among civilians.”



August 6, 2020

In Europe for years, Kurdish activists at risk of deportation to Iran

Kurdish activist and asylum seeker Chiya Qaderi faces deportation to Iran from Norway. (Photo: Hengaw)

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – A human rights watchdog has reported that two Kurdish activists and asylum seekers, both residents of Scandinavian nations, are at risk of being deported to Iran where either would be highly likely to face political persecution.

Chiya Qaderi, born 1991, has been living in Denmark for 12 years and has never even been to Iran, a report by rights group Hengaw claimed on Tuesday. He was reportedly born to Iranian-Kurdish parents on Mount Qandil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq at the base of an armed group that opposes the Iranian government.

He also has never held an Iranian nationality identification card, the rights monitor added.

Norwegian police, following a court order, went to Qaderi's place of residence on June 31 to detain him. Hengaw said he had refused to go with the officers who gave him two weeks to appeal the court ruling to deport him to Iran.

Should the legal authorities reject the man's appeal, Qaderi would be sent to Iran, where he could face "serious consequences" from the Tehran government. His mother, according to the report, is a refugee in Norway as well. His father, however,



Kurdish activist and asylum seeker Chiya Qaderi faces deportation to Iran from Norway. (Photo: Hengaw)

died as a fighter for the opposition Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDKI).

The second individual has been an asylum seeker in Denmark since 2015 and was denied refugee status two years ago, the rights watchdog said. He has since been reportedly living in a camp for rejected applicants. Danish authorities have told him that he is to be deported back to Iran, the report added.

Mohammed Haidarpour, 35, who was born in the Kurdish-majority western region of Iran, told Hengaw that he is currently in "physical and mental distress." He said, however, that Danish authorities had assured him he would be in "no danger" if and when he returns to Iran. Such a claim is highly questionable, given Tehran's history of arrests and human rights abuses

against Iranian Kurds with connections to opposition groups.

Haidarpour also called on human rights organizations to come to his aid and prevent his deportation.

Hengaw claims it has recorded several instances of Kurdish activists being deported back to Iran from European countries. Iranian security forces allegedly killed one deportee under torture, the group said, and multiple others have either been sentenced to prison or their fate is unclear.

These two cases come as the Iranian government has intensified a crackdown campaign against Kurdish activists in recent months, imprisoning minority rights advocates by the dozens, even as the new coronavirus disease continues to spread

in detention facilities.

According to a separate report by the rights monitor, Iranian forces have arrested over 50 Kurds in July alone. Authorities have detained 47 of them on charges of political activism and connections with opposition groups. The rest are civil rights and religious freedom activists.

Executions, which Amnesty International says Tehran is increasingly using as "a weapon of repression," have also increased. The United Nations rights experts condemned as "unlawful" one of the killings, which it said, "took place in secret after an enforced disappearance."

At least ten death sentences against Kurdish prisoners were implemented in July. Two were political activists and the rest were convicted of premeditated murder.



August 5, 2020

Kurdish leaders, public warn of fresh wave of Arabization, land occupation in Kirkuk

Days after Kurdish villagers engaged in clashes with Arab families over land ownership claims in the disputed territories of Kirkuk and Salahaddin provinces, a senior Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader warned of a new wave of Arabization, urging Kurdish leadership to halt the phenomenon.

"Step by step, the resettled Arabs are being returned to the bulk of the disputed territories," Harem Kamal Agha, an MP and deputy head of the PUK bloc in Iraqi parliament, told Rudaw, describing the move as a "fresh plan" and "a new Arabization process" by Baghdad.

The PUK MP urged his party's leadership and that of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to cast their differences aside and halt the demographic change.

Clashes erupted Sunday south of Kirkuk between Kurdish villagers and more than a dozen Arab families who once lived in the area over claims of land ownership in the volatile region.

The dispute took place in Guli Tapa, a village located between Daquq in Kirkuk province and Tuz Khurmatu in Salahaddin province.

As part of its Arabization policy, Saddam Hussein's Baath regime constructed a village called Mahawsh for Arabs relocated from elsewhere in Iraq in the 1990s on Guli Tapa land belonging to Kurdish villagers. Arabs from elsewhere in Iraq



Kurdish farmers armed with sticks during Sunday's land dispute. Photo: Rudaw TV

were moved into the disputed areas of Kirkuk largely between 1970 and 1978. The Arabization of the province has historically been a flashpoint between Baghdad and the Kurds.

Following the collapse of the Baath regime in 2003, the resettled Arabs were returned to their areas of origin further south in Iraq, with land returned to the original Kurdish inhabitants, according to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution - designed to resolve disputes of territory claimed by Iraq's various ethnic and religious groups.

Lands that had been confiscated from Kurds and Turkmen were returned, while the Arabs who had been resettled were given financial compensation. According to figures provided by Kirkuk's Agriculture Department, more than 1.2 million dunams of agricultural land were returned to their owners who were mostly Kurds, along with some Turkmen after 2003.

However, since federal forces

took control of disputed territories including Kirkuk on October 16, 2017, Kurdish locals have alleged that a process of "re-arabization" is underway in the area.

A senior KDP official echoed the sentiment that the volatile region was headed towards a "dangerous explosion" in the wake of the return of the resettled Arabs, but warned that such disputes should be resolved on a state-level.

"We are calling on the Region's government and the federal government to tackle this issue according to law and the constitution and that it should not be left to this and that group, or this and that party to solve," said Kamal Kirkuki, a KDP politburo member.

In an effort to resolve land ownership disputes between various ethnic groups in Kirkuk province, the Iraqi Presidency announced the formation of a committee made up of government and parliament representatives on Monday, Jamal Shukur, a member of the Iraqi

Parliament from the PUK bloc, confirmed to Rudaw. Zuhair Ali, the head of Kirkuk's Agriculture Department, says the Iraqi Justice Ministry has started reviewing past land ownership documents, contracts and deeds, and will once again register them.

The mayor of the district of Daquq where the land dispute emerged described the Arabs as the indigenous inhabitants of the area.

"The Arabs are indigenous people from Kirkuk and their identification cards are from Daquq," Luis Sheikh Fandi, mayor of Daquq, told Rudaw, adding that they possess the "land ownership deeds".

Nazim Shamari, deputy head of the Arab Front in Kirkuk, claims however that "these Arabs are not the resettled Arabs and they carry Kirkuk residency and identification cards."

He says both sides - Kurds and Arabs - should at least reach "an intermediate solution".

"Let the court do the work and farmers show their land ownership documents. Whoever can prove the ownership should keep the land," he added.

The land ownership dispute and the alleged return of resettled Arabs has angered many in the Kurdistan Region.

"This is a continuation of Saddam Hussein's Arabization process," Salam Fatih, a retired government employee in Sulaimani, told Rudaw.



August 06, 2020

2 SDF killed in clashes with armed tribes in eastern Syria: commander

Two members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were killed in clashes with armed tribal men in Syria's eastern province of Deir ez-Zor after an Arab tribal leader was assassinated by unknown gunmen, exacerbating ethnic tensions in the region, according to a top commander of the Kurdish-led force.

The towns of Ziban, al-Shuhail, and al-Huwajj in eastern Deir ez-Zor have seen days of unrest after an Arab tribal leader, Sheikh Mutsher Hamud Jeidan al-Hifl, was killed by unknown gunmen. Security is a problem for the region that is under SDF control, but borders regime areas and is a hotspot of Islamic State (ISIS) activity.

Locals and members of the Agaidat tribe, of which the Sheikh was a prominent leader, protested his death on Tuesday. The demonstrations began peaceful but turned violent as they were joined by people carrying weapons and clashed with the SDF.

A top SDF commander in the province told Rudaw English on Thursday that two members of their force were killed. The commander, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, explained that the armed people who engaged with the SDF were not civilians or protesters but "saboteurs."

An SDF vehicle was blown up as well, Ahmad Abu Khawla, commander of the SDF-linked Deir ez-Zor Military Council told SDF-affiliated Hawar News Agency (ANHA).

Tensions between the Arab population of Deir ez-Zor and the Kurdish-dominated civilian and military leaders have simmered for months, but rarely turn violent.

The Sheikh was with another leader of the Agaidat tribe in Deir ez-Zor, Sheikh Ibrahim Khalil Jeidan al-Hifl, when they were attacked in al-Huwajj on August 2. The Sheikh was killed and his companion was injured. Their driver was also killed.

The SDF condemned the incident as a "terrorist" attack and blamed ISIS. In recent raids, the SDF arrested seven people suspected of being behind a number of attacks and kidnappings in the province. Conflict monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said six "civilians" were among those arrested by the SDF in al-Shuhail, "including a family of five people."

A military delegation of the SDF, Kurdish security (Asayesh), and the Global Coalition against ISIS visited the deceased Sheikh's family, the Rojava Information Center (RIC), a local observatory group, reported on Thursday that SDF, citing an unnamed source who was present at the meeting.

"SDF & Coalition said they would try their hardest to catch the killer, and [the tribe] agreed to this ... The Aqadat [Agaidat] tribe's people have agreed to stand off for a month. If the killer still isn't found, maybe they will start protesting again," said the source.

US representatives also met with a group of tribal leaders and dignitaries from Deir ez-Zor, according to the Observatory.

The US Embassy in Damascus, closed since the Syrian uprising in 2011, condemned the assassination of the tribal leader: "The United States condemns the attack on Sheikh Mutsher Hamud Jeidan al-Hifl and Sheikh Ibrahim Khalil Jeidan al-Hifl, two prominent members of the Agaidat tribe. We offer our sincerest condolences to the Agaidat tribe and the family of Sheikh Mutsher, who was killed in the attack, as well as to the family of his driver who was also killed. We hope that Sheikh Ibrahim makes a speedy recovery and that the perpetrators are brought to justice."

The civilian administration of Rojava, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES), said the Sheikh was killed to stir up tensions between Kurds and Arabs. It was a "cowardly terrorist act that targets the lives of Syrians to achieve malicious goals and agendas to create discord between the components and accelerate some entities hostile to the project of administration," read an NES statement.

SDF officials, commanders, and media have accused the Syrian regime, Russians, and Turkish-backed groups of encouraging unrest in the oil-rich province and trying to create disunity between Kurds and Arabs.

SDF lacks equality between Kurds, Arabs: Pentagon

A new Pentagon report said that most Arabs in SDF-held areas give the Kurdish-led force "passive support" as a "preferred alternative to ISIS or the Syrian regime," but that power-sharing between Kurds and Arabs "remains imbalanced."

The SDF and its civilian wing the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) have "made limited efforts to incorporate Arab military and civil leaders into their ranks," stated the report summarizing Coalition operations between April and June, 2020.

"[L]ocal Arabs occupy positions on SDF and SDC-associated military and civilian institutions, but they lack equal influence and feel excluded from military and political decision-making processes," the report added, highlighting the ethnic imbalance in Deir ez-Zor province.

Worsening economic conditions, increased ISIS activity, and uncertainty over the Coalition's mission are contributing to falling popular support for the SDF, according to the Pentagon.

Kurdish leaders have made public outreach to Arab communities, hosting a clan forum last year and meetings with tribal leaders.

Adnan Afrini, SDF commander in Deir ez-Zor declined to comment on the Pentagon report.



August 6, 2020

US Firm Secures Oil Deal with US-Backed Forces in Syria

A U.S. company has reportedly reached a deal with Kurdish-led authorities in northeast Syria to develop and export crude oil in areas under their control in the war-torn country.

A senior official at the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration in Northeast Syria said the deal was approved by the U.S. government.

“As per the deal, a refinery will be built in northeast Syria with a cost of \$150 million,” the Kurdish official told VOA on the condition of anonymity.

“The company will explore [for] oil in three locations in northeast Syria, including Rumeilan, Tel Hamees and Tel Brak,” the official added.

Delta Crescent Energy LLC is reportedly involved in the deal. VOA could not reach the company for comment.

‘Modernizing’ oil fields

Details about the agreement first emerged last week from U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a congressional hearing.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2020. ... Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, Aug. 5, 2020.

Pompeo, who was questioned about it by U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, said the U.S. government backs the deal, noting that it will modernize the oil fields in northeast Syria. The deal took a little longer ... than we had hoped, and now

we’re in implementation,” Pompeo said. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a major U.S. partner in the fight against Islamic State, controls much of the oil-rich region.

Following a partial U.S. troop withdrawal from northeast Syria in October 2019, President Donald Trump said he was keeping some forces there “to secure the oil.”

The U.S. has imposed several sanctions targeting companies that deliver or finance fuel shipments of Syrian oil for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

But the American company involved in the northeast Syria deal has reportedly received an exemption from the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control to operate in Syria.

Risky for the Kurds

Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma, said “it is good to see the U.S. actually invest in improving the region if, in fact, this is what the contract means.”

Landis, however, believes the deal has “no legal underpinning and no regional support, not from Turkey, Damascus, Iraq or Russia.”

He added, “The Kurds are too weak to sustain their control without U.S. military support, which will not be offered indefinitely. When the U.S. pulls out of Syria, as I suspect it will do in the coming years, it will abandon the collaborative elite that it is now assembling in Northeast Syria,” Landis told VOA. “This will come at a tremendous cost to those being asked to trust

and depend on the United States today,” he said. US soldiers stand at an oil field in the countryside of al-Qahtaniyah town in Syria’s northeastern Hasakeh province near the...

US soldiers stand at an oil field in the countryside of al-Qahtaniyah town in Syria’s northeastern Hasakeh province near the Turkish border, on Aug. 4, 2020.

Objections

The Syrian government, which does not recognize the SDF-led entity in the northeast, condemned the deal, describing it as stealing Syria’s oil.

“Syria considers this agreement null and void and has no legal effect. And it warns again that such despicable acts express the approach of those client militias which have accepted to be a cheap puppet in the hands of the U.S. occupation,” Syria’s Foreign Ministry said Sunday.

Turkey, which views Syrian Kurdish fighters as terrorists, also criticized the deal.

“We deeply regret the U.S. support to this step, disregarding international law, violating territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of Syria, as well as being considered within the scope of financing terrorism,” Turkey’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement Monday.

Iran, a staunch supporter of the Syrian government, described the deal as “a violation of Syrian sovereignty.”

“This is yet another step by [the US] to plunder Syria’s natural resources,” Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement Tuesday.

Stabilization efforts

Ahed al-Hendi, a Syrian affairs analyst based in Washington, said the oil deal will improve the lives of Syrians living in the northeast and that the U.S. decision to invest in Syria’s oil is not after the oil revenue in northeast Syria.

“Syria’s heavy crude oil is expensive to produce, and it’s not much to begin with,” he told VOA, “so apparently the U.S. is not after the oil revenue in northeast Syria.”

Most oil fields in Syria have been largely nonoperational since 2011 because of the ongoing war. Before the conflict, Syria produced around 380,000 barrels of crude oil per day.

A US armoured vehicle drives past an oil field in the countryside of al-Qahtaniyah town in Syria’s northeastern Hasakeh...

A US armoured vehicle drives past an oil field in the countryside of al-Qahtaniyah town in Syria’s northeastern Hasakeh province near the Turkish border, on Aug. 4, 2020.

In the SDF-held region, about 30,000 barrels are now being produced per day, according to local sources. The oil is mostly refined in primitive ways that cause environmental pollution and health concerns for the local population.

“Having American companies involved in the oil sector will certainly help in building modern refineries that are suitable for the Syrian oil,” Hendi said, noting that “much-needed oil derivatives will then be available at acceptable prices.”

Hendi added that improving the oil sector in Syria would be “a major factor for stability before a political transition takes place in the country.”



6 August, 2020
Karwan Faidhi Dri

Rojava sees coronavirus spike as it struggles to impose preventative measures

Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria (Rojava) reported 12 new cases of COVID-19 and two deaths on Friday, bringing the total number of cases to nearly 70 and the death toll to three. The spike of cases comes as people are not following measures to prevent spread of the virus. The situation is especially concerning in crowded camps sheltering displaced persons and alleged supporters or members of the Islamic State (ISIS).

The 12 new cases reported on Friday were all in the Jazeera Region, the northeastern corner bordering Turkey and the Kurdistan Region that is the epicenter of the virus in Rojava, co-chair of the health board Jwan Mustafa said.

The new cases bring the total number to 66 and the death toll to three, according to Mustafa.

The first two cases were recorded in April, but they recovered and the region appeared to be virus-free until late July when a new wave of infection occurred, possibly brought by travelers from Damascus.

Rojava authorities imposed a 10-day lockdown, beginning July 31, the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday. They also ordered the closure of popular gathering spots like cafes, sports halls, and swimming pools. Collective prayers at mosques were also banned. Later they announced more measures, banning traffic as well.

While the number of cases in Rojava is small, authorities are worried that their limited health resources will not be able to cope with widespread contagion. They have 11 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) devices for testing for coronavirus: six provided by Nechirvan Barzani president of



A young boy rides a bicycle in front of closes shops in Qamishli, northeastern Syria during a lockdown imposed by local authorities due to surging cases of infections by the novel coronavirus, on Aug 8, 2020. Photo: Delil Souleiman/ AFP

Kurdistan Region months ago and five donated through the Kurdish Red Crescent a few days ago.

Along with the five PCR devices, the Kurdish Red Crescent said they also had 500 coronavirus kits, enough for 25,000 tests. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also donated medical aid.

Rojava is home to hundreds of thousands of displaced people, mostly ISIS-affiliated women and children, as well as families displaced by conflict elsewhere in the country, living in camps.

The camps are very crowded. A doctor inside al-Hol camp, housing thousands of ISIS-affiliated women and children, told Rojava Information Center (RIC) on July 28 that it is "impossible" to impose social distancing rules because of the large numbers of people and their refusal to follow corona instructions.

"People live very close to each other, social distancing is not possible. Tents are very close, and the people living here visit each other continuously," said the doctor who did not want to be identified.

"Also, it's difficult to force people to stay inside their tent

for 14 days, it's not the same as keeping people inside a normal house. We hope no cases will happen, since the camp is already isolated. However, we will try to put more strict procedures and more training in the camp," added the doctor.

There were reports that health workers in al-Hol had tested positive for COVID-19. AFP reported on Thursday that nine health workers from the Kurdish Red Crescent have tested positive, including three new cases on August 3, citing David Swanson, a spokesman for the UN's humanitarian office (OCHA).

Health official Mustafa on Friday denied there were new cases within the Kurdish Red Crescent staff.

The general population of Rojava is also not adhering to preventative measures. The high costs of face masks, latex gloves, and disinfectants means most people cannot afford them, Rudaw TV reported from Qamishli. Many people are also indifferent to the threat of the virus.

Economic hardship coupled with limited health resources could spell a disaster for the whole country. The Syrian regime has confirmed 999 cases of coronavi-

rus and 48 deaths in areas under its control, though the actual numbers are likely much higher.

"There has been a massive spread among cities," the health ministry said, AFP reported, while in the provinces the government lacks the capacity for widespread testing.

After nine years of war, Syria's healthcare sector is battered. Hospitals, which in rebel-held areas have been deliberately targeted in bombings, are filling up with coronavirus patients.

Sanctions imposed against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad are contributing to spread of the virus, a group of United Nations experts said in a statement on Thursday.

"Sanctions that were imposed in the name of delivering human rights are in fact killing people and depriving them of fundamental rights, including the rights to health, to food and to life itself," said Alena Douhan, special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.

Sanctions on nations like Syria and Iran "should be lifted – or at a minimum eased – so people can get basics like soap and disinfectants to stay healthy, and so that hospitals can get ventilators and other equipment to keep people alive," she said.

Syria "is at the edge of a severe uncontrolled outbreak of the pandemic," predicted the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in a report published this week.

Because of limited measures imposed to contain the virus, LSE predicts around 2 million active cases by the end of August if action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is not taken.



For the Turkish government, Kurdish Art and Culture is a threat

"I know many Kurdish artists. They had to hide their identity as Kurds. And many people wouldn't even mention their real city. They'd say "I'm from Istanbul", or they'd lose the possibility to do shows in big cities like Izmir. Many adapted to the government. People would change their subjects to be closer to Turkish culture. Many people in Diyarbakir struggle to have shows because of politics and also because we don't have support for the Kurdish art community." These are the words of Lukman Ahmed, a prominent Kurdish artist, originally based in South-Eastern Turkey, and now working for Voice of America in Washington D.C. Ahmed spent much of his artistic career in his native of Rojava, the Kurdish region in Syria, as well as the Kurdish region in Iraq and Turkey. Like many other Kurdish artists, Ahmed uses his art to express his identity as a Kurd, as others, such as the famed singer Ahmet Kaya, sought to do as well. However, his words show how difficult this is for a Kurdish artist inside Turkey, both due to direct state opposition, and the prevailing view within Turkish society that Kurdish expression, dissent, and freedom is a path to the division of the Turkish state, which its founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, sought so desperately to avoid after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

With the current leadership of President Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey has shifted towards a Neo-Ottoman and Islamist identity, not only seeking to crush its perceived enemies within its own borders, but also seeking to revise borders and regain influence in former Ottoman territories. Part of this transformation of the Turkish state is strictly controlling cultural expression and art, and thereby sti-



Kurdish art by Lukman Ahmad www.lukmanahmad.net

fling freedom of speech. Despite initially relaxing restrictions, ever since the renewed conflict with the Kurdistan WorkerS' Party (PKK) began again in 2015, repression has come back in a harsh way. In majority-Kurdish areas, the AKP has fired or arrested over 80 mayors that were democratically elected and replaced them with appointees loyal to the ruling party. Furthermore, over 80 percent of municipal staff in these areas that promoted the teaching of the Kurdish language, along with other minority languages, have been fired. Statues of prominent Kurdish heroic figures have been removed, streets renamed, and some artists jailed for paintings perceived as opposing the view of the government.

