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**ROJAVA:  
GROWING RUSSIAN-TURKISH TENSIONS,  
TURKISH HARASSMENT AGAINST AANES AND NEW EXACTIONS  
BY MERCENARY MILITIAS**

**T**he month of September was marked throughout Syria by intense activity by the Russian air force. Supporting Damascus in its recapture of new territories from the insurgents, it launched nearly 200 strikes on Idlib, targeting the Islamists in the “de-escalation zone”, and in the Syrian

desert, in response to the deadly attacks of ISIS against the military and pro-regime militiamen: during the 13<sup>th</sup> alone, for example, the Russian air force carried out nearly 70 strikes against the Jihadists. From Idlib, *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham* retaliated by bombing the areas held by the regime. Moreover, the Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights (*SOHR*) has accused the Russians of several massacres against the civilian population.

Throughout the country, and especially in the territories of the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), dominated by the PYD Kurds, tension has continued to rise between

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Russians and Turks. In Idlib, after three Turkish soldiers were killed and four others wounded, including by homemade bombs, Turkey reinforced its bases on the 13<sup>th</sup> by sending new military equipment. From the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Russian air force bombed the Turkish-controlled region of Afrin. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, near Tall Tamr (Hasakeh), the Turkish army fired missiles at a Russian helicopter, which it was unable to shoot down. On the same day, and for the first time in this area, Damascus forces fired several rockets at Turkish positions. The next day, however, the Russians and Turks conducted their 4<sup>th</sup> joint patrol near Kobane... while the Russians reinforced their position near Tall Tamr. Finally, in the last week of the month, the Russian air force bombed Afrin again, killing four and wounding a dozen Islamist militiamen of *Al-Hamza* (SOHR). On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Kurdish media reported firing on Russian planes by pro-Turkish mercenaries near Tall Tamr (WKI).

Paradoxically, Turks and Russians conducted seven joint patrols in September: five around Kobane, one in Qamishli and one in Hasakeh. The last one did not go far, as the inhabitants of the villages through which it passed successfully opposed it, despite attempts by Russian helicopters to disperse them with gas and sound grenades.

At the same time, mercenaries and Ankara forces continued their daily harassment against the AANES, firing artillery or using drone strikes, including in Manbij, where a SDF fighter was killed on the 4<sup>th</sup>. After a Turkish soldier was killed and four others wounded at their base in Yashili, Ankara forces fired more than 300 rockets at villages in the area, forcing several families to flee. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, a Turkish drone joined the artillery and mortars. Turkish fire also

injured two regime soldiers near Girê Spî (WKI). On the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, the pro-Turkish mercenaries, powerfully supported by Turkish artillery, continued their attempts to advance into the area, but were repelled by the Manbij Military Council fighters. The AANES capital, Raqqa, was also targeted. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, a civilian was wounded by a sniper in a village near the city. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, the SDF announced that Turkish artillery had caused the death of four workers, including one aged only 18, employed in digging tunnels north of Raqqa in Ain Issa (SOHR). The Christian town of Tall Tamr was also bombed. At the end of September, the Manbij Military Council counted it had received 723 rockets over the month (WKI).

At the same time, the pro-Turkish mercenaries have continued their abuses in the areas they occupy on behalf of Ankara. Under the guise of "arrests" for links to the former administration, they continue their kidnappings for ransom, their theft of the property of the displaced – and their factional infighting for the spoils of the loot. In Afrin, the SOHR reported on the 4<sup>th</sup> that the local council installed by the occupiers had decided to create 380 housing units on land belonging to Yezidis to accommodate displaced Islamists and their families. The *Sultan Murad Division*, made up of Turkmen militiamen under the orders of Ankara, has taken over dozens of shops and houses belonging to displaced Kurdish inhabitants. Some leaders of factions of the so-called "Syrian National Army" also take advantage of the terror they inspire in the displaced villagers to buy their land via intermediaries at a low price... In some villages, such as Barrad, the *Al-Sham Corps*, close to the Turkish secret services, has imposed a new "law" on the peasants, according to which they must pay a tax to the Islamist faction

controlling their village in order to be allowed to harvest their fields! Near the town of Jindires, members of the Islamist militia *Ahrar al-Sharqiya* set fire to the outskirts of a forest, presumably in preparation for the felling and sale of trees. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, members of another pro-Turkish militia, *Jabhah al-Shamiyah*, arrested a villager who was demanding his house back. The next day near Raqqah, members of *Ahrar al-Sham* arrested and tortured a young man who had criticized them on social media (SOHR).

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria released its report on the period July 2020-June 2021. It concludes, among other things: "There are [...] reasonable grounds to believe that elements of the Syrian National Army have committed acts of torture, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, which amount to war crimes". It concludes that Ankara, as the occupying power, is responsible.

Turkey does not pay much attention to such reports without judiciary consequences and the abuses of its militias continued unabated. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, a civilian died in detention in Serê Kaniyê (Ras al-Ain) as a result of torture by members of *Suqural-Shama*. The SOHR, which reported the information, noted that "violence and torture are dramatically intensifying in the prisons of the Turkish-backed factions". In the Bulbul district of Afrin, the *Sultan al-Murad* militia forcibly confiscated the homes of 65 civilians at gunpoint. Other mercenaries from the "*al-Mu'tassim Division*" attacked vehicles of local humanitarian organizations refusing to comply with their directives. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the SOHR reported that since the beginning of August, more than 100 civilians had been arbitrarily

arrested in Afrin by pro-Turkish factions for ransom.

Finally, as the olive harvest period approaches, several "Syrian National Army" factions have, as they have every year since 2018, undertaken to loot olive groves... Just one example, on the 20<sup>th</sup> in the village of Koutanly near Bulbul, the *Sultan Murad* faction cut down 50 olive trees around its HQ to sell them as firewood, before cutting down 100 almond and olive trees in the same village (SOHR).

On the Turkish-Syrian border, Turkish gendarmes continue their exactions against Syrian civilians trying to flee the war, to the point that the SOHR, which estimates that they have shot dead up to 25 civilians since January, including a woman and six children, regularly publishes reports entitled "*The crimes of the Turkish Jandarma (gendarmes)*". Among other things, it reports that on 11 January, a young man from Amuda trying to enter Turkey near Tirbe Spi was beaten up and then thrown over the border wall with a broken elbow. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, four young men were severely beaten near Darbasiyah. Another civilian died on the 20<sup>th</sup> from bullet wounds inflicted by the *jandarma*, as did another young civilian from Deraa on the 24<sup>th</sup> in Hatay hospital... According to SOHR statistics, as of September 24, they had killed 487 civilians since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, including 45 women and children. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, SOHR learned from its informants that the *jandarmahad* dumped on the Syrian side near Hasakeh the body of a child bearing signs of torture...

These crimes add to the insecurity of displaced Syrians, who are already frequent victims of abuses by the regime's forces when they try to return to their country. *Amnesty International* denounced these in a report on the 7<sup>th</sup>, mentioning arbitrary detentions, tor-

ture, rapes, disappearances... *Amnesty* has counted at least 17 disappearances of these returnees, sometimes summoned by the regime's police up to 18 months after their return. "Tell people not to return to Syria. Don't go back. I came back and I regret it. Reconciliation is a huge lie", [testifies a young woman], who was raped on her return from Turkey in 2017 and has not seen her son since, a victim of enforced disappearance (*Le Monde*).

ISIS jihadists have also been very active this month, further increasing the intensity of their campaign of assassinations of SDF or coalition fighters and local AANES officials, whose deaths number in the hundreds. As early as 2 September, a SDF convoy heading to the Koniko oil field was hit by an IED. Attacks killed or wounded civilians in Deir Ezzor, and the day after US forces stationed in Al-Shaddadi (Hasakeh) launched an anti-ISIS operation on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two rockets targeted the base, without causing any casualties. On the same day, the start of a mutiny by ISIS detainees in Al-Senaa'ah prison (Hasakeh) led to an alert and the overflight of the prison by coalition helicopters. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the coalition transported new military equipment in a convoy from neighbouring Iraqi Kurdistan for the second time since the beginning of the month, and regularly launched clean-up operations. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, the SDF, supported by helicopters, arrested 12 suspects in Deir Ezzor province for "relations with the Syrian National Army and ISIS cells" and confiscated weapons, documents and communication equipment.

At the same time, the situation remains unmanageable in Al-Hol camp, where exactions and killings by members of ISIS continue daily. The AANES is still trying to calm things down by progressively releasing families after

investigations. Thus, 92 Syrian families were released in mid-September after guarantees from tribal leaders. Since January, 644 families have been able to leave the camp...

Internally, the AANES has been confronted with several student protests demanding a return to the Damascus curriculum, especially in Kobane. They fear that their diplomas will not be recognized internationally. The authorities agreed to teach the Syrian curriculum privately, but later the *Asayish* (Kurdish Security) reneged on this concession, leading to new protests (SOHR).

On the other hand, violence broke out between supporters of the administration and the opposition Kurdish National Council (ENKS). On 5 August, unknown persons attacked the ENKS office in Darbasiyah, throwing a grenade which did not cause any casualties, while members of *Al-Shabiba Al-Thawriyah* ("Young Revolutionaries") threw stones at the premises of the Iraqi Kurdistan channel *Rûdaw* and the PYD. On 24 August, individuals had already tried to set fire to the ENKS office in Amuda. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the AANES increased the price of bread by decree, which provoked widespread popular discontent. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, ENKS organized a series of demonstrations against this increase as well as the increase in fuel prices, and arbitrary arrests by military formations. They were held in Qamishli, Hasakeh, Tall Tamr, Darbasiyah, Amuda, and Derik... In Qamishli, in front of the UN offices, the demonstration degenerated into clashes with the administration's supporters. At the end of the month, attacks hit several premises, including those of the *Rûdaw* channel and the PDK in Qamishli, and those of the Change Party in Hasakeh, the perpetrators of which have not been identified.

Finally, on 29 June, the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan ended the detention of the AANES representative in Erbil. Jihad Hassan (pseu-

donym) had been arrested on 10 June together with two members of the PYD's External Relations Committee. They were released on

June 29, but Hassan remained in detention for more than 15 weeks (SOHR).

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## TURKEY: THREATENED WITH CLOSURE, HDP PUBLISHES ITS PROGRAMME

**T**he economic deterioration continues in Turkey. According to *TurkStat*, annual inflation reached 19.25% in August, its highest rate in two years, and according to official statistics, youth unemployment is now around 26%. Revealing the gravity of the situation are the recent protests by students driven to the streets by rising rents, particularly in Istanbul. That there are nearly eight million of them for only 719,000 places in university residences has not prevented Mr. Erdoğan from opting as usual for a repressive line: "Turkey is the country with the largest number of public university beds and residences. Those who are sleeping in parks, gardens and on benches in recent days have nothing to do with students [...]. These so-called students are just a new version of those who were at Gezi" (*Le Monde*).

Unable to straighten the economy out, the AKP-MHP government is witnessing its popularity deteriorate along with it. And all the corruption scandals affecting a large number of municipal administrators (*kayyım*) appointed by Ankara to replace dismissed elected Kurdish mayors, recently revealed by the "pro-Kurdish" HDP party, still tarnish its image! In addition, far from being under control, the epidemic of COVID, after a slight drop at the end of August, has accelerated again in the middle of the month: 23% from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with 31,200 contaminations (*France-24*). The number of deaths has never fallen below 200 daily, and on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Health indicated that after more than a year of

closure, the reopening of schools on the 3<sup>rd</sup> had caused a surge in cases among minors, who now constitute a quarter of the 400,000 contaminated, as opposed to 10% previously... (*Bianet*)

To divert the attention of citizens, the government uses a tried and tested method: scapegoats. Syrian migrants (3.7 million) are accused of stealing the work of Turks. Moreover, Turkey still refuses to transmit data about them to the UNHCR... (*Bianet*) The opposition is sadly following the power's path: in August, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the CHP (Kemalist), promised, if he won the June 2023 elections, to "send the Syrians back home"... (*Le Monde*)

Politically, it is the Kurds, characterised as an internal enemy, who are the designated scapegoats. The HDP, which represents them on the political scene, is criminalized as a terrorist and legally threatened with closure. The 843-page indictment filed by the AKP and the MHP calls for the freezing of its assets and the exclusion of 451 of its cadres from political life. In this context, racist anti-Kurdish speeches and attacks are becoming widespread. Those who try to report on them become targets of investigation: on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Öznur Değer, a *JinNews* journalist who had covered the massacre of seven members of a Kurdish family in Konya on 30 July, was charged with "inciting hatred". On 22 July, another attack targeted eight Kurdish farm workers in Düzce, where a threatening mob forced them to leave the town. Refusing

to intervene "as long as nothing happened", the police finally began to search... the victims. The latter preferred to return to Mardin. Kurdish prisoners are also victims of this systemic racism. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, putting a parliamentary question to the Minister of Justice on the violations of prisoners' rights, HDP MP Gülüstan Kılıç-Koçyiğit cited the case of a prisoner in Kırıkkale punished for using the Kurdish word "friend" (*heval*), which has been considered by the prison administration to be an "organizational communication word"...

On the other hand, Mr. Erdoğan denies the existence of any Kurdish problem in the country. In late September, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu took him to task by stating in a documentary that there is indeed a Kurdish issue in Turkey "that the political authority has not been able to resolve for 35-40 years". He then criticized the AKP leader for having chosen to engage between 2012 and 2015 in a "peace process" with the PKK, an illegal party, rather than entrusting the issue to parliament, the natural place for such a discussion, which should have been conducted with the HDP, a legitimate interlocutor. Obviously, as long as he is locked into the alliance with the fiercely anti-Kurdish far-right MHP, Mr. Erdoğan cannot follow such a path... But a return to the forefront of the delicate Kurdish issue might not be so negative for the Turkish president, who is always on the lookout for a way to split the opposition... (*Al-Monitor*)

On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Constitutional

Court granted the HDP's request for an additional 30 days to prepare its defence, while the first hearing of the case was due to be held on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the other hand, the so-called "Kobanê trial", which targets 108 HDP members on charges of supporting the Kurdish resistance against ISIS, resumed on the 20<sup>th</sup> in Ankara. At the first hearing, the authorities barred access to observers and journalists. The court rejected requests from several defendants for postponement on health grounds.

Meanwhile, the repression of the HDP's political activities continues. A "peace rally" organised in Istanbul for the World Peace Day was dispersed by the police, who arrested more than 30 participants. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, a new hearing was held in Diyarbakir for the trial of one of the founders of the "Rosa" Women's Association, Ayla Akat Ata, accused of "propaganda for a terrorist organisation". Also in Diyarbakir, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, the trial hearing of former Nusaybin mayor Ayşe Gökkan went totally off the rails. Complaining in Kurdish that she had been imprisoned for 7 months without full access to the indictment, as the prison administration had refused to give her the full indictment, the defendant asked for a delay to learn about the charges. When her lawyer tried to translate her request for fear that her client had not been properly understood, the judge forbade her to speak without his permission, before having her removed by the police. The court then denied the defendant's request. Diyarbakir Bar Association officials who came to the hearing after this incident were similarly interrupted and then also expelled, this time with excessive violence and insults. The sister of the defendant lost consciousness and had to be taken to hospital. As a result of the violence, Gökkan's lawyer, Muharrem Şahin, refused to present her defence and requested an

adjournment of the hearing. This was rejected, and a criminal complaint was filed against the Diyarbakir Bar Association. The trial was postponed to October 20. In a statement made the courthouse, Diyarbakir Bar President Nahit Eren condemned the behaviour of the court president (*Bianet*).

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the governor of Mardin banned all demonstrations in the province for 15 days, citing the commemoration planned for that day at the tomb of Kurdish intellectual Musa Anter in the village of Sitlilê. Anter was shot dead by a JITEM (Turkish Gendarmerie Intelligence Service) squad near Diyarbakir on September 20, 1992. The communiqué of the governor's office justified the ban by accusing the organizers of the ceremony of belonging to the PKK and by invoking the coronavirus – which yet does not prevent the ubiquitous Turkish President and his supporters from holding public meetings and rallies all over the country...

On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Kurdish writer and lawyer Nurcan Kaya was convicted of "propaganda for an illegal organization" and given a one-year and three-month suspended sentence for several tweets sent in 2014 during the siege of Kobanê by ISIS jihadists. The suspended sentence is clearly a way of intimidating her into silence during her five years of probation, and Kaya has announced her intention to appeal and, if necessary, go all the way to the Constitutional Court.

In the Kurdish provinces, the violence of the military acting as an occupying army is ongoing. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, a seven-year-old child riding his bicycle down a street died after being hit by an armoured vehicle in İdil (Şırnak). The officer driving the vehicle was questioned three days later... and released. In 10 years, 20 children lost their lives in this way and 14 others were

injured, but a 2017 incident where an 85-year-old woman died in Lice is also particularly remembered.

Placed in a difficult situation by the constant harassment to which it is subjected and the arrest of thousands of its members and elected officials, the HDP nevertheless continues its struggle for democracy. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, its ex-chairman, who has been in prison for five years, Selahattin Demirtaş, published an op-ed on the news website *T24* in which he called on all opposition components to cooperate in the upcoming elections to prevent the AKP from making its "authoritarian rule permanent". For Demirtaş, a new victory for the currently ruling alliance could drag Turkey into an authoritarian system for decades. Conversely, a victory for the opposition would open up the possibility of solving problems that the Republic of Turkey has been experiencing since its founding: "I believe that no election in our history has simultaneously carried so many serious dangers and opportunities...", Demirtaş writes. While neither the AKP-MHP alliance nor the CHP and the "Good Party" (İYİ) can claim to win alone, no alliance is yet emerging in the opposition. In this configuration, the HDP's votes could prove crucial in deciding the country's future.

After Kılıçdaroğlu's statements about the possibility of resolving the Kurdish issue in parliament with the HDP as an interlocutor, Demirtaş responded on the 21<sup>st</sup> with a message sent through his lawyers: "The HDP I know aspires to resolve all of Turkey's problems, including the Kurdish issue; it is fully a political player and – of course – an interlocutor. The place where [this issue] can be solved is naturally the Turkish Grand National Assembly".

On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the HDP issued a

political statement entitled “Let’s win together; call for justice, democracy and peace” (<https://hdp.org.tr/en/let-us-win-together-we-call-for-justice-democracy-and-peace/15763/>). Stating its opposition to the presidential system which “aims to make arbitrariness and tyranny institutionalized and permanent”, the HDP calls for a “democratic transformation” that can only be achieved through “negotiations and consensus building on principles and methods”. The party’s political objectives are set out in the titles of eleven sections: 1- A strong democracy, with more delegation to local governments, 2- An impartial and independent judiciary, with respect for the decisions of international institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights, 3- The will of the people and not the rule of [appointed] “administrators”, 4- A democratic settlement of the Kurdish ques-

tion, necessary for a real democratization, and which should start with the opening of a dialogue in the parliament, 5- A peaceful foreign policy, with an end to military adventures, 6- Freedom and equality for women, 7- A fair economy, with measures to combat the precariousness caused by the economic crisis, 8- Recruitment on the basis of merit in the public administration, with an end to hiring on the basis of political affiliation and the reinstatement of the civil servants dismissed by decree, 9- Respect for nature, with the declaration of a state of climate emergency and the cancellation of environmentally harmful mega-projects, such as *Kanal Istanbul*, 10- Freedom for youth, with respect for their way of life, improvement of the education system and economic support, and finally 11- A democratic constitution: “civil, liberal [...], a social contract in the true sense of the word”, which

“should be based on the equality of citizens with respect for different cultures, identities, beliefs and mother tongues, lifestyles and a secular way of life”.

These 11 points constitute a basis for discussions conditioning the HDP’s support for the opposition to defeat Erdoğan in June 2023. Already, speaking on the 26<sup>th</sup> in Van’s Musa Anter Park on the occasion of World Peace Day, HDP co-chair Pervin Buldan had said: “Neither the Kurdish issue nor the peace issue are the problem of the HDP alone. They should concern everyone with a conscience. The failure to solve the Kurdish issue leads to the deterioration of the situation not only of the Kurds but also of 83 million people. That is why it is now time to call for peace and [...] a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue”.

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## IRAQ: NEW ANTI-AMERICAN ATTACK IN ERBIL; CAMPAIGN FOR OCTOBER 10 ELECTIONS

**K**urdistan seems to be more and more in the sights of the pro-Iranian factions in Iraq. On the evening of 11 September (the anniversary of the 2001 attacks...), an attack using two armed drones targeted the international airport of Erbil, where American troops are stationed. This is the sixth attack on Erbil in a year. The Kurdish anti-terrorist force confirmed that the two explosions caused no casualties. Already in July, a previous attack on Erbil had used drones, more able to evade the C-RAM defence batteries with which the U.S. military defends its cantonments. But both drones were shot down before causing any damage. Like Washington, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) condemned the attack. Several

Kurdish officials also blamed the lack of cooperation between peshmerga and Iraqi forces in the “disputed territories”, which they said facilitated such attacks, and called for the implementation of several previous agreements designed to facilitate joint operations (*WKI*).

As if to echo this event, on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani spoke at the site of the future US Consulate in Erbil. This was the site of the ceremony to mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the first US consulate in the region, which also celebrated the completion of the shell of the new building. Masrour Barzani recalled the “deep ties”, the “strong partnership” and the “long relationship of friendship” between the Kurdistan Region and the United States, as well as the

joint defeat inflicted on the jihadist enemy: “We have been at the forefront of the fight to prevent ISIS from reaching Europe and beyond, and we have done so as much to protect American values as to protect ourselves”, the Kurdish Prime minister said, before recalling that the fight against ISIS was far from over (*Kurdistan-24*). In response, the American consul Robert Palladino, recalling that the construction of the new building would be completed by the end of 2022, and that the diplomatic staff would move in in January 2023, added: “[With 52,000 square meters...] the U.S. Consulate General in Erbil will be the largest consulate in the world. [...] The reason [...] is that the relationship between the United States and the Kurdistan Region needs space to grow. The new consulate will be a



tangible sign – in concrete, steel and reinforced glass – of the United States’ long-term commitment to the government and people of the Kurdistan Region” (WKI).

The fight against ISIS is indeed far from over. The organization still poses a significant security risk, as evidenced by the dismantling in Erbil earlier this month of a cell of five members, including two minors: they were planning to smuggle explosives into the city to target foreigners and busy areas such as markets (WKI). But it is mainly in and from the disputed territories that the jihadist organization is causing trouble. As a sign of its resurgence, in the province of Kirkuk, while it previously preferred to commit attacks using IEDs, it no longer hesitates to confront the Iraqi security forces directly... On the 4<sup>th</sup>, its members organised an ambush in Rashad, in the south of Kirkuk, in which 13 Iraqi policemen were killed, at least 5 others wounded, and three vehicles destroyed. The next day, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and another wounded in another attack on a military checkpoint southeast of Mosul. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a police officer and three civilians were killed near Makhmur (WKI). On the 21<sup>st</sup>, another attack took place near Rashad, as well as in Hawija. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, a cell of three jihadists was dismantled in Hawija, and the next day two terrorists were ambushed and killed in Rashad. Faced with this upsurge, Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Qadhimi, like the head of the Iraqi National Security Agency, Abdul Ghani al-Asadi, did not hesitate to blame the “negligence” of the security forces. In the province of Kirkuk, the Iraqi federal police is due to be replaced by the 8<sup>th</sup> division of the Iraqi army...