Kurds have faced extensive cultural repression throughout their history. Up until 1991, the official government policy was to deny the existence of Kurds, referring to them as "Mountain Turks". Kurdish language use in public life was banned for many years, and today continues to be censored, with Kurdish language courses being forbidden from being taught. The only Kurdish-language newspaper in Turkey, Azadiya Welat, was closed in 2016. Even Zarok TV, a Kurdish channel that played cartoons for children, was briefly shut down

before being re-open.

The government of Turkey has always used the same excuse as motivation for all of these actions, against Kurdish television channels, artists, journalists, etc. That reasoning is that all of them were either directly working for or sympathizing with the PKK. Erdogan's government constantly reminds the world that his state has no problem with Kurds, but only with terrorists. However, it is difficult to perceive how a children's cartoon show could, 80% of municipal language teachers, as well as artists expressing their identity can be connected to terrorism. Lukman Ahmed said "A few times in Istanbul people would say "this is more politics than art". I said that politics is part of our life and you have to be a witness to that. All of it is covered by the Turkish government's political umbrella". It appears that this umbrella seeks to cover all of society within the borders of the Republic of Turkey, from journalism, to education, and to art, in order to more fully dominate public life. With the government so opposed to Kurdish expressions of culture, it is difficult for Kurdish artists such as Ahmed to find legal protection for their art as well. Neither the state nor many prominent members of the Turkish artistic community (who

could potentially be sponsors for artists) are willing to speak out and defend Kurdish art. Ahmed himself has recently faced a brazen attempt at plagiarism by another Turkish artist by the name of "Mehmet Yuçel". It is clear based on the image that several paintings have been copied to a large extent. However, when faced with such hostility from the Turkish art community, and a government that is more interested in keeping non-Turkish identities weak as opposed to promoting the cultural diversity found within its borders, how is an artist, even one as prominent as Ahmed, to secure and protect the rights to his own work?

The Turkish government does not only consider the militant resistance of the PKK as being a "terrorist" threat to Turkey. It is also the efforts by Kurds to develop their own, independent civil society organizations, from the Kurdish Institute of Istanbul, to the Azadiya Welat news channel, and even to the HDP political party, that represents Kurdish and minority interests in Turkey's Grand National Assembly. When a country develops its identity around an authoritarian ethno-nationalism, such as Turkey, or Assad's Syrian Arab Republic, Or Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist Iraq, it cannot allow challenges to this status quo. The idea of Assad's Syria is a united, Arabic country that emphasizes this Arab identity. If the existence of a separate, non-Arab ethnic and cultural identity is admitted to exist by a regime that stakes its entire identity and existence on Arab nationalism, and if this group is allowed to develop its own cultural and political civil society organizations, it will inherently become less dependent on the regime.

The same can be said for Tur-

key, where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk moved towards Turkish nationalism, away from the Islamism of the Ottoman Empire. The integrity of the Turkish state was emphasized as essential, and this has only been expanded upon by President Erdogan and his Neo-Ottoman ambitions within the region. It is this mindset that has led to any discussions or attempts at autonomy and/or independence by the Kurdish minority to be harshly cracked down upon. At the end of 2016, on December 31st, 94 associations, including the Kurdish Institute of Istanbul, were shut down due to allegations regarding "connections to a terrorist organization".

Nevertheless, in some regards, there is still reason to be optimistic. In many ways, the situation for Kurds in Turkey is still not nearly as drastic as it once was. According to Abdullah Keskin, who is the leader of Avesta, Turkey's largest Kurdish-language publisher, his company published more Kurdish-language books in 2016 than the entire Kurdish community in Turkey was able to publish in the first 60 years following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Recent actions though, are "a kind of coup against Kurdish language and culture" according to him.

Overall, culture has been used

by different ethnic and religious minorities around the world to express themselves and protest at their conditions since time immemorial. The Kurds within Turkey, and also those that find themselves within the borders of Syria, Iraq, and Iran, are no different. Individuals such as Lukman Ahmed and Abdullah Keskin have used art to show their respective governments, as well as the world, that their identity is real and that their people do exist. Art and culture are crucial in terms of their use as forms of protest, the ability of art and culture to keep an identity alive through language, stories, etc, and also in terms of the ability of art and culture to create an au-

tonomous civil society for its respective ethnic or religious identity. The institutes, schools, television networks, eventually help to further expand and promote an identity, to a point where authoritarian regimes will brazenly censor, shut down, and arrest those involved with such activities. It is essential that the Kurds of all four parts of Kurdistan, but especially Turkey, continue to express themselves as Kurdish people in the arts and culture, in order to keep their language, culture, stories, etc alive and able to resist the repression of those who would keep them censored.

Le Monde

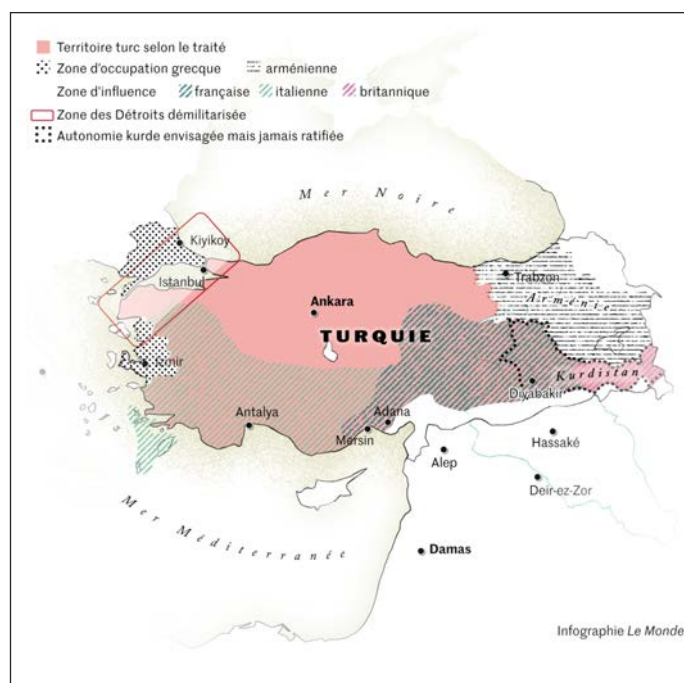
9 Août 2020
Pierre Filiu

Le centenaire de la reconnaissance internationale du Kurdistan

Le traité de Sèvres, imposé à l'empire ottoman le 10 août 1920, établissait un Kurdistan autonome, prélude à un éventuel Etat indépendant.

Cela fait aujourd'hui un siècle que le Kurdistan a été reconnu par les puissances européennes. Cette légitimation internationale participait d'un véritable démantèlement du territoire turc par le traité signé à Sèvres, le 10 août 1920. Le diktat alors imposé à l'Empire ottoman continue de nourrir la politique revancharde et les ambitions régionales de la Turquie actuelle, ainsi que vient de le mettre en lumière un passionnant dossier du « Monde », dont la carte ci-dessus est tirée. La dimension kurde de cet héritage historique mérite aussi d'être étudiée en tant que telle, car elle continue de peser sur les évolutions du Moyen-Orient.

DES FRONTIÈRES TRACÉES ENTRE KURDES ET ARMÉNIENS



Le sultan Abdulhamid II, au pouvoir de 1876 à 1909, avait maté les derniers soulèvements kurdes, mais en contrepartie d'un recrutement de ces tribus dans une cavalerie « hamidienne », dévouée au seul souverain, qui l'utilisait volenti-

ers pour réprimer les populations arméniennes. Cette collaboration de supplétifs kurdes s'est aggravée lors du génocide arménien de 1915-17 et de l'extermination des Assyriens d'Anatolie. Le « Comité pour le relèvement du Kurdis-

tan » (KTC) émerge en 1918 en alternative nationaliste à un tel leadership traditionnel, compromis avec les pires crimes du régime ottoman. Le représentant du KTC à Paris, Chérif Pacha, est lui-même un ancien diplomate ottoman, qui a dénoncé dès 1915 le génocide arménien. Il négocie avec la délégation arménienne à la Conférence de paix de Paris le tracé des frontières à venir entre une Arménie et un Kurdistan indépendants.

Ce tracé est repris dans le traité de Sèvres, qui établit une Arménie bel et bien indépendante, mais ne reconnaît qu'un statut d' « autonomie locale pour les régions où domine l'élément kurde, situées à l'est de l'Euphrate et au sud de la frontière méridionale de l'Arménie ». Une telle autonomie, mise en oeuvre sous l'égide de la France, de la Grande-Bretagne et de l'Italie, devra comporter des garanties pour les minorités non-kurdes, au premier rang desquelles les Ass-

yriens. Au bout d'un délai d'un an, la majorité de la population kurde pourra revendiquer son indépendance auprès de la Société des Nations (SDN), une revendication qui, si elle est entérinée par la SDN, devra être pleinement reconnue par l'Etat turc. La SDN vient par ailleurs de confier à la France et à la Grande-Bretagne des « mandats » sur la Syrie, pour la première, et sur l'Irak, pour la seconde.

DES ENTITES KURDES EXCLUES DU NOUVEAU KURDISTAN

Ce Kurdistan, dont l'autonomie peut déboucher sur l'indépendance, n'inclut pourtant pas deux entités où des chefs séparatistes imposent alors une administration kurde. Il s'agit d'abord d'Ismail Agha, dit Simko, qui contrôle, de 1918 à 1922, un territoire largement kurde dans le nord-ouest de l'Empire perse. Plus ambitieux encore est Mahmoud Barzanji, qui se soulève en 1919 contre les Britanniques dans le nord de l'Irak. Malgré la répression de cette première insurrection, il parvient à établir, en 1922, un « royaume du Kurdistan », avec pour capitale Sulay-

manya. Ces deux entités kurdes finissent néanmoins pas tomber sous les coups du centralisme persan, d'une part, et du mandat britannique sur l'Irak, d'autre part.

Le caractère léonin du traité de Sèvres provoque un sursaut nationaliste autour de Mustafa Kemal, le futur Atatürk (le père des Turcs). Les accords passés en 1921 entre Ankara, la nouvelle capitale turque, et Moscou, Paris et Rome, permettent à Kemal de concentrer contre la Grèce sa campagne militaire, victorieuse en 1922. La Turquie consolide ses frontières avec l'URSS, qui absorbe une « république d'Arménie » désormais soviétisée, et avec la Syrie, où elle abandonne la guérilla nationaliste face à la France (la résistance anticoloniale est alors menée par le Kurde Ibrahim Hanano, qui se considère Syrien avant tout). Le traité de Sèvres est abrogé, en 1923, au profit du traité de Lausanne qui consacre Kemal et sa République turque. Le grand récit national associe dès lors en Turquie les revendications kurdes au « complot » de Sèvres. La politique de turquification

systématique, qui réduit les Kurdes à n'être plus que des « Turcs des montagnes », entraîne différents soulèvements dans le Sud-est du pays, écrasés l'un après l'autre.

L'HERITAGE AMBIGU DE SEVRES

Les Kurdes étaient divisés en 1920 sur le projet d'un Kurdistan autonome sur une partie seulement des territoires majoritairement kurdes. Mais ils sont aujourd'hui unanimes à dénoncer la « trahison » des puissances européennes qui, après les avoir soutenus à Sèvres, les ont abandonnés à Lausanne. Ils y voient la confirmation de leur tragique isolement international, résumé par un adage devenu fameux: « Les seuls amis des Kurdes sont les montagnes ». La réalité est pourtant, en 1920-23, que les entités kurdes de Perse et d'Irak n'ont bénéficié d'aucun soutien des Kurdes d'Anatolie, dont une partie s'est d'ailleurs ralliée à Mustafa Kemal, dans l'espoir, vite déçu, d'une alliance turco-kurde sur le modèle « hamidien ». Il faudra attendre 1946 pour qu'une éphémère « république

kurde » voit le jour à Mahabad, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, avec le soutien de militants venus d'Irak, dénommés alors peshmergas (ceux qui vont au devant de la mort).

Cette première manifestation de solidarité kurde, par-delà les frontières, sera pourtant loin d'être la règle: durant les décennies suivantes, des Kurdes d'Irak se rallieront souvent au pouvoir en place à Téhéran pour mener leur lutte contre Bagdad, alors que des Kurdes d'Iran effectueront le choix inverse, quitte à s'opposer aux peshmergas du pays voisin. Aujourd'hui encore, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), qui domine le gouvernement autonome du nord de l'Irak, tolère les raids menés sur son territoire par l'armée turque contre les maquis du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), né en Turquie en 1978. Dans de telles conditions, la référence au traité mort-né de Sèvres est plutôt de l'ordre de l'incantatoire. Et ce centenaire de la reconnaissance internationale du Kurdistan risque fort d'être bien peu célébré.

The Washington Post

August 10, 2020

Analysis | A century-old treaty haunts the Mediterranean

Want smart analysis of the most important news in your inbox every weekday, along with other global reads, interesting ideas and opinions to know? Sign up for the Today's World-View newsletter.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan attends Friday prayers at Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Istanbul on Friday. (Presidential Press Office/Reuters) A hundred years ago, French, British and Italian officials convened in a famous porcelain

factory southwest of Paris to carve up the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed Aug. 10, 1920, concluded months of fitful negotiations among the victors of World War I and paved the way for the remaking of the modern Middle East. It imposed terms on the defeated Ottomans widely seen as even more punitive than the measures dictated to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles earlier that year, forcing the empire to rescind all its claims to lands in the Middle East and North Africa.

Britain and France marked out separate zones of colonial influence from the deserts of Arabia to the Black Sea, motivated not least by their desire for lucrative oil concessions. Greece and Italy secured their own holdings in what's now western and southern Turkey, including retaining control over myriad Aegean islands. Istanbul, once the capital of a transcontinental imperial juggernaut, would be internationalized along with the strategic straits that the city straddles. Ethnic Armenians

and Kurds would be granted their own enclaves, while the Ottomans were left with a humiliating rump state in the Anatolian hinterland.

The blueprint set out by the treaty had a lasting legacy, in part prefiguring the borders and political futures of countries like Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. But it's not remembered in the West as much as, say, the infamous clandestine Sykes-Picot pact, because of what followed in Turkey. Nationalists in the Ottoman ranks,

led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, rejected Sèvres and waged a series of wars that cast out the French, Greeks and Italians from Anatolia and compelled the Europeans to settle on new terms with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which defined Turkey's modern borders. Nevertheless, the memory of colonial Western schemes to deprive Turkey of sovereignty — and the armed struggle needed to foil them — still stalks the Turkish political imagination.

“Sèvres has been largely forgotten in the West, but it has a potent legacy in Turkey, where it has helped fuel a form of nationalist paranoia some scholars have called the ‘Sèvres syndrome.’” wrote Nicholas Danforth, a historian of 20th-century Turkey, in a 2015 piece marking the 95th anniversary of the treaty's signing. “Sèvres certainly plays a role in Turkey's sensitivity over Kurdish separatism, as well as the belief that the Armenian genocide — widely used by European diplomats to justify their plans for Anatolia in 1920 — was always an anti-Turkish conspiracy rather than a matter of historical truth.”

The treaty looms even larger now. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has a penchant for posturing over historic symbols, began meeting toward the end of last year with the leader of the U.N.-backed government in Libya in a former palace of Ottoman sultans in Istanbul. In the aftermath of one of these sessions, Erdoğan explicitly linked his government's newly emboldened foreign policy to a moment of historical reckoning. “Thanks to this military and energy cooperation, we overturned the Treaty of Sèvres,” he said, hailing his country's willingness to once more project power across the Mediterranean.



Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan attends Friday prayers at Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque in Istanbul on Friday. (Presidential Press Office/Reuters)

In the months since, Turkish drones and military support have helped the Tripoli-based government turn the tide of battle in Libya's messy civil war. Erdoğan, thanks to Libyan backing, has secured maritime exploration and potential oil drilling rights in the Eastern Mediterranean that put Turkey into a new tussle with other countries in the region, including Greece, Egypt, Cyprus and France. The new Turkish claims clash with those of Greece and Cyprus and flared long-running tensions among these troubled neighbors.

“A key driver of Turkey's behavior is that, with the exception of the Tripoli government that controls half of war-torn Libya, Ankara—also involved in military action in Syria and Iraq—has virtually no allies in the region,” explained the Wall Street Journal's Yaroslav Trofimov. “The first regional organization to cooperate on energy development, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum that was established last year, unites Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Greece, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Italy. France, a vocal opponent of Turkey's

aims in the region and whose Navy frigate had a standoff with three Turkish vessels off Libya in June, has also applied for membership.”

France has tacitly backed the renegade Libyan general Khalifa Hifter and French President Emmanuel Macron has engaged in a war of words with Erdoğan over their geopolitical differences, no matter their partnership as nominal NATO allies. While Turkish strategists conjure the idea of a “blue homeland” — an expansionist vision of Turkish rights and claims in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea — officials in Athens, another nominal NATO ally, speak openly of the real prospect of military conflict with Turkey.

As Cold War bonds fade, older realities are coming to the fore. When Macron toured Beirut after the explosion last week, promising to help deliver a new political status quo for an infuriated Lebanese public, it was a reminder of the potency still of the French legacy in its former protectorate — and a welcome exercise of soft power for a president more tor-

mented at home.

For Erdoğan, the current squabbles are part of a nationalist power play that's hardly unique to Turkey. “Turkish foreign policy is increasingly coercive and maximalist,” Yohanan Benhaim, a Paris-based Turkish scholar, told French daily *Le Monde* in a piece that explored Erdoğan's “revenge” on Sèvres. “It echoes what we see in other countries, the position of Israel which wants to annex the West Bank, and that of Russia, which annexed Crimea. International order is called into question. What we are witnessing in Turkey is only the translation of a global phenomenon, the questioning of the status quo and the international order which prevailed until then.”

In a column responding to the *Le Monde* piece, Ibrahim Karagul, a hard-line Turkish commentator, suggested the Western media wasn't “wrong” in spotlighting the weight of Sèvres on Turkey's newly assertive foreign policy. “It is closing the century-old bracket,” Karagul wrote of Erdoğan's agenda. “It is parting the doors to new centuries.”

Les Kurdes et le syndrome turc

Vivant sur leurs propres territoires, dans des principautés sous domination de l'Empire ottoman et de l'Empire perse, les Kurdes ont connu pour la première fois, il y a tout juste 100 ans, la possibilité de créer leur propre Etat grâce au Traité de Sèvres, qui mettait fin à la Première Guerre mondiale sur le front du Moyen-Orient. Traité qui n'a jamais été respecté.

Un siècle plus tard, alors que l'actuelle armée turque mène des opérations militaires dans les quatre parties du Kurdistan [turc, irakien, iranien et syrien] pour briser leur espoir de liberté, les Kurdes espèrent surmonter les effets du Traité de Lausanne qui, en 1923, a annulé celui de Sèvres. Les Kurdes irakiens se battent pour protéger leur entité fédérale, reconnue par la Constitution irakienne. Leurs frères du Rojava [Kurdistan syrien] subissent les politiques du marteau et de l'enclume entre Damas et Ankara. Quant aux Kurdes d'Iran et de Turquie, leurs revendications identitaires autonomistes pâtissent des politiques négationnistes et des répressions de la part de deux régimes islamo-nationalistes – l'Iran chiite d'une part et la Turquie sunnite d'autre part.

Kurdistan ottoman amputé

Après la Première Guerre mondiale et la chute de l'Empire ottoman, quelques Etats-nations ont été créés. En mars 1920, Constantinople (Istanbul) est occupée par les Français et les Britanniques. L'avenir de la région est largement entre les mains des puissances occidentales. Afin d'obtenir des conditions de paix clémentes, le dernier sultan ottoman, Mehmet VI (dit Vahdettin) décide de coopérer avec les Alliés. L'Angleterre et

la France, deux des puissances victorieuses de la Grande Guerre, ont promis l'indépendance aux Kurdes et aux Arméniens. Le 10 août 1920, un traité de paix est signé à Sèvres, en France, entre la Turquie ottomane vaincue et les puissances occidentales qui l'ont acculée à la défaite à la suite de l'armistice de Moudros, conclu le 30 octobre 1918.

Le Traité de Sèvres, qui confirme l'armistice et entérine le démembrement de l'Empire ottoman, prévoit notamment la création d'une Arménie indépendante (section VI, Arménie, art. 88 à 93) et d'un Kurdistan autonome en Turquie, mais qui pourra toutefois devenir indépendant sous certaines conditions (section III, Kurdistan, art. 62 à 64). La décision de créer ces deux entités a été prise par le Conseil suprême des Alliés lors de sa réunion à Londres en février 1920.