Jihadists also launched attacks in other disputed provinces. In Khanaqin, on the Iranian border,

they attacked a military checkpoint on the 7<sup>th</sup>, killing two soldiers and injuring at least four; on the 14<sup>th</sup>, another attack killed two and injured four. In Tuz Khurmatu, a sniper attack killed one Shiite militia member and wounded two others on the 4<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Iraqi command announced that an air strike on the Hamrin Mountains had neutralized four jihadists. In Makhmur, an area where the Qara Chokh Mountains have become a sanctuary for ISIS, attacks have become a daily occurrence. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, jihadists killed four civilians and wounded eight Shiite militiamen. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Security announced the neutralization of three terrorists near the village of Kashaf. According to an appeal launched at the end of the month by local activists, 90% of the more than 40 Kurdish villages in the area had been evacuated because of the attacks. At the end of the month, the Iraqi military announced that it would soon launch a new anti-ISIS operation on the Qara Chokh Mountains...

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, a small peshmerga contingent conducted a reconnaissance in the disputed areas between Erbil and Kirkuk. Erbil and Baghdad are to form three joint brigades of peshmerga and Iraqi military personnel and deploy them to the peri-urban areas of the disputed territories where ISIS is active. But on the 21<sup>st</sup>, their deployment was delayed until after the parliamentary elections, scheduled for 10 October. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the Turkmen Front, supported by Turkey, and the Arab Coalition had raised the spectre of the “return of the peshmerga” at a press conference, even opposing any form of security cooperation between them and the Iraqi army... On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the province’s acting governor, Rakan al-Jabouri, said the government planned to arm Arab tribes to help in the fight against ISIS, adding

that the Prime minister had formed a committee to investigate security problems in the province...

For his part, peshmerga General Sirwan Barzani indicated in an interview given to the French daily *Le Monde* on the 17<sup>th</sup> that he feared a “jihadist upsurge” after the chaotic American withdrawal from Afghanistan, which has boosted the morale of the jihadists. He called for a continued US presence in Iraq: “For the balance of the region and of Iraqi Kurdistan, the forces of the international anti-EI coalition must remain. We need their technology. We don’t have drones to monitor jihadist movements or thermal cameras. The federal government in Baghdad does not allow us to acquire them. Keeping American troops is also important for the morale of the population, the displaced, and for Christians to feel safe. [...] The Americans must continue to help us with advisers, military technology and intelligence. Also mentioning President Macron’s recent visit and promises of support, he called them important: “The French can do more in the field of special forces training, in sharing intelligence and monitoring the movements of the EI” (*Le Monde*).

As the date of the parliamentary elections draws closer, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) has entered the campaign in Kirkuk, ending a four-year absence from the province, which it left after it was recaptured by Iraqi forces on October 16, 2017. The party’s candidate, Shakhwan Abdullah, indicated the KDP’s intention to reopen its headquarters in the provincial capital. According to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), in Kirkuk 130 candidates are standing before the voters, including 56 independents, the rest as members of political parties. There are 13 seats to be filled,

including one reserved for a Christian candidate. The Kurds are aiming to win at least half of the seats... In Khanaqin, where 7 Kurdish candidates are standing for election, one of the pro-Iranian militias controlling the province has prevented some of them from putting up their posters in Jalawla, using the security situation as an excuse and the fact that an election campaign would "cause tensions". In Tuz Khurmatu, despite lengthy discussions, the Kurdish parties could not agree on a single candidate. There will be two candidates, which may cost the community a seat. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, PUK candidate Bakhtyar Hijran said that 600 Kurdish families displaced in October 2017 have still not returned; in some cases their homes have been burned down. In Sindjar (Shengal), where there are 25 Yezidi candidates, some of them supported by non-Yezidi parties, one seat, coveted by 7 of them, is reserved for this community. The other Yezidi candidates are seeking seats outside the quota. On 30 September, the mayor of Sindjar, Mahama Khalil, drew attention to the risk of an election boycott because of the lack of security and basic services in the district.

Sindjar is one of the areas hit hard by the Turkish air force since the beginning of its anti-PKK operations in Iraq. After two strikes in the first week of the month, while the Turkish Defence Ministry announced a "success" without giving details, several pro-PKK Yezidi media outlets accused Turkey of helping ISIS by attacking the Sinjar Resistance Units (YPS), thus allowing the jihadists to secure control of the Sindjar Heights (WKI).

In addition, on the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Turkish drone strike again hit the Makhmour refugee camp, killing several residents, including 5 members of the "Mahmour Self-Defense Forces", a militia created after the camp's brief invasion by ISIS in 2014. Many of the residents of the UN-recognized camp had to leave Turkey in the 1990s due to the Turkish state's crackdown. The next day, the mayor of Amêdî (Dohouk) district, Warshen Salam, informed the Kurdish channel *Rûdaw* that Turkish artillery fire had wounded two peshmerga on leave who had gone fishing near Shiladze.

Turkish operations and strikes have forced the evacuation of hun-

dreds of villages and caused extensive destruction. According to an interview given to *Hawar News Agency (ANHA)* by Sarwar Qaradaghi, of the *Kurdistan Nature NGO*, since the beginning of its operations, the Turkish State has intentionally burned 35% of the forests in Iraqi Kurdistan, or 626,000 hectares of forest land, and also destroyed many cultivated fields. In the second week of the month, the Turkish air force carried out several strikes near the Iraqi-Turkish border, in the districts of Avashin and Darkar (Dohuk). In Suleimaniyeh, a PKK cadre was shot dead on the 17<sup>th</sup> and another PKK member was wounded on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The PKK accused Ankara of these assassinations.

On another note, the KRG welcomed the unanimous decision of the UN Security Council to extend the mandate of the UN team investigating crimes against humanity committed by ISIS, including the genocide of Yazidis, for one year. The extension, requested by the Iraqi government, was complemented by the appointment by UN Secretary General António Guterres of a German lawyer, Christian Ritscher, as the mission's new special adviser.

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## IRAN: NEW REGIME ATTACK ON KURDISH EXILE PARTIES; SEVERAL KURDISH PRISONERS TORTURED TO DEATH

**T**he new Iranian President marked his arrival in power by launching new attacks against the Kurdish opposition parties that had been exiled in Iraqi Kurdistan for decades. On 9 September at 6 a.m., military planes, artillery and drones struck several establishments of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in Sidakan and Choman (Erbil).

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Brigadier-General

Mohammad Pakpour, commander of the ground forces of the Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdaran*), had warned the "terrorist groups affiliated with global arrogance" that Iran would not tolerate their presence and activities and reserved the right to strike them "decisively and overwhelmingly". The warning also applied to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which was accused of tolerating these groups despite several warnings... and to the inhabitants, who were warned to stay

away from potential targets (*Tasnim*). According to the testimony of Kawa Bahrami, commander of the PDKI peshmerga, six drones were involved in the attack, and in Galala, another commander counted four. Already in 2018, a dozen missiles fired at the headquarters of the PDKI and the PDK-I (two parties resulting from a split in the PDKI), in Koya, had killed 18 people and injured more than 50. This time, it seems that there was only material damage (four drones were shot down), but this action is

a new warning for the future. In fact, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, taking advantage of a visit to Tehran by Iraqi Prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, reiterated the demand for the disarmament and expulsion of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, bolstered by the American evacuation from Afghanistan, Iran renewed its threats through its Chief of Staff of the ground forces, the *pasdaran* commander Mohammad Bagheri, who threatened the "American and Zionist mercenaries" with annihilation...

The Centre for Cooperation of Political Parties of Iranian Kurdistan (CCIKP) condemned the attack, accusing Tehran of "fleeing from dozens of internal crises by creating another one". Bagheri in his statement also called for the expulsion of those stationed at the Hareer (Erbil) airbase, saying, "We will not tolerate the presence of the Hareer base near our borders, where counter-revolutionary conspiracy meetings are held".

Since 2015, when the PDKI announced resuming its armed struggle against the regime in Tehran, there have been regular clashes in Iranian Kurdistan between peshmerga and repressive forces. The KRG has pledged not to allow the Kurds of Iran settled on its territory to send fighters to the Iranian side, but the latter deny any sending of fighters across the border, claiming that the attacks are the work of their members already present in Iran (*Rûdaw*). In addition, the *Hengaw* Organization for Human Rights has reported clashes between the *Pasdaran* and the PKK near Oshnavieh.

The regime's repressive forces also continue to kill Kurdish cross-border carriers on the Iran-Iraq or Iran-Turkey borders. Accused of smug-

gling, these *kolbars*, forced by the lack of resources to practice this dangerous profession, are shot on sight even though, generally unarmed, they present no danger. According to the *Kurdistan Human Rights Association* KMMK, at least 5 were killed and 36 injured in August. On 4 September, two were injured in Baneh (*WKI*), on 5 September, another was shot near Piranshahr (*RojInfo*). On the 11<sup>th</sup>, another was killed and 3 others injured near Baneh. The day before, two shepherds were injured in the same area. Another *kolbar* was killed near Marivan, and another was injured when he fell into a ravine near Nowsud. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, two more were killed, again near Baneh and in Sardasht.

A Turkish air strike killed two *kolbars* near Ummia on the 17<sup>th</sup>, bringing the number of *kolbars* killed by the Turkish military to 15 since January. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, however, a Turkish drone killed two more carriers in a strike on a group from the village of Kuran (Urmia), of which eight surviving members, some wounded, were taken prisoners. According to data compiled by the *Kurdish Human Rights Network* (KHRN) in its latest report, since January, at least 30 *kolbars* have died and 94 have been wounded by border guard fire or in accidents and illness. Also according to KHRN, in 2020, 147 were injured and 52 killed, 46 of whom were shot by Iranian or Turkish (*Rûdaw*) border guards. A recent UN report on the human rights situation in Iran counts more than 170 *kolbars* injured and 60 killed, including children... The UN is concerned about the "excessive use of force" against *kolbars*, estimated at "70,000, mainly from the Kurdish minority, [who] depend on their *kolbar* status for their livelihood, including women, many of whom are heads of households".

In addition, arrests, convictions and executions continued in

Iranian Kurdistan. In its report, the KHRN estimates that in August "the Iranian police, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, [the *pasdaran*]) arrested at least 47 Kurdish civilians, activists and former political prisoners on political grounds. [...] Security forces also detained three children in Javanrud, Kermanshah province, who were released after several hours in detention". There are also reports of the killing of three women in the towns of Marivan, Sanandaj and Saqqez. The KHRN also reported on the firing of shells by the *pasdaran* which caused forest fires on Mount Shaho. Finally, the KHRN condemned the assassination of KDP-I cadre Musa Babakhani, killed in a hotel in Erbil, and counted at least seven executions during the month of August (*Rûdaw*).

On September 3, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that a UN panel of experts had called on Iran to overturn the death sentence of Kurdish political prisoner Heidar Ghorbani, charged with membership of the PDKI and "armed rebellion against the state" and agree to his retrial. His first trial was anything but impartial: arrested in October 2016, Ghorbani, deprived of a lawyer, had been tortured for months in the Sanandaj *Etelaat* (Intelligence) detention centre, until he signed a confession later broadcast on television. In August 2020, the Supreme Court upheld his conviction and refused his request for a retrial. According to his lawyer, Ghorbani's executioners were never able to force him to confess to taking up arms... Due to the iniquitous trial conditions prevailing in Iran, experts have called for a moratorium on all executions.

In addition, security forces carried out a violent raid in Nagadeh on a

family's residence, resulting in gunshot wounds to two family members. Other arrests took place in Marivan and Oshnavieh. The following week, the *pasdaran* tortured to death the Kurdish activist Yasir Mangori in Ourmia (*Hengaw*): according to Mangori's family, he had been arrested on 17 July, but his death was not announced to his relatives until the beginning of September, without specifying the circumstances. The body of the deceased was not returned to his family, who suspected that he had died under torture. *Al-Monitor*, which reported the news, cited an activists' assessment that since 2017, at least 23 Kurdish prisoners, including 15 political detainees, have been tortured to death in Iran. In addition, eight Kurds have been arrested in Mahabad, two brothers in Sanandaj, and two other people in Baneh and Sardasht. In Mahabad, Said Fathi was sentenced to four years and two months in prison for "belonging to a Kurdish opposition party" (WKI).

A source close to the family of wrestler Navid Afkari Sangari told *Voice of America (VOI)* in Persian on 15 September that the prisoner, who had confessed to murder under torture, had been executed on 11 September without the family being informed and given a final opportunity to meet him, as is required by law. Sangari himself, who had called his family the day before, did not seem to know that he was going to be executed, having only mentioned a "transfer".

His lawyers had not been informed either. The manner of Sangari's execution has not been disclosed.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the *Washington Kurdish Institute* reported that two Kurdish prisoners, Assad Ramin and Dawood Rahimi, had been tortured to death by *Etelaat* officers the previous week. They had been arrested on the 6<sup>th</sup> for "belonging to a Kurdish opposition party". On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the *Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN)* reported that another 23-year-old Kurd, Amir Hossein Hatami, from Ilam, had suffered the same fate in Fashafoyeh prison in Tehran. He was severely beaten on the head at the start of his imprisonment two weeks ago for a minor offence and was transferred to hospital. The Hatami family's request to visit him in hospital was refused by the prison administration. A small crowd of relatives gathered outside the prison to demand that the authorities bring those responsible for his death to justice. Fashafoyeh prison, located 32 km south of Tehran, is Iran's largest detention centre with around 15,000 inmates.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Kurdish activist Naska Afkhami from Sardasht was the target of a grenade attack on her family home, which caused only material damage. The motive seems to be the denunciation by the young woman of numerous men who had harassed women on social networks. Following the attack, dozens of activists, defying a government ban, gathered on the 25<sup>th</sup> to demonstrate

in the city and demand that the authorities prosecute those suspected of sex crimes (WKI).

Finally, in the last week of the month, security forces made further arrests in Oshnavieh, Saqqez, Sanandaj and Divandareh. In addition, *Hengaw* reported that the authorities tortured to death an imprisoned Kurd, Shahin Nasri, for testifying about the torture of wrestler Navid Afkari Sangari. Meanwhile, the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Bijar sentenced Kurdish activist Danish Mawlawi to five years in prison for "propaganda against the regime" and "membership of a Kurdish opposition party" (WKI).

As for the COVID-19 epidemic, the official number of cases has reached 5 million as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, while the country has been facing a 5<sup>th</sup> wave for the past two months, with up to 500 daily deaths and just over 100,000 cumulative deaths. As of that date, more than 19 million people had received the first vaccine injection and some 9 million were fully vaccinated (*Financial Tribune*). Challenging the official figures as grossly underestimated by the government, the exiled opposition National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which compiles its own figures from regional data, calculated a total of more than 397,000 deaths in 547 cities by the same date. By the 30<sup>th</sup>, the same source counted 444,200 deaths, or about 47,000 deaths in a month, an average of 1,560 each day...

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## GERMANY:

### FOUR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF KURDISH ORIGIN IN THE BUNDESTAG

**F**our Kurds were elected deputies during the German parliamentary elections of 26 September last, including three young women. They are :

**GökayAKBULUT**, born on 16/10/1982 in the province of Kayseri (Caesarea) to an Alevi Kurdish family. Her family emigrated to Germany where she attended high school in Hamburg, then studied Political Science and

Public Law at the University of Heidelberg. After obtaining her Master's degree she was accepted for an internship at the UN headquarters in New York. She was elected for the first time to the Bundestag in 2017 on the list of the

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left-wing party *Die Linke* and was recently re-elected with flying colours.

**Canan BAYRAM**, born on 11/02/1966 in the Kurdish town of Malatya. She came to Germany at a very young age and completed her studies in Bonn. She became a lawyer in 2003 and practiced her profession in Berlin, which has a large Kurdish and Turkish community. Elected in 2006 as a member of the Berlin Parliament where she remained until her election to the Bundestag in 2017 on the Alliance 90/Green Party list. She was the only Green MP to be elected directly by voters rather than elected on the party list. She has just been re-elected to the Bundestag with flying colours, still on the Green list.

**Sevim DAGDELEN**, born on 4 September 1978 in Duisburg into a Kurdish family from Malatya, is a second-generation German-Kurdish woman who is very attached to her roots. After an eclectic education at the universities of Marburg, Adelaide (Australia) and Cologne, she

became a journalist. In 2005 she was elected to the Bundestag on the list of the left-wing party *Die Linke*. Since then she has been re-elected regularly as a member of *Die Linke*.

**Kassem TAHER SALEH**, born in 1993, in Zakho, Iraqi Kurdistan. He came to Germany with his family at a very young age and grew up in Plauen, Saxony, where he completed his secondary education. Afterwards, he obtained a degree in civil engineering at the Technical University of Dresden. He joined the *Die Grünen* party in 2019 where he became co-spokesperson of the Federal Working Group on Migration, Integration and Anti-Discrimination. Presented by the Greens as the “best candidate of the Saxon Green Youth”, he was elected as a member of the Bundestag at the age of 28.

These four German-Kurdish MPs publicly claim their Kurdish origins and devote part of their time to defending the Kurdish people in their quest for freedom. They serve as a model for the integration and

political commitment of new generations of the Kurdish diaspora.

Germany has the largest Kurdish community in Europe. In the absence of reliable statistics, the numerical importance of the Kurdish community is subject to evaluation. A study entitled *Country Report on Ethnic Relations, Germany* carried out in 2008 for the European Parliament gives the figure of 2,397,400 for the German population originating from Turkey. Of these, 700,000 had become German citizens. According to Turkish statistics, there will be around 900,000 of these in 2021 out of a population of around 2.7 million people from Turkey. Researchers consider that about one third of this population is Kurdish, i.e. about 900,000 Kurds from Turkey. In addition, there are more than 250,000 Syrian Kurds who arrived in 2015, as well as about 150,000 Iranian and Iraqi Kurds living in Germany. In total, there are currently 1.3 million Kurds in Germany, of whom almost 500,000 have become German citizens.

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## UNITED KINGDOM, NORWAY:

### A KURDISH MINISTER OF EDUCATION, TWO KURDS ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT

**A** Kurd becomes Minister of Education in Great Britain and two Kurds are elected to the Norwegian Parliament.

On the occasion of the recent reshuffle of the British Government, **Nadhim ZAHAWI**, of Iraqi Kurdish origin, who until then had been Minister for Vaccination, was promoted to Minister for Education in Great Britain. This is the first time that a Kurd has reached a position of this level of responsibility in a major European country. This appoint-

ment comes at a time when the President of Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani, is on an official visit to London at the invitation of the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

The integration process of the Kurds is also well under way in other European countries. Thus, during the Norwegian legislative elections of 14<sup>th</sup> September, two Kurds were elected to the Norwegian Parliament, the *Storting*. They are Seher Aydar, a 32 year old Kurd from Turkey and Mani Hussaini, a 33 year old Kurd from Rojava.

Born in Turkey, Ayder grew up in Fredrikstad, Norway. She started her political career in the “Women’s Front”, Norway’s leading feminist organisation, and has led several projects, including a “Solidarity with Kurdistan” campaign, and is now a member of the Red Party.

**Mani Hussaini**, a member of the Labour Party, was born in Qamishli, Rojava. His family first sought asylum in Sweden and then moved to Norway in 2001. He has been the leader of the “Workers’ Youth League” since October 2014.

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## CULTURE: RECENT PUBLICATIONS OR RELEASES

### *Dead Washer* (French title *La laveuse de mort*), novel

The literary prize “Les Orientales”, attributed in the French (Brittany) city of Lorient aims to promote knowledge and understanding of the Eastern world. Its 10<sup>th</sup> edition was awarded on the weekend of 4 and 5 September to the Kurdish-born writer Sara Omar for her first novel, *Dead Washer*, published in French by *Actes Sud*. First published in Danish in 2017 as *Dødevaskeren*, the novel tells the story of an unwanted little girl who is entrusted to her grandmother, a death washerwoman in charge of taking care of the bodies that no one wants to prepare or even bury, those of women murdered for reasons of “dishonor”. More than 100,000 copies of the book were sold in a country of less than six million inhabitants... (AFP)

### *Nine days in Raqqa*, documentary.

Released on September 1<sup>st</sup>, this documentary selected for the 2020 Cannes Film Festival focuses on Leila Mustapha, a Kurdish engineer who became mayor of Raqqa after the defeat of ISIS, and shows the efforts to rebuild the city. This had been chosen by the jihadist organisation to become the capital of its “caliphate”. Since then, thousands of people have returned and according to the NGO *Save the Children*, the population is now estimated to be at least 270,000. But 36% of the city’s buildings are still destroyed.

Leila Mustapha was awarded the *World Mayor Jury Award* 2021 on 14 October for her efforts to rebuild her war-torn city. Mustapha shares the 2021 Award with the mayors of Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Grigny (France) (*Rûdaw*).

### *Les filles du Kurdistan* (*Kurdistan Girls*), comic book.

This comic book by Mylène Sauloy (author) and Clément Baloup (illustrator) presents the female fighters of the YPJ (*Yekîneyên Parastina Jin*, Women’s Protection Units), in Rojava. Beyond the military struggle, inspired by the documentary directed by Mylène Sauloy released in 2016, *La Guerre des filles* (*The War of the Girls*) crowned by several awards, the book focuses on the political dimension of the struggle of these women, who seek to re-found a society on feminist, democratic and ecological bases.

### *Rojnamegerîyakurdî ya dijîtal* eBook

With the support of *Reporters Without Borders* (RSF), *Botan International* has just set up a “Media Education Office” in Diyarbakir for Kurdish journalists. Opened on 28 August, the new office will host training courses, seminars and workshops on Kurdish journalism (including podcasting workshops), and will also produce electronic books. Journalists will also find a recording studio and office space available free of

charge. As Kurdish-language journalism training is impossible to organise officially in Turkey, the facility fills an important need.

Already, in the workshops held so far, journalists from various media such as the BBC, *New York Times*, *Deutsche Welle* (DW), *Voice of America* (VOA), *Mezopotamya Agency*, *The Guardian*, *Reuters*, *Gazete Duvar* and *Bianet* have shared their techniques and experiences in their mother tongue, Kurdish. *Botan International* has published the trainers’ notes in the form of a first e-book, entitled *Rojnamegerîya kurdî ya dijîtal* (*Kurdish Digital Journalism*), which can be downloaded from this link:

<http://botaninternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/book.pdf>.

(link to the original *Bianet* article:)

<https://bianet.org/english/media/239027-kurdish-digital-journalism-ebook-is-now-out>

### *New York Kurdish Film Festival*.

The 5<sup>th</sup> *New York Kurdish Film Festival*, which took place in the Big Apple from 10 to 12 September, also focused on women. The programme presented mainly works by Kurds, but also Western perspectives on the life and struggle of the Kurds. But at the centre of the programme was the contribution of Kurdish women to the development of feminism, human rights, literature and an egalitarian society.