Le même Conseil, réuni en avril 1920 à San Remo, a attribué à l'Angleterre le mandat sur «l'Irak et le vilayet (département) de Mossoul» – la distinction entre ce vilayet et l'Irak étant une question liée aux ressources pétrolières. Le statut du Kurdistan est au cœur de la question kurde actuelle en Irak, dans le contexte de l'occupation de Mossoul par l'Organisation d'Etat islamique (EI) et compte tenu des ambitions néo-ottomanes de la Turquie de Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Le mandat sur la Syrie et le Liban a été reçu par la France, et l'Arménie a été placée sous mandat des Etats-Unis. Les dispositions du Traité de Sèvres ne précisent pas les frontières des entités politiques à créer, à l'exception de quelques vagues indications générales. Tout est renvoyé à plus

tard (lire ci-dessous le texte du Traité de Sèvres).

Les dispositions internationales amputent donc le Kurdistan ottoman, autonome ou indépendant, de régions considérables. Et le Kurdistan iranien n'est point mentionné, la Perse n'ayant pas participé à la guerre.

Les articles 88 et 89 du traité, relatifs à l'Arménie – dont le peuple a subi le premier grand génocide du XXe siècle, perpétré par l'Empire turco-ottoman –, désignent les frontières avec la Turquie. Les vilayets de Van, Bitlis et Erzeroum déterminent la frontière entre le Kurdistan turc qui serait devenu autonome, le cas échéant indépendant, et cette même Arménie. Thomas Woodrow Wilson, président des Etats-Unis, ne tardera pas à désigner les frontières jusqu'à Trébizonde, sans consultation préalable de leurs populations.

Surréalisme

En évoquant le Traité de Sèvres, on ne peut s'empêcher de penser que son aboutissement tient du surréalisme: «On a donc créé à Paris une Arménie indépendante sans Arméniens, un Kurdistan autonome sur papier et, au surplus, amputé ces deux entités des deux-tiers de leurs territoires». 1 Ismet Chérif Vanly (discours), Conférence internationale sur le Traité de Lausanne et ses conséquences à l'occasion du 75e anniversaire du Traité, les 24-25 juillet 1998, Lausanne.

Selon le traité, la Turquie proprement dite est démembrée, réduite politiquement à l'état de protectorat, et limitée à l'Anatolie centrale avec Ankara, et un littoral sur la mer Noire. Dans un tel contexte, Mustafa Kemal Pacha se lève pour défendre la patrie turque.

Il initie son mouvement depuis Erzeroum afin d'obtenir le soutien des Kurdes qui ne veulent d'aucune manière être placés sous un gouvernement arménien, protégé par les Etats-Unis. Mustafa Kemal crée une «Association pour la défense des provinces orientales» et se pose en défenseur de «la Nation ottomane» menacée et d'une «communauté islamique fraternelle de Kurdes et de Turcs» dont les droits ethniques seraient respectés. Au congrès d'Erzeroum d'août 1919, il flatte les délégués kurdes, qui le soutiennent.

Bénéficiant aussi de l'aide, en or et en armement, envoyée par le jeune gouvernement soviétique, les troupes kémalistes remportent la victoire sur le front du Caucase. Les Kurdes participent aussi aux combats sur le front ouest, où les forces grecques seront défaites quelques mois avant l'ouverture de la Conférence de la paix à Lausanne. Inutile de dire que les Kurdes seront trompés par les kémalistes lors des négociations de cette conférence, ainsi qu'à l'occasion du traité signé le 24 juillet 1923 à Lausanne.

C'est ce traité qui a biffé celui de Sèvres. Les Arméniens et les Kurdes, qui étaient agréés à la Conférence de la paix à Sèvres, n'ont pas été invités, même à titre d'observateurs. Il va pourtant s'agir, à Lausanne, de leurs intérêts vitaux et de leur destin. Compte tenu des promesses qui leur ont été faites par les puissances sorties victorieuses de la guerre, cette attitude s'apparente à une trahison, à une lâcheté qu'on préfère appeler «raison d'Etat». La Turquie otage du «syndrome de Sèvres» Le dépeçage de l'Empire ottoman après la Première Guerre mondiale reste une «profonde

humiliation» pour le peuple turc. Tous les dirigeants turcs de gauche comme de droite utilisent cette rhétorique nationaliste face aux masses populaires ou dans les manuels scolaires: «invasion de l'extérieur, trahison des minorités chrétiennes, trahison des élites ottomanes elles-mêmes».

Le récit nationaliste qui découle de cette historiographie illustrée par le «Nutuk», ce discours fleuve que Mustafa Kemal a prononcé en octobre 1927 à l'Assemblée nationale, intègre ces éléments selon une ligne historique simple, qui forme la base de l'éducation nationale et de la vision politique régénérant et protégeant tout à la fois le pays. La modernisation forcée, l'étatisme, l'homogénéisation culturelle et l'exaltation du caractère national turc fondent l'utopie de la modernité kémaliste. «Peut-être ne se distancie-t-elle pas des idéologies fascistes de son temps que sur un point: elle n'est pas impérialiste», selon Dorothee Schmidt, spécialiste de la Turquie.² Dorothee Schmidt, «Turquie: le syndrome de Sèvres, ou la guerre qui n'en finit pas», Politique étrangère 2014/1 (Printemps), Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI).

Or les rêves impérialistes néo-ottomans, d'une part, et l'instrumentalisation du Traité de Sèvres à des fins tactiques, de l'autre, sont devenus des pratiques banales en Turquie. C'est en via cette instrumentalisation que le gouvernement islamo-nationaliste de Recep Tayyip Erdogan mène ses guerres de reconquête au Rojava syrien et au Kurdistan irakien et iranien sous prétexte de la lutte contre «le terrorisme».

Ces politiques sécuritaires et nationalistes, fort utiles en temps de crise économique et politique pour attiser les plaies du «syndrome de Sèvres»,



Mobilisation des Kurdes de Suisse contre le Traité de Lausanne en juillet 2018, à Lausanne. KEYSTONE

sont les nouveaux instruments populistes de l'homme fort d'Ankara. Le président turc, qui déploie également ses troupes dans le conflit syrien ainsi que des milices djihadistes sur le front libyen, entend plus que jamais rétablir la puissance de la Turquie afin d'avoir la main sur les ressources énergétiques vitales pour l'Europe.

Quant aux Kurdes, divisés entre quatre Etats de la région, ils continuent à revendiquer leurs droits à l'autodétermination, tout en rappelant au monde civilisé ses devoirs politiques et moraux envers cette grande nation privée d'Etat, forte de plus de 35 millions d'âmes. Un siècle après le Traité de Sèvres, pendant que la carte du Moyen-Orient est redessinée par les mêmes acteurs historiques, les Kurdes vont-ils en profiter?

Ihsan Kurt est Président de l'Association pour le fonds kurde Ismet Chérif Vanly (AFKIV), Prilly (VD). Le Traité de Sèvres

Ont assisté à la signature de ce «Traité de paix entre les Puissances alliées et associées et la Turquie», non ratifié, l'Angleterre, la France, l'Italie, le Japon, l'Arménie, la Belgique, la Grèce, l'Hedjaz (Arabie), la Pologne, le Portugal, la Roumanie, l'Etat serbe-croate-slo-

vene, la Tchéco-Slovaquie et la Turquie. Dans la section III, Kurdistan, a été décidé:

«Article 62: Une commission siégeant à Constantinople et composée de trois membres respectivement nommés par les gouvernements britannique, français et italien, préparera, dans les six mois à dater de la mise en vigueur du présent traité, l'autonomie locale pour les régions, où domine l'élément kurde, situées à l'est de l'Euphrate, au sud de la frontière méridionale de l'Arménie, telle qu'elle pourra être déterminée ultérieurement, et au nord de la frontière de la Turquie avec la Syrie et la Mésopotamie, conformément à la description donnée à l'article 27, II-2e et 3e. A défaut d'accord unanime sur quelques questions, celles-ci seront référées par les membres de la Commission à leurs gouvernements respectifs. Ce plan devra comporter des garanties complètes pour la protection des Assyro-Chaldéens et autres minorités ethniques ou religieuses dans l'intérieur de ces régions et, dans ce but, une commission comprenant des représentants britannique, français, italien, persan et kurde visitera les lieux pour examiner et décider quelles rectifications, s'il y a lieu, devraient être faites à la frontière de la Turquie là où, en vertu

des dispositions du présent traité, cette frontière coïncide avec celle de la Perse. [...]

Article 64: 1) Si dans le délai d'un an à dater de la mise en vigueur du présent traité, la population kurde, dans les régions visées à l'article 62, s'adresse au Conseil de la Société des Nations en démontrant qu'une majorité de la population de ces régions désire être indépendante de la Turquie, et si le Conseil estime alors que cette population est capable de cette indépendance, et s'il recommande de la lui accorder, la Turquie s'engage, dès à présent, à se conformer à cette recommandation et à renoncer à tous droits et titres sur ces régions.

2) Les détails de cette renonciation seront l'objet d'une convention spéciale entre les principales puissances alliées et la Turquie.

3) Si ladite renonciation a lieu et lorsqu'elle aura lieu, aucune objection ne sera élevée par les principales puissances alliées à l'encontre de l'adhésion volontaire à cet Etat kurde indépendant, des Kurdes habitant la partie du Kurdistan comprise jusqu'à présent dans le vilayet de Mossoul.» Sèvres, 10 août 1920



August 9, 2020

Turkish opposition leader accuses ruling AKP of turning Kurdish problem into quagmire

The leader of Turkish opposition Future Party Ahmet Davutoğlu on Sunday criticised the government for turning the country's Kurdish problem into a quagmire and vowed education in the Kurdish language.

"We are going to end the order of those who established power by confining you to poverty and fear," news site Duvar quoted the former ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as saying during a party congress in Turkey's Kurdish majority southeastern province of Diyarbakır.

Davutoğlu's Future Party, a breakaway from the AKP, is



seeking to capture votes from the ruling party's support base, including Kurds, who make up some 10 to 15 percent of the country's population.

The Future Party leader, who greeted the residents of the Diyarbakır in Kurdish, promised

education in the Kurdish language, referring to a recent ban on theses in Kurdish in the city's Dicle University.

"How is it that you are not bothered by theses being written in foreign languages in the departments of English, German

and French language and literature, but the writing of a thesis in Kurdish, the pure language of this land, bothers you?" Davutoğlu said.

The Future Party believes that education in one's mother tongue is an integral part of maintaining social peace and a sense of belonging, he said.

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been fighting for self-rule in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey for more than three decades. Some 40,000 people, most of them Kurds, are believed to have been killed in the conflict.



August 9, 2020

The unbearable weight of being Kurdish

Ava Homa's powerful debut novel "Daughters of Smoke and Fire" tells the story of Leila Saman, growing up in Mariwan, Iran, a mainly Kurdish city of 90,000 people about 15 km from the Iraqi border.

The book opens on the day five-year-old Leila's brother Chia is born, which happens to be March 16, 1988 - the day Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein launched a chemical attack on Halabja, killing thousands of people, mostly Kurds, and injuring thousands more with nerve agents and mustard gas in the waning days of the Iran-Iraq war.

Halabja happens to be the hometown of Leila's father, who ends up weeping on the

day his only son is born. Immediately the reader gets the sense that few moments of joy in this world will go unsullied by darkness.

"One of the things you learn as a Kurd is that even when you have a little bit of joyful time, happy time, some freedom, it is going to crash," Homa told Ahval in a podcast.

Since its publication in May, Homa's novel has received mostly rave reviews. The Independent described it as "blisteringly powerful" and named it one of the best books of May, while former U.S. ambassador Peter Galbraith called it "one of the best books to come out of the Near East in a long time".

Grief and suffering are as regular as the sunrise in Homa's Kurdistan. Leila's grandfather watches Iraqi authorities wipe out his family. Then Leila's father sees friends and relatives hung in prison, before finally Leila herself sees the person she's closest to executed.

Homa, who fled Iran at age 24, has written that growing up Kurdish in Iran she learned at a young age that being alive was an act of subversion, that her life meant next to nothing to the state or the police - the very people whose responsibility it was to protect her.

"It's a question that you deal with from the moment you learn your name, you know

that you belong to this group that has been targeted for annihilation," she said. "You are wondering, 'Why? How can I make meaning out of it? Why am I so hated? How can I be strong?'"

Homa's novel examines how the four members of the Saman family - Leila, her brother Chia, her father Alan and her mother Hana - grapple with being a Kurd in Kurdistan in different ways, and how their reactions to their world ripple out to affect others.

"Daughters of Smoke and Fire" is one of the first novels written in English by a Kurdish woman, and as the book opens five-year-old Leila recalls her father explaining to

her that women are worth half as much as men under Iranian law. Years later, after a desperate teenage Leila throws herself in front of a speeding car, her mother's main concern when she visits her in the hospital is not her daughter's physical and mental well-being - both of which are seriously compromised - but whether her virginity is intact.

The generation of Kurdish women born in the 1950s and 1960s sometimes accidentally served as agents of the patriarchy, believing they were protecting their daughters even as they kept them from living. When not writing, Homa helps organise and run suicide prevention workshops for Iranian women, and she's found they are often driven by their parents to seriously consider the most drastic measure possible.

"The people who are supposed to shelter and protect you become in a way agents of the state by bringing that oppression inside the home," said Homa. "You cannot be a hypocrite. If you want justice and freedom, then you want to bring justice and freedom to your own house first."

Shiler, one of the novel's most compelling characters, finds her own sort of freedom. Born in prison, she rebels all through childhood and ends up going to the Qandil mountains to join the Peshmerga. She represents the sort of 21st century Kurdish woman who might lead a battalion of militants into battle against the Islamic State or oversee Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Yet even these women face issues of identity and empowerment.

"On the one hand, yes you are fighting side by side with your man to protect Kurdistan," she said. "On the other hand you are fighting something within yourself - the voice that told you from the moment you are



born there is a ceiling to how much you can achieve."

This type of Kurdish woman was crucial to the creation of Rojava, the autonomous region of northeast Syria founded in late 2013 amid the chaos of the Syrian civil war, which Homa sees as a sort of beacon.

"Everything we dreamed for and fought for was finally possible," she said, pointing to the region's famed gender equality and bottom-up power structure, its prohibition on underage marriage, forced marriage and polygamy. "It wasn't perfect, wasn't beyond criticism, but it was really the best thing to happen to Kurds."

The existence of Rojava has brought Kurds closer together, underscoring the potential of their struggle and the fact that Kurdish solidarity stretches beyond borders.

"The happiness and achievement of Rojava was for all of us, the same way the Dersim massacre or Halabja massacre was everyone's pain, regardless of borders," said Homa.

In Dersim, or Turkey's Tunceli province, Turkish authorities killed tens of thousands of Kurdish people in 1937-38, an

event that made it crystal clear Kurds were unlikely to ever feel comfortable in any of the four states Western powers placed them in the wake of the First World War, setting them on the path to violent rebellion.

That it happened in Turkey may help explain why Turkish Kurds have in many ways led the fight against Kurds' oppressors. The fact that Turkey is home to the world's largest Kurdish population - an estimated 17 million Kurds, compared to some 10 million in Iran, 7 million in Iraq, and 3 million in Syria - likely also played a role.

Homa's novel at one point mentions the Kurds in "Bakur", the "north" in Kurdish, whose villages were burned and whose women were raped by the Turkish army. This is a clear reference to the state's response to the insurgency launched by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the early 1980's, and which continues today. Earlier, Leila's father describes Kurds in Turkey as hopeless.

"We look up to them," said Homa. "We are amazed by how much they have been able to accomplish not only by standing up to state oppres-

sion but also by changing their society."

She pointed to the women co-leaders of the HDP, the influence of jailed former HDP co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş and the way Kurdish leaders in Turkey stand up not just for Kurdish rights, but for human rights, for diversity and democratic plurality.

"Their ability to move beyond nationalism, their ability to organise themselves, even in the diaspora there is a sense of deep admiration and respect for Kurds from Bakur," she said. "There is a real sense of aspiring to them, not just today but even in history, they have always been more advanced in women's rights and they have been braver in standing up for their own rights."

Thanks to their brutally painful and difficult history, Homa believes Kurds have become masters of rising from the ashes - a sentiment that nicely sums up Leila's story. Despite the Turkish incursion launched last year, Rojava still exists today.

Despite Turkey's recent military offensive, the Peshmerga and the PKK remain headquartered in the Qandil mountains.

And despite the vast and continuing crackdown by the Turkish government, the HDP continues to fight for the rights of Kurds and all oppressed people in Turkey.

The lesson might be that Kurdish oppressors tend to use similar methods and tend to fail in silencing their foes.

"When you look at Machiavelli's instructions, they are the same things the Iranian government or the Turkish government are applying today," said Homa. "In this sense they are not original. We are capable of rising above these things if we believe we don't deserve the way we are treated."

Daech : le combat des yazidis contre leurs bourreaux français

Deux djihadistes sont poursuivis en France, le dernier depuis juillet, pour crimes contre l'humanité et génocide contre cette minorité irakienne.

TERRORISME C'est un long et courageux combat, après l'un des crimes les plus atroces de ces dernières années. Enlevées, vendues, violées, torturées par des fanatiques de l'État islamique, des femmes yazidies se dressent contre leurs bourreaux présumés. Dont deux djihadistes français, Sabri Essid et Nabil Greseque, visés par deux informations judiciaires pour génocide et crimes contre l'humanité ouvertes par le parquet national antiterroriste le 25 octobre dernier pour Essid et le 10 juillet pour Greseque.

Et la liste pourrait s'allonger. Les deux hommes sont accusés, notamment à partir de témoignages de victimes, d'avoir participé en Irak aux exactions contre la minorité yazidie (petit groupe ethnico-religieux kurde non musulman). Après avoir occupé, en 2014, la région de Sinjar (foyer historique du groupe, à l'extrême nord de l'Irak), Daech a mis en œuvre un plan de persécution systématique : des milliers d'assassinats, de cas de tortures, de viols et mises en esclavage de femmes, d'enlèvements d'enfants convertis et embrigadés comme « lionceaux du califat »... Le pôle « crimes contre l'humanité » du tribunal de Paris, qui a une compétence universelle, enquête depuis plusieurs années sur ces crimes. Et pour cause : ils ont été en partie perpétrés par des islamistes étrangers,



parmi lesquels des Français.

En 2018, la Fédération internationale des droits humains (FIDH) et Kinyat, une ONG kurde irakienne, avaient rendu public un rapport intitulé « Crimes sexuels contre la communauté yazidie : le rôle des djihadistes étrangers de Daech ». Rencontrées en Irak en 2017, seize femmes yazidies racontaient « avoir été offertes à ou achetées par des combattants de l'État islamique d'origines saoudienne, libyenne, tunisienne, libanaise, jordanienne, palestinienne, yéménite, française, allemande, américaine et chinoise ». Des individus qui ne cachaient pas leurs origines, certains djihadistes français exhibant même des photos de famille prises dans l'Hexagone. Acceptant ainsi de témoigner, ces femmes ont apporté des éléments cruciaux aux enquêteurs français et les ont aidés à identifier des sus-

pects.

Parmi eux, Nabil Greseque et Sabri Essid. Deux hommes aux profils très différents. Reconnu par l'une des femmes yazidies, Greseque n'était pas une figure ou un cadre de l'État islamique. Né en février 1989, ce petit soldat est toutefois apparu, selon le Centre d'analyse du terrorisme, sur des vidéos de propagande de Daech. Ses « mérites » lui auraient en tout cas valu de pouvoir acquérir une femme esclave persécutée par l'organisation.

« Formateur » des frères Merah

Le second suspect est lui une petite « célébrité » de l'État islamique. Né en 1984, Sabri Essid est le demi-frère par alliance de Mohamed et d'Abdelkader Merah. C'est lui qui les a fait basculer dans l'islam radical. Essid est un vétéran du

premier djihad irakien. En 2006, il avait gagné la Syrie pour rejoindre l'Irak. Voulant combattre l'armée américaine, il avait été arrêté en Syrie et renvoyé vers la France. Il avait été condamné à cinq ans de prison en 2009.

Fiché pour radicalisation, ex-condamné pour terrorisme, Sabri Essid avait pu rejoindre en 2014 le califat proclamé par l'État islamique. Pendant le premier procès d'Abdelkader Merah, un membre d'un service de renseignement toulousain avait évoqué un Essid au « fanatisme incroyable », au « discours manichéen » et aux forts penchants pour une « violence totale »... Rien d'étonnant à ce que, dans une vidéo diffusée en mars 2015, il ait été vu « parrainant » son beau-fils de douze ans qui exécutait un homme accusé d'espionnage. Et à ce qu'il ait lui aussi profité des esclaves de Daech. Essid, Greseque, et quelques autres, comparaitront-ils un jour devant une cour d'assises pour crimes contre l'humanité et génocide ? Rien n'est certain.