## LYON: A TRIBUTE TO HEVRIN KHALAF

**T**he city of Lyon inaugurated on September 21 a square named after Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf, who was assassinated at the age of 35 by members of the Turkish-backed Islamist faction *Ahrar al-Sharqiya* in North-Eastern Syria in October 2019. The square is located at a crossroads on Rue de Marseille in the heart of Lyon's cosmopolitan 7<sup>th</sup> arrondisse-

ment. In addition to the ecologist mayor of this district, the deputy mayor of Lyon in charge of international relations, elected officials from Lyon and Grenoble, the president of the Kurdish Institute and many Kurds and Lyonnais attended this inauguration. The Lyon City Council had unanimously decided last July to give the name of Khalaf to this square. Suad Mustafa, Hevrin Khalaf's mother, told

*Kurdistan 24* last year that she wanted those responsible for her daughter's murder to be brought before an international tribunal: "A war crime has been committed against humanity, and the person who gave the orders to these militants must be held accountable before a fair court", she said. The US State Department has put the Islamist faction on its list of terrorist organizations.

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# La politique nataliste d'Erdoğan : un besoin et une tactique démographique

Par **Stéphane de Tapia**, géographe, professeur au département d'études turques de l'université de Strasbourg.

Le 17 mars 2017, le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan apostrophait les Turcs vivant dans les pays européens : « Ne faites pas trois, mais cinq enfants ! Vous êtes, vous, l'avenir de l'Europe ! » Cet appel pour le moins étonnant a été prononcé lors d'une cérémonie d'ouverture de locaux préfectoraux, juste après la visite d'un établissement militaire à Eskişehir (une ville plutôt social-démocrate, donc d'opposition). Cet appel a été repris à peu près dans les mêmes termes par la quasi-totalité des titres de la presse turque, pro-gouvernementale ou d'opposition.

Le discours tenu à cette occasion est un classique de la rhétorique du président turc, avec ses attaques *ad hominem*, son tutoiement systématique (1) de tous les opposants (2), ses appels à l'unité et ses menaces souvent tonitruantes adressées aux Européens. Ces derniers sont en effet régulièrement accusés d'être des menteurs sur tous les plans, partisans de libertés religieuses comme démocratiques à géométrie variable, ou incapables de reconnaître la valeur intrinsèque du peuple turc.

Alors que jusque-là, le conseil était de faire au moins trois enfants, la nouvelle norme édictée est passée à cinq. Quelles sont donc les raisons de ce discours nataliste ? Un discours qui, d'ailleurs, en suit et en précède d'autres, sur le même ton et sur les mêmes thèmes : la grandeur retrouvée de la Turquie et l'incapacité quasi-congénitale des Européens à comprendre la grandeur d'une nation turque dépositaire de la seule vraie religion qui soit : l'islam sunnite.

## Un besoin démographique

Les raisons de cet appel du Président sont sans aucun doute plurielles. Entre un vrai souci démographique — toutes proportions gardées, comparable à celui de la Chine de Xi Jinping —, le vieillissement prévisible de la population turque, et d'autres raisons moins avouées,

tactiques sinon stratégiques : la volonté de puissance et de revanche sur les « partenaires » européens et la crainte de la démographie kurde.

Membre du G20, la Turquie vit actuellement sa « transition démographique », ce passage d'un régime de forte natalité et forte mortalité, à un régime — typique des pays économiquement développés — de faible, voire très faible natalité et faible mortalité, entraînant à terme le vieillissement de la population (ce qui est notamment le cas au Japon). La Turquie se trouve aujourd'hui entre ces deux régimes (à l'exception notable du Sud-Est), connaissant une transition plus ou moins rapide où la natalité augmente fortement, d'abord par effet mécanique (la proportion de jeunes adultes entraînant une forte natalité) mais aussi grâce aux améliorations du système de santé ainsi qu'aux meilleures conditions de vie. Cela entraîne naturellement une forte baisse de mortalité à tous âges et une augmentation de l'espérance de vie. La fin de cette transition amènera un faible taux de natalité face à un faible taux de mortalité sur fond d'élévation générale du niveau de vie, en termes de PIB et PPA par habitant.

Il convient également de rappeler que la Turquie de 1927, année du premier recensement moderne républicain, comptait 13 648 720 habitants. Un chiffre qui est passé à 56 473 035 en 1990, pour atteindre 82 003 882 habitants en 2018. Un chiffre moins élevé cependant que ce que l'on avait parfois envisagé : 100 millions de Turcs à l'horizon 2020. Les projections démographiques — toujours à prendre avec précaution — envisagent un seuil maximal de 93 475 000 Turcs d'ici 2050, auquel succèdera une décroissance assez rapide. Le cap symbolique des 100 millions ne serait donc pas atteint.

Si l'on raisonne simplement en termes de natalité et de fécondité, on observe que le taux maximal de natalité a été atteint durant la période intercensitaire 1950-1955, juste avant le déclenchement de l'émigration à l'étranger et alors que l'exode rural s'emballait. Il était alors de 4,84 % par an. Or, en 2019, ce taux n'est plus que de 1,43 %, face à un indice de fécondité (nombre d'enfants par femme en âge de procréer) de 1,88. En

d'autres termes, la Turquie a rejoint la situation de pays comme l'Italie, l'Espagne ou la France avant la pandémie de Covid-19. Mécaniquement, la Turquie reste un pays « jeune », comparé aux pays européens, mais le vieillissement est d'ores et déjà à l'horizon.

## La rhétorique d'Erdoğan : une volonté de puissance et de revanche

L'appel d'Erdoğan s'explique aussi par une volonté de puissance, telle qu'elle se manifeste d'autre part via une politique de grands travaux parfois qualifiés de mégalomanes ou pharaoniques. On pense notamment au palais présidentiel de Beştepe (Ankara) (3), à la mosquée de Çamlıca (Istanbul), au troisième pont du Bosphore et au troisième aéroport d'Istanbul — l'un des plus grands du monde —, associé au projet dit *Kanal Istanbul* (4), qui doit doubler le Bosphore.

Cet appel s'explique également par une politique revancharde. Il est bon en effet de revenir sur le discours énoncé par Erdoğan à de multiples occasions. On peut classer ses déclarations tonitruantes et ses coups d'éclat en deux grandes catégories : les « coups de gueule spontanés » (5) et les déclarations plus « programmatiques ».

On peut toutefois s'interroger sur l'impact de ces « coups de gueule », forts mais sans suites réelles en Europe, alors qu'ils alimentent en Turquie le sentiment de révolte populaire (et souvent bien au-delà) contre l'arrogance et la condescendance, le double langage sur les droits de l'homme, le « deux poids-deux mesures » des Européens face aux Turcs, et au-delà aux Musulmans, injustement colonisés et dont la dignité serait défendue par le président Erdoğan. Cela paraît effectivement bien fonctionner dans les opinions arabes, plus enthousiastes face aux déclarations du président turc que les Turcs eux-mêmes, du moins pour une bonne part d'entre eux.

## Réislamiser : un enjeu de société

Les discours programmatiques, en revanche, recèlent de petites phrases, souvent sous forme de slogans (6), s'inscrivant dans une stratégie bien plus vaste et



mûrement réfléchi de réislamisation de la société turque et de diffusion, aussi souvent que possible, des valeurs de l'islam sunnite. Cela rappelle sans conteste les stratégies « fréristes », si ce n'est qu'il s'agit bien ici d'une politique étatique, développée aussi bien en interne qu'à l'international.

L'aspect démographique devient alors sensible, car la population turque, comme souligné plus haut, a véritablement adopté des pratiques que ne désavoueraient ni les familles européennes ou américaines, ni les japonaises ou coréennes (deux enfants au plus, très fort investissement dans l'école, la formation, les cours du soir). Mais il faut montrer au monde extérieur la jeunesse d'une population formée par les valeurs islamistes (et ici on soulignera le projet politique et non les valeurs islamiques ou musulmanes en tant que telles), par sa vitalité et son dynamisme dans tous les domaines (en particulier le monde de l'entreprise privée, le monde des affaires). De nombreux outils ont été créés au cours des années, à commencer par la multiplication des lycées de formation des imams (*Imam-Hatip*) et des facultés de théologie, le transfert de pans entiers de l'Éducation nationale à des fondations pieuses (*vakıf*) appartenant à des confréries (*tarikât*), la mise sous tutelle des universités (souvent déstructurées), mais aussi la création d'établissements semi-publics (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı* (YTB) [Présidence des Turcs expatriés et communautés parentes], *Maarif* [Éducation]) ou le renforcement de la Présidence des Affaires religieuses (*Diyanet*) aussi bien en interne qu'à l'international (DİTİB). Restera à faire le bilan raisonné de cette politique volontariste, alors que des sociologues turcs mettent en avant la désaffection de nombreux jeunes face à des valeurs religieuses que beaucoup estiment dévoyées.

### La peur de la démographie kurde

L'exception de la démographie kurde s'explique par la quasi-totalité des indices démographiques et économiques propres aux régions kurdophones du Sud-Est anatolien — ce que les autorités turques, de tout temps, ont toujours refusé de nommer « Kurdistan » (7). Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de consulter les données des recensements turcs publiés par TürkStat (l'institut de statistiques correspondant à l'INSEE) ou sur une vision cartographique disponible sur les réseaux sociaux : le site du géographe turc Ramazan Saygılı (8) (voir cartes). Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, la région « kurde » saute, au sens propre, aux yeux : âge moyen, âge médian, pyramides des âges, taux de natalité, mortalité, fécondité, nuptialité, chômage, émigration... Tout concourt à caractériser une région pour le moins problématique. Si l'on ajoute que l'insécurité y est générale depuis la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, dans un contexte géopolitique lui aussi problématique et lourd de dangers (Syrie, Irak, Iran), on comprend immédiatement qu'une démographie régionale kurde dynamique, typique des régions sous-développées, face à une démographie générale turque beaucoup plus proche des normes européennes, est *per se* un problème crucial.

En Syrie, Irak, Iran ou Turquie, on peut parfois parler de « revanche des berceaux » (9). Les enfants remplacent les parents ou grands-parents victimes de vagues de répression depuis des générations comme militants et combattants. Avec le passage du PKK à la lutte armée dès 1984, l'image est sans doute appropriée, même si l'on peut difficilement imaginer des parents s'exprimer ainsi. De fait, aucun sondage ou étude ne peut ici être mené.

Dans le même ordre d'idées, il est impossible d'estimer la part de la population kurde de Turquie et de donner une quelconque évaluation des évolutions démographiques de cette « minorité » ethnique qui d'ailleurs récusera ce terme. Le dernier chiffre un tant soit peu précis (mais probablement sous-évalué) était celui des locuteurs du kurde au recensement de 1965. Depuis, toutes les estimations sont basées sur ce chiffre. On prête ainsi à la population kurde une part de 20 à 25 % du total de la population totale turque, avec une proportion comparable pour les Alévis, qui peuvent d'ailleurs être tout aussi bien Turcs que Kurdes, au sens ethnique du terme. Les Kurdes, selon ces estimations, représenteraient entre 15 et 25 % du total de la population totale, ce qui constitue une fourchette statistique assez vague.

Autre aspect de la question, une frange importante de la population kurde n'est plus kurdophone et tous les Kurdes ne sont pas indépendantistes, ni même simplement autonomistes. Il est d'ailleurs certain que l'AKP et le président Erdoğan mobilisent une partie non négligeable de cet électoral, sur une base conservatrice et islamiste partagée, ne serait-ce que par la participation conjointe à des confréries comme celle des Nakşibendi.

En réalité, il est plus que probable que le slogan « ne faites pas trois, mais cinq enfants ! » ne sera suivi d'aucun effet, ni en Turquie, ni dans l'émigration, pour des raisons démographiques, économiques et sociologiques... sauf peut-être au « Kurdistan » turc.

Stéphane de Tapia

### Notes

- (1) L'une des apostrophes les plus courantes du président turc est « *Sen, kimsin sen?* » (Qui es-tu, toi ?) qui peut aussi être adressée à un dirigeant étranger, dès lors qu'il émet la moindre critique envers la politique turque, interne ou internationale.
- (2) Partis politiques d'opposition, partisans de Fethullah Gülen, Kurdes...
- (3) Deux autres palais d'été sont aussi en construction à Ahlat, non loin du lac de Van, et Marmaris, sur la côte méditerranéenne.
- (4) Inauguration du premier chantier le 27 juin 2021.
- (5) Nous mettrons dans cette catégorie les assertions contre la chancelière Angela Merkel présentée comme « nazie », les critiques violentes envers le Premier ministre néerlandais Mark Rutte ou le chancelier autrichien Sebastian Kurz, le président français Emmanuel Macron décrit comme ayant de gros problèmes de « santé mentale » (octobre 2020), tenant des « propos inadmissibles » à l'égard des musulmans dans le monde. Ces déclarations sont nombreuses, pratiquement jamais suivies d'effets diplomatiques ou politiques, au grand dam de très nombreux médias de tous les pays concernés, pas seulement de droite.
- (6) Tel le « Nous voulons une génération pieuse et rancunière » (*dindar ve kindar bir nesil istiyoruz*) repris à l'envi depuis février 2012 lors d'un Congrès des jeunes de l'AKP.
- (7) Alors qu'une province portant ce nom a bien existé durant l'Empire ottoman.
- (8) <http://cogrfayaharita.com/>
- (9) Comme le disait Hélène Carrère d'Encausse à propos de l'Asie centrale musulmane dans le cadre soviétique.

### Kurdistan : la revanche des berceaux ?

Les deux cartes ci-dessous, réalisées par le géographe turc Ramazan Saygılı, montrent l'âge moyen en Turquie (en haut) et la part de la jeunesse (15-24 ans) dans la population (en bas). Dans les deux cas, la région du Kurdistan, situé dans le Sud-Est de la Turquie, ressort par rapport aux autres régions de Turquie. Sur la carte du haut, plus le violet est clair, plus l'âge moyen est bas (globalement entre 19/20 et 20/23 ans dans le Sud-Est du pays). Sur la carte du bas, le orange foncé désigne les provinces où la part des 15-24 ans représente 22 à 25 % de la population, contrairement au jaune clair (plutôt répandu dans l'Ouest et le Nord du pays) qui correspond à 14 à 16 % de la population. (Conception et réalisation des cartes : © Ramazan Saygılı/<http://cogrfayaharita.com/>)







# Séries TV turques : définir une identité

Entretien avec **Ariane Bonzon**, journaliste et spécialiste de la Turquie et du Proche-Orient. Elle est notamment l'auteur de *Turquie, l'heure de vérité* (Empreinte, 2019).

**Depuis une dizaine d'années, le gouvernement de R. T. Erdoğan et son « Parti de la justice et du développement » (AKP) s'appuie sur le développement de séries historiques glorifiant l'ère ottomane. En quoi sont-elles vectrices du soft power turc ?**

Bien que celles-ci jouent un rôle important, il serait réducteur de ne parler que des séries glorifiant l'ère ottomane. En effet, avant celles soulignant la grandeur des sultans ottomans du passé, il y en eut une qui mettait en avant une Turquie moderne, progressiste, et en pleine croissance économique. Cette série, intitulée *Gümüş [Argent]*, plus connue sous le nom de *Nour [Lumière]* dans les pays arabophones, est un drame romantique qui a beaucoup plu aux femmes arabes, car le héros turc tranche avec l'image du macho arabe. Avec une centaine d'épisodes de 90 minutes chacun, diffusés entre 2005 et 2007, la série est un succès. Le dernier épisode aurait réuni plus de 85 millions de spectateurs à travers le monde arabe. Les séries ottomanes ne sont donc qu'une seconde étape de cette politique d'influence à travers les séries. Mais *Nour* a véritablement lancé cet aspect du soft power turc, car cette série combinait valeurs musulmanes et modernisme. Cela n'a pas toujours été bien accueilli au Moyen-Orient. L'Arabie saoudite, par exemple, s'est montrée très critique.

Vient donc ensuite la « période ottomane ». Erdoğan cherchait à séduire la rue arabe musulmane conservatrice, et plus particulièrement la galaxie des Frères musulmans. Rappelons qu'en 2011, le printemps arabe débute et Mohammed Morsi, représentant des Frères musulmans, arrive au pouvoir en Égypte. Il ne s'agit plus seulement de faire la part belle aux sultans mais de raconter l'épopée ottomane, sa grandeur

passée, un empire qui s'étendait jusqu'au Nord du Maroc. La série *Muhteşem Yüzyıl [Le Siècle magnifique, 2011]* raconte l'histoire du sultan Soliman le Magnifique sous l'angle de sa vie privée, avec ses faiblesses (alcool, harem...) plus que sous l'angle guerrier et conquérant. Cette série ne correspondait donc pas vraiment aux valeurs que veut promouvoir le président Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, d'où les critiques de ce dernier.

Trois ans plus tard, *Diriliş Ertuğrul [La Résurrection, 2014]* traite des Turkmènes, fondateurs de l'Empire ottoman, et du rôle qu'ils ont joué pour surmonter la division au sein de l'Islam face aux Croisés. Une série qui correspond bien mieux au président Erdoğan, qui cherche à se présenter en « défenseur de l'Islam » et tient à s'inscrire dans une supposée continuité historique, faisant de la période kémaliste parlementariste, entre 1923 et 2011, une parenthèse. Plus récemment, et de manière très représentative de cette volonté, Erdoğan a loué la série produite par Netflix et financée en partie par l'argent public turc, *L'Essor de l'Empire ottoman*, relatant la conquête de Constantinople en 1453 par Mehmet II. Enfin, la série *Payitaht : Abdülhamid [Capitale : Abdülhamid]* également très appréciée par le président turc, peut se lire à la lumière de l'actualité. La production montre le dernier sultan et calife ottoman victime de complots et soucieux de préserver l'État ; un personnage qui présenterait quelques similitudes avec le dirigeant turc. « Le soft power sert à occuper l'imaginaire » selon certains politologues, et c'est bien cela que cherche à faire le président Erdoğan.

**Quels objectifs servent ces feuilletons ? Quelles sont les idées et les valeurs que véhiculent ces productions, que certains appellent des « soap operas turcs » ?**

Les objectifs et les valeurs sont aussi variés que les feuilletons qui les traitent. Il existe tout d'abord deux périodes : avant et après 2011, avec des messages un peu plus conservateurs et identitaires sur la plus récente de ces périodes. Celle-ci témoigne d'une volonté de réécrire l'histoire, de construire une « Nouvelle

Turquie », en référence à un fantasme impérial. L'idée serait d'inspirer la « nostalgie » de la période ottomane dans les pays arabes. Il y a également la volonté de réaffirmer que le califat (autoproclamé par Daech en Syrie et en Irak) est en Turquie. Le message s'adresse à la fois à la population turque et aux populations des pays voisins.

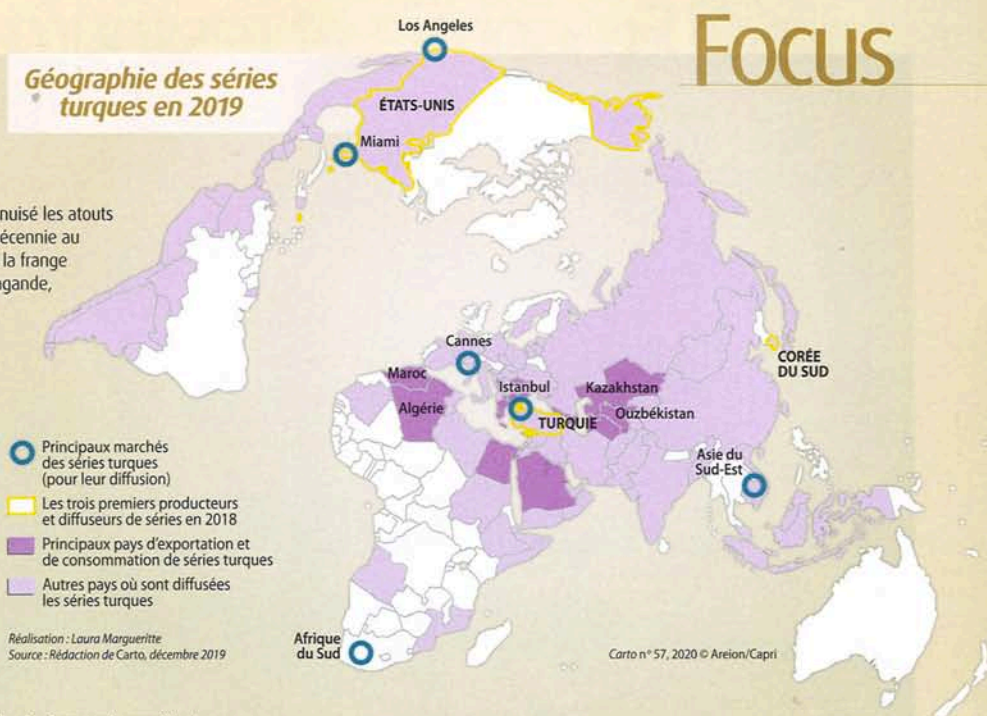
D'autre part, les séries abordent un grand nombre de sujets. Elles s'attaquent parfois à des tabous que les journalistes, muselés en Turquie, ne peuvent traiter. Il ne s'agit pas simplement d'histoires d'amour, mais de police, d'agressions sexuelles, d'homosexualité, de prostitution, de politique ou de défense. Même les conflits militaires ou les coups d'État sont abordés. Cela représente une avancée significative pour le pays. D'autant plus que ces feuilletons sont diffusés aux heures de grande écoute, toute l'année, simultanément sur plusieurs chaînes.

L'image véhiculée à l'étranger est celle d'une société turque relativement libre, ouverte, la rendant particulièrement attractive. À la suite du succès de *Nour*, une hausse du tourisme a été constatée. Les tour-opérateurs proposent désormais des visites de studios. Toutefois, certains pays arabes censurent parfois des séries ou choisissent celles qui leur conviennent. En Turquie, le gouvernement a tenté de reprendre le secteur en main, ou tout du moins d'influer sur le contenu de certaines séries. Ce faisant, je me demande s'il n'a pas commis une faute politique. Alors que ce soft power culturel était encore dynamique et puissant — en particulier à la suite de *Nour*, qui a donné l'image d'une Turquie plus « moderne », où les femmes sont plus libres et émancipées que dans le monde arabe —, le président Erdoğan a fait le choix de retirer, par décret, son pays de la Convention d'Istanbul, contre les violences faites aux femmes. Ceci a été mal vécu par de larges pans de la société turque, y compris chez certaines figures féminines proches de l'AKP. Aux yeux de la communauté internationale, cela a confirmé l'autoritarisme du régime turc. En cherchant à plaire aux secteurs les plus conventionnels et autoritaires de son électorat, en dénonçant une supposée « décadence



# FOCUS

## Géographie des séries turques en 2019



Réalisation : Laura Marqueritte  
Source : Rédaction de Carto, décembre 2019

Carto n° 57, 2020 © Areioni/Capri

occidentale », le président a finalement peut-être amenuisé les atouts et les gains du *soft power* acquis lors de sa première décennie au pouvoir. Les séries participent de la volonté de séduire la frange islamo-nationaliste de la population : les clips de propagande, où les martyrs étaient glorifiés, sont devenus des feuilletons. Il existe désormais une banalisation de l'héroïsme militaire, sur fond religieux.

### Les médias américains estiment que la Turquie serait aujourd'hui le deuxième producteur et distributeur de feuilletons télévisés au monde après les États-Unis. Comment expliquer un tel succès ?

Les données quant à ces revenus restent difficilement vérifiables. La sociologue turque Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver a estimé à 2 milliards de dollars les productions turques en 2008. À partir de ses recherches sur l'économie des séries, elle a calculé que celles-ci auraient depuis connu une augmentation fulgurante (de 200 %) en termes d'argent investi. Cette universitaire rappelle que les studios et la main-d'œuvre ne coûtent pas cher et qu'il est très rentable de tourner en Turquie. En outre, les équipes sont compétentes : le cinéma turc a une longue histoire et les séries s'inscrivent dans cette continuité. Par ailleurs, en ce qui concerne les retours sur investissement, il est tout aussi avantageux de réaliser une série qui se développe sur plusieurs mois, en plusieurs épisodes de 90 minutes qu'un film unique de 60 minutes. Avec la crise économique, il sera intéressant d'observer l'attrait que pourront avoir ces studios à bas coût pour des productions étrangères.

Le succès de certains feuilletons turcs tient également au fait qu'ils sont suivis par toutes les classes sociales et toutes les générations, et tout particulièrement par les 15 millions de femmes qui ne travaillent pas, en Turquie. On peut aussi observer ce phénomène sous un angle historique. Lors de l'époque kémaliste, la culture populaire fut particulièrement méprisée par les élites, qui cherchaient à adopter les codes occidentaux. Elles mettaient par exemple en avant la musique classique, les opéras. Aujourd'hui, il n'est pas exclu qu'une culture plus commune émerge. Enfin, n'oublions pas la concurrence sur le marché économique des séries entre maisons de productions syriennes, du Golfe, égyptiennes et turques, lesquelles ne sont pas peu fières de leur audience internationale.

### Quid de l'impact de ces séries auprès des minorités et du grand public en général ?

Il reste encore difficile à évaluer. Prenons l'exemple récent de *Bir Başkadir* [Quelque chose de différent, 2020] (1), qui traite de l'incapacité à communiquer entre les laïques, économiquement plus aisés et les conservateurs musulmans, plus populaires, ainsi que de la difficulté à dialoguer entre générations. Sur un sujet très politique, la série relate entre autres, l'évolution de deux sœurs, l'une très religieuse et conservatrice, l'autre plus progressiste et de gauche et dont la ligne pourrait être proche de celle du Parti démocratique des peuples (HDP, autonomiste kurde, de gauche). On comprend qu'elles sont kurdes à leur langage. Un autre personnage, de famille modeste, part se battre au front, sans doute comme jeune appelé, vraisemblablement contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit en Turquie, en guerre contre Ankara depuis 1984) mais le terme n'est jamais cité, et il en revient traumatisé. La guerre qui dure depuis près de 40 ans dans le Sud-Est entre le mouvement autonomiste kurde et le pouvoir central turc d'Ankara, entre deux nationalismes, est abordée de manière un peu détournée, tant c'est encore un sujet délicat, risqué, tabou même : l'histoire des Kurdes est souvent évoquée à travers le prisme du conflit militaire. En outre, ce feuilleton raconte l'histoire d'une famille populaire, et non pas de la grande bourgeoisie, à la différence de *Nour* par exemple. Il aborde le sujet des minorités ethniques, mais aussi sociales. On peut imaginer l'intérêt que les Kurdes ont pu porter à la production, lesquels, bien que partageant une aspiration autonomiste très marquée, ne forment pas un peuple homogène, même en Turquie. Ce qui est sûr, c'est que les séries ont été parfois l'occasion pour des journalistes de gauche, nombreux parmi les scénaristes, de faire passer des « choses vues » et des idées qu'ils n'auraient peut-être pas pu exprimer dans la presse ou à la télévision...

Sur l'impact de ces séries, une anecdote indique qu'il n'a pas été jugé insignifiant par Israël. En janvier 2011, les autorités de l'État juif furent outrées par l'adaptation

fimique de l'une de ces séries turques qui ont tant de succès au Moyen-Orient et au Maghreb et qu'elles jugèrent parfaitement antisémite. Très nationaliste, *Kurtlar Vadisi - Palestine* [Vallée des loups - Palestine, 2011] présente de façon peu nuancée la vision turque de l'affaire du *Mavi Marmara*, ce ferry pro-palestinien pris d'assaut par Tsahal en mai 2010. L'ambassadeur de Turquie fut convoqué sous l'œil des caméras au ministère israélien des Affaires étrangères. Le numéro deux du ministère, Danny Ayalon, refusa de serrer la main de l'ambassadeur, et le fit asseoir en contrebas sur un canapé. Entre les deux hommes : une table basse avec un drapeau israélien mais pas de drapeau turc. L'objectif était alors de ternir l'image de la fierté ottomane et turque auprès de la rue arabe. Ce qui *a contrario* pourrait confirmer que l'audience de ces séries, de ce *soft power*, est prise très au sérieux par certains gouvernements.

### Fin 2012, Erdoğan critiquait l'une de ces séries les plus populaires, *Soliman le Magnifique*, la jugeant « contraire aux mœurs musulmanes » en déclarant : « Ceux qui jouent avec les valeurs du peuple doivent recevoir une leçon ». Au-delà d'une probable autocensure des créateurs, y a-t-il eu des condamnations concrètes ?

L'auteur de la série n'a pas caché avoir peur d'être arrêté à cause de cette série. Mais Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dispose cependant d'autres leviers pour faire pression sur les créateurs. Celui qu'il utilise le plus fréquemment : substituer des proches et des fidèles du pouvoir aux personnes précédemment en place. Cela se retrouve à tous les niveaux dans les secteurs de l'administration publique, comme la police, la justice, l'université et le monde des arts. Et l'AKP a financé massivement les maisons de production dont il peut désormais se permettre de changer les dirigeants. Ce dispositif mis en place comprend également la suppression de subventions d'État ou le fait de ne plus acheter à certaines sociétés, ce qui les décrédibilise en partie. Arrêter les personnes dans ce contexte n'est plus forcément utile. Par ailleurs, les déclarations du président Erdoğan sont à prendre avec du recul, selon à qui s'adresse le message. Le numéro un turc et ses ministres reprennent en cœur l'antienne d'une influence néfaste de l'Occident et prônent un retour aux « valeurs musulmanes et ottomanes » : la question est de savoir cependant s'ils y croient eux-mêmes.

En conclusion, on voit que dans leur variété, les séries turques illustrent l'ambivalence du régime : certaines vont montrer au monde arabe l'image d'un pays occidentalisé censé respecter les « valeurs musulmanes », tandis que d'autres dispensent un message beaucoup plus idéologique, religieux et conservateur, à usage plus interne, en phase avec l'inflexion islamo-nationaliste du régime.

Propos recueillis par Léa Robert le 5 juillet 2021

### Note

(1) A. Bonzon, « *Bir Başkadir*, la série turque de Netflix que les Français seraient bien avisés de regarder », Slate, 21 décembre 2020 (<https://bit.ly/2V1iHhL>).





**DIPLOMATIE**  
ANALYSES STRATÉGIQUES ET RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES

N° 63  
Août - Septembre 2021  
Entretien avec Deniz Ünal

entretien

Avec **Deniz Ünal**, économiste au Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales (CEPII), rédactrice en chef de la collection « Panorama » et coordinatrice des « Profils du CEPII ».

**Photo ci-dessus :**  
Un homme échange de la monnaie dans un bureau de change d'Istanbul en mars 2019. Le dollar est une valeur refuge pour les Turcs, qui détiennent parfois plus de devises étrangères que de livres turques. Les bureaux de change se trouvent partout et il est souvent possible de payer en dollars dans les échoppes. Face à la crise, la tendance n'a fait que s'accroître depuis 2018. (© Shutterstock)

# Économie et ressources



## Dérégulée et dépendante, l'économie turque s'engluie dans la crise

La Turquie se retrouve aujourd'hui en grande difficulté économique, après ce que vous avez appelé ses « Dix Glorieuses » (1). Pouvez-vous nous expliquer comment le pays en est arrivé à cette situation ?

D. Ünal : Effectivement, durant la première décennie de ce siècle, l'économie turque a connu « Dix Glorieuses » grâce, principalement, à l'instauration d'autorités indépendantes de régulation. Puis l'exécutif s'est progressivement affranchi du principe de séparation des pouvoirs, et ce virage vers un capitalisme autoritaire l'a plongée dans la crise. Ou plutôt, l'y a replongée. En effet, durant les deux décennies qui ont précédé l'accession au pouvoir, en 2002, du Parti de la Justice et du Développement (AKP) dont est issu le pouvoir actuel, l'économie avait déjà connu une inflation chronique qui avait conduit à des dévaluations et, partant, à des crises financières, dont celle, profonde, de 2001. Pour enrayer cette spirale, il eût fallu des réformes que les gouvernements de coalition de l'époque — instables il est vrai — n'ont pas instaurées. La seule issue, provisoire, consistait alors à recourir aux financements du FMI. Mais après la crise de 2001, la gouvernance a changé. Les nécessaires réformes ont été menées à bien par le nouvel exécutif

qui disposait d'une majorité à l'Assemblée et qui les a doublement ancrées, d'une part en plaçant sa stratégie de sortie de crise sous l'égide du FMI et de la Banque mondiale, d'autre part en s'engageant à absorber l'acquis communautaire (2) en vue de l'adhésion du pays à l'UE. Ainsi la Turquie a-t-elle enfin été dotée d'une Banque centrale indépendante, aux côtés de nombreuses autres autorités économiques autonomes. Cette régulation transparente de l'économie a permis une notable diminution de l'inflation, une réévaluation du taux de change de la livre turque et une croissance soutenue qui s'est accompagnée de l'instauration d'une protection sociale universelle, d'une réduction des inégalités sociales et spatiales. Voilà qui explique pour beaucoup les succès électoraux croissants que l'AKP et son leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ont enregistrés durant ces « Dix Glorieuses ».

C'est encore grâce à l'assainissement de son système financier que la Turquie a traversé sans encombre la grande récession mondiale de 2008. La chute du commerce mondial qui s'ensuivit l'a certes grandement affectée. Mais, à l'instar des autres économies émergentes, elle a bénéficié de la disponibilité massive de capitaux spéculatifs à un moment où, dans



# Économie et ressources

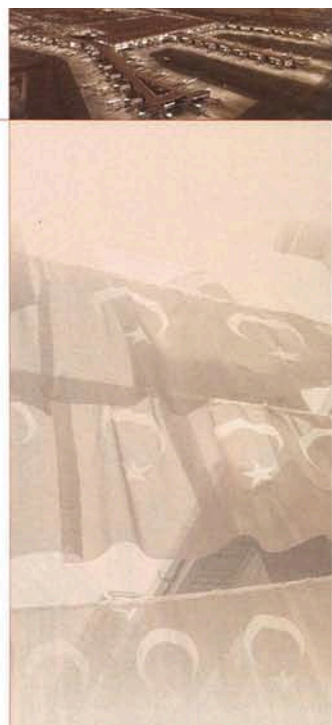
les pays avancés, les taux d'intérêts étaient devenus pratiquement nuls, voire négatifs. Cela lui a permis de financer sa croissance sans devoir recourir à l'aide du FMI, qui l'eût conditionnée à des mesures vertueuses dans l'attribution des marchés publics et dans la gestion des municipalités. Car l'opacité gagnait. D'autant plus que l'ancrage européen ne tenait plus. Lors de joutes électorales, des leaders européens agitaient comme un chiffon rouge la perspective de l'entrée de « l'Asie Mineure » et de ses 80 millions de musulmans dans l'UE chrétienne, dont le pouvoir turc, fort de son soutien populaire, commençait à se détourner, tout en prenant un tour de moins en moins laïc et de plus en plus autoritaire au fil des années 2010.

par la présidentialisation du régime, a abouti à la concentration de pratiquement tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du seul Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Les contre-pouvoirs, notamment celui de la presse, sont muselés. Reste la démocratie formelle qui a permis à la première force d'opposition d'emporter les principales villes turques lors des élections municipales de 2019. Il n'empêche : comme la plupart des grands émergents, la Turquie vit désormais sous le règne du national-capitalisme autoritaire (3).

**Comment expliquer que la livre turque ait à ce point dévié depuis 2018 et que l'inflation atteigne aujourd'hui les 17 % ?**  
En août 2018, un tweet de Donald Trump, menaçant de surtaxer l'acier et l'alumi-

Rappelons les effets déterminants de l'accession à l'indépendance de la BCRT en 2001, donc de la fin de sa subordination au Trésor pour interdire les prêts directs au gouvernement : durant la décennie qui a suivi, l'hyperinflation a été endiguée, la monnaie nationale a été réévaluée et le chronique endettement public a été comblé. Jusqu'en 2016, ses trois premiers gouvernements ont effectué la totalité de leur mandat, fixé à cinq ans, et n'ont pas dévié de leur mission première : œuvrer à la stabilité des prix. Mais le quatrième a été démis de ses fonctions au bout de quatre ans par le président de la République et, depuis, la BCRT a connu trois gouvernements en trois ans.

Depuis l'avènement, en 2018, de la présidentialisation du régime, la BCRT, obéissant aux volontés de l'homme fort de la Turquie, maintient des taux d'intérêt bas pour faciliter l'accès au crédit des entreprises et des particuliers et stimuler ainsi l'activité économique. Or, le pays manque d'épargne propre. D'où d'importants déficits courants, qui sont financés principalement par la dette, qui doit à son tour être financée... L'augmentation consécutive de la masse monétaire et la persistance de taux d'intérêt bas ont stimulé l'inflation. Elles ont de surcroît favorisé la « dollarisation » de l'économie : la rentabilité de la devise nationale étant trop faible, ménages et entreprises la délaissent. Il en résulte que plus de la moitié des dépôts bancaires sont en devises étrangères, principalement en dollars, et que la livre turque dévise. Pour la défendre, la BCRT a vendu ses réserves obligatoires en devises dans une totale opacité par le truchement des banques publiques. On estime



**Photo ci-dessous :**  
Un syndicaliste turc distribue des tracts dans les rues d'Istanbul. La hausse des prix et du chômage, entraînant une baisse du pouvoir d'achat, est la source d'une frustration populaire grandissante dans le pays. La flambée des prix des denrées alimentaires a notamment porté un coup dur au soutien populaire du président Erdoğan, qui a du mal à inverser la tendance. Selon une étude indépendante du Centre de recherche de la Confédération des syndicats progressistes de Turquie (DISK-AR), le chômage réel en Turquie serait le double (9,7 millions de chômeurs) du chiffre officiel fourni par les autorités (4,2 millions). (© Shutterstock)

**“ Comme la plupart des grands émergents, la Turquie vit désormais sous le règne du national-capitalisme autoritaire. ”**

Peu à peu, les autorités économiques de régulation ont perdu leur indépendance, sans compter que les entreprises proches du pouvoir versées dans la construction ou les armements ont eu les faveurs des commandes publiques. Les ingérences du pouvoir dans la sphère économique se sont accrues après l'instauration de l'état d'exception consécutive à la tentative avortée de coup d'État, en juillet 2016, par la mouvance du prédicateur Fethullah Gülen, ancien allié de l'AKP. Cet état d'exception, couronné en 2018

par la présidentialisation du régime, a abouti à la concentration de pratiquement tous les pouvoirs entre les mains du seul Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Les contre-pouvoirs, notamment celui de la presse, sont muselés. Reste la démocratie formelle qui a permis à la première force d'opposition d'emporter les principales villes turques lors des élections municipales de 2019. Il n'empêche : comme la plupart des grands émergents, la Turquie vit désormais sous le règne du national-capitalisme autoritaire (3).

## Livre turque et réserve de change : la dégringolade





# Économie et ressources



**Photo ci-dessus :**

Bureau de la Banque centrale turque dans le quartier de Galata, à Istanbul. En mars 2021, Şahap Kavcıoğlu a remplacé Naci Ağbal à la tête de la Banque centrale de la République de Turquie. Il s'agit du quatrième gouverneur depuis 2019. Ce limogeage est intervenu au lendemain d'une décision de relever à 19 % le taux directeur afin de contenir l'inflation. Mais Recep Tayyip Erdoğan est ouvertement hostile aux taux élevés, les considérant responsables de l'inflation. Un avis que partage M. Kavcıoğlu, économiste et ancien député de l'AKP. (© Shutterstock)

aujourd'hui que 128 milliards de dollars ont été ainsi vendus, mais en vain : les réserves de la BCRT — fait unique au monde — sont maintenant en négatif d'environ 50 milliards de dollars. Pour maquiller cet échec, la BCRT réalise des opérations de SWAP consistant à échanger provisoirement des livres turques contre des renminbis de la Chine ou des rials du Qatar.

**La Turquie est l'un des rares pays à avoir affiché une croissance positive (1,8 %) en 2020, année de la pandémie qui l'a pourtant très durement touchée (3 millions de cas et 30 000 morts). Cette contradiction n'est-elle pas lourde de menaces ?**

Ici comme ailleurs, les mesures de confinement liées à la pandémie ont provoqué au deuxième trimestre 2020 une forte chute du PIB, notamment due à l'effondrement de la demande extérieure et de l'activité touristique. Le taux d'emploi et les résultats des entreprises ont suivi le même mouvement. La réponse des autorités turques a été conforme au mode opératoire qui est le leur depuis 2018 : l'ouverture des vannes de crédits à très bas taux d'intérêts via les banques publiques. Ces crédits ont représenté 9 % de son PIB, contre, en moyenne, 2,5 % dans les économies émergentes et 11 % dans les économies avancées. En revanche, la Turquie a très peu soutenu son économie par des aides directes d'État qui ont représenté 2 % de son PIB, contre, toujours en moyenne, 4 % dans

les économies émergentes et 16 % dans les économies avancées.

Si cette stratégie a permis au pays d'enregistrer l'un des rares taux de croissance positifs en 2020, sa soutenabilité est douteuse : aujourd'hui, les ménages et les entreprises turcs sont très fortement endettés, et un million et demi de Turcs ont basculé dans la pauvreté...

**La Turquie peut-elle profiter de la réorganisation des chaînes de valeur mondiales dans le monde post-Covid-19 ?**

Les ruptures d'approvisionnement de produits pharmaceutiques ou de matériels de santé mais aussi la pénurie des semi-conducteurs dans la filière électronique ont fortement remis en cause l'hyper-mondialisation depuis la crise sanitaire. Une réorganisation des chaînes de valeur à l'échelle régionale permettrait de réduire les risques de rupture d'approvisionnement de produits critiques. La Turquie, grande économie émergente,

**avoir conduit des opérations d'exploration gazière dans les eaux chypriotes et pour avoir acheté un système de défense russe antiaérien S-400. Quelles sont leurs conséquences sur l'économie du pays ?**

Il est peu probable que l'UE mette en œuvre les sanctions prévues, qui sont au demeurant très limitées, notamment parce qu'elles entraîneraient chez elle un effet boomerang. Les menaces américaines sont plus sérieuses. Depuis 2019, le Congrès a préparé plus d'une vingtaine de projets de lois visant la Turquie. Ils portent sur les thèmes suivants : la sécurité énergétique en Europe (gazoduc *TurkStream* construit par les Russes), la sécurité énergétique et le partenariat en Méditerranée orientale (champs de gaz sous-marins autour de Chypre dont la Turquie conteste la répartition), la sécurité du ciel de l'OTAN (achat des anti-missiles russes S-400 par Ankara) et l'intervention de la Turquie en Syrie.

**“ Les réserves de la banque centrale turque — fait unique au monde — sont maintenant en négatif d'environ 50 milliards de dollars. Pour maquiller cet échec, elle réalise des opérations de SWAP consistant à échanger provisoirement des livres turques contre des renminbis de la Chine ou des rials du Qatar. ”**

trouverait là de nouvelles opportunités, en défaveur de lointains partenaires asiatiques. D'autant que le pays est déjà intégré aux chaînes de valeur européennes depuis qu'il a satisfait aux obligations ayant conditionné son union douanière avec l'UE — effective depuis 1996 pour les échanges de biens industriels — et que, depuis le début des années 2000, elle a en partie absorbé l'acquis communautaire dans la perspective de son adhésion à l'UE. La Turquie a ainsi fortement inséré son appareil productif dans les chaînes de valeur européennes, en particulier dans les filières des véhicules et de la mécanique. Tous produits confondus, la Turquie est aujourd'hui le 6<sup>e</sup> client et fournisseur de l'UE-27, devant le Japon.

**Le pays est aussi sous le coup de sanctions américaines et européennes pour**

Les sanctions envisagées sont de même nature que celles appliquées à l'Iran : interdiction de recourir au système financier américain, ne serait-ce qu'au dollar comme monnaie d'échange ; interdiction d'emprunter auprès des institutions financières internationales ; sanctions contre des dirigeants (ministres, militaires...) et enquête sur les biens d'Erdoğan ; et enfin embargo sur certains échanges (d'armements, en particulier). Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que le procès en cours devant le tribunal de Manhattan contre la banque publique Halkbank pour contournement de l'embargo contre l'Iran peut se solder par une amende de 20 milliards de dollars.

Si les menaces de sanctions américaines se matérialisent, la Turquie traversera une crise majeure, alors même que son économie souffre d'une double



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dépendance, énergétique et financière. Parmi les sept plus grandes économies émergentes en termes de PIB, la Turquie est la seule qui soit aussi démunie de ressources énergétiques propres [voir l'analyse de N. Rebière p. 34]. Son approvisionnement dépend très fortement de ses voisins russe (plus de la moitié de ses importations de gaz naturel) et iranien (plus de la moitié de ses importations de pétrole brut). Cette dépendance est scellée par des contrats sur plusieurs dizaines d'années qui tiennent compte des gazoducs et oléoducs sillonnant son territoire et desservant tant la Turquie que l'Europe. Par ailleurs, la Turquie manque d'épargne propre pour assurer sa croissance. L'endettement en devises du secteur privé turc, aujourd'hui de plus de 200 milliards de dollars, est essentiellement contracté auprès des banques européennes et il est pour moitié financé par des capitaux à court terme. D'où la grande vulnérabilité financière de l'économie turque. Le pays doit donc coûte que coûte concilier ces deux dépendances qui l'attachent à deux axes stratégiques en conflit.

**“ Les perspectives d'évolution de l'économie turque resteront sombres tant que ses institutions ne seront pas réformées. ”**

**Quelles sont les perspectives d'évolution de l'économie turque et les principaux défis qu'elle a à surmonter ?**

L'économiste turc Mahfi Eğilmez a récemment fait un inventaire des problèmes institutionnels du pays en pointant son rang dans différents classements mondiaux : 57<sup>e</sup>/180 pour l'efficacité de la gouvernance (compétitivité soutenable) ; 76<sup>e</sup>/169 pour la liberté économique ; 86<sup>e</sup>/180 pour la corruption perçue ; 99<sup>e</sup>/180 pour la performance environnementale ; 107<sup>e</sup>/128 pour l'État de droit ; 153<sup>e</sup>/180 pour la liberté de la presse ; et 174<sup>e</sup>/194 pour la stabilité politique et l'absence de violence. Les perspectives d'évolution de l'économie turque resteront sombres tant que ses institutions ne seront pas réformées.