Sabri Essid, visé par un mandat d'arrêt depuis février 2020, est donné mort par Daech, ce qui ne constitue en rien une preuve. Et Nabil Greseque semble introuvable. Quoi qu'il en soit, des procès par défaut pourraient se tenir à Paris et répondre à la demande de justice des martyres yazidies.

Iran : plus de 85.500 décès dus au coronavirus dans 373 villes - NCR Iran

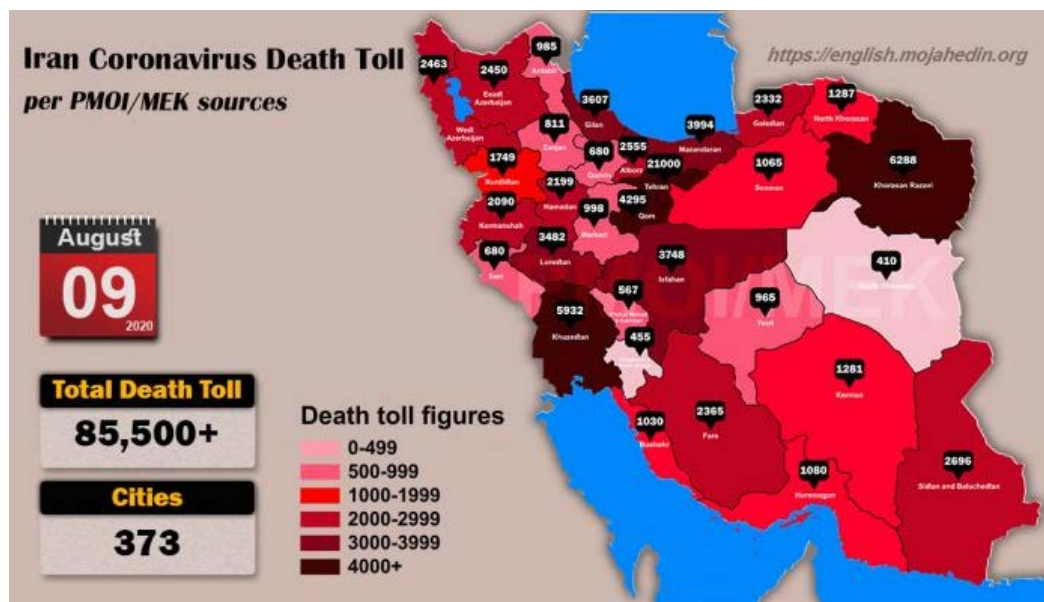
Un membre du centre de lutte contre le Covid-19 : Le premier malade infecté a été signalé fin décembre, mais le gouvernement l'a dissimulé. Les chiffres du ministère de la Santé sur le nombre de patients et de décès sont d'un vingtième de la réalité.

Rohani a de nouveau blâmé la population et déclaré que le respect (des gestes barrières) est passé de 77% à 17%. « Nous avons connu une vague une seconde fois ».

Iradj Harirchi, vice-ministre de la Santé, a déclaré que dans plus de 100 pays, le taux de mortalité dû au coronavirus a atteint zéro ou un nombre à un chiffre. Il a reconnu que le nombre réel de victimes était supérieur au double des chiffres officiels du ministère de la Santé (Agence Isna, 9 août)

Minou Mehrnaz, du comité scientifique du centre national de lutte contre le coronavirus : les hôpitaux sont pleins. Le nombre de malades venant consulter à l'hôpital Khomeiny est passé de deux à 120 par jour. Nous aurons un très mauvais automne. On ne pourra pas avec les masques empêcher la prolifération du virus lors des cérémonies de deuil du mois de Moharram. La plupart des unités de soins intensifs des hôpitaux sont pleines et chez certaines personnes, la maladie progresse si rapidement que le patient meurt avant de pouvoir commencer les soins. (Agence Irna, 9 août)

L'Organisation des Moudjahidine du peuple d'Iran



(OMPI/MEK) a annoncé ce 9 août 2020, que le nombre de décès dus au coronavirus dans 373 villes d'Iran a malheureusement dépassé les 85.500. Le nombre de morts dans les provinces de Khouzistan est de 5932, de Mazandaran 3994, de Guilan 3607, de Lorestan 3482, de Sistan-Baloutchistan 2696, de Golestan 2332, de Kermandah 2090, de Khorasan du Nord 1287, du Kurdistan 1749, de Bouchehr 1030, de Zandjan 811, d'Illam 680 et de Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari 567.

Rohani a une fois de plus blâmé la population pour la deuxième vague du virus au siège de lutte contre le covid-19 et a déclaré : « Quand le respect (des gestes barrière) était de 77%, le nombre de morts était passé de trois à deux chiffres ; ce respect est passé de 77% à 17%, et

nous avons connu une vague une seconde fois (...) Nos lits, médecins et infirmières sont limités (...) Au moins nous devons considérer que nous aurons cette situation pendant encore 6 mois. Bien sûr, cela peut prendre six mois de plus ou même un an. » Malgré les recommandations fermes des médecins et même des experts du régime, Rohani a réitéré la nécessité de tenir les cérémonies de deuil du mois sacré de Moharram, en disant : « Pourquoi ne pas faire le deuil ? Nous pouvons faire ce deuil avec des foules moins nombreuses. Dans les salles de Hosseiniyeh ou dans des endroits pouvant contenir 1000 personnes, nous disons de le faire avec 100 personnes. » (Agence IRNA, 9 août)

Mahboubfar, membre du centre national de lutte contre le coronavirus a déclaré :

«Exactement un mois avant l'annonce officielle de l'apparition du coronavirus dans le pays, fin décembre, le premier patient infecté a été signalé. Mais à ce moment, le gouvernement l'a dissimulé pour des raisons politiques et de sécurité (...) Malheureusement, dès le départ, l'opinion publique n'a pas reçu d'informations claires. Il est certain que ces chiffres ont été tronqués depuis le début de l'épidémie de covid-19 dans le pays. En tout cas, ces chiffres sont injectés dans la société sur la base de considérations politiques et sécuritaires. A mon avis, les chiffres annoncés par le ministère de la Santé (malades et décès) représentent un vingtième des chiffres réels. » (Quotidien Jahan Sanat, 8 août).

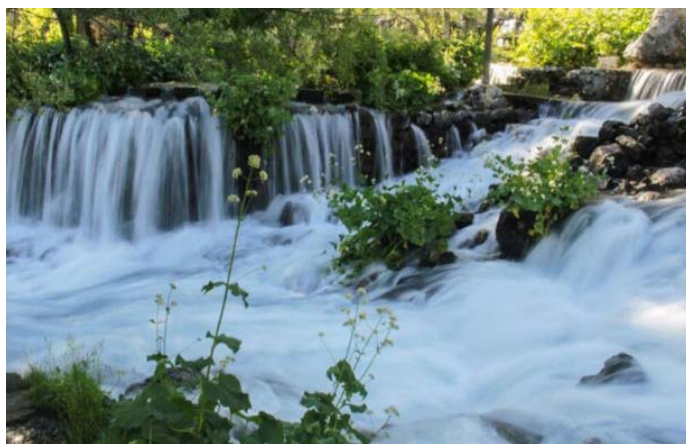
Secrétariat du Conseil national de la Résistance iranienne

Le gouvernement turc s'attaque aux sources sacrées des Alévis à Dersim

L'Etat turc mène une guerre globale contre le peuple kurde et la nature du Kurdistan qui est pillée et détruite n'échappe pas à cette guerre. Après l'inondation de la ville antique d'Hasankeyf, dans le cadre du projet GAP, voici que le gouvernement turc a décidé de s'attaquer aux sources d'eau sacrées des Alévis de Dersim.

Dans la province de Dersim, le gouvernement turc a débuté son projet de transformation des sources de Munzur dans un but lucratif. Les habitants de la région sont indignés – et jurèrent qu'ils vont mener une résistance collective contre la destruction de leur nature et lieu sacrés.

Le gouvernement turc a débuté son projet de transformation des sources sacrées des Alévis à Munzur, du district



d'Ovacik de Dersim.

Le projet a été préparé par l'Agence de développement de Firat (FKA) et approuvé par le conseil régional de préservation du patrimoine culturel d'Erzurum en juin 2019, sous la coordination du gouvernorat de Tunceli, qui a affirmé que « ce sera bon pour le tourisme ».

Le projet de 800 millions de

lires comprend des ponts en acier à construire sur Munzur. Le projet a été préparé sans la consultation des habitants de la ville, ni les municipalités et les organisations de la société civile.

Il est également prévu de construire deux parkings, l'un près du village de Gözeler.

Les écologistes et les citoyens

affirment que le projet détruira les sources de Munzur et que l'accès aux sources sera payant.

Pour la population alévie de Dersim, le paysage fluvial et montagneux du Munzur est un symbole de leur région, qu'ils considèrent comme un miracle unique. Outre l'approvisionnement en eau, la pêche et d'autres aspects économiques, le Munzur a un statut « sacré » pour les Alévis. Son importance historique, culturelle et scénique est immense depuis des siècles. Le Munzur est directement associé à presque toutes les mythologies, légendes et traditions de Dersim. Il a été nommé d'après le berger Munzur Baba, qui, selon une légende, a renversé du babeurre dans la région près d'Ovacik, qui aurait donné naissance aux 40 sources de Munzur.

TURQUIE. Attaques contre la langue et les institutions kurdes

En Turquie, les pressions visant les Kurdes n'ont pas baissé depuis les années 90. Ces attaques se sont intensifiées au cours des dix dernières années avec la fermeture de la plupart des institutions kurdes après la tentative de coup d'Etat du juillet 2016, et maintenant le turc est imposé même aux sections kurdes des universités.

Récemment, la direction de l'université de Dicle a annoncé

qu'une thèse ne peut pas être écrite en kurde dans le département de littérature populaire kurde. De plus, la langue d'enseignement du département est le turc.

Dans une déclaration après la vidéo de la conférence partagée par Selim Temo sur les réseaux sociaux, l'université a déclaré que les affirmations étaient fausses et a souligné que la langue d'enseignement était le turc. Par la suite, le ministère des transports a déc-

laré que « le kurde n'est pas une des langues communes » en réponse à la motion d'annonce du kurde dans les avions déposée par la députée du HDP Ebru Günay.

Bien que l'AKP ait relâché la pression sur le kurde pendant la période du « processus de paix » avec le PKK, presque toutes les institutions kurdes sont devenues des cibles après la tentative de coup d'Etat du 2016. Les pressions

ont été particulièrement intenses.

Des administrateurs ont été nommés à la place des élus des municipalités kurdes, les panneaux kurdes ainsi que les lettres kurdes pour les panneaux routiers et piétonniers ont été supprimés. Les locuteurs kurdes dans l'espace public et les chansons kurdes chantées lors des mariages ont été pris pour cible, comme dans les années 90. Après 2016, on a

pu se rendre compte à quel point l'assimilation et la pression sur les Kurdes et leur langue ont augmenté.

Des écoles kurdes scellées à trois reprises

La pression sur les Kurdes avait en fait commencé à se faire sentir pendant le processus de paix. KURDI-DER, MAPER et Eğitim Sen ont ouvert l'école primaire Dibistana Seretayî a Ferzad Kemangar-Ferzad Kemanger dans le district d'Amed Bağlar et l'école primaire Dibistana Seretayî a Berîvan-Berivan dans le district de Cizre, à Şırnak, et l'école primaire maternelle Üveys à Hakkari Gever en 2014. Dibistana Seretayî a Berîvan a été fermée sur ordre du procureur le lendemain de son ouverture, mais a continué à donner un enseignement en kurde lorsque le sceau a été enlevé par les élèves et leurs familles. L'école a été scellée 3 fois au total. Par la suite, l'enseignement en kurde a été complètement arrêté avec le curateur nommé à Cizre en 2016.

L'école primaire Ferzad Kemanger, ouverte à Amed en 2014, qui dispense un enseignement en kurde à 250 enfants âgés de 5 à 11 ans, a été fermée par le décret n° 677.



L'école primaire Ali Heriri, qui dispensait un enseignement en kurde à Amed, a également été l'une des écoles fermées. Le collège Dicle Firat, qui dispensait un enseignement en kurde dans le district de Kayapınar, à Amed, en 2010, faisait partie des écoles fermées en 2016.

Les activités du jardin d'enfants Üveys, qui est en service à Gever depuis 2014 et dont le programme d'études a été préparé par KURDÎ-DER, ont également pris fin avec la nomination d'un administrateur. Dans l'école où au moins 800 enfants ont été éduqués, les alternatives ont également été bloquées pendant les périodes de fermeture. En 2016, avec les couvre-feux, le lieu d'entraînement du parc Ape Musa a été fermé et transformé en poste de police. Une école kurde du village de

Yalaza (Kerwas) dans le district de Lice à Amed a été détruite par les forces armées turques en avril 2017, pendant les couvre-feux. Les jardins d'enfants, dont le programme était en kurde et qui étaient soutenus par les municipalités du DBP, ont été transformés en institutions qui dispensent un enseignement turc ou des cours de Coran par les administrateurs nommés à la place des élus des municipalités kurdes.

Attaques contre les institutions kurdes

Le département de kurdologie au sein de l'Institut des langues vivantes a également été touché par les problèmes de décret de l'université de Mardin Artuklu.

L'Institut kurde d'Istanbul, qui travaille sur la langue, la litté-

ture et l'histoire kurdes depuis 1992, a également été l'une des institutions fermées par décret. En 2006, la recherche et le développement de la culture kurde (KURDI-DER), avec ses 37 branches dans différentes provinces, dont le siège est à Amed, a été fermée par le décret statutaire 677. Les organisations de la société civile telles que l'Académie de la langue Ehmedê Xanî et l'Union des écrivains kurdes ont également été fermées par décret.

En plus des institutions et des académies, de nombreuses émissions de télévision et de radio en kurde ont été fermées : DENGÊ TV, JÎYAN TV, VAN TV, ZAROK TV et de nombreuses radios ont été fermées par le décret-loi 677. Tous les établissements d'enseignement et de radiodiffusion en kurde ont été la cible de cette attaque.

Depuis l'état d'urgence proclamé après le 15 juillet 2016, alors que les institutions et tous les lieux où le kurde était maintenu en vie ont été attaqués par l'État turc. Les nationalistes turcs ont également attaqué régulièrement les citoyens kurdes dans l'espace public.



12 août 2020

Les drones turcs tuent deux généraux de l'armée irakienne

Deux officiers de haut rang irakiens et un soldat ont été tués mardi lors d'une frappe aérienne par un drone turc à Sidakan, dans la province d'Erbil, dans la région du Kurdistan irakien. La visite du ministre turc de la Défense à Bagdad a été annulée, l'ambassadeur convoqué, et Bagdad en est désormais à menacer de riposter à la Tur-

quie dont les frappes à la bombe, ou aux drones sont désormais quotidiennes contre les monts frontaliers de Qandil. S'agit-il d'une bavure de l'aviation turque ou bien d'un piège dans lequel est tombé Erdogan ?

Le général de brigade Zubeir Hali, commandant du 3e régiment des gardes-frontières ira-

kiens, et Mohammed Rashid, commandant de la 2e brigade des gardes-frontières de la région ont perdu la vie suite à une frappe au drone turc visant une réunion avec les membres du PKK.

Une occupation du nord de l'Irak de concert avec les USA ?

En réaction à l'offensive turque

contre le territoire irakien, Bagdad menace de saisir le Conseil de sécurité.

Selon les sources locales, Zubeir Hali et Mohammed Rashid étaient en réunion avec les commandants du PKK dans la région du Kurdistan pour les convaincre de se retirer des zones habitées par des civils lorsqu'ils ont subi la frappe aé-

rienne turque. Dénonçant Ankara d'avoir lancé l'attaque de drone ayant coûté la vie à deux officiers irakiens de haut rang, Bagdad a annulé une visite ministérielle et convoqué l'ambassadeur de Turquie. Les responsables irakiens qualifient la frappe de « flagrante attaque de drone » menée par les Turques contre le nord de l'Irak où Ankara n'a cessé ces dernières semaines d'attaquer les positions kurdes.



« Deux commandants de bataillon de garde-frontières et le conducteur de leur véhicule ont été tués », a précisé l'armée dans un communiqué marquant le premier décès de troupes irakiennes depuis que la Turquie a lancé à la mi-juin l'opération transfrontalière contre les éléments du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

« L'attaque a également laissé des blessés parmi lesquels se trouvent un nombre de civils dont certains sont dans état critique et ont été transférés à l'hôpital de Soran à Erbil. Deux véhicules stationnés près du lieu où se déroulait la réunion ont été pris pour cible et l'ampleur des dégâts n'a pas encore été mesurée », a déploré une source de sécurité irakienne à l'agence de presse irakienne, Baghdad Today.

Le ministère irakien des Affaires étrangères - qui avait déjà convoqué à deux reprises l'ambassadeur de Turquie pour les actions militaires turques sur son territoire - a déclaré que l'ambassadeur a reçu cette fois-ci « une lettre de protestation avec des mots forts » dénonçant une telle agression. La présidence irakienne avait dénoncé plus tôt ce qu'elle juge « une violation de la souveraineté irakienne » et appelé Ankara à « arrêter toutes ses opérations militaires » dans la région.

Ces tensions interviennent alors que les premières informations font état de fausses données qui auraient conduit Ankara à lancer la frappe, à nuire à ses relations avec Bagdad et son armée. Selon des sources, si la Turquie a bombardé la réunion, provoquant la mort de deux officiers de haut

rang irakiens, c'est surtout parce qu'il a cru avoir à y éliminer le numéro 2 du PKK et bras droit d'Abdellah Ocalan, chef historique de la milice. Or ces informations se sont avérées bien fausses, le raid n'ayant visé que les forces irakiennes et les civils. Ceci ressemble à un piège, et des sources n'écartent pas une « connexion israélienne » dans cette bavure.

Irak : que cherche la Turquie ? (Débat)

Accompagnés du chef d'état-major, le général Yaşar Guler, et du commandant des forces terrestres, le général Umit Dundar, le ministre turc de la Défense, Hulusi Akar est allé à l'encontre des troupes stationnées dans la province de Sirnak située dans le sud-est de la Turquie, et justement proche des frontières avec l'Irak. Akar

a déclaré que les opérations Claw-Eagle et Claw-Tiger, qui ont débuté le 16 juin, se poursuivent avec succès depuis 48 jours, signe que la Turquie est décidée de poursuivre son agression. Mais au train où vont les événements, l'équipée irakienne d'Ankara pourrait s'avérer bien coûteuse. Cette bavure tire la sonnette d'alarme contre la poursuite d'une politique d'agression que la Turquie a adoptée à la fois dans le nord de la Syrie et de l'Irak et qu'elle croit poursuivre impunément, a estimé Seyyed Reza Sadr al-Hosseini s'est exprimé en ces termes :

« Les Turcs cherchent peut-être à établir une base militaire sur le sol irakien, idée parfaitement saugrenue qui pourrait nuire à leur présence sur la scène irakienne et kurde, présence à la fois économique et énergétique. Le coup contre l'armée irakienne a par ailleurs ceci de dangereux qu'il pourrait exposer les forces turques à la riposte militaire irakienne et là, étant donné la volonté des Hachd al-Chaabi à soutenir l'armée irakienne afin de protéger les intérêts de l'Irak et sa souveraineté, il se peut qu'Ankara ait en face de lui la Résistance. En Syrie, les Turcs l'ont une fois essayé et les choses ont plutôt mal tourné pour eux ».

Iraq: Officials in Iraqi Kurdistan announce highest daily increase in COVID-19 cases

Officials in Iraqi Kurdistan announce the highest daily increase in COVID-19 cases on August 11; follow government directives

Officials in the northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan announced the highest recorded daily increase in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases on Tuesday, August 11, with 653 new

cases detected. The second highest daily increase in cases, numbering 566, was subsequently recorded on Wednesday, August 12. The governorate of Sulaymaniyah is the worst affected in Kurdistan, with more than 9500 cases, followed by the capital governorate, Erbil, with 7300. The north-western governorate of Duhok has recorded 1400 cases.

Currently, travel between provinces under Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) control is banned until further notice, with permits available for essential travel. Face masks must be worn in public and residents must abide by social distancing regulations. Parks, cafes, gyms, clubs, and swimming pools remain closed indefinitely, and large gatherings are prohibited. Health

clinics, including dentist offices, are to be closed until Wednesday, August 19. Restaurants are limited to takeaway and delivery services only.

Airports in the region reopened on August 1, with any passengers traveling through Erbil (EBL) and Sulaymaniyah (ISU) international airports requiring a negative COVID-19 test to be permitted to fly. Passengers

must be tested for COVID-19 in the 48 hours prior to their flight. Passengers will need to pay for their test, which costs 100,000 Iraqi dinars (84 USD).

Protests have been reported over the KRG's handling of the pandemic, particularly in Sulaymaniyah and other smaller cities, with protesters calling for early elections to be held.

As of August 12, health authorities in the KRG have confirmed 18,766 COVID-19 cases, with 686 associated deaths. In Iraq, 160,436 cases have been reported, with 5588 deaths. Further spread of the virus is expected in the near term.

Context

The first case of COVID-19 was reported on December 31 and the source of the outbreak has been linked to a wet market in Wuhan (Hubei province, China). Since then, human-to-human transmission of the

virus has been confirmed.

Cases of the virus have been confirmed in numerous countries and territories worldwide. On March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the global outbreak a pandemic. Virus-screening and quarantining measures are being implemented at airports worldwide, as well as extensive travel restrictions.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Some patients may experience other symptoms such as body pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell, or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. These symptoms (in most cases mild) appear gradually. Generally, most patients (around 80 percent) recover from the disease without being hospitalized.

Advice

Measures adopted by local authorities evolve quickly and are usually effective immediately.

Depending on the evolution of the outbreak in other countries, authorities are likely to modify, at very short notice, the list of countries whose travelers are subject to border control measures or entry restrictions upon their arrival to the territory in question. It is advised to postpone nonessential travel due to the risk that travelers may be refused entry or be subject to quarantine upon their arrival or during their stay.

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, travelers are advised to abide by the following measures:

Frequently clean hands by applying an alcohol-based hand rub or washing with soap and water.

When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue; if used, throw the tissue away immediately and wash hands.

If experiencing a fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or any other symptoms suggestive of

respiratory illness, including pneumonia, call emergency services before going to the doctor or hospital to prevent the potential spread of the disease.

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Iraq: Suspected Islamic State (IS) militants attack security forces in Saladin province on September 3



August 14, 2020

Neither Turkish nor Kurdish identity is something to brag about, says former HDP co-chair Demirtaş

Former HDP co-chair Selahattin has said in a letter that neither Turkish nor Kurdish identity is something to brag about. "If you are to hang an identity around your neck, let it just read 'only human,'" read Demirtaş's letter, which was shared by his wife Başak Demirtaş.

Başak Demirtaş, wife of jailed former People's Democratic Party (HDP) co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş, has shared a section of a letter that the renowned politician sent from Edirne High Security Prison. Başak Demirtaş said that their

daughter Delal had copied the letter using her own handwriting and shared this version on her social media account.

"By any means necessary, do not be yourself! Be someone else just a bit. Neither brag about your Turkishness nor Kurdishness; but do not also be embarrassed about them. If you are to hang an identity around your neck, let it just read 'only human.' Do not be scared of people who cover their heads, but be scared of those whose brains are covered. Do not defame praying, but slam those who steal

money and then pray," Selahattin Demirtaş's letter read.

The letter starts with lyrics of Turkish popular vocalist Tarkan's song "Şıkıdım," also known as "Hepsi senin mi?" (which can be translated as 'Is it all yours?').

"Don't be anyone else, be yourself. You are much more beautiful this way," says the letter's first two sentences, in an apparent reference to Tarkan's song.

"Ok, you must of course have a beauty. I am not saying 'You are of no use to anything.' But

please, be someone else at least once in your life. Are you not seeing that the nation is in this way since everyone is 'themselves.' You want another life, another world, another future, but then you are saying that you should stay the same," Demirtaş's letter continued.

Demirtaş has been jailed since November of 2016 in Edirne High Security Prison, in the northeastern corner of the country, though he hails from the southeastern province of Diyarbakır where his family lives.



13 August 2020

COVID-19: As Iraq nears 165,000 cases, officials warn of another wave

The Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment announced 3,841 new coronavirus infections and 53 deaths over the previous 24 hours as officials warned that numbers could continue to spike.

According to the ministry's daily pandemic statement, the total number of patients known to have contracted the highly-contagious disease since the first one was confirmed in February has reached 164,277 and those who have died number 5,641. Over 117,000 are being classified as having recovered, although this indicates only that they are no longer actively receiving medical treatment and

does not account for potential long-term health effects.

Earlier on Thursday, the committee in Iraq's parliament tasked with coordinating the response to the pandemic warned of a sustained spike in the number of infections.

"The coming days will witness a significant increase in the number of daily coronavirus infections due to a failure to implement measures and decisions taken to curb the pandemic," member Ryaz al-Masoudi warned in a statement, noting that "decisions taken are only on paper and are not implemented on the ground."

Masoudi explained that the curfew, in effect, applies only to state employees and students, but it does not exist on the streets.

"The continuing high daily infection rate makes the Ministry of Health unable to cope with the increase and the government is required to put urgent plans in place to confront the next big wave of the virus."

On Friday, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Hazem Al-Jumaili said that such numbers acted as an "alarm bell" among health professionals and that the public must take the pandemic more seriously.

"Citizens' commitment to preventive measures is the most important factor in reducing the number of infections," he said, arguing that the ongoing spike in cases is "the result of the citizen's failure to comply with health guidelines."

The coronavirus has infected more than 20.7 million people worldwide and killed over 750,000 according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or underreporting.



August 14, 2020

Turkey again cuts water to northeast Syria amid rise in COVID-19 cases

Turkey and Turkish-backed groups have yet again cut off drinking water to the northern Syrian city of Hasakah, reported the pro-Syrian government news agency SANA on Thursday.

In a statement to SANA, the General Director of Hasakah Water Establishment Mahmoud Ukla "said that the Turkish occupation forces and their mercenaries stopped pumping drinking water in Aloukk station, which threatens the lives of about one million people."

The water station is near the border town of Ras al-Ain (Serekaniye), which Turkey and its militant proxies took over in October during Turkey's so-called Peace Spring Operation. Under Russian mediation, though, Kurdish-led authorities in northeastern Syria have been providing electricity to the Turkish-occupied areas in exchange for water flow, but Turkish-backed groups have continued to repeatedly cut off water, demand-

ing higher levels of power.

A report from USAID published on Wednesday citing UN reports stated that the Alouk water station "supports an estimated 470,000 people in the governorate's Al Hasakah and Tell Tamer cities and surrounding areas, including Al Hol camp." According to UN data from February to July, the water supply from Alouk was interrupted at least 12 times, due to interference "from parties controlling the station."

Moreover, Turkey has also reduced the flow of water from the Euphrates River.

"In late July, a 65 percent reduction in the rate of water flowing from the Euphrates River also negatively affected the electrical and water supply across Al Hasakah, where power outages now occur for up to 12 hours per day, the UN reports," the USAID publication continued.

It further warned that the unreliable

water supply in northeast Syria increases the risk of coronavirus transmission, "as additional water is needed for COVID19 mitigation measures such as more frequent cleaning and handwashing."

Northeast Syria has until last month been mostly free of known infections, but there has been a steady rise in confirmed cases over the past few weeks.

The local Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria (AANES) on Thursday reported 27 new coronavirus cases, including one death. This brings the total number of known figures in the area to 171 cases and eight fatalities.

According to USAID al-Hol Camp is particularly susceptible to water supply disruptions, as Alouk station provides approximately 50 percent of the camp's water. As a result, the UN says that reduced water flow there "has led to severe water shortages and resultant protests in Al Hol in recent weeks."

On Monday, Save the Children said in a press release that the first reported coronavirus case among residents at al-Hol was confirmed after earlier cases were detected among health workers there. The local Kurdish-led administration, however, has not confirmed the infections.

Al-Hol Camp was built to house 40,000 individuals but currently holds around 65,000, mostly women and children. This includes nearly 11,000 foreign females with alleged ties to the so-called Islamic State.

"One of our worst fears has come to pass," said Sonia Khush, Syria Response Director for Save the Children. "An outbreak of COVID-19 in Al Hol camp is going to be challenging to control considering how overcrowded the camp is and how little access families have to water, personal hygiene items, tests, and protective equipment, with more than 65,000 people living in the camp at the moment."

France Condemn Turkish Attacks on Iraqi Territory

Iraq received on Thursday Arab and French support one day after the killing of Iraqi border guards by Turkish airstrikes.

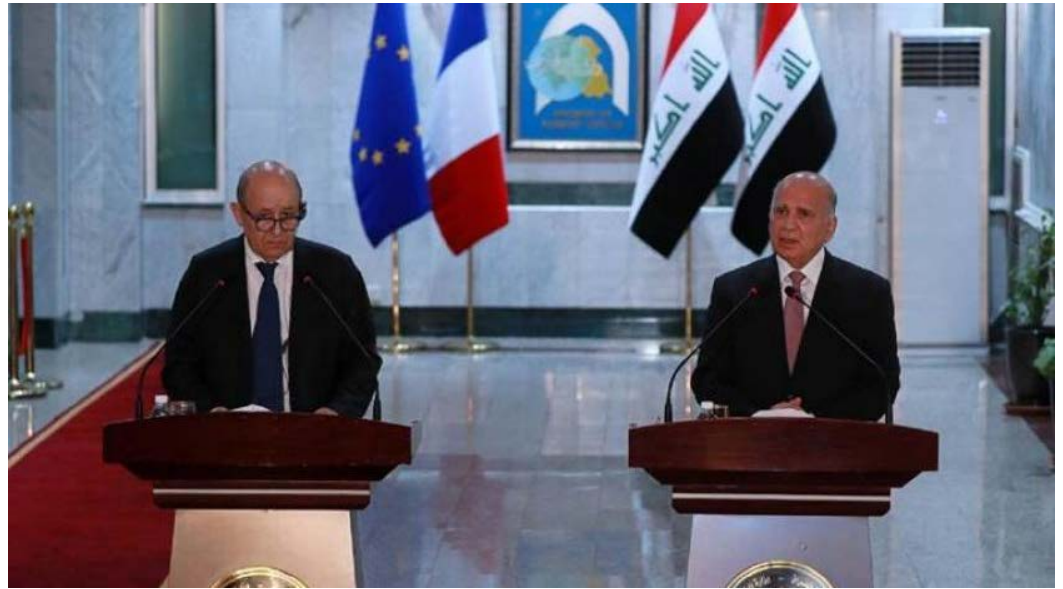
France condemned the Turkish bombing of the Iraqi border guards in the "SedaKan" area in the Kurdistan region, confirming its keenness on fully respecting the sovereignty of Iraq.

"France condemns this dangerous development (the Turkish bombing of the Iraqi borders) and calls for the truth to be revealed," said the French Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, Anies von der Molle, in a press release.

Meanwhile, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah received a phone call from his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Muhammed Hussein and he offered his condolences and sympathy for the Iraqi military martyrs.

In this context, the two ministers affirmed their rejection of such violations against the security and stability of Arab countries.

Hussein had also contacted the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and his counterparts, Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ayman Saffadi, the Jordanian Foreign Minister and the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah.



French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein (AP)

A statement by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry said those contacts were made to inform the Arab brothers about details of the attack, to emphasize the importance of concerted Arab efforts facing these dangerous developments in the security situation with neighboring Turkey, to come up with a unified position that keeps Turkey from repeating such violations, and to withdraw their invading forces from Iraqi territory.

"The brothers affirmed their countries' full support for the security and sovereignty of Iraq, and condemned the Turkish attacks, calling for the immediate cessation of any Turkish military operations on Iraqi lands," the statement said.

For its part, Ankara said Thursday it "will take the necessary

measures to protect the security of its borders, in the event that Iraq continues to ignore the presence of the terrorist PKK members on its territory."

A spokesman for the Joint Operations, Tahsin Al-Khafaji, described the recent Turkish attack on Sedkan in the Kurdistan region as a dangerous encroachment and escalation by the Turkish side, indicating that "it was carried out individually without informing Iraq despite the existence of several channels and contacts that link us with them both in past and even in the present."

Khafaji told the Iraqi news agency NINA that what happened is a "sinful attack on our national sovereignty, and a dangerous escalation by the Turkish side, which claims to pursue the PKK fighters."

On Wednesday, head of the Iraqi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Committee, Zafer Al-Ani, affirmed, "Ankara's persistence in the aggression will make it lose all its friends and it must solve its problems far from Iraq."

He called on the government to pursue all possible political means to preserve the sovereignty of Iraq and the lives of its citizens.

"From the position of my responsibility as head of the Iraqi-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Committee, I reiterate that Ankara's persistence in attacking Iraq will make it lose all its friends and no one will be able to justify its violations or turn a blind eye, as long as the matter concerns the sovereignty of Iraq and respect for its borders," he said.

Afrin : des villages yézidis colonisés par les mercenaires djihadistes de la Turquie

L'Organisation des droits humains d'Afrin a publié un rapport sur les crimes et les violations des droits humains commis par l'Etat turc et ses mercenaires djihadistes au cours de la première moitié du mois d'août, attirant l'attention sur les crimes systématiques commis contre les civils dans la région d'Afrin sous occupation turque.

Le rapport indique que des habitations civiles ont été évacuées par les mercenaires et que des camps ont été installés dans des villages autrefois habités par les Kurdes Yézidis, afin d'y accueillir des mercenaires et leurs familles.

Selon l'organisation des droits humains d'Afrin, les mercenaires de la faction Nureddin Zenki

affiliée à l'armée turque, ont vendu toute une rue de la ville de Jindires aux mercenaires d'Ahrar El Sharkiya pour 25 000 dollars après en avoir déplacé les habitants. Les mercenaires et leurs familles originaires d'Idlib et d'autres régions ont été installés dans les habitations situées sur la rue.

Le rapport indique également que les mercenaires de l'État turc ont mis le feu aux terres agricoles du village d'Omara, dans la ville de Shera. Les mercenaires ont coupé des arbres dans la région jusqu'aux villages de Gobek et Gulilka dans la province de Mabata et la montagne Hawar. En outre, une centaine de civils vivant dans la province de Bilbilê ont été contraints de participer à l'abattage.

Une partie des arbres a été vendue sur les marchés d'Idlib, mais la plupart ont été envoyés en Turquie.

Notant que l'État turc occupant poursuit sa politique de turquisation et de changement démographique à Afrin, le rapport de l'Organisation des droits humains d'Afrin a ajouté que les civils ont été forcés d'émigrer en raison des enlèvements, des tortures et des pillages de leur biens, leurs habitations ayant ensuite été occupées par des familles de mercenaires.

Le rapport a souligné les attaques et les violations commises à l'encontre de la communauté kurde yézidie, in-

diquant que l'État turc et ses mercenaires avaient colonisé une vaste zone allant du village de Tirindê, dans le centre d'Afrin, à la province de Shêrawa.

Des camps pour les mercenaires et leurs familles ont également été installés à Bafflonê, un autre village Yézidi de la province de Shera, et dans le village d'Afraza, dans la province de Mabata.

L'Organisation a déclaré que la création de ces camps abritant des mercenaires arabes et turkmènes, ainsi que leurs familles, s'inscrivait dans la politique de changement démographique pratiquée par la Turquie dans les zones occupées au nord de la Syrie.

Kurdistan au féminin

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

18 août 2020

Décès d'une jeune Kurde violée par un officier turc

TURQUIE / BAKUR – Les cas les plus récents de viols par des militaires turcs visant les femmes et adolescentes kurdes nous montrent clairement que l'Etat turc utilise le viol comme une arme de guerre contre le peuple kurde depuis des décennies. Le décès survenu aujourd'hui d'une adolescente kurde violée par un sergent turc n'en est que le dernier de ce crime de guerre visant les femmes.

Une jeune Kurde de 18 ans,

séquestrée et violée pendant 20 jours par un sergent turc, est décédée à Batman. Elle avait été hospitalisée après avoir tenté de se suicider le 16 juillet dernier.

I. E. avait été hospitalisée après une tentative de suicide le 16 juillet dernier à Batman / Beşiri, avait déclaré dans une lettre que le sergent Musa O. l'avait violée. Elle a perdu la vie à l'hôpital aujourd'hui. Sur les réseaux sociaux, des appels pour l'arrestation du sergent violeur

se font sous le hashtag #MusaOrhanTutuklansin.

Alors qu'elle était à l'hôpital, sa famille a trouvé une lettre dans laquelle elle donnait les détails concernant la séquestration et le viol par l'officier turc, qui avait été arrêté après que la famille avait porté plainte.

Au cours de son interrogatoire, l'officier a nié avoir eu des relations sexuelles avec I.E. et a déclaré avoir été «

ivre » au moment des faits et il a été relâché aussitôt.

Cependant, le rapport de l'institution de médecine légale, qui a été révélé par l'Agence Mezopotamya, indique clairement qu'elle a été violée.

Une ordonnance de confidentialité a été imposée sur l'affaire et le sergent Musa O a été remis en liberté. L'officier est accusé d' « abus sexuel qualifié ». La famille de I.E. avait en-

suite demandé l'aide de l'Association des droits de l'Homme (İHD).

La députée du Parti démocratique du peuple (HDP) Feknas Uca a soumis une question parlementaire sur

l'affaire au ministre de la Justice Abdulhamid Gül. Le procureur général de Batman a ouvert une enquête

contre l'éditeur du journal Jiyan Haber, İdris Yayla, suite à des publications concernant cette affaire. (via ANF)



August 21, 2020

Erbil reopens roads with other Iraqi provinces, lifts several other coronavirus measures

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – Erbil province has reopened roads to and from other Iraqi provinces for all after months of closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an official statement published early Friday, Erbil province's operation room announced the lifting of the movement restriction, which grants easy entrance to the province for people. "Traveling into and out of

Erbil province will be open from today onwards," the statement reads. "Tour group trips to Erbil will remain prohibited."

Residents of the Kurdistan Region could previously only move within its provinces through an online application process. Movement between the Kurdistan Region and provinces controlled by federal Iraq was prohibited. The operation room has also granted mosques the ability

to open doors for worshipers on Friday prayers, taking COVID-19 measures into account.

"Funerals and weddings celebrations will remain prohibited in the halls and indoor places," the statement added.

Restaurants and cafeterias in Erbil province will be allowed to reopen, but need to take a number of additional measures into account as well, ac-

ording to the statement.

Erbil has seen a total of 9,509 COVID-19 cases, 4,305 of which remain active. As many as 294 people have died in the province after contracting the virus, according to government figures.

Across the Kurdistan Region, a total of 23,204 cases have been confirmed and 849 people have died. Iraq has recorded more than 192,797 infections and 6,208 deaths.



24 août 2020
Par Tara Schlegel

Migrants dans la Manche : une famille kurde raconte l'enfer d'une traversée

Épisode 1 | Avec ses enfants et son mari, Ropak vient de tenter de traverser la Manche à bord d'une embarcation de fortune. La famille avait payé 8 000 £ aux passeurs, mais le moteur a vite lâché et l'un des passagers est tombé par-dessus bord. Récit d'un naufrage et d'un exil commencé il y a plusieurs années. Ropak et sa famille sont des

rescapés. Comme tant d'autres migrants, ils ont tenté de rejoindre les plages et les falaises de Douvres (Angleterre), à une petite trentaine de kilomètres du littoral français, à bord d'une embarcation de fortune. Ils ont dû faire demi-tour, surpris par une houle trop forte et un bateau qui prenait l'eau. Cette nuit-là, ils ont tous eu beaucoup de chance. Ropak a

accepté de se confier et livre, avec Hazhar son époux, le récit de leur exil, qui a commencé il y a plusieurs années au Kurdistan irakien, jusqu'à cette traversée qui a failli tourner à la catastrophe. Elle est entourée de détroit et ses redoutables bancs de sables.

Plus de 342 traversées ou tentatives

Le 18 août dernier, au matin, le corps d'un jeune Soudanais de 28 ans a été retrouvé sur la plage de Sangatte (Pas-de-Calais), illustrant de façon terrible les dangers de la traversée entre la France et l'Angleterre que tentent de très nombreux exilés. Plus de 1 000 migrants ont été interceptés par les autorités françaises depuis le début de l'année.

Lorsque les embarcations font naufrage, ou sont signalées par les innombrables navires qui traversent la Manche, la préfecture maritime envoie ses équipes de secours. D'après ses calculs, on compterait 342 traversées ou tentatives de traversées entre le 1er janvier et le 11 août 2020. Ce qui représente 4 192 personnes. C'est presque le double de toute l'année précédente au cours de laquelle la préfecture avait comptabilisé 203 traversées ou tentatives pour 2 294 migrants. Chaque jour, ou presque, sur son site internet, on peut lire le récit de ces nuits d'intervention qui sont autant de nuit de cauchemar pour les familles embarquées. Et côté britannique, la presse - de la BBC au Daily Mail - raconte les arrivées quotidiennes.

Rien qu'au cours de la nuit du mercredi 19 août, nuit où le jeune Soudanais a probablement embarqué, les autorités maritimes ont repêché une cinquantaine de migrants. Lors de l'une des opérations, sur une embarcation où étaient entassés 11 adultes et 3 enfants, les secouristes ont récupéré l'un des passagers dans la mer.

Malgré les risques très importants que courent ces exilés, ils sont de plus en plus nombreux à tenter de franchir le détroit du Pas-de-Calais. Certains y parviennent. Selon François Guennoc, de l'association l'Auberge des migrants, 60 à 70% des traversées se transforment en succès. Mais des centaines d'autres échouent. La jeune femme kurde que nous avons rencontrée en a fait l'expérience. Ropak, c'est son prénom (qui signifie "un visage clair, qui ne saurait mentir") a trouvé refuge depuis cinq jours dans la Maison Sésame, une jolie demeure où une quinzaine de migrants sont hébergés en ce moment. Un havre de paix bien provisoire, avant de se lancer à nouveau à l'assaut de la Manche.