**Si la situation du pays est mauvaise, la Turquie est-elle encore une puissance économique qui compte sur la scène internationale ?**

La Turquie n'en reste pas moins une puissance qui compte, notamment de par sa population de 84 millions d'habitants, la plus importante d'Europe (5) devant celle de l'Allemagne [voir le focus de S. de Tapia p. 24]. Il s'agit d'une population jeune, la moitié ayant moins de 32 ans contre 44 ans d'âge médian au sein de l'Union européenne. De plus, le pays devrait connaître une

croissance démographique de 2,5 % dans les cinq ans à venir, alors que la population de l'ensemble de l'Europe va stagner. Autre fait démographique notable, la Turquie est le pays du monde qui abrite aujourd'hui le plus grand nombre de réfugiés. Essentiellement composés de Syriens (3,7 millions en juin 2021), ces derniers sont en moyenne plus jeunes et s'accroissent davantage que les natifs de leur pays d'accueil, où ils désirent majoritairement rester.

Le pays se situe pratiquement au même rang mondial sur les plans démographique (17<sup>e</sup>) et économique (19<sup>e</sup>). Mais, même si son produit intérieur brut à prix courants — 720 milliards de dollars en 2020 — place la Turquie au 8<sup>e</sup> rang européen, juste après la Suisse, et au 7<sup>e</sup> rang des économies émergentes (après la Chine, l'Inde, la Russie, le Brésil, le Mexique et l'Indonésie), son niveau de richesse demeure cependant inférieur à celui des pays avancés. En parité de pouvoir d'achat, le revenu par tête de la Turquie, similaire à celui de la Russie, représente 69 % du revenu moyen au sein de l'UE-27.

**Propos recueillis par Léa Robert, le 5 juillet 2021**

#### Notes

- (1) Deniz Ünal, « Croissance économique turque : aux sources des "Dix Glorieuses" », *La Lettre du CEPII* n° 326, novembre 2012 (<http://www.cepii.fr/CEPII/fr/publications/lettre/abstract.asp?NoDoc=4829>).
- (2) Le socle commun de droits et d'obligations qui lie l'ensemble des États membres de l'Union européenne.
- (3) <https://www.en-attendant-nadeau.fr/2021/06/30/capitalismes-illiberaux-henin-insel/>
- (4) Patrice Rötig et Deniz Ünal, *L'économie turque dans la tourmente*, Paris, La Découverte, collection « Repères », 2019 ([http://www.cepii.fr/PDF\\_PUB/em/2020/em2020-07.pdf](http://www.cepii.fr/PDF_PUB/em/2020/em2020-07.pdf)).
- (5) Le contour de l'Europe est ici celui adopté dans les « Profils Régions » du CEPII : Union européenne, Albanie, Bosnie-Herzégovine, Islande, Kosovo, Macédoine du Nord, Monténégro, Norvège, Royaume-Uni, Serbie, Suisse et Turquie. Les statistiques citées sont issues de la base de données de CHELEM du CEPII (sauf celles relatives à l'âge médian issues d'Eurostat).



**Photo ci-dessous :**  
Vue du « palais d'été » du président Erdoğan, dont la construction s'est achevée en 2019 mais qui avait pu rester secret jusqu'en juillet 2021. Une surface de près de 130 terrains de football, une résidence de 300 pièces, un hélicoptère, une plage privatisée... Cet étalage de luxe a fait beaucoup réagir en Turquie, alors que le pays connaît de graves difficultés économiques. Situé sur les rives de la mer Égée, à Marmaris, le luxueux complexe aurait coûté 62 millions d'euros. (© Google Earth)





## Covid Cases Hit 5 Million Mark

**N**early 18 months into the Covid-19 pandemic, Iran's tally of confirmed cases surged past the five million mark in the fifth peak of the disease.

The Health Ministry on Wednesday logged 33,000 more infections driven by the Delta variant, pushing the national tally to 5.02 million, IRNA reported.

Iran is ramping up vaccination to contain the spread of the highly contagious mutation as it faces a fifth wave of the outbreak.

President Ebrahim Raisi in his weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday lauded the accelerated vaccine rollout but called it "insufficient" to stem the virus.

"One of the prerequisites for booming businesses and the reopening of schools and education centers is mass vaccination," the president said.

He pointed to the rise in vaccine imports and production and said vaccination centers had increased by two to three times over the past months.

Newly appointed Health Minister Bahram Einollahi also said that mass vaccination was on top of the government's agenda and that rollout would pick up speed starting next week.

"From next week, five million shots will arrive into the country



Covid Cases Hit 5 Million Mark

on a weekly basis," he said, noting, "We'll receive 20 million jabs by [September 22] and another 30 million by [October 22]."

On Wednesday, more than 566,000 shots were given out across the country. So far more than 19 million people have received the first dose of a coronavirus vaccine and some nine million have been fully vaccinated.

Iran has in total administered over 28 million shots since it launched a vaccination campaign back in February.

The country is planning to vaccinate most of its population by March 2020.

Lambda Vigilance

Head of Covid-19 Operations,

Babak Dinparast, discussed the Interior Ministry's order to governors general across the country for stricter border control to prevent the dangerous Lambda variant from entering the country.

All travelers will be tested for a Covid infection upon arrival and those suspected of carrying the virus will be quarantined, the official said.

The new Lambda variant first emerged in Peru in August 2020 before being named a variant of interest by the World Health Organization.

The mutation is more resistant to vaccines than the original coronavirus which came from Wuhan, China. The Delta variant, first detected in India, is currently dominant throughout Iran.

Iran has been trying to contain a fifth wave of the pandemic over the past two months as its daily cases crossed 50,000 at one point and overnight fatalities of over 500 became common.

Early warnings by health officials against the Delta variant failed to prevent the mutation from taking over the country.

The Health Ministry on Wednesday registered a further 599 deaths, which brought the national toll to 108,893. Some 7,800 patients with severe symptoms are hospitalized in ICU units.

Worldwide coronavirus cases increased to 218.6 million on Wednesday as the death toll caused by the respiratory illness reached 4.53 million.



# La France exhorte l'Iran à reprendre les négociations sur le nucléaire, Téhéran évoque « deux à trois mois » avant une décision

Interrompu au mois de juin, deux jours après l'élection de l'ultraconservateur Ebrahim Raïssi, le cycle de discussions mené à Vienne n'a pas repris malgré l'insistance des Etats-Unis

**L**e ministre des affaires étrangères français, Jean-Yves Le Drian, a appelé l'Iran, mercredi 1er septembre, à reprendre sans délai les négociations sur son programme nucléaire. Un mois après l'investiture du président ultraconservateur Ebrahim Raïssi, la stratégie de Téhéran quant à l'avenir de l'accord de 2015 est très attendue par la communauté internationale.

« Le ministre a souligné l'importance et l'urgence d'une reprise immédiate des négociations, interrompues par l'Iran depuis le mois de juin, afin de permettre un retour à la pleine mise en œuvre de l'accord [de Vienne sur le nucléaire] », a dit à l'Agence France-Presse (AFP) un porte-parole du Quai d'Orsay à l'issue d'un entretien téléphonique entre M. Le Drian et son nouvel homologue iranien, Hossein Amir Abdollahian. Le ministre français a également fait part de son inquiétude « vis-à-vis de l'ensemble des activités nucléaires conduites par l'Iran en violation de cet accord », a ajouté le porte-parole.

Des discussions pour sauver l'accord au printemps

L'accord conclu en 2015 offrait à l'Iran un allègement des sanctions occidentales et onu-

siennes en échange de son engagement à ne jamais se doter de l'arme atomique et d'une réduction drastique de son programme nucléaire, placé sous un strict contrôle des Nations unies. Téhéran s'engageait ainsi à ne pas produire d'uranium enrichi.

L'Iran a cependant affirmé, plus tôt cette année, avoir entrepris la recherche d'uranium métal afin de fournir du combustible pour un réacteur nucléaire de recherche ; un sujet sensible, car cette matière peut être utilisée dans la fabrication d'armes nucléaires. L'annonce était entrée dans le cadre d'une série de mesures prises en violation de l'accord de 2015 après la décision du président Donald Trump, en 2018, du retrait des Etats-Unis de cet accord.

Six cycles de négociations entre l'Iran et les puissances internationales, dont la France, ont eu lieu à Vienne entre avril et juin, pour tenter de sauver l'accord. Ces pourparlers visent à réintégrer les Etats-Unis dans l'accord et à ramener l'Iran au respect intégral de ses engagements internationaux concernant son programme nucléaire.

Pour l'Iran, « un processus de deux ou trois mois est nécessaire »



Le président iranien, Ebrahim Raïssi, à Téhéran, le 25 août 2021. VAHID SALEMI / AP

Mardi, M. Amir Abdollahian a laissé entendre que ces discussions, interrompues depuis le 20 juin, c'est-à-dire deux jours après la victoire de M. Raïssi à la présidentielle, risquaient de ne pas reprendre avant deux ou trois mois. « L'autre partie sait pertinemment qu'un processus de deux ou trois mois est nécessaire pour que le nouveau gouvernement se mette en place et prenne la moindre décision », a-t-il dit.

Le nouveau ministre des affaires étrangères iranien a affirmé avoir été invité à Paris par Emmanuel Macron, qui, selon lui, cherche « à se rapprocher » de l'Iran. Ni l'Elysée ni le ministère des affaires

étrangères n'ont confirmé cette invitation. M. Le Drian a « souhaité que le dialogue entre la France et l'Iran puisse contribuer à la reprise et à la conclusion de ces négociations », a simplement relevé le ministre, sans plus de précisions.

« M. Macron (...) est venu me voir à deux reprises », a raconté M. Amir Abdollahian, qui a participé samedi, au côté du président français, à un sommet régional à Bagdad consacré à la lutte contre le terrorisme. « Il a appelé son ministre des affaires étrangères et a dit "J'ai invité [M. Amir Abdollahian] (...), nous devons revoir les relations bilatérales" », a-t-il assuré, cité par le site de la chaîne de télévision d'Etat iranienne.

L'OB

01 Septembre 2021  
Par Par Hélène Riffaudeau

## « Filles du feu », femmes du front

**D**eux femmes en tenue militaire, AK-47 en bandoulière et foulard à fleurs colorées noué dans les cheveux avancent dans un paysage désolé. Sur le chemin, elles aperçoivent un chien errant qui tente de déterrer le cadavre d'un djihadiste sommairement inhumé par leurs camarades. Elles le recouvrent de lourdes pierres avant de poursuivre leur route. Ce magistral plan-séquence ouvre le film de l'ethnologue et cinéaste Stéphane Breton (« Eux et moi », « Quelques jours ensemble »).



« Filles du feu » : En suivant plusieurs groupes de combattantes kurdes au nord de la Syrie, Stéphane Breton a capté une image de la guerre et des gens qui la font (© Quark Productions)

« S'ils sont tués par elles, ils n'iront pas au paradis »

Pendant plusieurs mois, alors que le conflit contre l'organisation Etat islamique faisait rage en 2015, il a suivi plusieurs groupes de combattantes kurdes manœuvrant au nord

de la Syrie pour le salut de leur peuple et la dignité des femmes. Ces quelques mots, en préambule, résument bien l'enjeu particulier de « leur » guerre : « Les islamistes les détestent car s'ils sont tués par elles, ils n'iront pas au paradis. » Engagées sur un pied d'égalité avec leurs homologues

masculins, elles ont forcé l'admiration un peu partout dans le monde. Loin des nombreux reportages tournés sur le sujet, ce documentaire dépouillé du moindre commentaire assume sa part de mystère.

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Plutôt qu'une expérience directe du front, Stéphane Breton choisit de nous montrer la guerre par le biais de scènes de la vie quotidienne : les nuits courtes à veiller dans un froid glacial, les longues marches dans des villages ravagés où seuls divaguent encore des chiens aux hurlements enragés, les maigres repas, etc. Sa caméra enregistre le récit qu'en rapporte une combattante lorsqu'elle revient sur les lieux d'une bataille et fait l'éloge funèbre de ses camarades morts au champ d'honneur. Dans le finale, on observe Diljîn Ararat, une jeune commandante, organiser avec autant de patience que de détermination des groupes de femmes kurdes et d'hommes arabes, qui pour certains semblent à peine sortis de l'adolescence, pour partir au combat. Diljîn sera tuée peu après le tournage. Ce film captivant lui est dédié.



01 Septembre 2021

## The struggles of working women in Iran's Kurdistan province

**W**hen Mahnaz Amiri decided to separate from her husband 12 years ago, the responsibility of providing for her children fell on her shoulders.

The 52-year old from the city of Sanandaj has been working as a tailor for more than a decade to provide for her family and is

one of more than three million female breadwinners across the country.

"Sometimes I used to lock the door and work secretly in fear because they [the government] wouldn't let me. Our society doesn't support us. They don't accept that we're family breadwinners," she said.

According to Nahid Tajadin, a member of Iranian parliament's social committee, the number of female breadwinners has increased by 58 percent in the last 10 years. With the spread of the coronavirus, many of these women face financial problems and unemployment, compounded by social stigma.

"Our society doesn't support us," Amiri said, adding that in addition to working outside of the home to support their families, women also have to do the housework and child care inside the home.

Bayan Nasrizar, 46, has had several jobs over the past 20 years to provide for her three

children, including running a shop where she makes and sells traditional food.

«I have been making kalana [a type of local bread] for three years. I bake pies as well. I also prepare traditional Kurdish foods for my customers, including doghawa [kufta], dolma, and hallow [a grape and meat dish],” she said. Last year, she had to close her shop for three months because of the coronavirus pandemic. Now, her sales have declined.

It’s a hard life, but she is grateful because she is able to provide for her family. “Although my income has decreased, I still feel satisfied because I am not dependent on anyone,” she said. The Kurdish provinces in Iran’s west have always struggled with high unemployment, few



Video filmed in Sanandaj in August 2021. Subtitles by Sarkawt Mohammed.

job opportunities because a lack of investment, and a shortage of services. Women are traditionally kept at home, making the situation doubly hard for those who need to work to support their families.

Women’s rights activist and researcher Bayan Azizi said that female breadwinners face significant challenges, but are “one of the most important parts in society.” It used to be thought that only

widows had the responsibility of providing for their families. “Today, this is no longer true,” said Azizi. Some are not married, others are married but their husbands are away for work or are in prison.

According to the activist, the number of women breadwinners is on the rise.

“We did research in Kurdistan province on the problems of women breadwinners. As a result, we found out 65 percent of these women’s problems are financial, and small loans are not helping their situation,” she said. The second obstacle facing these women is social - societal expectations about women’s role in and out of the home.



September 02, 2021  
By Dilan Sirwan

## Dozens of human rights violations reported in Iran’s Kurdish areas in August

**K**urdistan Region - At least one kolbar was killed and 13 wounded by Iranian forces in August, and at least 47 people were arrested, a human rights organization monitoring Kurdish areas of Iran said on Wednesday in their monthly report.

“In August, the Islamic Republic of Iran military forces killed at least one kolbar and wounded 13 in the western border areas of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan provinces,” read the report from the Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).

Two other kolbars died in a road accident and nine were injured “either in a road accident or falling from mountain heights.”

Kolbars are semi-legal porters who transport untaxed goods across the Kurdistan Region-Iran border and sometimes the Iran-Turkey border. They are constantly targeted by Iranian border guards and are sometimes victims of natural disasters. Iran’s Kurdish provinces are among the poorest in the country and many kolbars are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack of alternative employment.

In a recent report on the human rights situation in Iran, the United Nations raised concern over the “excessive use of force” against kolbars. “Reports estimate that around 70,000 Iranians, mostly of the Kurdish minority, depend on being a kolbar for sustenance, including

women, many of them women heads of household,” the report read.

According to the UN, approximately 60 kolbars, including children, were killed and more than 170 injured in 2020.

KHRN also reported dozens of arrests in Kurdish provinces.

“Iranian police, Ministry of Intelligence, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) arrested at least 47 Kurdish civilians, activists, and former political prisoners in various cities in Kermanshah, Kurdistan, and West Azerbaijan provinces on political charges,” it stated. “Reportedly, security forces also detained three children in Javanrud, Kerman-

shah province. They were then released after several hours in detention.”

The monitor also reported the murders of three women in the cities of Mariwan, Sanandaj, and Saqqez, Kurdistan Province.

During August, Iran executed at least seven Kurdish civilians, according to KHRN, and the human rights watchdog condemned the assassination of Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) official Mousa Babakhani, who was killed in an Erbil hotel.

KHRN also reported Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) shelling that caused forest fires on Shaho mountain in Kurdistan province.



## En Turquie, l'afflux de réfugiés crispe l'opinion

**A**lors que le chômage et l'inflation gagnent du terrain, les réflexes de rejet se renforcent dans ce pays qui accueille le plus grand nombre de réfugiés au monde. Un mécontentement attisé par les partis d'opposition qui reprochent au gouvernement le laxisme de sa politique migratoire.

Pour avoir reçu chez elle des journalistes étrangers, Farideh, une jeune Afghane installée en Turquie depuis plusieurs années, a été congédiée par sa propriétaire turque, juste après la visite des indésirables, aperçus par cette dernière dans la cour de l'immeuble au moment où ils prenaient congé.

La mère de famille, qui a un mois pour se trouver un nouveau logement, ne cesse de se demander pourquoi elle a été chassée. Faut-il y voir une ruse de la propriétaire avide d'obtenir une augmentation du loyer ? A moins qu'il ne s'agisse de sa part d'une manifestation ordinaire de xénophobie ? « A travers les actualités et les réseaux sociaux, la population turque voit que des milliers d'Afghans sont passés en Turquie ces derniers mois pour fuir l'offensive des talibans. Les gens sont inquiets », explique la jeune femme.

Syrie, Afghanistan, Iran, Irak...

La Turquie est le pays qui accueille le plus grand nombre de réfugiés au monde : 3,7 millions de Syriens ayant fui la guerre y sont hébergés, s'ajoutant aux centaines de milliers de réfugiés venus d'Afghanistan, d'Iran, d'Irak et d'ailleurs.

La question migratoire est de-

venue brûlante, une vraie bombe à retardement pour le gouvernement, surtout depuis que le pays se retrouve confronté à la perspective de l'arrivée d'une nouvelle vague de réfugiés venus d'Afghanistan, via l'Iran. La prise de pouvoir des talibans et le départ contraint des troupes turques de l'aéroport de Kaboul ont renforcé les craintes des autorités.

Parvenue au maximum de sa capacité d'accueil, la Turquie « ne pourra pas supporter un fardeau migratoire supplémentaire », a expliqué récemment le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, à la chancelière allemande Angela Merkel. C'est aussi pour régler la question des réfugiés afghans, estimés par le ministère de l'intérieur à environ 300 000 sur le sol turc, dont 129 323 seulement sont légaux, que M. Erdogan s'est dit prêt à engager le dialogue avec les talibans.

Un mur de béton sur plus de 100 kilomètres

Ankara cherche par tous les moyens à endiguer le flux. En construction depuis 2017, un mur de béton a vu le jour sur plus de 100 kilomètres le long de la frontière avec l'Iran. Il est prévu de le prolonger et de le renforcer par des tours de guet, des caméras à infrarouge, des tranchées. Récemment, les contrôles se sont multipliés le long de la frontière et sur les routes. Des représentants des forces spéciales ont été envoyés en renfort pour traquer les passeurs et les migrants clandestins.

Le gouvernement est soucieux de montrer à la population qu'il maîtrise les frontières du pays.

S'il ne le fait pas, les manifestations d'hostilité envers les réfugiés pourraient s'amplifier. Le 12 août, dans le quartier d'Altindag à Ankara, plusieurs centaines de jeunes hommes munis de bâtons ont détruit des commerces, des voitures et des logements appartenant à des Syriens.

La violence s'est abattue sur ce quartier d'ordinaire plutôt tranquille après une rixe entre des Turcs et des Syriens, au cours de laquelle un jeune Turc a été tué. Pendant des heures, les assaillants se sont acharnés sur les biens des Syriens, ont pillé et détruit au nez et à la barbe des policiers, visiblement débordés. Une centaine d'individus soupçonnés d'avoir pris part à ces attaques ont été arrêtés tandis que les médias s'alarmaient de la montée du sentiment anti-migrants parmi la population.

Attaque xénophobe plutôt rare en Turquie

En réalité, de telles attaques xénophobes sont plutôt rares en Turquie, surtout si on les rapporte au nombre total de réfugiés – légaux et illégaux – présents dans le pays, soit 5 millions, selon M. Erdogan, et à la population du pays : 82 millions d'habitants. Jusqu'ici, le gouvernement, avec le soutien financier de l'Union européenne, n'a pas ménagé ses efforts pour ouvrir aux « invités syriens », bénéficiaires d'une protection temporaire et non du statut de réfugiés au sens de la convention de Genève, les portes des établissements scolaires et du système de santé.

Ces dernières années, l'hospitalité des Turcs semble avoir

atteint sa limite. Depuis 2016, Ankara a érigé un autre mur le long de sa frontière avec la Syrie et n'accorde qu'au compte-gouttes les permis de « protection temporaire » aux personnes qui fuient le chaos syrien. « En général, les Turcs sont plutôt bienveillants à notre égard, mais il n'est pas rare que certains nous apostrophent et nous disent de rentrer en Syrie », explique Musa, un réfugié installé à Ankara avec sa famille et qui travaille en tant que journalier dans le bâtiment.

M. Erdogan s'est dit récemment « conscient du mécontentement causé par l'immigration irrégulière », marquant ainsi la distinction entre les réfugiés afghans, privés de statut, et les réfugiés syriens, tolérés et qui finiront par rester. Ces neuf dernières années, plus d'un million de Syriens sont nés en Turquie révèle l'ONG Mülteci Destek Dernegi (association de soutien aux réfugiés) dans un bilan publié en 2021.

Elections, législatives et présidentielle, prévues en 2023

Le mécontentement est attisé par les partis d'opposition qui reprochent au gouvernement le laxisme de sa politique migratoire. Quelques semaines avant les débordements xénophobes d'Altindag, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, le chef du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP, kémaliste), qui se pose en rival de M. Erdogan en vue des élections, législatives et présidentielle, prévues en 2023, avait promis, une fois de plus, de « renvoyer les Syriens chez eux » si son parti venait à remporter les élections.

The Washington Post

September 3, 2021  
By Bobby Ghosh / Bloomberg

## After Afghanistan, Biden Shouldn't Abandon Iraq Too

**A**s Afghans grapple with fear and uncertainty in the wake of the U.S. military pullout from their country, Iraqis are beginning to wonder if it will be their turn next.