Les passeurs ont exigé 8 000 livres sterling pour la traversée



Ropak et sa famille (qui préfèrent apparaître floutées) ont trouvé un refuge à la Maison Sésame, après avoir échappé à la noyade en traversant la Manche. Crédits : T.S. - Radio France

Ropak est une jeune femme toute frêle dont le ventre arrondi se remarque à peine. Elle sourit beaucoup, mais paraît épuisée. Sa fillette de 2 ans, Eilarya, tout aussi menue, s'agrippe à sa main et s'amuse à la mordiller. "Elle va bien", rassure Léa Lambert, qui vient de conduire la famille à l'hôpital, cet après-midi-là. Une visite pour vérifier que les enfants, Eilarya et son grand frère Anas, n'ont pas de séquelles et que Ropak, qui est enceinte de 8 mois, n'a pas été non plus trop secouée. La petite Eilarya n'a pas parlé pendant plusieurs heures, après le naufrage. Elle était traumatisée raconte Ropak.

Dans la nuit du jeudi 13 août, la famille a été prévenue par téléphone qu'il était temps d'embarquer. Les parents avaient payé 8 000 livres sterling "aux passeurs", confient-ils sans donner plus de détails. Une grosse somme pour se retrouver à bord d'une embarcation pneumatique qui n'était, visiblement, pas taillée pour la circonstance. Ropak et son mari Hazhar racontent cette nuit terrible, installés à présent devant des tasses de thé fumantes. A leur côté, Bavel, un ami kurde, accepte de traduire car Ropak ne connaît que quelques bribes d'anglais. Mais tout comme Hazhar, elle parle arabe, farsi, kurde et maintenant grec. Léa, la jeune femme qui porte en partie le projet de la Maison Sésame - un lieu qui recueille les familles

exilées - les écoute avec bienveillance. "Les associations qui sillonnent la plage et reçoivent des appels d'urgence nous adressent les familles. Et dès que nous avons de la place, nous les prenons. Il se trouve que ce matin-là, une chambre était libre", sourit Léa. La Maison Sésame, que coordonnent aussi Tchang, Caroline et Baptiste, abrite trois familles en ce moment, venues du Kurdistan, de Tchétchénie et de Syrie.

Dans la cuisine, les femmes préparent un grand repas. A la table de la salle à manger, Ropak et Hazhar poursuivent leur récit. Cette nuit-là donc, ils embarquent à bord d'un bateau pour tenter la traversée. "Au bout de quelques centaines de mètres, le bateau a commencé à prendre l'eau", raconte Hazhar, "avec d'autres hommes, on a découpé des bidons d'essence qui traînaient sur le bateau pour tenter d'écooper l'eau, mais cela ne suffisait pas". Ropak ajoute, "la situation était terrible, les femmes et les enfants pleuraient. Un petit garçon est tombé à la mer". Immédiatement, les adultes ont arrêté l'embarcation.

"L'enfant qui est tombé à l'eau avait 10 ans"

"C'est un jeune homme du Kurdistan irakien qui a sauté à l'eau pour rattraper l'enfant", ajoute presque fièrement Hazhar, "l'enfant devait avoir 10 ans". A quelques centaines de mètres du rivage, la houle était déjà très importante et l'embar-

cation totalement sous-dimensionnée tanguait de façon impressionnante. Il faut dire que les migrants étaient apparemment une centaine à bord ! Plusieurs fois, Hazhar et Ropak répètent ce chiffre et semblent formels. Après avoir tenté pendant une heure environ d'écooper en vain l'eau qui pénétrait dans le bateau, les clandestins ont fait demi-tour. Le moteur ne marchait plus. Les passeurs n'avaient probablement pas rempli le réservoir suffisamment, comme cela semble fréquent d'après les récits que recueillent les associations.

"Après avoir fait demi-tour, Dieu nous a secouru et les vagues ont poussé le bateau vers la plage", précise Hazhar. Ropak acquiesce mais elle ne peut plus parler. Les larmes aux yeux, elle prend sa petite fille sur les genoux. Quand ils sont arrivés, épuisés et totalement trempés sur la plage, les exilés se sont éparpillés. Ropak et Hazhar voulaient rejoindre la "Jungle" de Grande-Synthe à pied, mais ils ne savaient pas où ils se trouvaient. C'est en prenant le chemin de la route qu'ils sont tombés sur deux bénévoles de l'association Utopia 56. Cette nuit-là, raconte Léa, il y a eu tellement de naufrages que les jeunes citoyens qui aident les réfugiés se sont particulièrement mobilisés.

Tenter une nouvelle traversée, malgré la peur

Que vont faire à présent Ropak, Hazhar, Eilarya et Anas ? "Si la France me donne des papiers, je veux bien rester", sourit tristement Hazhar. "C'est bien le problème", renchérit Léa, "les familles qui ont parcouru l'Europe ont souvent eu des prises d'empreintes consenties ou non, que ce soit en Grèce, en Roumanie, ou ailleurs." Une fois en France, si ces familles entament une procédure de demande d'asile, elles ont de fortes chances d'être renvoyées dans le pays européen par lequel elles ont transité, même si ce pays leur a refusé l'asile. C'est une situation que redoutent Ropak et

Hazhar et qui les incite à vouloir tenter à nouveau la traversée vers l'Angleterre. Même s'ils ont examiné l'idée de vivre en France, comme le confie Hazhar, suivi de Léa qui souligne la difficulté de ces démarches.

Neuf pays : à pied, en taxi, en camion

Comme toutes les tragédies de l'exil, l'histoire de la fuite de Ropak et Hazhar s'étend sur des années. Au pays, au Kurdistan irakien, Hazhar est devenu mécanicien dès l'âge de 19 ans. Ropak a fait des études, mais ils se sont mariés "quand elle avait 20 ans", sourit-elle, et ensuite elle n'a plus travaillé. De santé fragile, Ropak se bat contre un cancer depuis huit ans, mais elle ne peut plus se soigner correctement depuis qu'ils ont quitté leur patrie, il y a déjà trois ans. Tous deux ont décidé de se sauver à l'étranger pour des raisons "privées" sur lesquels ils ne veulent pas s'étendre. Entre les lignes, on comprend que la situation politique est particulièrement compliquée sur place, qu'il y a des disparitions pour qui "ne veut pas travailler pour le gouvernement".

A l'été 2017, le couple et leur petit garçon alors âgé de 2 ans embarquent pour la Grèce, via la Turquie. Ils resteront à Athènes jusqu'au mois d'août 2019. Période sombre, par ses conditions de vie précaire, mais aussi pleine d'espoir. Ropak est enceinte de sa fille et ils ont déposé une demande d'asile. "J'avais un médecin pour moi, mais je n'ai jamais vu ce docteur", précise-t-elle. Pudique, elle ne veut pas s'étendre sur leurs conditions de vie difficile. "Tout le monde sait comment vivent les réfugiés en Grèce", coupe Hazhar d'un geste las. Deux ans après leur arrivée, ils se voient notifier un refus par l'administration grecque. Ils décident alors de s'enfuir à nouveau. Suivra un long périple à travers l'Europe : Albanie, Kosovo, Croatie, Serbie, Bosnie,

Roumanie, Autriche, Allemagne, France. Depuis la Grèce, cela fait neuf pays. "Nine", énumère fièrement Ropak en anglais.

"Pendant trois jours, les enfants n'ont rien mangé"

Une partie du trajet se fera en taxi, une autre en bus ou à pied. Ils marchent au moins deux semaines, sous la pluie. Leur fille a à peine 1 an et leur garçon 4 ans à ce moment-là. Leur rencontre avec la police en Croatie les a particulièrement marqués. Hazhar raconte comment ils ont été arrêtés et battus, leurs téléphones portables cassés. "Pendant trois ou quatre jours, on était enfermés sans manger", s'indigne Ropak, "même les enfants n'ont rien mangé." Ce scénario se répète cinq fois : cinq fois la famille tente de franchir la frontière croate clandestinement. Cinq fois, elle est arrêtée par la police croate, battue, enfermée. Enfin, elle change de stratégie et monte dans un camion qui la déposera finalement en Serbie.

En Roumanie, le couple et leurs enfants sont arrêtés. On les oblige à donner leurs empreintes. Ils resteront 9 mois, dans un centre d'accueil. "Les conditions étaient très mauvaises", raconte Ropak, "on ne pouvait pas vivre en Roumanie, il était interdit de sortir. Même avant le confinement, il n'y avait que Hazhar qui avait le droit de sortir une fois par semaine pour faire des courses." Les enfants, en particulier, souffraient de ne pas pouvoir aller jouer dehors. "Il y avait beaucoup de mafia", renchérit Hazhar, "nous n'avons pas voulu rester".

Une nouvelle fois, la famille reprend la route. A l'aide de passeurs, ils sont véhiculés vers la frontière roumaine - qu'ils mettront 6 heures à traverser de nuit à pied. En Autriche, ils se cachent dans un camion, à l'arrière, au milieu des marchandises. Ropak,

alors enceinte de 7 mois, garde un très mauvais souvenir de cet épisode. Après l'Allemagne, les voilà enfin en France. Ils prennent un taxi jusqu'à Lille, puis le train, direction Dunkerque et sa "Jungle". En tout, ils ont mis une année entière pour se retrouver à quelques encablures des côtes britanniques.

Le voyage a coûté 15 000 euros

Entre la Roumanie et leur arrivée en France, autour du 4 août 2020, Ropak, Hazhar et leurs deux petits enfants ont déboursé 15 000 euros. Une somme exigée par les passeurs pour organiser cette longue traversée, qui ne comprend pas bien entendu, toutes les dépenses du quotidien.

Les voilà désormais installés, si l'on peut dire, sur la commune de Grande-Synthe, dans la forêt, surnommée la "Jungle" où se réfugient environ 400 personnes en ce moment, sous des tentes le plus souvent prêtées par des associations. C'est de là qu'ils ont tenté par deux fois de rallier l'Angleterre. Lors de leur premier essai, ils ont été arrêtés par la police. La deuxième tentative est celle où ils ont fait naufrage. Mais ils songent déjà à repartir, malgré la peur. Malgré la précarité de leurs équipements aussi, car Hazhar craint de voir la police confisquer leurs gilets de sauvetage. C'est une accusation fréquente de la part des exilés et que confirme Léa Lambert. Les policiers embarquent le matériel pour tenter de décourager les familles de prendre le risque de ces traversées périlleuses. Mais les trafiquants, eux, font de la vente des gilets de sauvetage, un commerce juteux, comme le détaillent Hazhar, Ropak et Léa.

A présent qu'ils sont à l'abri dans la Maison Sésame, Ropak ose rêver d'un chez elle. Un lieu où "rester, dormir, maison", comme elle le dit dans son anglais très hésitant.

Depuis la Grèce, ils n'ont pas habité dans une vraie maison et c'est donc très difficile pour elle de se soigner, comme le précise Léa Lambert.

La Maison Sésame abrite les familles épuisées

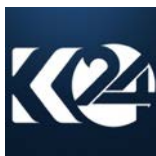
Léa et les bénévoles de la Maison Sésame ont monté ce projet d'hébergement temporaire depuis un peu plus d'un an. La jeune femme dynamique parle désormais assez bien le kurde et quittera ses fonctions dans quelques semaines. Un grand sourire aux lèvres, elle détaille l'objectif de ces mises à l'abri. Nous sommes dans la cuisine, bruyante, de la Maison Sésame, au milieu des femmes et des hommes qui préparent le repas du soir. Un mélange de cuisine kurde, tchétchène et syrienne, à l'image des habitants.

Plus de 600 tankers, cargos, chalutiers traversent la Manche chaque jour, sans compter les Ferrys

Pour mieux comprendre les risques que prennent les migrants qui osent cette traversée de la mer, quotidiennement, sur de toutes petites embarcations, Bernard Baron raconte ce détroit du Pas-de-Calais qu'il connaît si bien.

Avec les bénévoles de la SNSM (Société nationale de sauvetage en mer) il sillonne en permanence la Manche pour venir au secours des plaisanciers, pêcheurs ou nageurs imprudents. Il se refuse à donner des détails sur les migrants rescapés, mais il est évident que lui-même et ses collègues ont secouru bien des familles en perdition.

Le trafic incessant dans le détroit du Pas-de-Calais rend les traversées d'autant plus périlleuses que la mer est très froide. Même les sportifs les plus aguerris peuvent y laisser leur vie, conclut Bernard Baron.



August 24, 2020
By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Academics call for acquittal of activist convicted in Iran for teaching Kurdish language

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – Academics across the world in a signed statement called for the acquittal Zara Mohammadi, an activist convicted in Iran for teaching the Kurdish language. Among them famed American linguist Noam Chomsky and Turkish sociologist İsmail Beşikçi, the experts also called for an end to discriminatory policies in Iran against non-Persian languages.

On July 14, 2020, an Islamic Revolutionary Court in Iran sentenced Zara Mohammadi to ten years in prison on charges of being a national security threat. Her lawyer has defended her by saying that she had been captured for teaching her mother tongue to children and being involved in other cultural activities.

Zara Mohammadi is a co-founder of the Nojin Cultural Association, which is a civil society organization focused on societal and educational initiatives, including teaching the Kurdish language and literature.

"The Islamic Revolutionary Court's verdict insinuates that Zara Mohammadi's Kurdish instruction threatened Iran's "national security." It is worth noting that the Revolutionary Courts are not constitutional. According to Article 61 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "the judiciary power is exercised by the Public Courts of Justice", the academics said in a signed statement.

"Moreover, while Iran's constitution explicitly privileges the Persian language as the country's official language and language of education and therefore marginalises other languages spoken in Iran as "tribal" and "local," it does explicitly allow the instruction of non-Persian languages (Article 15)," they said.



Kurdish language teacher and civil society activist, Zara Mohammadi during one of her lectures (Photo: Instagram @zara_sine)

Although Kurdish culture, such as dress and music, is allowed and Kurdish is used in some broadcasts and publications, the Kurdish minority continues to suffer deep-rooted discrimination in Iran. Moreover, the Persian language is the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education in Iran.

Kurdish is not taught in schools.

According to Amnesty International's annual human rights review published in February, ethnic minorities in Iran, including Kurds, continue to face "entrenched discrimination, curtailing their access to education, employment, and adequate housing."

There are over 12 million Kurds who live in Iran and form around 15 to 17 percent of the population.

"The verdict pronounced against Zara is a clear example of the Is-

lamic Republic of Iran's duplicitous policy toward non-Persian languages of Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution," Dr. Haidar Khezri, Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Central Florida, USA, told Kurdistan 24 on Sunday.

Khezri was among the signatories of the statement calling for Mohammadi's release.

The move is, "[o]n the one hand, an explicit constitutional commitment to diversity at the rhetorical level, and, on the other, a policy of assimilationism and soft linguicide in practice, and even punitive reactions."

Furthermore, the academics said that "over the past 40 years the Islamic Republic of Iran has refrained from implementing Article 15 of the constitution and consistently treated non-Persian languages as threats to Iran's national security."

"The Revolutionary Court's latest ruling against Zara Mohammadi is therefore only the latest instance of the Islamic Republic's securitization of the promotion, even by private individuals, of non-Persian languages."

According to the academics, Iran's discriminatory practices against the Kurdish language "are in clear violation of several international conventions and covenants, including the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of which Iran is a signatory."

They condemned the "Islamic Revolutionary Court's unlawful verdict and called for the immediate acquittal of Zara Mohammadi and an end to discriminatory policies in Iran against non-Persian languages."

'Kurds' votes are not for sale,' says HDP Co-Chair Buldan

HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan has spoken in Bursa: "They have no credibility left. So, they will try to open a new area for unearned income by alleging that they have discovered gas reserves and make new calculations based on this until 2023."

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Pervin Buldan spoke in Turkey's western province of Bursa yesterday (August 24) as part of the third stage of the party's Democratic Struggle Program.

"Kurds' votes are not for sale," Buldan emphasized in her speech and said, "The votes of Kurds are the votes of people who have their bellies full for your all types of lies and your oppressive mentality based on denial."

Former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who has recently founded the Future Party after resigning from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), made a statement in Turkey's eastern province of Van on August 22, saying, "If Kurds are uneasy, none of us can be at peace."

Other highlights from Buldan's speech were as follows:

'No one can accept such an attitude'

"If need be, you deny it; if need be, you make politics unbearable for them; if need be, you imprison politicians; if

need be, you appoint trustees and do not raise your voice against it; you keep the representatives of a people hostages in prisons and do not say a single word about all these...

"While you do not say a single word while Selahattin Demirtaş, Figen Yüksekdağ, İdris Baluken, Sebahat Tuncel, Gültan Kışanak and dozens of my other friends whom I cannot name all are in prison, while you say nothing to the ones who rule the country with trustees and have no words to say to those who have turned the country into a country of isolation, you then come up and talk about Kurdish question.

"Then, you will seek ways to initiate politics in Kurdish provinces while you do not object to any of these. Neither Kurds, nor the people of Turkey would accept such an attitude.

'Kurdish question affects everyone'

"Kurdish question is not only the issue of Hakkari or Diyarbakır. Kurdish question is also the problem of Bursa and the people of Bursa. It is also the issue of the people of Balıkesir, İzmir, the Aegean and Black Sea.

"Because the crises that we have been going through, both economic and social, are not crises that solely affect the HDP and Kurds. Just as they affect the peoples living in western Turkey, in its Aegean and Black Sea, just

as it affects the Circassians, Alevis, Arabs and Turks living there, they also affect the Kurds in Kurdistan and the people living there.

'No one faces the future with confidence'

"If the society of Turkey says we are brothers and sisters in this country and live together, they should definitely have a word against what Kurds are going through, they should say something against the pressures they have to live with and the atrocity they face amid this policy of denial.

"This country is the country of us all, we live here all together. If we live together as Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Alevis, women and youth, then we have to stand up against these problems and issues altogether.

"They have turned the country into a country of isolation. Isolation is not imposed solely on [PKK leader] Mr. Öcalan in İmralı Prison. It is imposed on the society and peoples of Turkey in the person of İmralı.

"The people of Turkey live in isolation in every sense of the term. In a country where there is no justice, law, democracy and even social media is not free, people don't feel free and no one faces their future with confidence."

'They seek their power in the depths of ground'

Concluding her remarks, Buldan also touched upon President and ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's "good news" that natural gas reserves were discovered in the Black Sea.

"They reopened Hagia Sophia to worship; but everyone knows that there were different calculations behind it. They had a survey conducted following Hagia Sophia and saw an increase of one percent. This would not suffice them to come into power again.

"Now, they give the good news that they discovered gas in Black Sea. They now try to seek their power in the depths of ground because they have lost face to look people in the face. They have no credibility left.

"So, they will try to open a new area for unearned income by alleging that they have discovered gas reserves and make new calculations based on this until the year 2023. They say that they will bring the gas reserves into life in 2023. But they know that they cannot stay in power until 2023. Will this gas remain until 2023? No. What will they do?

"They will hold new tenders, give them to companies and make the society of Turkey to meet the cost of this gas reserve. The thing is that they will transfer its revenue to their own companies and pro-government companies." (AS/SD)

In northeast Syria town, families say Turkey cut their water

Outside her home in northeast Syria, Sheikha Majid said her life had become an endless quest for fresh water, three weeks into the latest supply cut by Turkish forces.

"I spend the whole time running after water trucks," the 43-year-old grandmother said, amid an ongoing outage -- one of many in recent months -- in Hasakeh, a city run by a semi-autonomous Kurdish administration.

As coronavirus spreads across northeastern Syria, residents in Hasakeh have been caught up in spats between Turkish forces to the north and Syria's Kurds, viewed by Ankara as "terrorists".
PUBLICITÉ

In October last year, Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies occupied a 120-kilometre (75-mile) stretch of land inside the Syrian border, including the Alouk power station that supplies drinking water to Hasakeh.

Kurdish officials say Turkey is now using the water station to pressure the local authorities into giving them more electricity in areas Ankara seized from them.