The Biden administration, doubling and tripling down on the president's defense of his Afghanistan withdrawal, has been deploying Washington's current catchphrase, "forever wars," as well as invoking old shibboleths about the "national interest." Pursuing the latter, so the theory goes, requires ending the former.

Iraq, where the U.S. military presence is now in its 18th year, may seem like another "forever war," but prolonging that presence is a necessary condition for a number of interlocking American objectives, including preserving the country's fragile peace, protecting Middle Eastern allies, preventing the resurgence of the Islamic State and interdicting the malign influence of Iran.

These are all manifestly in the American national interest.

Does Biden see this? Let's hope so. The president has a history of woolly and reckless ideas about the Middle East — as a senator, he endorsed a proposal to "soft-partition" Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines, giving little thought to whether Iraqis wanted to be subdivided in that way. Thankfully, he has refrained from airing such views since entering the White House.

Unlike in the case of Afghani-

stan, where the president overruled the Pentagon's argument for maintaining a military footprint, he has apparently been persuaded that Iraq is a different matter. Instead of withdrawing all U.S. troops, he has decided their mission will morph from combatting enemies to helping the Iraqis to do the job.

This is a deft bit of legerdemain, allowing both Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to appease domestic constituencies that are clamoring for a full American exit. The U.S. president can pretend that, even if he hasn't brought the troops "back home," he has taken them out of the frontline; and Kadhimi, in the run up to a general election, can placate Iran-backed militias and political parties that want the Americans gone.

The continued U.S. military presence will not only improve the skills of the Iraqi security services; it will also bolster the morale of soldiers who, much like their Afghan counterparts, have for years carried much of the burden — and paid much of the human cost — of fighting terrorist groups in their country. Not even Biden could accuse the Iraqis, as he shamefully did the Afghans, of being unwilling "to fight for themselves."

Nor could he argue that U.S. forces in Iraq are in imminent danger: There is no Taliban-like force on the verge of taking over Baghdad. That, too, is in large part a testament to the qualities of the Iraqi fighting forces. They were the ones,

with U.S. assistance, who recovered territory lost to the Islamic State, and they're the ones keeping the terrorists, still at large, from making a comeback.

But the American involvement is crucial to defending the Iraqi military from other threats. Having U.S. units embedded with Iraqi national forces, especially the elite forces, keeps them from being infiltrated and taken over by Tehran's proxy militias. The Americans also prevent sectarian and ethnic rivalries within the armed services — between Kurds and Arabs, say — from getting out of hand.

The U.S. military presence in Iraq is crucial for the pursuit of American interests in the wider neighborhood, too. The Syrian Kurds, who have been allies in the fight against the Islamic State, are supplied through northern Iraq. Kurds on both sides of the border, having cast their lot with the U.S., have been shaken by the pullout in Afghanistan.

Others in the neighborhood have cause to celebrate the events in Kabul, and hope they will soon be repeated in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, the major Iraqi-Kurdish cities, and Baghdad. Hezbollah, for instance, would welcome the removal of U.S. forces. Its supplies of arms from Iran — which enable the terrorist group to dominate Lebanon, fight for the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad and menace Israel — could then be greatly increased. As my colleague Zev Chafets

has pointed out, Biden's Afghanistan withdrawal already has Israel looking nervously over its shoulder. A withdrawal from Iraq would leave America's most important ally in the Middle East exposed to even greater danger from the implacable hatred of the Islamic Republic.

Other allies in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have recently taken to hedging their bets by parleying with Iran, and Iraq has emerged as their main intermediary. Kadhimi's qualifications as an honest broker rest on his being equidistant from Iran and the Arab states. But take the U.S. out of the picture, and there's every likelihood that the prime minister becomes a puppet of Tehran. Rather than being a place where the Iranians and Gulf Arabs can confer, Iraq would quickly turn into an area of contestation, with destabilizing effects across the region.

Even a White House keen to "pivot" away from the Middle East must see that this would go directly against the American national interest. Here's hoping Biden doesn't succumb to his reckless tendencies — and stays the course in Iraq.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

**Bobby Ghosh is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He writes on foreign affairs, with a special focus on the Middle East and Africa.**

## Iran must halt execution of Kurdish prisoner: UN rights experts

**T**he imminent execution of an Iranian Kurdish prisoner must be halted and his death sentence repealed, UN-appointed independent human rights experts said on Friday.

Their appeal follows serious concerns that Heidar Ghorbani did not receive a fair trial and was tortured during pre-trial detention.

He was arrested in October 2016 in connection with the alleged killing of three men affiliated to Basij paramilitary forces and no information was provided to Mr. Ghorbani's family on his whereabouts until three months later.

In a statement, the rights experts said that they were "seriously concerned" that the 48-year old's confession was forced as a result of torture and ill-treatment.

They also expressed concerns that he had been denied access to a lawyer during the investigation, and that later his attorney did not have full access to his case file during the trial.

"Allegations of torture and confessions extracted under duress are extremely concerning, as is the fact that these allegations did not lead to any investigation and appear not to have been considered by the Court during his trial", the experts said.



Foundational guarantees of fair trial and due process are enshrined in international human rights law.

Charging, convicting and sentencing

In October 2019, a Criminal Court convicted Mr. Ghorbani of aiding and abetting murder, attempted kidnapping and assisting the perpetrators of the attack to escape.

He was sentenced to 118 years and six months in prison.

The following January, a Revolutionary Court in Kurdistan Province convicted him of an armed rebellion against the State, called *baghi*, and sentenced him to death – despite the court's acknowledgement in the verdict that Mr. Ghorbani was never armed.

### Charges denied

Iran's Criminal Code stipulates that to establish the crime of *baghi*, the defendant must be a member of

an armed group and personally resort to arms.

During his trial, Mr. Ghorbani denied all charges, stating that he was not a member of a Kurdish political organization and never had a weapon when the victims were killed, the rights experts noted.

In August 2020, Iran's Supreme Court upheld the death sentence and rejected Mr. Ghorbani's requests for a judicial review in September 2020 and again in August 2021.

His sentence may be carried out at any time.

### Below legal threshold

"Many foundational guarantees of fair trial and due process enshrined in international human rights law appear to have been violated", the independent human rights experts said.

They described it "regrettable" that the Government continues to issue death sentences and "particularly concerning" when the crimes do not meet the threshold as required by international law.

Moreover, the experts found it troubling that "courts continue to issue death sentences in trials that not only breach international fair trial standards, but even domestic law and due process guarantees".

We call on Iran to impose an immediate moratorium on executions -- UN experts

"Once again, we call on Iran to impose an immediate moratorium on executions and commute all death sentences", they stated.

The UN experts had previously raised concerns with the Government about death sentence and fair trials violations against Mr. Ghorbani, which were responded to with comments.

[Click here for the names of the nine UN experts who endorsed the statement.](#)

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.





03 Septembre, 2021

## UN experts call on Iran to halt execution of Kurdish political prisoner

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported today that a group of UN human rights experts have called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to overturn the death sentence of the Kurdish political prisoner Heidar Ghorbani and to grant him retrial as there were serious concerns about the unfairness of his trial.

“The Iranian authorities must immediately halt the execution of Heidar Ghorbani and annul the death sentence against him and grant him a retrial in compliance with their international obligations”, the OHCHR report cited the experts as saying.

In February 2020, Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj sentenced Ghorbani to death on charges of “armed rebellion against the state” (baghi) through his alleged membership in the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI).

The experts have expressed concerns about reports that Ghorbani was forced to confess under torture, was denied access to a lawyer at the time of investigation, and that his lawyer was not given full access to his case file during the trial.



“We are seriously concerned that Mr Ghorbani’s eventual confession was forced as a result of torture and ill-treatment”, the experts said.

The experts also called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to commute all death sentences in the country.

### Background

In October 2016, Iranian security forces arrested Heidar Ghorbani, a resident of Kamyaran. They interrogated and tortured him for several months in the detention centre of the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj to obtain forced confessions.

In March 2018, Iranian state-

owned Press TV published the forced confessions.

On 7 October 2019, Branch 1 of the Criminal Court of Sanandaj sentenced Ghorbani to 90 years in prison and 200 lashes.

In February 2020, Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj sentenced Ghorbani to death on charges of “armed rebellion against the state” (baghi) through “membership in the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI)”.

On 5 August 2020, Branch 27 of the Supreme Court upheld the ruling and rejected the prisoner’s appeal for a retrial.

Ghorbani’s lawyer, Mr Nikbakht, has denied the accu-

sations against his client and said: “The Islamic Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj has sentenced Heydar Ghorbani to death on charges of armed rebellion against the state”, said Mr Nikbakht, adding that “The condition for committing the crime of armed rebellion against the state (baghi) is membership in an armed group and the use of weapons against the Islamic Republic [of Iran]. My client has not made any confession in this regard, even in the difficult and painful circumstances he has experienced, and the only evidence to prove this accusation is the claims of the offices of the intelligence ministry in Sanandaj and Kamyaran.”

## Un enfant a été tué par un véhicule blindé de l'armée turque à Sirnak

**V**endredi soir, un enfant est mort dans un accident impliquant un véhicule blindé appartenant aux forces de sécurité turques. Mihraç Miroğlu, âgé de sept ans, a été percuté par un véhicule blindé dans le quartier de Turgut-Özal, dans le district d'Idil de la province de Sirnak alors qu'il descendait la rue à

vélo. Il a succombé à ses blessures à l'hôpital.

L'enfant a été enterré après une autopsie. Des centaines de personnes ont assisté aux funérailles au cimetière de Şex Hesani, dont les dirigeants du HDP.

1 900 euros pour une vie humaine

Les véhicules blindés de l'armée et de la police circulent généralement à toute vitesse dans les zones résidentielles et les agglomérations kurdes, provoquant souvent des meurtres par négligence ou intentionnels de passants, y compris d'enfants qui jouent. La plupart de ces meurtres restent impunis. Le sous-officier,

qui a délibérément renversé Pakize Hazar, 85 ans, à Lice, dans la province d'Amed, le 14 juin 2017, a été initialement condamné à une peine d'emprisonnement pour « homicide par négligence grave », mais cette peine a été convertie en une amende d'environ 1 900 euros.



06 Septembre 2021

## Iran : Plus de 406.900 décès dus au coronavirus - NCR Iran

**L**a faculté de médecine Beheshti : en raison du manque de contrôle et de la forte circulation du Covid-19 dans le pays, l'entrée des variantes « Lambda » et « Mu » est possible. (Agence Mehr, 5 septembre 2021)

· La Maison des Infirmières : Dans notre pays, la vie humaine ne vaut rien. 100 à 150 infirmières quittent le pays chaque mois faute de soutien. (Quotidien Jahan Sanat, 5 septembre 2021)

· Le directeur général des ci-

metières de la ville de Tabriz : Le nombre de décès dus au coronavirus à Tabriz a quadruplé pour atteindre 30 personnes par jour. Il est difficile de fournir des services à la banlieue de Tabriz en raison du grand nombre de défunts. (Agence de la radiotélévision officielle, 5 septembre 2021)

· La faculté de médecine de Kermanschah : hier soir 333 patients ont été admis et le nombre d'hospitalisations a atteint les 1567. (Agence Isna, 5 septembre 2021)

· La faculté de médecine d'Isfahan : à l'exception de Kachan et Aran-e-Bidgol, il y a 3481 malades du coronavirus hospitalisés, dont 499 en soins intensifs et 50 patients sont décédés ces dernières 24 heures. (Agence Mehr, 5 septembre 2021)

L'Organisation des Moudjahidine du peuple d'Iran (OMPI/MEK) a annoncé ce 5 septembre 2021 que le nombre de décès dus au coronavirus dans 547 villes iraniennes est supérieur à 406.900.

Le bilan des morts dans les provinces est le suivant : Téhéran 95.546, Khorasan-Razavi 31.185, Isfahan 26.810, Khouzistan 25.031, Mazandaran 15.710, Fars 14.564, Azerbaïdjan oriental 14.543, Azerbaïdjan occidental 14.328, Guilan 14.070, Alborz 11.858, Qom 11.260, Kerman 10.547, Golestan 9570, Hamedan 7838, Markazi 7633, Kermanschah 7108, Hormozgan 7045, Yazd 6978, Kurdistan 6367, Ardebil 5090, Qazvine 4469, Zandjan 4055 et Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari 3150.



## Who will protect Kurdish children from armored vehicles?

**L**et's give the world to the children just for one day

*like a balloon in bright and striking colours to play with let them play singing among the stars*

*let's give the world to the children*

*like a huge apple like a warm loaf of bread*

*at least for one day let them have enough*

*let's give the world to the children*

*at least for one day let the world learn friendship*

*children will get the world from our hands*

*they'll plant immortal trees..."*

- Nazım Hikmet Ran

On June 7, 2016, 6-year-old Bünyamin Bayram was hit by an armored vehicle and lost his life in Cizre district in Şırnak.

On July 24, 2016, 4-year-old Taha Kılıç, who was run over by an armored vehicle in front of the İpekyolu District Security Directorate in central Van province, lost his life.

In Şırnak's Cizre, an armored police vehicle hit 5-year-old Hakan Sarak. The police fled the scene and Sarak died of blood loss.

On February 9, 2017, 7-year-old Berfin Dilek lost her life after being hit by an armored police vehicle in Mardin's Dargeçit.

On August 2, 2018, 7-year-old

Raşid Oso from Syria was hit by an armored vehicle and lost his life in İstanbul's Okmeydanı.

On September 13, 2019, 6-year-old Efe Tektekin, who was run over by an armored vehicle that was underway on Emek Street, lost his life in central Bağlar district in Diyarbakır province.

On October 19, 2017, 6-year-old Felek Baturlost his life after being hit by an armored vehicle in Siirt's Çal Neighborhood.

According to the June 2019 report of the Human Rights Association (İHD) Diyarbakır Branch, at least 63 armored vehicle crashes took place between the years of 2009 and 2019.

In writing this article, I have only cited the names of the children whose passing was documented in that report. Last Friday (September 3), another name, that of Mihraç Miroğlu, was added to the list.

Mihraç lived in Şırnak. While he was riding his bike on the street where he lived, he was hit by an armored vehicle and lost his life.

If you are to ask about the legal proceedings about these deaths, let me summarize them in one word: Impunity...

Let me give you a concrete example...



Photo: Mezopotamya Agency (MA)

In 2017, again in Silopi in Turkey's Kurdish-majority Şırnak province for some reason, an armored vehicle hit a house and caused the death of 7-year-old Muhammed Yıldırım and 6-year-old Furkan Yıldırım.

In the trial over the death of the children, armored vehicle's driver and police officer Ö.Y. and his superior M.M. had their 8th and final hearing at the Cizre 2nd Heavy Penal Court on May 2, 2019.

At the hearing, the lawyers of the Yıldırım Family were lashing out... At the justice that was not served and at the report that concluded that the police officers had been "partly negligent at the lower limit"...

Striking remarks were made by defendant police officer Ö.Y. at the hearing. Ö.Y. said that he was back on his duty and requested that his supervised release be lifted. The court accepted his request and lifted

his obligation to give a signature as part of judicial control measures.

Yes, the officers who were put on trial for causing the death of Muhammed and Furkan are free today, just as they were yesterday..

There is still no clear information about the officers who were driving the armored vehicle that caused the death of Mihraç.

We will wait and see, we will follow it up.

Otherwise, we will be unable to do anything more than what Nazım Hikmet once wrote in one of his poems:

"let's give the world to the children at least for one day let the world learn friendship children will get the world from our hands they'll plant immortal trees..."



07 septembre, 2021  
Par Léia Santacroce

## "9 jours à Raqqa" au cinéma : maire kurde de la ville, "Leïla Mustapha est une étoile dans la longue nuit syrienne"

**A** lors que s'ouvre ce mercredi, à Paris, le procès des attentats du 13 novembre 2015, commandités à l'époque depuis la cité syrienne de Raqqa, ancienne capitale autoproclamée de l'Etat islamique, un documentaire sort en salle sur Leïla Mustapha, épatante présidente kurde du Conseil civil qui se démène pour rebâtir sa ville.

Avant de se rendre au nord de la Syrie, elle avait prévenu son éditeur : pas dit qu'elle reviendrait de Raqqa avec de quoi nourrir un livre. Après neuf jours sur place auprès de Leïla Mustapha, co-présidente du Conseil civil de la ville, la journaliste et écrivaine Marine de Tilly a rapporté un portrait paru chez Stock (La femme, la vie, la liberté), et un documentaire, 9 jours à Raqqa, en salle ce 8 septembre, qui faisait partie de la sélection Cannes 2020.

"Le film est le journal de bord de ces neuf jours passés sur le terrain pour l'écriture du livre", détaille Xavier de Lauzanne, le réalisateur. C'est lui qui, par l'intermédiaire d'un ami commun, s'est greffé à l'aventure avec caméra et preneuse de son pour y tourner le premier volet d'une trilogie consacrée à la vie après Daech.

C'était en février 2019, un peu plus d'un an après la libération de l'ancienne capitale autoproclamée de l'Etat islamique par les Forces démocratiques syriennes, coalition arabo-kurde à domination kurde.

Kurde, syrienne, musulmane, trentenaire, ingénieure et non-voilée, Leïla Mustapha est co-maire de la ville depuis 2017 (elle partage le poste avec un homme arabe, conformément aux règles des conseils civils de la région du Nord et de l'Est de la Syrie). Elle se démène pour reconstruire sa ville, celle d'où les attentats du 13 novembre 2015 avaient été commandités. Un défi titanesque qu'elle relève avec un calme et une détermination qui appellent le respect, et qui ont immédiatement convaincu le trompettiste franco-libanais Ibrahim Maalouf de composer la musique du film pour ses "frères syriens et ses sœurs syriennes".

Rencontre avec les auteurs de ce portrait lumineux.

GEO : Comment présenteriez-vous Leïla Mustapha ?

Marine de Tilly : C'est une sorte de gifle émancipatrice au visage du Moyen Orient. C'est une femme courageuse pleine



Leïla Mustapha n'avait que 29 ans, en 2017, quand elle a pris la présidence du Conseil civil de Raqqa. © Jean-Matthieu Gauthier

d'espoir et de volonté, qui est en train de faire de Raqqa - où, il y a trois ans, on était au Moyen Age islamiste - un laboratoire de démocratie inédit non seulement en Syrie, mais partout au Moyen Orient. La première image qui me vient quand je pense à elle, c'est une sorte de lumière, d'étoile, dans la longue nuit syrienne.

Pourquoi neuf jours ?

Xavier de Lauzanne : Parce que c'est à la fois beaucoup et pas beaucoup. Il fallait rester suffisamment pour que Marine (de Tilly) puisse récolter les infos nécessaires pour son livre, et il ne fallait pas rester

d'avantage pour des questions de sécurité. Au bout de neuf jours, on était déjà largement identifiés dans la zone. C'était un peu plus d'un an après la libération, la ville n'était pas encore complètement sécurisée, donc il ne fallait pas s'éterniser.

Marine de Tilly : Neuf jours, là-bas, c'est déjà beaucoup. Enfin, très peu pour faire ce qu'on avait à faire, mais d'ordinaire, on y reste beaucoup moins. On avait dans l'idée d'y retourner, mais on n'a pas pu à cause des offensives turques au nord du pays. Donc a dû faire le livre et le film avec nos neuf jours dans notre escarcelle.



07 Septembre 2021  
Par Damien Boone

## Sortie ciné: « 9 jours à Raqqa »\*, portrait d'une maire courage

Gros plan sur Leïla Mustapha, la maire (kurde) de Raqqa, après la défaite de Daech. Un documentaire doté de trop rares moments marquants.

En salles ce mercredi.

**M**arine de Tilly, journaliste et écrivaine, a neuf jours, pas un de plus, pour faire le portrait de Leïla Mustapha, devenue à 30 ans la maire (kurde) de Raqqa après la défaite de Daech. Le documentariste Xavier de Lauzanne l'accompagne dans cette tentative urgente et périlleuse.

Quoi de plus respectable que de vouloir mettre en lumière une femme courageuse, de se pencher sur une ville meurtrie ? 9 Jours à Raqqa nous perd hélas dans le traitement qu'il

fait de son sujet, sans doute en voulant trop bien faire. Images d'archives des révolutions arabes et de la guerre en Syrie (sans qu'on sache précisément, parfois, ce qu'on regarde), parole souvent convenue de l'interviewée (et on peut comprendre sa prudence), images esthétisantes des ruines sur fond de trompette d'Ibrahim Maalouf... Les moments marquants sont trop rares : l'interview de la jeune femme, malade et fatiguée, qui baisse enfin la garde, le dîner chez ses parents. On a l'impression, et le regret, de pas-



Leïla Mustapha est devenue à 30 ans la maire de Raqqa après la défaite de Daech. Photo Jean-Matthieu Gautier

ser à côté de Leïla Mustapha et de la réalité de Raqqa. Neuf jours n'étaient peut-être pas suffisants.



07 septembre 2021

## Le régime iranien tue un kolbar

**L**es forces armées du régime iranien ont tué lundi un Kolbar dans la zone frontalière de Hecî Ofran entre le Sud-Kurdistan (Irak) et l'est-Kurdistan (Iran)

Selon Kolbernews, Mihemed Xalid Ebdullahzadeh, père de deux enfants qui travaillait comme kolbar, a été pris pour cible par les forces du régime iranien sur les hauteurs d'Hecî



Ofran et a perdu la vie dans la région kurde de Piranşar dans l'est du Kurdistan.

L'Association des droits de l'Homme du Kurdistan (KMMK) a récemment publié son rapport sur les violations des droits dans les régions kurdes d'Irak pour le mois d'août. Au moins 5 kolbars ont été tués et 36 blessés en août.



# En Syrie, le retour à très haut risque des réfugiés

Détentions arbitraires, torture, viols, disparitions...

L'ONG Amnesty International dénonce dans un rapport les persécutions dont sont victimes les exilés qui reviennent dans le pays.

**A** l'été 2019, la Syrie ne vivait plus au rythme soutenu des combats, après la reconquête des deux tiers du pays par le régime de Bachar Al-Assad. Au Liban, la vie était déjà misérable et le climat délétère pour les réfugiés syriens. Alors, Noor (le prénom a été changé) a décidé de rentrer dans son pays avec son fils et sa fille, sans penser qu'elle s'exposerait de nouveau aux horreurs de la guerre. A son arrivée au poste-frontière d'Al-Baqia-Tall Kalakh, au nord du Liban, l'officier syrien lui assène pourtant : « Pourquoi as-tu quitté la Syrie ? Parce que tu n'aimes pas Bachar Al-Assad et que tu n'aimes pas la Syrie ? Tu es une terroriste... La Syrie n'est pas un hôtel que tu quittes et réintègres quand tu le désires. » Après l'avoir accusée d'envoyer des armes en Syrie et de se prostituer, il l'a violée, ainsi que sa fille de 5 ans, puis les a prises en photo, nues.