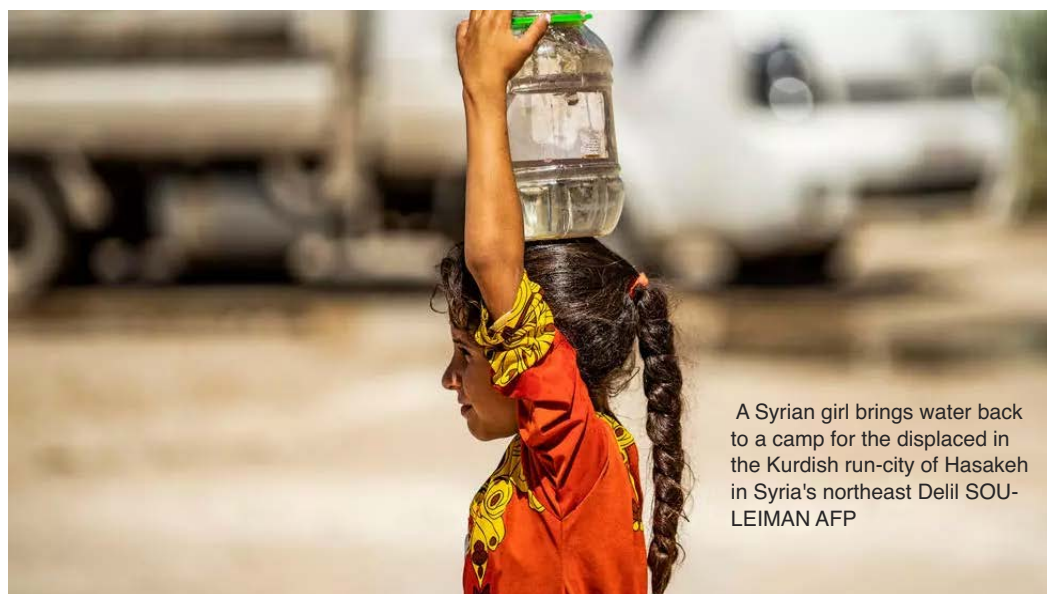
While Turkey claims the station has merely been under maintenance, aid organisations have warned against using water as a political or military tool to the detriment of civilians.

Majid said the latest supply cut had made it difficult to ensure basic hygiene for her seven children and two grandchildren.

"Most of the time we bathe in salty water" from wells instead, she said, adding that she used the brackish liquid for washing clothes too.

In the city's narrow streets, women and children clutched empty jerrycans, waiting to fill them up from water deliveries, some from aid groups.

On a rooftop, a young girl held



A Syrian girl brings water back to a camp for the displaced in the Kurdish run-city of Hasakeh in Syria's northeast Delil SOU-LEIMAN AFP

a gushing green pipe over a water tank, funnelling water from a truck below.

- 'Weapon against civilians' -

"This time it's really dragged on," elderly resident Muhammad Khatar told AFP on Saturday, referring to the latest supply cut.

"All we want is to eat and drink, and do our job. We have nothing to do with politics."

The Kurds say there have been eight interruptions to the supply of water from the station near the town of Ras al-Ain since last autumn.

The Turks "occupied our land and now they're cutting off our water," 45-year-old Saleh Fatah said.

The issue has sparked increasing concern at a time when confirmed coronavirus infections have risen to 362 cases including 25 deaths in Syria's Kurdish-held northeast, according to data provided by the semi-autonomous administration.

Damascus on Monday accused Ankara of using water as a "weapon against Syrian civilians".

- 'Pressure point' -

Dozens of those cases are in Hasakeh.

In March, the United Nations warned one of the earlier water supply interruptions from Alouk was putting 460,000 people at risk in the Hasakeh area, as the pandemic spread worldwide.

Kurdish forces spearheaded the US-backed battle against the Islamic State group in Syria, but Ankara says they are linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey.

Turkey's defence ministry claimed on August 6 the Alouk water facility was under maintenance but that Hasakeh was still receiving water.

The Kurds say the water has been cut off, and the hashtag "Thirst is strangling Hasakeh" has been trending online.

Kurdish officials say that, after Ankara's military campaign in October, there was an initial deal for the Turks to ensure continued water supply from Alouk, in exchange for the Kurds providing electricity to newly taken areas.

But the Turks have been trying to exert pressure on the Kurds to give them more electricity, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor and a Kurdish official.

The Turks repeatedly "ask for more electricity," said Suzdar Ahmad, the joint head of the Kurdish-run water authority.

Aheen Sweid, co-director of the energy authority, said the water cuts were nothing new.

"Since the Turks occupied Ras al-Ain there have been endless

rounds of negotiations over water interruptions from Alouk," she said.

This time, around 10 days after the taps ran dry in Hasakeh, on August 13 the Kurds cut off the electricity to the Ras al-Ain area in retaliation, Sweid said.

Both sides then negotiated via Russia -- an ally of Syria's central government in the country's complex civil war -- and on Saturday they came to an agreement that envisaged water making its way back to Hasakeh's pipes from Monday.

But Syria analyst Nicholas

Heras said the water cuts were likely to continue in areas controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

"Seizing the Alouk plant was one of Turkey's key campaign goals" in October last year, he said, "exactly because Turkey wants to use water as a pres-

sure point to turn local people in Hasakeh against the SDF."

Ankara now held the "ability to cut water indefinitely to over half a million water-starved people" in Kurdish-held areas, representing a far more effective weapon than retaliatory power cuts, he said.

LA CROIX

26 août 2020

En Irak, la contestation gagne le Kurdistan

Alors qu'il était resté à l'écart du soulèvement qui enflamme le Sud chiite depuis des mois, le Kurdistan irakien est touché à son tour. À Erbil, la capitale, Dohuk dans le nord, ou Souleymaniyé et Halabja dans le sud, les manifestations se succèdent, ainsi que les arrestations. Parmi les protestataires se mêlent, dans le sud, des fonctionnaires de cette région autonome de l'Irak, excédés de ne plus percevoir leurs salaires, ainsi que dans le nord des opposants à la violente intervention militaire turque du mois de juin, destinée à réduire les bases arrière du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Les autorités tentent de juguler la contestation en interdisant les rassemblements, en coupant Internet, voire en « exerçant des pressions » sur les journalistes, déplore Reporters sans frontières. Autant de signes de la crise profonde dans laquelle se trouve la région, saignée financièrement par plusieurs années de lutte contre Daech et à laquelle le gouvernement central de Bagdad a décidé de suspendre ses versements depuis avril.

En vertu de la loi de finance irakienne, la région du Kurdistan perçoit en principe 12 % du budget fédéral mais doit en échange fournir 250 000 barils de pétrole brut par jour à Bagdad.



Cette obligation n'étant plus remplie depuis des mois, le gouvernement irakien, lui-même confronté à l'effondrement des cours du pétrole et à une contestation sociale grandissante, a fini par couper les vivres au Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (GRK), le précipitant dans la crise. « Révolution blanche »

« Certaines revendications sont légitimes. Mais ce que nous n'acceptons pas, c'est que des manifestations pacifiques soient détournées par Nouvelle génération (le parti d'opposition, NDLR) ou par le PKK », prévient Safin Dizeyi, ministre des affaires étrangères du GRK, qui déplore des « appels à la violence, ou à une

« révolution blanche » » dans certains médias. À ses yeux, le principal responsable de cette mauvaise passe est le gouvernement irakien qu'il soupçonne d'arrière-pensées « politiques ». « Nous espérons qu'un accord sera trouvé d'ici à la fin de l'année, comme cela a été évoqué à Washington avec le premier ministre Mustafa Al Kadhimi. Nos attentes ne doivent pas être trop hautes mais nous souhaitons qu'elles soient en bonne partie satisfaites. »

L'erreur serait de réduire les tensions actuelles à leur volet économique, estime toutefois Adel Bakawan, directeur du département recherche à l'Iremmo, qui – au-delà du

fossé culturel et linguistique qui les sépare – voit plusieurs « marqueurs communs » entre les jeunes manifestants chiites et kurdes : « L'absence d'idéologie et de programme, le refus de la corruption et de l'injustice sociale, et surtout une immense défiance à l'égard des responsables politiques. » « Une première contestation s'est fait jour dès 2011 alors que l'économie était au plus haut, rappelle-t-il. Ceux qui descendent dans la rue sont des jeunes nés autour de 2003, qui n'ont connu ni Saddam Hussein, ni l'embargo, ni la guerre entre le Kurdistan et Bagdad. Ils ont d'autres envies et d'autres rêves que la génération au pouvoir ne peut pas comprendre. »

Pourquoi l'Occident accepte-t-il tant de crimes de la part du président Erdogan ?

Une carte blanche de Benoit Lannoo, historien de l'Église et des chrétiens d'Orient.

Un soleil de plomb, des températures dépassant tous les jours les quarante degrés et pas une goutte d'eau de pluie : ce sont des circonstances normales à cette époque dans la Basse-Djézireh, la région d'al-Hasakah au nord-est de la Syrie. Le Khabour, la rivière qui traverse la capitale du gouvernorat dénommé également Hassaké, est un ouādī maintenant : un oued à sec. Mais il n'est pas normal du tout que les robinets ne fournissent plus la moindre goutte d'eau non plus.

Or, des milices jihadistes et nationalistes turques empêchent depuis quinze jours les dispositifs de transport d'eau potable venant des régions moins arides dans la région frontalière syro-turque. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas la première fois qu'ils se servent de l'eau comme arme de guerre, depuis la prise d'une "zone de sécurité contre des terroristes kurdes" de cent kilomètres de long et de vingt-cinq kilomètres de large dans la Haute-Djézireh syrienne.

"Ces coupures volontaires d'eau potable sont des atteintes aux droits de l'Homme", dit le Patriarche syriaque-orthodoxe Ignace Éphrem II Karim dans un courrier adressé vendredi au secrétaire général des Nations Unies. "Cet acte sans éthique frappe surtout les enfants, les vieillards et les personnes vulnérables, dans un pays qui par ailleurs souffre déjà fort de la pandémie du Covid-19. Pendant, il s'agit ici d'un crime contre l'humanité."



Encore un crime du Président turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan autour de ses frontières méridionales pour lequel l'Occident ferme les yeux. Le nettoyage ethnique se poursuit en silence. La minorité chrétienne qui essaie de survivre du côté nord de la frontière, subit l'une intimidation après l'autre. Les parents d'un prêtre chaldéen à Istanbul, Remzi Diril, par exemple ont voulu réintégrer leur village natal de Meer ; ils ont été enlevés et assassinés en janvier.

Mais les troupes turques –

sous le prétexte de protéger la Turquie contre des attaques terroristes kurdes – n'ont pas seulement envahi le nord de la Syrie en octobre dernier, en avril encore ils ont également fait des victimes parmi des chrétiens et des yezidis à l'extrême nord de l'Irak, autour de Zakho et Sinjar. Et ne l'oublions pas : ces troupes turques qui envahissent les pays limitrophes, sont des troupes de l'Otan, notre alliance militaire !

L'expression al-Jazayra en arabe signifie : "L'îlot". La Djézireh a toujours été une région multiculturelle et multireligieuse, où cohabitent des yezidis et des mandéens, des kurdes chrétiens et sunnites, des chrétiens chaldéens, des Syriaque-catholiques

et des Syriaque-orthodoxes ainsi que des Arméniens qui s'y sont installés après les génocides commis par les Jeunes Turcs à l'issue de la Première guerre mondiale.

Cette diversité est systématiquement menacée maintenant par les islamistes et nationalistes turques. Fin de l'année dernière, dans les abris de bus à Diyarbakir, sont même apparus des affiches avec le Verset coranique dit "de l'Épée", populaire dans les milieux d'extrémistes et souvent cité comme justification pour des actes terroristes. Mais l'Occident s'en fout. N'est-il pas grand temps de revoir fondamentalement notre "alliance" avec la Turquie ?



August 26, 2020

COVID-19: Iraq records 72 deaths and 3,837 new infections in 24 hours

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment on Wednesday announced more than 3,800 new coronavirus infections and 72 deaths resulting from the disease in the past 24 hours.

The ministry announced in its daily epidemiological status update that it had conducted 20,359 tests in that time period, making a total of 1,502,546 tests carried out since the outbreak of the virus in Iraq in February.

According to the health officials, the new numbers brought the total number of infections in Iraq to 215,784 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 6,668 deaths and nearly 52,000 active cases in Iraqi hospitals and other medical care centers.

Today's figures for infections and



The number of coronavirus infections in Iraq has reached 215,784, more than 6,600 of them fatal. Iraqi health workers conduct coronavirus tests. (Photo: AFP/Mohammed Sawaf)

deaths in Iraq do not include the most recent developments in the autonomous Kurdistan Region, which has its own health ministry and typically announces results later in the day. As such, Kurdistan's figures are usually added to

the following day's national tally.

The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq, Adham Ismail, announced earlier on Wednesday that the rate of new infections sharply in-

creased since the recent Eid al-Adha holiday.

The statement was made during a press conference held with the governor of Sulaimani province, Haval Abu Bakr, and the province's head health directorate, Sabah Hawrami. Ismail also explained, "There is still no treatment for the pandemic," so it was essential that "people's lives should undergo a change and protective mask should be part of every family's life and everyone must commit to staying away from crowded places."

The highly-contagious disease has infected over 24 million people worldwide and killed nearly 821,000 according to government-reported data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The actual figures could be dramatically higher due to insufficient testing capabilities or underreporting.



August 27, 2020
Halgurd Sherwani

Two Kurdish brothers found dead after alleged abduction by ISIS

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The dead bodies of two Kurdish youths were found on Thursday after they were allegedly abducted by so-called Islamic State militants in Khanaqin, Diyala province, a local source told Kurdistan 24.

On Wednesday night, at a "fake checkpoint" set up by Islamic State militants at the Dakai Michael Village near Kahanqin district, two people were ambushed and later their truck was set ablaze by the militants, a source familiar with the incident told Kurdistan 24.

"After seeing the truck on fire, two Kurdish brothers named

Saman Dawood and Luqman Dawood tried to reach the scene and extinguish the blaze," the source added, but they were also ambushed by the terrorists and were abducted last night.

Local officials announced that earlier in the morning they had found dead bodies of the abducted brothers close to the area where their kidnapping occurred.

Units of the Iraqi army were close to the area where the ambush took place, according to the source.

However, allegations are directed towards the Islamic State for the murders of the two Kurdish

brothers. The terror group has not claimed responsibility yet.

Despite the territorial defeat the terror group suffered in 2017, it has been able to sporadically launch hit-and-run attacks in those areas that are devoid of security cooperation between the Kurdistan Region's Peshmerga forces and Iraq's security forces.

A United Nations counter-terrorism official announced that the Islamic State remains a serious threat in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere around the world, over two years after the territorial defeat of the extremist organization.

Top Kurdistan Region officials

and Peshmerga commanders have issued repeated warnings to both the Iraqi government and the international community that the Islamic State remains active and capable of reasserting itself and re-emerging in the disputed territories to continue its campaign of violence.

A "security vacuum," as Kurdish officials have described it, has made the disputed areas in Diyala, Salahuddin, and Kirkuk more vulnerable to Islamic State attacks.

Editing by Karzan Sulaivany

Turquie : l'avocate Ebru Timtik meurt après 238 jours de grève de la faim contre son emprisonnement

Emprisonnée pour son travail d'avocate et ses convictions progressistes. Ce jeudi 27 août, le cabinet d'avocat People's Law Office a révélé la mort de l'avocate turque Ebru Timtik, d'une grève de la faim démarrée il y a 238 jours.

Poursuivie pour ses combats progressistes

En 2019, elle avait été condamnée par la justice turque à treize ans de prison, officiellement pour appartenance à une organisation terroriste. Un procès factice, l'avocate étant en fait poursuivie pour son métier et ses engagements, comme le rappellent nombre de ses soutiens en deuil sur Twitter. Elle avait notamment défendu des dissidents kurdes face au régime autoritaire d'Erdogan, Président de la Turquie.

Réclamant un procès équitable, Ebru Timtik avait entamé une grève de la faim le 2 janvier. Le 5 avril, elle avait décidé d'intensifier sa grève de la faim, en se privant de vitamines. Un acte radical, qui conduit inévitablement à la mort.

Elle est décédée dans un hôpital d'Istanbul. Mercredi, le cabinet People's Law Office, où elle était collaboratrice, avait annoncé que les personnels médicaux tentaient de la réanimer, après un arrêt cardiaque.

"Ebru était l'avocate du peuple, écrit son cabinet d'avocats en guise d'hommage. Elle aimait les gens autant que sa vie, elle a résisté jour après jour pour obtenir



justice. [...] Ebru Timtik, avocate du peuple, est immortelle !"

Hommages internationaux

Ce jeudi 27 août, des dizaines de personnes se sont rassemblées devant l'institut médico-légal où se trouve son corps. Des rassemblements ont aussi eu lieu devant des ambassades turques à travers l'Europe.

Lors des universités d'été de la Conférence des Bâtonniers, ce vendredi, sa présidente, Hélène Fontaine, a rendu hommage à Ebru Timtik : "Il n'y a pas de frontière lorsqu'on est avocat".

"Bien plus qu'une avocate, Ebru était une soeur, une confidente, une camarade, un océan de bienveillance, de tendresse et de courage, écrit le traducteur Bahar Kimyongür. Pas une once de haine en son cœur même envers le pouvoir qui l'a assassiné."

Des centaines d'avocats seraient emprisonnés en Turquie

Ebru Timtik faisait une grève de la faim aux côtés de son confrère Aytac Ünsal. Faisant partie, comme elle de l'Association des Avocats Progressistes (ÇHD), il a aussi été condamné pour appartenance à une organisation terroriste, et demande un procès équitable. Il est dans un état critique, selon Arrested Lawyers. Depuis le 30 juillet, ils avaient été sortis de prison pour être hospitalisés, mentionne le site Arrested Lawyers, qui dénonce l'arrestation d'avocats à travers le monde.

Barkin Timtik, petite soeur d'Ebru Timtik, également avocate, est aussi en prison. Elle avait été jugée en même temps que sa soeur, et 18 autres avocats, fin 2018, comme le rapportait Dalloz.

En Turquie, de nombreux avocats opposés au régime d'Er-

dogan sont arrêtés, jugés sous de faux prétextes, souvent pour terrorisme, et emprisonnés.

La République de Turquie vit la crise judiciaire la plus sévère de son Histoire.

En février 2020, le pays a fini par détenir le triste record du plus grand nombre d'avocats jetés en prison, selon une association regroupant différents barreaux du pays : "Des pratiques illégales et des interventions directes de l'exécutif dans des procès suivis de près par le public ont récemment atteint un niveau inacceptable", dénonçait un communiqué, alertant aussi sur des arrestations de juges. "La République de Turquie vit la crise judiciaire la plus sévère de son Histoire."

Ce mois-ci, Arrested Lawyers a comptabilisé 441 condamnations d'avocats en Turquie, entre 2016 et 2020.

Cachez ce saint que je ne saurais voir !

Comme pour les églises d'Iznik et de Trabzon, transformées en mosquées en 2011 et en 2013, les autorités turques ont -pour l'instant- décidé de préserver les fresques chrétiennes de la basilique Sainte-Sophie, à Istanbul, par un jeu d'ombres et de rideaux sur tringles. Histoire de ne pas trop heurter la communauté internationale.

Ainsi, le 24 juillet, lors de la première prière du vendredi

depuis 1934, et tandis que l'ouléma Ali Erbas prêchait, le cimetière traditionnel dans la main gauche, l'archange Gabriel ou la Vierge et l'enfant étaient plongés dans l'obscurité.

Au mois d'août, c'est l'église byzantine Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora d'Istanbul qui a été transformée en mosquée à son tour, laissant craindre une détérioration d'oeuvres d'art chrétiennes, notamment des mosaïques du XIV^e siècle ou

une monumentale représentation du Jugement dernier.

Car, contrairement à Sainte-Sophie, les figures bibliques décorent ici l'ensemble de l'édifice, et il sera impossible de les dissimuler à l'heure de la prière. Après la première islamisation de l'église, en 1452, les Ottomans avaient gratté les images chrétiennes ou les avaient recouvertes de plâtre. Alors, quoi, cette-fois-ci ?

Pour Zeynep Turkeyilmaz, historienne de l'Empire ottoman, l'église Saint-Sauveur risque donc « l'équivalent d'une destruction, car il est impossible de transformer cette architecture intérieure en la préservant » (« L'Obs », 21/8).

Il n'y aura plus que le cimetière à visiter ?

J. C.

En Syrie, le régime Assad reste dans le déni malgré la progression du Covid-19

Le système de santé, délabré par neuf ans de guerre, souffre de sanctions internationales qui compliquent son approvisionnement en matériels et médicaments.

Laborieusement convoquée à Genève après neuf mois d'interruption, la troisième session des pourparlers intersyriens menés sous l'égide de l'ONU a failli tourner court, lundi 24 août, après que quatre membres de la délégation venue de Damas ont été testés positifs au Covid-19. Si les discussions ont repris jeudi 27 août, le comité constitutionnel, censé déboucher sur une réforme de la Constitution du pays, n'a pour l'instant rendu qu'un bulletin médical, comme un écho sinistre de la gravité de l'épidémie qui sévit dans le pays.

Au 27 août, le ministère de la



Des habitants de la ville d'Hassaké, au nord-Est de la Syrie, vont faire le plein aux citernes fournies par des organisations humanitaires après lors une panne d'eau le 22 août. DELIL SOULEIMAN / AFP

santé comptabilisait officiellement 2 440 cas dans les régions contrôlées par Damas, dont une centaine « importés », et 98 décès liés à la pandémie. Le nombre de contaminations, bien que largement

sous-estimés selon les ONG, ne cesse d'augmenter.

« Depuis juillet, la situation épidémiologique a rapidement évolué. En juillet, 532 cas ont été confirmés contre 157 cas

en juin et 79 en mai. Au moment de la rédaction du présent rapport, en août, les autorités avaient confirmé plus de 920 cas. Compte tenu du nombre limité de tests pratiqués dans le pays, il est donc possible que des cas asymptomatiques et bénins ne soient pas détectés et que le nombre réel de cas dépasse de loin les chiffres officiels », alerte le Bureau de coordination des affaires humanitaires (OCHA) de l'ONU. A rebours du déni des autorités, les témoignages sont alarmants.

Crainte d'un effondrement économique

« La frontière entre le Liban et la Syrie est toujours fermée, à moins d'avoir une recommandation ou une autorisation spéciale. Tout le monde à Damas me dit de ne pas venir, car les cas de Covid-19 explosent. La

situation est encore pire à Alep, en termes de contamination et de manques de lits. Les fils Facebook se transforment en carnets de condoléances », raconte un homme d'affaires qui vit entre Beyrouth et Damas.

« Cela fait deux jours que je n'avais pas ouvert mon compte Facebook et, aujourd'hui, ce ne sont que des condoléances. Que celui qui n'est pas mort ou tombé malade me laisse un message », commente sarcastiquement un activiste, pourtant prorégime, qui suggère aux morgues de publier le nombre de décès plutôt que de laisser cette tâche au ministère de la santé.

Début août, le directeur adjoint de la direction de la santé du gouvernorat de Damas estimait à 100 000 le nombre de cas probables dans la capitale et ses environs en se basant sur le nombre de décès, une centaine par jour. Signe d'une détérioration de la situation dans l'agglomération, de nombreux cas « suspects » sont répertoriés en province chez des

malades ayant récemment séjourné à Damas.

Dans un pays ravagé par neuf ans de guerre, le régime syrien avait initialement imposé un début de confinement, fermé les écoles, interdit les prières collectives et limité les déplacements avant de rapidement assouplir les mesures les plus contraignantes par crainte d'un effondrement économique. « Les impacts socioéconomiques du Covid-19, notamment sur la sécurité alimentaire et les moyens de subsistance, sont susceptibles d'exacerber les besoins humanitaires substantiels du pays », prévient l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS).

« **Taux de transmission élevés** »

A un système de santé délabré s'ajoute l'impact des sanctions internationales mises en place par les pays occidentaux et une partie des pays membres de la Ligue arabe. « On manque de tout d'un point de vue médical en Syrie, de lits, d'oxygène... Ce sont d'abord les sanctions [occidentales] qui

sont en cause : elles ne visent peut-être pas les médicaments, mais des sociétés surréagissent quand elles entendent le mot "Syrie". Elles préfèrent ne pas négocier par crainte d'être pénalisées. Ainsi, une usine pharmaceutique à Damas qui importe les matières premières depuis l'Inde, via le port de Beyrouth, s'est vu récemment refuser une importation par son partenaire indien. La Syrie n'a plus, non plus, les qualifications médicales, tant les médecins sont nombreux à être partis », ajoute l'homme d'affaires.

Loin d'être contenue dans les zones gouvernementales, l'évolution de la pandémie dans les vastes territoires contrôlés par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS, à dominante kurde) dans le nord-est du pays inquiète aussi les humanitaires. « Il ne fait aucun doute que nous assistons à une augmentation des cas de Covid-19 dans le nord-est de la Syrie. Au 24 août, il y avait 394 cas confirmés. Les tests sont en nombre limité, mais, parmi ceux qui sont ef-

fectués, environ la moitié donne un résultat positif. Cela démontre que les taux de transmission sont élevés et que beaucoup plus de tests sont nécessaires », estime Will Turner, responsable des programmes d'urgence pour la Syrie à Médecins sans frontières (MSF).

« Les villes de Hassaké et Qamishli sont les foyers les plus actifs. Nous craignons que cela ne se déplace bientôt vers Rakka, une autre zone densément peuplée qui accueille un grand nombre de personnes déplacées et qui ne se remet toujours pas des destructions de la guerre. Les services de santé sont rares et l'accès à l'eau et à l'assainissement est médiocre », poursuit Will Turner.

« Entre la dépréciation des monnaies locales et l'explosion des cas de Covid-19, le risque d'une crise humanitaire de plus grande ampleur existe, tant en Syrie qu'au Liban : tout le monde vit sur ses réserves », conclut l'économiste franco-syrien Samir Aïta.

Le Monde

25 août 2020
Par Marie Jégo

Turquie : incertitude sur le sort des fresques de l'ancienne église byzantine Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora transformée en mosquée

La conversion de la Chora en mosquée était réclamée de longue date par plusieurs associations proches des confréries islamiques. Un décret du président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, publié vendredi 21 août, leur donne satisfaction.

Prolongé dans la contemplation des fresques de l'église Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora à Istanbul, Anton Koutsenko se dit qu'il est sans doute « *parmi les derniers* » à pouvoir admirer ces merveilles de l'art byzantin. L'église du V^e siècle vient tout juste d'être transformée en mosquée sur décret du président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, publié

vendredi 21 août. L'islam interdisant les représentations figuratives, les somptueuses mosaïques et fresques du XIV^e siècle sont vouées à être recouvertes.

« *Seront-elles enduites de chaux ou vont-elles disparaître derrière des rideaux ?* », s'inquiète le touriste ukrainien. « *Cacher de telles merveilles*

n'a aucun sens... », se lamente sa femme, Nadia. « *Il va falloir habiller l'intérieur de kilomètres de tissus* », imagine-t-elle. Nul ne sait quand les aménagements auront lieu.

Samedi, l'église, qui avait jusqu'ici le statut de musée, continuait à recevoir des visiteurs bien que plusieurs parties du bâtiment aient été

fermées au public de longue date pour cause de réfection. La préposée à la vente des billets ignore quand la conversion va se produire. « *On va fermer ces jours-ci, le temps de procéder aux transformations nécessaires, ensuite il y aura sûrement une cérémonie officielle pour la première prière.* »

Située près des anciens rem-

parts de la ville, l'église aux six dômes est célèbre pour ses mosaïques et ses fresques byzantines du XIV^e siècle. D'une finesse et d'une fraîcheur incomparables, elles sont parmi les mieux conservées au monde. Sur les murs et les dômes, les principaux thèmes bibliques sont déclinés, la Dormition de la Vierge, la Résurrection, le Jugement dernier.

Les lois du califat

L'édifice a pris sa forme actuelle aux XI^e et XII^e siècles. Il a été consacré en tant que mosquée par le sultan Bajazet II, près de soixante ans après la conquête de Constantinople par son père Mehmet II. A l'époque ottomane, les fresques et mosaïques ont été cachées sous une couche de chaux. Transformée en musée après la seconde guerre mondiale, la Chora (« Kariye », en turc), a pu retrouver ses représentations bibliques grâce à une minutieuse restauration menée de 1948 à 1958 par une équipe de spécialistes américains de l'art byzantin.

Sa conversion en mosquée était réclamée de longue date par plusieurs associations proches des confréries islamiques. La décision a été prise en novembre 2019 par le Conseil d'Etat, la plus haute juridiction administrative de Turquie. Les principaux arguments des rigoristes ont été jugés recevables. Le statut de musée a été déclaré illégal en référence aux décisions prises à l'époque du califat, qui avait interdit d'utiliser l'édifice à des fins autres que cultuelles.

Le même raisonnement a prévalu le 10 juillet, lors de la conversion de la basilique Sainte-Sophie en mosquée. La justice turque s'aligne désormais sur les lois du califat – aboli en 1924 par Atatürk – plutôt que sur celles de la République, ce qui en dit long sur l'ampleur de la révolution culturelle imposée par Erdogan depuis dix-huit ans passés au pouvoir.



Détail de l'une des fresques de l'église byzantine Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora à Istanbul, le 21 août. Emrah Gurel / AP

Son décret d'application était attendu avec impatience par les milieux islamistes. Publié vendredi au *Journal officiel*, il ordonne l'ouverture de la « mosquée Kariye » au culte musulman, la plaçant sous la responsabilité de la Direction des affaires religieuses, une institution d'Etat devenue toute puissante, dotée d'un budget considérable (plus d'un milliard d'euros) et responsable de 84 685 mosquées en Turquie.

de ralentissement économique et de reprise de l'épidémie de Covid-19.

Sous le règne de l'AKP, six anciennes églises byzantines ont été reconverties en mosquées, deux à Istanbul et quatre autres dans les villes de Trabzon, Kirklareli, Iznik et Edirne. Les autorités assurent que les touristes pourront continuer à admirer les fresques de la Chora, en dehors des heures



Des visiteurs de l'église byzantine Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora d'Istanbul, le 21 août. BULENT KILIC / AFP

« Chefs-d'œuvre architecturaux »

En transformant l'église byzantine en mosquée, comme il l'a fait un mois plus tôt pour la basilique Sainte-Sophie, M. Erdogan cherche à cajoler la base conservatrice et pieuse de son Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, au pouvoir depuis 2002), au moment où sa popularité s'étirole sur fond

de prière. Elles promettent de préserver les œuvres d'art comme elles l'ont fait à Trabzon, sur les bords de la Mer noire, où une église byzantine appelée Sainte-Sophie a été convertie en mosquée en 2013, ses fresques ayant été cachées sous des rideaux amovibles.

Sainte-Sophie et la Chora sont inscrites sur la liste du Patri-

moine mondial de l'Unesco, qui leur reconnaît le statut de « chefs-d'œuvre architecturaux ». L'agence, qui avait déclaré par le passé que des changements de statut de ces monuments historiques porteraient atteinte à leur valeur patrimoniale, n'a guère réagi aux décrets turcs.

« Le siècle sera turc »

La Grèce, actuellement soumise aux intenses pressions de son voisin turc en mer Egée et en Méditerranée, a pour sa part dénoncé, vendredi, « une provocation supplémentaire envers les croyants et la communauté internationale ». En Turquie, seul le Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, pro-kurde), s'est exprimé contre cette conversion. « *L'un des symboles de l'identité profonde, multiculturelle et multireligieuse de notre pays a été sacrifié* », a dénoncé, dans un tweet, le député Garo Paylan, élu du HDP au Parlement turc.

Dans le quartier de l'église, à la porte d'Edirne, non loin de la muraille byzantine, le calme règne. Dans la touffeur de cette chaude journée d'août, des hommes assis autour d'un thé sous une tonnelle près du marché aux pigeons voyageurs se réjouissent de la décision de leur président.

« *Dès que la mosquée Kariye ouvrira, j'irai* », clame Abubekir, le plus âgé du groupe, la tête ceinte d'un petit calot musulman. La conversation s'anime à l'évocation du dernier discours de M. Erdogan, consacré à la découverte d'un gisement de gaz en Mer noire.

Bien que modeste, 320 milliards de mètres cubes – soit l'équivalent de sept ans de consommation des foyers turcs –, le gisement est censé ouvrir « *une nouvelle ère* » pour la Turquie, selon les mots du chef de l'Etat. « *Le siècle sera turc* », lance un jeune homme à la cantonade. Le groupe acquiesce d'un air entendu.

Kurdes de Syrie : "Ils sont tombés dans le trou noir de l'information alors que rien n'est joué"

Malgré des tensions et quelques incidents, les combats en Syrie se sont raréfiés. Que sont devenus les Kurdes de Syrie qui sur le terrain ont chassé le groupe djihadiste État islamique ? Après avoir aidé la coalition internationale, les Kurdes de Syrie sont tombés dans l'oubli. Ils ont été délaissés voire trahis par les Occidentaux.

Entretien avec Patrice Franceschi, écrivain-aventurier français et auteur de "Avec les Kurdes, ce que les avoir abandonnés dit de nous" récemment publié chez Gallimard.

Patrice Franceschi :
"Kurdes, ils sont tombés dans le trou noir de l'histoire"

Qu'est devenu notre lien avec les Kurdes ?

La tragédie des Kurdes est à la fois la nôtre parce qu'on a combattu ensemble le même ennemi, et maintenant que nous croyons avoir gagné contre Daech, nous les abandonnons alors que tout n'est pas fini. D'autre part, ils sont tombés dans le trou noir de l'Histoire, dans le trou noir de l'information, ils ont disparu des radars, comme on dit, alors que rien n'est joué.

Tout est encore en jeu et abandonner les Kurdes aujourd'hui, c'est à l'avenir le retour des djihadistes, le retour de Daech sous un autre nom, et donc le retour du terrorisme en France.

Nous avons par conséquent commis une faute morale en abandonnant les Kurdes il y a près d'un an lorsque les Turcs avec leurs supplétifs djihadistes les ont attaqués. Nous avons



Des combattantes kurdes des Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS) se rassemblent lors d'une célébration sur la place emblématique Al-Naim à Raqqa le 19 octobre 2017, après avoir repris la ville aux combattants du groupe État islamique (EI). • Crédits : Bulent Kilic - AFP

abandonné nos alliés qui avaient combattu avec nous Daech.

Mais aussi faute politique, simplement parce que s'il y a bien une chose qu'il ne fallait pas faire, c'était de croire que la victoire était déjà à portée de main. En fait, dans ces affaires, ce sont des luttes et des combats, des guerres sur un temps long.

Que s'est-il passé ? Pourquoi les Kurdes sont-ils tombés dans le trou noir de l'Histoire, quels sont les ressorts de cet abandon ?

Il y a un grand mystère dans la tragédie kurde. Une sorte de malédiction pour certains peuples qui ne font pas l'actualité internationale au moment où il faut le faire ou dans le temps long. Le sous-titre de ce petit livre paru chez Gallimard - "Ce que les avoir abandonnés dit de nous" - dit tout pour moi. C'est-à-dire que les Kurdes sans les Alliés occidentaux, en qui ils cro-

yaient profondément, ne pouvaient pas faire grand-chose face à la fois aux djihadistes dans son ensemble et face aux États de la région, à commencer par les Turcs qui veulent leur disparition absolue.

Avec nous, ils ont vaincu Daech. Je vous rappelle qu'ils ont payé le prix fort : 38 000 tués et blessés dans la lutte contre le groupe État islamique. La France a perdu un seul soldat pendant cette guerre. Qu'est-ce qui nous est arrivé pour que nous ne voyions plus que défendre les Kurdes, nos amis, nos alliés contre nos ennemis communs, était essentiel, que n'importe quelle guerre pour la préservation de nos libertés et notre sécurité ? C'est ce dont je parle dans la dernière partie de ce livre qui pour moi était peut-être le plus excitant à écrire, par rapport au thème des Kurdes. Faire une cartographie de ce qui est arrivé depuis une cinquan-

taine d'années sur notre masochisme occidental constant, sur l'érosion de notre volonté de vivre libre, sur la domination complète sur nos vies du consumérisme, tout cela est dû au fait que nous baissons les bras quand il faut faire trop d'efforts pour défendre nos libertés

Est-ce que les Kurdes n'ont pas aussi été victimes de la géopolitique, les Américains, les Turcs, et les Russes aussi ?

Ils sont victimes depuis toujours de la Realpolitik qui fait que ce plus grand peuple du Moyen-Orient sans État est toujours tiraillé entre les volontés hégémoniques ou impérialistes des États régionaux. Pour l'affaire qui nous préoccupe, les Kurdes de Syrie contre le groupe État islamique, il y avait réellement un ennemi commun qui à Raqqa avait planifié les attentats en France et qui nous avait poussé à intervenir. Nous voulions que Raqqa disparaisse de la surface du globe pour qu'il n'y ait plus de terrorisme chez nous. Donc, on aurait pu comprendre que pour la première fois avec les Kurdes, notre volonté de nous défendre en commun ait été totale. Cela a été le cas pendant cinq ans. Mais au moment où Raqqa disparaît, au moment où le groupe État islamique est décrété cérébralement mort, eh bien nous avons tourné le regard et laissé les États régionaux reprendre la main contre nous alors que rien n'est terminé.



August 31, 2020

Nearly 150 ISIS attacks in 2020; Erbil and Baghdad yet to agree on joint-security: Peshmerga official

A Peshmerga official said on Sunday that there was no timeline for the resumption of security talks between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal Iraqi government to, among others, confront the so-called Islamic State.

Since its territorial defeat in late 2017, the terrorist organization has continued to stage regular attacks in several areas across Iraq, prominent among them the disputed territories.

There have been several attacks in recent weeks that led to the killings of members of the security forces and civilians.

Members of the Islamic State, according to the official, have been behind 147 separate incidents in territories disputed by the regional and federal governments, based in Erbil and Baghdad, respectively, resulting in 650 casualties.

The Secretary-General of the Peshmerga Ministry, Jabar Yawar, pointed out that the Peshmerga does not currently have a delegation in Baghdad to hold meetings with officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, as the two sides have not set a date for such discussions.

Such gatherings would aim to



The Secretary General of the Ministry of Peshmerga, General Jabar Yawar. (Photo: Kurdistan 24)

form committees to jointly administer the security of the disputed territories, which include many cities, towns, districts, and villages stretching from the provinces of Kirkuk and Diyala in the east to Nineveh in the west, near the Syrian border.

Yawar explained that the Kurdistan Region, at this time, has one delegation in Baghdad, working to create a strategic basis for the federal budget for the years of 2021, 2022, and 2023, and KRG's share of it, including that of the Peshmerga.

Joint Security

"The Peshmerga forces and Iraqi Security Forces have two high-level joint committees," Yawar said, noting that the Peshmerga Ministry ad-

ministers one of them and the federal Defense Ministry's commander of the joint operations in Iraq the second one.

The official added that the Kurdish and Iraqi sides had conducted two meetings in July 2020 to discuss security coordination in the disputed territories, with no deal in sight as of yet.

"Erbil and Baghdad are still in the discussion period, with no agreement regarding coordination and cooperation yet."

Yawar said that the US-led Coalition had affirmed its support for the Peshmerga and Iraqi forces attempts to establish "intelligence, and security cooperation," adding that the

best way to ensure a lasting defeat of the terror group is through such measures.

The Peshmerga official also explained that Erbil and Baghdad first introduced the idea of jointly administering the security of the disputed areas in 2009.

The plan, according to Yawar, consists of three phases: establishing a general coordination center between the Peshmerga and Iraqi forces; forming a second coordination center tasked with setting a line of defense in territories witnessing terrorist activities; a third phase would see the two sides carrying out military operations against terrorist groups such as the Islamic State.

Macron en Irak mercredi pour des entretiens avec les dirigeants du pays, selon des responsables du pays



La visite, pas encore confirmée par l'Élysée, sera la première d'un chef d'État étranger depuis la nomination du premier ministre Moustafa al-Kazimi. CHRISTIAN HARTMANN / AFP

Le président français Emmanuel Macron effectuera mercredi 2 septembre sa première visite officielle en Irak, où il rencontrera à Bagdad le premier ministre et son homologue, en signe de solidarité avec ce pays en crise, ont indiqué des sources gouvernementales irakiennes à l'AFP.

Emmanuel Macron, qui effectuera cette visite d'une journée après son déplacement au Liban, sera le premier chef d'État étranger à se rendre en Irak depuis la nomination en mai du premier ministre Moustafa al-Kazimi. «Il rencontrera le premier ministre et le président (Barham Saleh) irakiens et espère avoir des dis-

cussions avec plusieurs (autres) acteurs politiques», a indiqué une source gouvernementale à l'AFP.

L'Élysée n'a pas confirmé jusque-là le déplacement, qui l'a toutefois été auprès de l'AFP par deux autres responsables irakiens. Les entretiens seront axés sur la «souveraineté», ont précisé les sources irakiennes, affirmant que Bagdad cherchait à emprunter son propre chemin à l'écart des vives tensions entre ses deux alliés, Washington et Téhéran.

Emmanuel Macron ne se rendra pas à Erbil

Le message du chef de l'État français devrait faire écho à

celui de son chef de la diplomatie, Jean-Yves Le Drian, qui a souligné, lors d'une visite en Irak en juillet, la nécessité pour Bagdad de «se dissocier des tensions de son voisinage». Le 27 août, la ministre française des Armées, Florence Parly, a elle aussi mené des entretiens à Bagdad et Erbil, capitale de la région kurde (nord), rappelant notamment l'importance de poursuivre la lutte contre le groupe djihadiste Etat islamique (EI). Contrairement à la plupart des responsables étrangers en visite en Irak, Emmanuel Macron ne se rendra pas à Erbil, et espère rencontrer les leaders kurdes à Bagdad, selon les mêmes sources irakiennes.

L'Irak est pris en étau depuis des années entre Washington et Téhéran, une position de plus en plus difficile depuis le début en 2018 d'une campagne de «pression maximale» des Etats-Unis contre l'Iran. En janvier, un puissant général iranien et son lieutenant irakien ont été tués par une frappe de drone américain à Bagdad. Téhéran a répondu avec des frappes contre les troupes américaines présentes dans l'ouest de l'Irak. Deuxième plus important producteur de l'Opep, l'Irak a été fortement touché par la chute des prix du pétrole et la pandémie de coronavirus a encore aggravé la situation économique.