La guerre, la violence et la répression du régime Assad ont déplacé 13,3 millions de Syriens depuis 2011, dont 6,6 millions ont trouvé refuge dans les pays limitrophes, et certains en Europe. Elles ont rattrapé ceux qui, de gré ou de force, ont pris le chemin du retour. Détentions arbitraires, torture, viols et violences sexuelles, disparitions forcées : dans un rapport publié mardi 7 septembre, l'organisation Amnesty International a documenté 66 cas de violations graves des droits de l'homme commises par les autorités syriennes entre mi-2017 et le printemps 2021, à l'encontre de réfugiés revenus dans leur pays, dont 13 enfants et 15 femmes, comme Noor et sa fille.

« Les cas concernent des zones géographiques différentes et s'inscrivent dans une tendance d'abus observés depuis le début du conflit en Syrie. On en conclut qu'il y a un risque réel de persécution des réfugiés qui rentrent en Syrie, lié à la perception de ce groupe par les autorités. Ce risque est le critère qui qualifie les réfugiés à la protection dans le cadre de la convention de Genève de 1951, au titre de l'obligation internationale de non-refoulement », commente Marie Forestier, coordinatrice du rapport. Ce constat corrobore les alertes répétées d'organisations syriennes sur la poursuite de violations flagrantes des droits humains par les autorités. Selon le Centre de documentation des violations en Syrie, en 2020 et 2021, 82 013 civils ont été détenus, 3 363 enlevés et 3 585 ont disparu.

« **Ne rentrez pas** »

L'enquête menée par Amnesty International révèle que les autorités de Damas nourrissent une suspicion, voire un désir de vengeance, envers ceux qui ont quitté le pays, vus comme des « terroristes », au même titre que les membres de l'opposition. La torture et les mauvais traitements – dont le viol et les violences sexuelles documentés dans 14 de punir. Les détentions arbitraires ont lieu dans la foulée du retour ou sur convocation, jusqu'à dix mois plus tard. Plus de 25 personnes ont ainsi été arrêtées pour « terrorisme », soit parce qu'elles étaient originaires de zones sous contrôle de l'opposition, soit parce que leurs proches étaient suspectés. Certaines ont été détenues plusieurs mois hors de toute procédure légale. Dix-

sept personnes ne sont pas réapparues depuis leur disparition forcée.

« Dites aux gens de ne pas revenir en Syrie. Ne rentrez pas. Je suis rentrée et je le regrette. La réconciliation est un énorme mensonge », témoigne Aya (le prénom a été modifié), qui a été violée à son retour de Turquie, en 2017, et n'a plus revu son fils depuis, victime de disparition forcée. La peur d'une nouvelle détention a entraîné l'exil de nouveau de 23 des 66 cas étudiés. En mars, le Haut-Commissariat aux réfugiés (HCR) des Nations unies a lui-même estimé que « les conditions restent peu propices pour organiser de larges opérations de rapatriement sécurisées, dignes et durables ». Alors que 280 000 Syriens sont officiellement rentrés entre 2016 et mai 2021, selon les estimations de l'ONU, l'enquête du HCR a révélé que seuls 2,4 % des réfugiés ont l'intention de rentrer dans l'année à venir, bien que 70 % d'entre eux espèrent le faire un jour.

Ce constat va à l'encontre des gages que dit vouloir donner le régime syrien – et son allié russe – pour permettre le retour des réfugiés. Ce discours, destiné à normaliser sa reconquête du pays et à obtenir le soutien des bailleurs de fonds internationaux pour la reconstruction, trouve un écho dans certains pays. Le Liban, où vivent 1,5 million de réfugiés syriens dans une grande pauvreté et sans accès aux services de base, a ainsi renvoyé plus de 6 000 Syriens entrés illégalement dans le pays, entre avril 2019 et fin 2020. Et, même dans le cadre des procédures de retour organisées depuis le Liban, ou depuis

le camp de Rukban, à la frontière jordanienne, certains ont été détenus au retour, après avoir pourtant fait l'objet de contrôles de sécurité en amont par les autorités syriennes.

## Durcissement en Europe

Malgré cette situation, au sein de l'Union européenne (UE), Copenhague et Stockholm ont commencé à revoir le régime de protection accordé aux réfugiés syriens. Le Danemark, qui accueille 20 000 réfugiés syriens, est devenu le premier pays membre de l'UE à restreindre ainsi l'accès au permis de résidence des demandeurs d'asile venant de régions considérées comme sécurisées, comme Damas et sa région. Entre janvier et juin, 402 permis de résidence ont été retirés ou non renouvelés. La commission d'appel pour les réfugiés a confirmé, à ce stade, la position de retour pour 48 d'entre eux.

Amnesty International observe aussi un durcissement des conditions d'accès au statut de réfugié dans d'autres pays membres de l'UE, dont la France. « Les dirigeants européens considèrent que, les hostilités allant en se réduisant, la guerre est finie. Mais les opérations militaires ne sont pas le seul risque encouru par les Syriens, souligne Marie Forestier. Le gouvernement, qui est responsable d'un grand nombre de violations des droits de l'homme et de crimes de guerre depuis le début du conflit, est toujours en place. Le respect des droits de l'homme doit être un critère considéré par les gouvernements européens pour accorder ou maintenir le statut de réfugié aux gens qui ont fui. »



## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief September 7, 2021

### Iran

The Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Ground Forces (IRGCGF), Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour, warned Iraqi Kurds to stay away from the bases and offices of Iranian Kurdish opposition parties. Pakpour also claimed previous Iranian warnings to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) regarding the activities of opposition groups on Iraqi soil had gone "unheeded." Many Kurds are interpreting Pakpour's recent statements as an indication Iran plans to carry out further operations on Iraqi territory. In 2018, the Iranian regime launched a ballistic missile strike on the headquarters of two Kurdish opposition parties in Koya that killed at least 18 and wounded more than 50.

Iranian security forces showcased the regime's commitment to extinguishing Kurdish political rights by arresting Mohammed Rasaie in Marivan, Jabar Pishahang in Oshnavieh (Shinno), and five members of a family in Nagadeh. The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights claimed Iranian authorities shot and wounded two members of the family detained during the Nagadeh raid, Assad Ramin and Dawood Rahimi. At the same time, a criminal court in Bokeran affirmed a Kurdish activist named Jalal Wafaie's five-month prison sentence.

Iranian border guards shot and killed a Kurdish border porter (kolbar) named Mohammad Abdulhazada between Haji Omeran and Piranshahr on Sunday. Iranian authorities also wounded two kolbars near Baneh on Saturday. Four additional kolbars were injured on Saturday when their vehicle flipped over near Salasi Bawajani.

### Iraq

ISIS (Da'esh) intensified the tempo of their attacks in the "Disputed Territories" last week. On Saturday, Da'esh terrorists sprung a complex

ambush near Rashad, south of Kirkuk, that killed 13 Iraqi police officers, wounded at least five, and destroyed three police vehicles. A second Da'esh attack on an army checkpoint southeast of Mosul killed three Iraqi soldiers and wounded one on Sunday. Concurrently, Da'esh operatives kidnapped a resident of Kirkuk Governorate's Sha'al village on Wednesday. In response to Da'esh's recent mini-offensive, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Khadimi chaired an "urgent" National Security Council meeting and was quoted as saying, "Sometimes mismanagement and negligence of military leaders results in some security breaches."

On Sunday, the Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) announced the arrest of a five-man Da'esh cell in Erbil. According to the KRSC statement and the terrorists' confession, the cell, which included two members under the age of 18, was organized by Da'esh's intelligence organization (Emni) and planned to smuggle IEDs into Erbil for use against foreigners and crowded venues like markets.

The mayor of Duhok Governorate's Amedi District, Warshen Salam, informed Rudaw that Turkish artillery fire wounded two off-duty Peshmerga members, Haji Abdullah and Sabir Abdullah, while they were fishing near Shiladeze on Thursday. Meanwhile, a Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) media outlet released footage of Turkish attacks on caves and claimed the Turks were using chemical weapons. Furthermore, a Turkish drone strike on the Makhmour refugee camp caused material damage. Turkey's ongoing invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan has killed dozens of civilians, displaced thousands, and increasingly looks like it will result in a permanent Turkish military presence in Iraq.

Several lawmakers from Turkey's

main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), visited Iraq's Kurdish region and met with senior KRG officials and representatives from Kurdish political parties, including former President of Kurdistan Region and current leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Masoud Barzani. A KRG statement claimed the two sides discussed ways to strengthen relations between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey, while the CHP said the visit was intended to bolster its Middle East Peace and Cooperation Organization's (OBİT) efforts to establish channels of dialogue with Turkey's neighbors and achieve peace in the Middle East. At the same time, the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan, Abdul Mu'neim al-Odat, traveled to Erbil and met with several Kurdish officials. Lastly, the European Union's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, intends to visit Iraqi Kurdistan this week.

### Syria

Turkey and its Islamist proxies launched a barrage of attacks on Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-controlled territories near Ain Essa, Manbij, Giri Spi, and Zargan that injured at least one civilian. An IED explosion in Afrin killed another civilian and wounded several more. Moreover, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported Turkish proxies in occupied Afrin are still looting Kurdish-owned homes and arbitrarily arresting civilians. Turkey and its proxies also remain committed to changing the demography of the area and are building new settlements on lands previously owned by displaced Kurds.

A Da'esh IED killed a 14-year-old boy and injured two of his siblings on a farm in Deir Ez Zor Governorate's al Azba town. Da'esh operatives on motorcycles then killed an SDF member in Darnaj on Monday. That said, Kurdish security

forces (Asayesh) captured a Da'esh terrorist east of Deir Ez Zor during a joint operation with the US-led coalition.

Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) Co-chair Ilham Ahmed gave an interview to al Sharq al Awsat and called for Syrian opposition parties to "engage in efforts to unify the ranks of the political opposition and form a political opposition body that represents everyone." Ahmed went on to say, "The US presence in Syria guarantees a political solution."

### Turkey

A Turkish armored vehicle struck and killed a 7-year-old Kurdish boy named Mihrac Miroglu in Adil city on Saturday. A similar incident in 2017 killed an 85-year-old woman in Lice, but a Turkish court forgave the offender when he agreed to pay a fine of 2,255 USD.

The Constitutional Court of Turkey approved the People's Democratic Party's (HDP) request for an additional 30 days to prepare its defense against the Turkish government's closure case that was originally scheduled for September 7. The HDP is facing an 843-page indictment filed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), that would implement a ban on 451 politicians and freeze the party's assets.

Turkish police broke up several organizations' attempt to hold a "peace rally" commemorating World Peace Day in Istanbul by arresting more than 30 people, including senior HDP members. Turkish police also arrested a Kurdish musician named Neset Güçmen in Diyarbakir (Amed). Lastly, a prosecutor in Amed demanded a 30-year prison sentence for former HDP lawmaker Çağlar Demirel. Demirel has remained imprisoned since receiving a 90-month sentence for "membership of a terrorist organization" in December 2016.

## Webinar: What role does the United States and its allies have in addressing medical and mental health support for the Kurdish and survivor communities after the end of the combat mission in Kurdistan and Iraq?

**O**n July 26, U.S. President Joe Biden announced that American troops would end their combat mission in Iraq by the end of 2021. The announcement left more questions than answers with many in fear about the political stability and the future of economic and infrastructure development in the region.

The Kurdish people have en-

dured decades of genocide, rape, torture, forced religious conversion, and loss of loved ones to the Ba'ath Regime, ISIS, and multiple other terrorists. This panel will take a narrow look at how the United States and its allies can work with local governments to create programs that will provide necessary health, trauma, and mental care support for Kurdish people as they start to

navigate post-conflict settings as a means of preventing future conflict in the region.

The psychotherapy and health programs at Jiyon Foundation for Human Rights address the root of post-conflict trauma and provide a roadmap to stability among various communities in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq, and Syria. Today Jiyon supports 9 treatment centers, a clinic for

Yazidi women and families, a Healing Garden and mobile teams helping survivors in 11 refugee and IDP camps and nine regions throughout Kurdistan, Iraq, & Syria. Since 2005 these programs have supported over 100,000 survivors of trauma, terror, domestic violence and human rights violations in the region."



07 septembre, 2021

## « La Turquie a brûlé 35 % des forêts du Kurdistan irakien »

**S**arwar Qaradaxi, membre de l'organisation Kurdistan Nature, a annoncé que la Turquie a brûlé plus de 626000 hectares de terres forestières au Sud-Kurdistan, ce qui représente 35% des forêts.

L'État turc cible intentionnellement la nature du Kurdistan lors de ses attaques d'occupation au Kurdistan. Ces attaques, qui se poursuivent depuis plusieurs années, ont dévasté une vaste région. Sous couvert de lutte contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), l'État turc bombarde toutes les montagnes, plaines et vallées du Sud-Kurdistan (Nord de l'Irak).

Soulignant la dévastation des terres boisées à la suite des attaques de la Turquie contre le Sud-Kurdistan, Sarwar Qaradaxi a déclaré : «

Selon de nombreux rapports, l'État turc a eu recours aux armes chimiques 11 fois jusqu'à présent. Ces armes utilisées contre les forces de la guérilla portent aussi gravement atteinte à la nature du Kurdistan. »

S'adressant à l'agence de presse Hawarnews (ANHA), Sarwar Qaradaxi a rappelé que les avions de chasse de l'État turc ont bombardé le Sud-Kurdistan 698 fois entre 2015 et fin 2019 et a ajouté : « Pendant cette période, ils ont également à 555 reprises mené des attaques avec des obus d'artillerie. Rien qu'en 2020, ils ont bombardé le Sud-Kurdistan à 300 reprises. »

Exprimant que les bombardements ont sérieusement dévasté la nature du Kurdistan, Sarwar Qaradaxi a poursuivi : « Toutes les créatures de la nature ont été affectées par ces

attaques, qui ont également forcé de nombreuses personnes à immigrer. L'agriculture, un moyen de subsistance fondamental dans la région, a subi des dommages à grande échelle lors de ces attaques. »

Rappelant le récent bombardement de la Turquie contre la région de Pencwin, Sarwar Qaradaxi a déclaré : « En raison des incendies déclenchés par les bombardements, une grande partie des champs agricoles ont brûlé. A la suite des bombardements les produits récoltés pendant un an, seul moyen de subsistance de la population, ont brûlés. Ils ont tous été réduits en cendres par l'État turc ». Sarwar Qaradaxi a informé que le Sud-Kurdistan abritait 12100 hectares de forêts post-plantation et

plus de 1017000 hectares de terres forestières naturelles. Il a noté qu'en raison des attaques de l'État turc, 626000 hectares de forêts ont été brûlés au cours des dix dernières années, ce qui représente 35% de toutes les forêts du Sud-Kurdistan. Il a condamné le silence du gouvernement et du parlement régionale du Sud-Kurdistan (KRG) face à ces attaques, et a également ajouté : « L'État irakien, usant de ses droits de souveraineté, peut demander à l'État turc de rendre des comptes. Cependant, le gouvernement irakien reste malheureusement silencieux face à ces attaques. C'est une honte ». S'adressant aux organisations de protection de la nature des quatre régions du Kurdistan, Sarwar Qaradaxi les a appelées à élever leur voix contre les attaques de la Turquie.





08 septembre 2021

Par Damien Boone

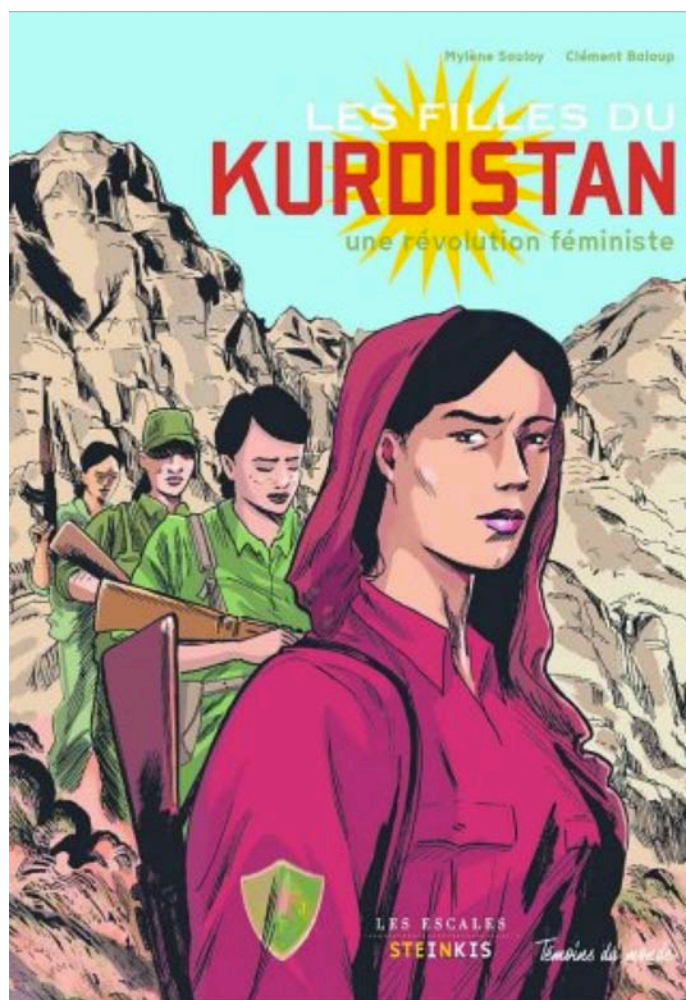
## Les Filles du Kurdistan Par Mylène Sauloy & Clément Baloup Steinkis/Les Escales

**D**ans les montagnes du Kurdistan, un grand territoire situé à cheval sur quatre pays (l'Irak, l'Iran, la Turquie et la Syrie), des femmes armées de kalachnikov résistent à Daech.

Ces femmes Kurdes, installées dans la région du Rojava, appartiennent aux Unités de défense féminines (YPJ pour Yekîneyên Parastina Jin en kurde). Leur combat va bien au-delà de la lutte contre le groupe terroriste auquel elles ont arraché de haute lutte quelques territoires, parmi lesquels la ville de Kobané en 2015 : elles cherchent à refonder une société sur des bases féministes, démocratiques et écologiques.

Et c'est bien sur cette dimension politique que s'appuie le récit, inspiré d'un documentaire réalisé par Mylène Sauloy sorti en 2016, *La Guerre des filles*, couronné par plusieurs prix. Proche de ces combattantes depuis le début des années 2000 après s'être intéressée aux mouvements de résistance en Amérique latine, la documentariste est ici accompagnée à l'illustration, en noir et blanc, par Clément Baloup, croisé par exemple sur *Les Engagés de Nouvelle-Calédonie*.

Le récit s'organise autour des destins d'abord parallèles puis croisés de trois filles, de Paris à Kobané, en Syrie, du Kurdistan de Turquie au Sinjar en Irak. S'activent sur des terres aux paysages parfois désolés que l'on pourrait croire livrées au patriarcat une fourmilière de cen-



taines de femmes de tous âges, certaines en treillis, d'autres voilées. Elles portent des briques de terre, creusent, jardinent, bref, elles construisent un village au sein duquel les femmes occupent un rôle primordial.

L'intérêt principal de l'ouvrage est de mettre l'accent sur des femmes dont le combat remarquable, même s'il a été relayé médiatiquement, reste peu connu, ou alors traité sous un angle « glamour » qui les pré-

sente avant tout comme des créatures sexy. D'ailleurs, il est intéressant de noter que le récit met en scène, par moments, la réception de cette lutte dans la presse occidentale : les combattantes oscillent alors entre espoir de soutien et désenchantement face à l'inaction des Occidentaux. Ce dernier point est brûlant d'actualité, après le désengagement américain qui les prend en étau entre deux ennemis : Bachar et Erdogan.

Il est également étonnant de trouver chez ces femmes des pratiques et des revendications qui seraient encore qualifiées d'avant-garde dans des régions prétendument plus civilisées : ici, la parité est de mise, et les femmes, probablement parce qu'elles ont prouvé leurs aptitudes et leur bravoure au combat, font autorité et occupent des positions de pouvoir. Pour ces femmes, éprises de lectures philosophiques, la domination masculine est le terrain des autres formes de domination : elle est donc la première à questionner et à renverser, avant de s'attaquer aux autres formes d'oppression. Aussi, la question écologique, conçue comme un rapport harmonieux entre les humains et la nature, apparaît comme très progressiste.

On ne peut donc qu'être admiratif de ce combat féministe, héritier d'une longue histoire rappelée dans un dossier documentaire qui accompagne l'ouvrage. Corollairement, et c'est notre seul regret, le récit est très (presque trop) dense : dates, noms d'organisations politiques, personnages, chronologie et localisation des événements... Si l'on comprend bien le souhait de Mylène Sauloy de partager sa riche expérience, et si l'on comprend aussi que cela reflète une mosaïque éclectique et cosmopolite, il est parfois difficile de s'y retrouver, comme si le passage du documentaire vers la bande dessinée ne s'était pas délesté d'atours qui alourdisent la narration graphique.



September 8, 2021  
By Halgurd Sherwani

## ‘The job is not finished,’ Borrell says of fight against ISIS following meeting with KDP President Masoud Barzani

**T**he war against the Islamic State (ISIS) group is not over yet, the EU’s chief diplomat said after meeting with Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) President Masoud Barzani on Tuesday.

Josep Borrell also said that the European Union remains committed to its partnership with the Kurdistan Region in the fight against ISIS.

Borrell landed in Baghdad on Monday, where he met with top Iraqi officials, including Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. He then flew to the Kurdistan Region to meet senior Kurdish officials, including Masoud Barzani, the former president of the autonomous region and the current leader of the KDP.

“We remain firmly committed – the job is not finished,” Borrell tweeted on Wednesday, commending the vital contribution the Peshmerga made to the multinational coalition’s efforts to combat ISIS. Insightful discussion w/@masoud\_barzani on the role of Kurdistan region



President Masoud Barzani (right) is pictured during his meeting with Josep Borrell, EU’s top diplomat, in Erbil, Sept. 7, 2021. (Photo: EU)

in Iraq & security issues yesterday. I commend the important contribution of Kurdistan regional government in the efforts of the @coalition against Da’esh. We remain firmly committed - the job is not finished pic.twitter.com/MOchGJ-kyqg

During his meeting with

Barzani on Tuesday, Borrell praised the role played by the Kurdish leader in the nation’s struggle for freedom and expressed his appreciation for the sacrifices made by Peshmerga forces and the people of Kurdistan in the war against terrorism. He also expressed his appreciation for the region’s hosting of hundreds of thou-

sands of civilians displaced by the conflict.

The European leader met separately with Prime Minister Masrour Barzani and President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani on Tuesday in Erbil, where he later gave a tour around its historic landmark of Erbil Citadel and main bazaar.



## Les Orientales à Sara Omar pour « La laveuse de mort »

**L**e prix littéraire 2021 « Les Orientales », dont l'objet est de favoriser la connaissance et la compréhension du monde oriental, a été attribué à Lorient à l'écrivaine d'origine kurde Sara Omar pour *La laveuse de mort*, publié chez Actes Sud. Le premier roman de Sara Omar, née en 1986 et vivant au Danemark, débute au milieu des années 80 au Kurdistan, avec la naissance d'une petite fille qui n'est pas la bien-

venue aux yeux de son père. La mère craignant pour la vie de sa fille, l'enfant sera confiée à sa grand-mère.

Or, celle-ci est une laveuse de mort, ces femmes qui s'occupent des corps que personne ne veut préparer ni même inhumer, ceux des femmes assassinées pour des motifs de « déshonneur » dans une société profondément conservatrice. Autant de violences extrêmes auxquelles sera ex-

posée la fillette malgré la bienveillance de ses grands-parents.

Écrit en danois et publié en 2017 au Danemark, ce roman y a été un phénomène de librairie avec plus de 100 000 exemplaires vendus dans un pays de moins de six millions d'habitants.

La laveuse de mort a été distinguée au troisième tour de scrutin, face à l'autre finaliste,

l'Irlandais Colum McCann pour *Apeirogon*, un roman multi-primé publié chez Belfond qui traite de deux pères endeuillés, un Israélien et un Palestinien.

Le prix « Les Orientales », porté par une association culturelle qui entend vivifier les liens avec l'ailleurs de cette ville bretonne fondée par la Compagnie française des Indes orientales au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, a célébré l'an dernier son dixième anniversaire.



September 9, 2021

## The Washington Kurdish Institute condemns attacks by Iran's regime on the Kurdistan Region

**I**n recent days, commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) threatened attacks on the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The warning came from the commander of the IRGC, General Mohammad Pakpour, who vowed a "decisive and crushing" response against the Kurdish parties.

This morning, Thursday, September 9th, warplanes and suicidal drones of the Iranian regime bombarded positions of the Kurdistan Democratic

Party of Iran (KDPI) near Choman and Sadikan, sub-districts of the Erbil province in the Kurdistan Region.

The Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI) condemns Iran's aggression in the strongest terms. We call upon Iraq's Federal Government, the United Nations (UN), the United States government, and the international community to stop Iranian aggression against exiled Iranian opposition groups.

The Iranian regime's discriminatory policies against the

Kurds since its establishment in 1979 have forced the Kurdish opposition parties to take refuge in the Kurdistan Region. Under international laws and norms, Kurdish parties must be protected from repeated brutal acts of the regime. All of the Kurdish parties, including the KDPI, have called for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish issue in Iran but their demands have not been heeded and they have instead faced continued aggression by the regime.

These attacks will further undermine Iraq's sovereignty,

especially that of the Kurdistan Region, which has faced brutal assaults by the Iranian regime and its proxies in Iraq. The Iraqi government should be vocal and work earnestly to stop any further attack on the Kurdistan Region and the Iranian Kurdish parties. The UN and the United States have a moral obligation to prevent attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, especially those committed by a regime that has been a destabilizing factor in the Middle East.

# Migrants traversant la Manche : tout comprendre aux nouvelles tensions entre Paris et Londres

**P**romesse majeure du Brexit, la lutte contre l'immigration illégale n'a pas les résultats escomptés au Royaume-Uni. Londres accuse depuis longtemps Paris de ne pas beaucoup l'aider dans sa tâche, malgré des accords conclus récemment. "Nous dépendons pour beaucoup de ce que les Français font", a déclaré mercredi le Premier ministre Boris Johnson au Parlement, face à une opposition remontée.

Lundi, 785 personnes sont arrivées sur l'île en traversant la Manche depuis la France sur une embarcation de fortune. Une nouvelle rencontre a eu lieu ce mercredi entre la ministre de l'Intérieur britannique Priti Patel et son homologue français Gérald Darmanin. Sans apaiser la situation, bien au contraire.

## Que reproche Londres à Paris ?

Les conditions favorables en mer aidant, le nombre d'arrivées bat tous les records. D'après l'agence de presse PA, plus de 14 000 migrants ont débarqué sur les côtes du sud de l'Angleterre par la Manche depuis le début de l'année, soit bien plus que sur toute l'année dernière (plus de 8 000).

Au-delà des traversées que le Premier ministre Boris Johnson estime "stupides" et "dangereuses", la situation profite selon lui aux "activités de gangs cruels et criminels". Londres aimerait que la France contienne plus activement ces départs, qui entraînent parfois des drames.

Mi-août, le naufrage d'une embarcation a provoqué la mort

d'un migrant érythréen. L'an dernier, quatre membres d'une famille kurde iranienne étaient morts et leur enfant d'un an avait disparu avant d'être retrouvé, selon des médias britanniques, plusieurs mois plus tard sur les côtes norvégiennes.

Depuis 2018, onze décès sont à déplorer, indique Philippe Durtieux, préfet maritime de la Manche et de la mer du Nord.

## Que proposent les Britanniques ?

A l'issue d'une rencontre mercredi à Londres avec son homologue français Gérald Darmanin, la ministre britannique de l'Intérieur Priti Patel a indiqué vouloir obtenir des "résultats". Selon la presse britannique, elle souhaite que la police des frontières britannique (Border Force) s'entraîne à refouler les embarcations avant qu'elles n'atteignent les côtes anglaises.

The Times précise que Priti Patel a demandé que soit réécrite en ce sens l'interprétation par le Royaume-Uni du droit maritime international. Cette stratégie, qui a reçu l'assentiment du Premier ministre Boris Johnson, ne serait utilisée que dans "des circonstances très limitées" d'après le Telegraph, pour les plus gros bateaux et quand la situation est jugée sûre.

La ministre avait déjà menacé en début de semaine, selon la presse britannique, de ne pas verser plus de 60 millions d'euros promis pour financer le renforcement de la présence des forces de l'ordre françaises sur les côtes, dans un accord conclu fin juillet.



Vue aérienne de migrants tentant de traverser la Manche pour rejoindre l'Angleterre, le 11 septembre 2020 (illustration).  
afp.com/Sameer Al-DOUMY

Il y a un an, Londres songeait à envoyer les demandeurs d'asile arrivés illégalement dans des centres de tri fermés sur des îles perdues au milieu de l'Atlantique, aux confins de l'Europe, chez les Papous ou sur des navires désaffectés au large des côtes de la Grande-Bretagne. Des idées a priori abandonnées.

## Comment réagit la France ?

"La France n'acceptera aucune pratique contraire au droit de la mer, ni aucun chantage financier", a réagi ce jeudi matin sur Twitter Gérald Darmanin. "L'engagement de la Grande-Bretagne doit être tenu. Je l'ai dit clairement à mon homologue (...) L'amitié entre nos deux pays mérite mieux que des postures qui nuisent à la coopération entre nos services."

Pour Paris, les solutions présentées par Londres sont contraires au droit maritime international et entraînent des risques pour la sécurité des embarcations de fortune qui entreprennent la traversée. "En mer, la sauvegarde

de la vie humaine prime sur des considérations de nationalité, de statut et de politique migratoire", avait insisté le ministre français dans une lettre adressée lundi à Priti Patel.

Gérald Darmanin y rejetait aussi la proposition britannique de créer un "centre de commandement conjoint unique" des forces françaises et britanniques, le jugeant contraire à la souveraineté française et inutile car la coordination sur le terrain est déjà "bonne et efficace".

Il soulignait que la hausse du nombre de migrants débarqués au Royaume-Uni s'expliquait surtout par le recours des passeurs à des bateaux de plus grande capacité, "pouvant accueillir jusqu'à 65 personnes" contre une quinzaine auparavant, transportant parfois des nourrissons, personnes âgées ou handicapées.

Il relevait aussi des "nouvelles stratégies de diversion" avec des "bateaux appâts" saturant les dispositifs d'intervention.



## Kirkuk Minute September 9, 2021

### Kirkuk

ISIS (Da'esh) continued attacks in Kirkuk suburbs and across the disputed territories. On Friday, September 3rd, Da'esh terrorists attacked a federal police checkpoint, killing an officer and wounding two more in Daquq's Sobghan village. Furthermore, on late Saturday night, Da'esh terrorists launched a major attack on the federal police near Rashad sub-district, killing 13 officers by snipers, light guns, and an IED, which hit a backup convoy during the clashes. The Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Khadimi chaired an "urgent" meeting of the National Security Council. Following this meeting, the Minister of Defense, Juma Inad, visited Kirkuk to launch investigations into increased Da'esh attacks. Inad told reporters that 85% of the attacks were due to "negligence" by military personnel. Meanwhile, with US-led Coalition air support, Iraq's Counter-terrorism Units ambushed a Da'esh scout near Perdi (Alton Kopy) on Tuesday, killing several. US jets targeted the hide-outs of those who fled the Iraqi ambush. Moreover, Iraqi warplanes stuck north of the Sargaran sub-district. In the recent week, Da'esh terrorists have been clashing directly with security forces as opposed to their use of IED attacks in the past, a sign of their strong re-emergence in the area. After years of assuming responsibility in Kirkuk, the Federal Police will be replaced by Iraq's 8th army division. At the same time, the Iranian-backed militias sent three more brigades

to Kirkuk with heavy weapons. Since October 16, 2017, the Iraqi forces have struggled to fill the security vacuum left by removing the Peshmerga forces from the region.

Kirkuk's police announced the seizure of an office used in the city for illegal trade of natural resources, including oil and gas. According to a statement, the office was shut down, three suspects were taken into custody, and two tankers were confiscated. Kirkuk faces a severe gas shortage, mainly due to smuggling linked to militias and political parties.

After four years of absence, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) returned to Kirkuk and launched its parliamentary election campaign. According to the KDP candidate Shakhwan Abdullah, the party will reopen its headquarters next week. The Iraqi security forces occupied KDP's main branch in Kirkuk on October 16, 2017. Following which, the KDP boycotted the 2018 elections.

The Turkish-backed Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition held a press conference against the planned return of the Peshmerga forces to the province. Officials from both sides denounced any forms of security cooperation between the Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraq's federal forces. Recently, Baghdad and Erbil agreed to create joint Peshmerga and Iraqi military brigades and deploy them in the disputed territories where the terror group

has been actively launching attacks.

According to the Kirkuk office of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, suicide rates have increased in the province in the first half of the year, reaching 50, including 41 females and 11 males. The commission also reported 260 cases of domestic violence.

### Khanaqin

On Tuesday, September 7th, Da'esh terrorists attacked an army checkpoint in the Halwan area between Khanaqin and Jalawla (Golala). After nearly an hour of clashes and an IED explosion, which hit the support team, two soldiers were killed, and four more were injured, including a commander.

In an interview with al Iraqia channel, the Oil Minister, Ihsan Abdul Jabbar said that several French companies have expressed interest in oil investments in Khanaqin. He offered no further elaboration.

### Tuz Khurmatu

A Da'esh sniper near Yangeja, west of Tuz Khurmatu, killed one and wounded two members of the Iran-backed militias on Saturday, September 4th. On Tuesday, September 7th, Da'esh slogans and warnings to security forces and citizens were found written on 13 walls across the town, a move that shocked the security forces.

Several public figures and

community leaders are trying to convince the Kurdish parties to unite under one candidate in Tuz Khurmatu. This is to prevent a scattering of Kurdish votes across multiple candidates, which could cost the parties a parliamentary seat. Since 2003, without a cohesive backing of one candidate, the Kurds in the town have not been able to win a seat in parliament and fear the new election laws will make it harder to win with multiple candidates.

### Makhmour

On Friday, September 6, a Turkish drone strike on the Makhmour refugee camp caused material damage. The airstrike hit a playground in the early hours that caused additional damage to nearby homes. The security forces in Makhmour continue to restrict large crowds in the town fearing more casualties due to Turkish airstrikes.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

After two airstrikes on the Yazidi town last week, the Turkish Defense Ministry proclaimed "success" without publishing further operation details. Meanwhile, Pro-PKK Yazidi media outlets accused Turkey of aiding Da'esh by attacking the Sinjar Resistance Units (YPS) and allowing terrorists to take over the Shingal heights. Furthermore, as the town suffers from lack of services and security, a delegation of senior Yazidis is set to visit Baghdad and raise the issue with the fed



Washington Kurdish Institute  
Est. 1996

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dermine Iraq's sovereignty, especially that of the Kurdistan Region, which has faced brutal assaults by the Iranian regime and its proxies in Iraq. The Iraqi government should be vocal and work earnestly to stop any further attack on the Kurdistan Region and the Iranian Kurdish parties. The UN and the United States have a moral obligation to prevent attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, especially those committed by a regime that has been a destabilizing factor in the Middle East.



September 13, 2021

## Iran calls for disarmament, expulsion of opposition groups in Kurdistan Region during PM Kadhimi visit

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, told Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi that Iranian Kurdish opposition groups should be disarmed and removed from the Kurdistan Region. His comments came mere days after renewed Iranian cross-border attacks targeted these groups.

On Sunday, Shamkhani and

Kadhimi spoke in the Iranian capital Tehran during the latter's visit. Shamkhani told the Iraqi premier that these groups endanger the security of regions along the Iran-Iraq border and should, therefore, be disarmed and expelled altogether, Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported.

In the days leading up to Kadhimi's visit, Iran had threatened to launch renewed cross-

border attacks against these groups.

Last Thursday, Tehran appeared to live up to its threat when it bombarded countryside in the Balakayati and Sidakan areas of the Kurdistan Region's Erbil province with artillery. Footage obtained from Kurdistan 24 seemingly showed that small 'suicide drones' were used during those strikes.

No casualties were reported.

Several armed Iranian opposition groups have resided in the Kurdistan Region for decades.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has consistently opposed armed groups using its territory to launch attacks against any of its neighbors.

Also on Sunday, Kadhimi met with Iran's newly-elected president, Ibrahim Raisi.





13 Septembre 2021

Par Murielle Paradon et Boris Vichith

## Syrie: situation explosive dans le camp d'al-Hol

**L**e camp d'al-Hol regroupe les familles des combattants de l'État islamique emprisonnés, mais également des déplacés de guerre. Plus de 60 000 personnes, en majorité syriennes et irakiennes, y vivent dans des conditions sanitaires et sécuritaires très difficiles. Les crimes se multiplient.

De nos envoyés spéciaux au camp d'al-Hol, dans le nord-est de la Syrie,

Autorisations, fouilles au corps... Pour entrer dans le camp d'al-Hol, il faut montrer patte blanche. Et nous ne pouvons pas aller très loin, juste au marché à une centaine de mètres de là. « Après, c'est trop dangereux », affirment les gardes kurdes chargés de la sécurité. Des meurtres ont lieu tous les jours sous les tentes qui s'étendent à perte de vue. À l'intérieur de ce camp, qui abrite des familles de jihadistes et des déplacés de guerre, on peut circuler librement, mais on ne peut pas sortir.

Autour de nous, au milieu de la poussière et de la chaleur, une foule de femmes en noir se forme. Toutes portent un niqab et des gants, ne laissant apparaître que leurs yeux. Elles nous interpellent. « Les conditions de vie sont très difficiles. On est maltraité, ils nous retiennent ici avec cette chaleur, sans eau. Il y a beaucoup d'ordures, autour des tentes. On marche des kilomètres pour avoir de l'eau », lance l'une d'elle tandis qu'une autre, des sanglots dans la voix, supplie : « Par Dieu, allez voir la situation dans le camp ! La pau-

vreté, les enfants malades... Nous vendons de l'alimentation fournie par les ONG pour avoir de l'argent. On n'a pas assez à manger. Tout est cher, on en a marre ! ».

« On est tous État islamique dans ce camp ! »

Ces femmes viennent majoritairement d'Irak. Elles racontent avoir rejoint la Syrie pour fuir les milices chiites dans leur pays. Elles se seraient retrouvées, malgré elles, au milieu des combats entre les Forces démocratiques syriennes et l'État islamique, avant d'être emmenées dans ce camp. Mais au bout de quelques minutes, certaines avouent leur adhésion à l'idéologie de l'EI. « Sous les lois de l'État islamique, au moins on vivait en sécurité. Ils ne nous faisaient pas de mal. Ils suivaient les règles du Coran et de la Sunna et les lois du prophète Mohamed ! », lance une femme. Une dispute éclate. « Arrête de dire ça, sinon on ne sortira jamais d'ici ! » « Quand t'étais à Baghouz, tu disais que t'étais avec l'État islamique, maintenant tu dis le contraire ? rétorque la première femme. On est tous État islamique dans ce camp ! »

L'insécurité est totale à al-Hol

Certaines de ces femmes étaient mariées à des combattants de l'EI, tués durant l'assaut final sur Baghouz en 2019. D'autres hommes sont morts dans le camp d'al-Hol. L'insécurité y est totale.

Une jeune femme nous entraîne à l'écart de la foule : « Il



Le camp d'al-Hol, dans le nord est-du pays, est placé sous contrôle des forces kurdes. © Murielle Paradon/RFI

y a des meurtres, des assassinats plusieurs fois par jour. Je passe mes nuits sans dormir, car j'ai peur des assassinats et aussi des patrouilles, confietelle. Mon mari a été tué dans le camp. Il travaillait comme gardien au marché et il a été tué ici. » Les hommes qui acceptent un travail proposé par les forces kurdes, en charge du camp, sont souvent considérés comme des traîtres et risquent la mort, nous explique-t-on.

Des évasions pour quelques milliers de dollars

Pour les 40 000 Irakiens qui peuplent la majorité du camp d'al-Hol, des retours au pays ont commencé à être organisés, mais au compte-gouttes. Alors certains rêvent de s'évader. Pour quelques milliers de dollars, on peut payer son ticket pour la liberté. « Si j'avais de quoi payer, je paierais des milliers de dollars,

mais je ne les ai pas, affirme un vieil homme. Et vous pouvez demander à tout le monde ici, les passeurs reçoivent beaucoup d'argent des Irakiens. » Mais la liberté n'est pas garantie. « Parfois, ils réussissent à sortir des gens du camp, mais ces derniers sont arrêtés juste après et remis dans le camp et battus. »

La situation dans le camp d'al-Hol est intenable et particulièrement préoccupante pour les jeunes. « Nous avons deux fils de 12 et 14 ans. Nous sommes très inquiets pour eux car s'ils grandissent dans ce camp, ils ne pourront pas retourner en Irak », se lamente une femme. Il n'y a pas d'avenir pour eux. « Mon fils de 14 ans ne sait même pas lire ! Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait pour mériter ça ? » Il n'y a pas d'avenir dans le camp d'al-Hol. Les jeunes apparaissent désœuvrés, à la merci des éléments les plus radicaux.



September 14, 2021  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## 80 organizations, experts urge rescue of Yazidis still missing after being kidnapped by ISIS

Following Tuesday's opening of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, over 80 organizations and experts called on world leaders to ensure that missing Yazidi (Ezidi) women and children kidnapped since 2014 by ISIS in the disputed Iraqi district of Sinjar (Shingal) are located and safely reunited with their families.

The emergence of ISIS and its violent assault on Iraq's Yazidi-majority city of Sinjar in August 2014 led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of members of the religious community while committing crimes that are now widely recognized as genocide.

Seven years after ISIS abducted them from Sinjar, 2,763 Yazidi women and children are still unaccounted for and their fates remain unknown, a joint letter from the organizations read.

"Despite this significant lapse of time, no real effort has been made to locate them, and if alive, ensure that they are rescued and reunited with their families," read the letter, which called upon world leaders to work together to conduct an official investigation into the whereabouts of the missing women and children, including at the infamous al-Hol displacement camp in Syria, where many are believed to be held among the tens of thou-

sands who live there without the knowledge of the camp administration.

"The international community must make a serious, coordinated rescue effort," Pari Ibrahim, Founder and Executive Director of the Free Yazidi Foundation (FYF) and co-author of the letter, said.

"We are calling for an 'Amber Alert' for our missing Yazidis. This year, FYF's top priority, seven years since the Yazidi Genocide began, is: Bring Back Our Women & Girls." In the UK, the letter was delivered in person to Lord Alton of Liverpool, peer at the UK House of Lords, by Dr. Ewelina Ochab and Jess Templeman

from the Coalition for Genocide Response.

Lord Alton later said that he was honored to support the initiative to rescue Yazidi women and children.

"It is unacceptable that seven years after the abductions, this step has not been taken," he concluded. "These women and children deserve better. Their families deserve better. We, as the international community, must do better."

In August, on the seventh anniversary of the Yazidi genocide, Yazidi activists called on the international community to help bring missing girls taken from their community back home.



September 14, 2021  
By Layal Shakir

## Two Kurds win seats in Norwegian parliament

Two Kurds originally from Turkey and northeastern Syria (Rojava) won seats in Norway's parliamentary elections on Monday.

Seher Ayder, a member of the Red Party, and Labour Party member Mani Hussaini will both enter the Norwegian parliament, Storting.

"Thank you to everyone who voted for us, everyone who

has lined up, distributed flyers, called, texted, and talked about Red [party]," Ayder said in a Facebook post. "We have made history and this is just the beginning."

Ayder, 32, was born in Turkey and grew up in Fredrikstad, Norway. She has a background in the Women's Front, Norway's main feminist organization, and has led several projects including a 'Solidarity

with Kurdistan' campaign. She is the first deputy representative in the supreme legislature of the country.

Hussaini, 33, posted a thank you message, adding that the job begins now.

He was born in Rojava's Qamishli. His family first sought asylum in Sweden and moved to Norway in 2001. He has been the leader of the

Workers' Youth League since October 2014.

Labour leader Jonas Gahr Store is set to be the next prime minister and his party is working to form a governing coalition with other left-leaning parties.

There are an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 Kurds in Norway, most fleeing their homes because of war or political instability.

The New York Times

September 13, 2021

By David E. Sanger and William J. Broad

## Iran Nears an Atomic Milestone

Iran has come within roughly a month of having enough material to fuel a single nuclear weapon, crossing a threshold that may raise pressure on the United States and its allies to improve the terms of a potential deal to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Experts studying new data contained in reports last week by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' atomic inspection group, say that by enriching nuclear fuel in recent months to near bomb-grade levels, Tehran has gained the capability to produce the fuel needed for a single nuclear warhead within a month or so, under the most extreme timeline. Federal officials who have seen classified estimates are prevented from discussing official assessments but conceded in background conversations that they believed it would take Iran only a few months.

Manufacturing an actual warhead — one that could fit atop an Iranian missile and survive the fiery re-entry into the atmosphere, a technology the Iranians were actively studying 20 years ago — would take considerably longer. Iran continues to insist it has no desire for a nuclear arsenal.

Nonetheless, Iran has not been this close to a weapon capability since before President Obama agreed to the 2015 nuclear accord. That agreement forced the Iranians to ship more than 97 percent of their fuel out of the country, and the United States said it would take at least a year for Iran to succeed at "breakout," the term nuclear experts use to define a race to build a bomb's worth of atomic fuel.

Now, more than three years after President Donald J. Trump withdrew from the treaty, a slow and steady Iranian effort to restore the country's capabilities appears to

have succeeded.

A report issued on Monday by the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group that specializes in analyzing the findings of the United Nations agency, concludes that a race over the summer to enrich uranium at 60 percent purity — just below bomb grade — has put Iran in a position to produce the fuel for a single bomb in "as short as one month." A second weapon's worth of fuel, it says, could be produced in less than three months, and a third in less than five.

But a lead author of the report, David Albright, cautioned on Friday that Iran's actions signaled an effort by the new government of President Ebrahim Raisi to seek new terms, more favorable to Iran, in negotiations over restoring the 2015 deal that Mr. Trump rejected. There have been no formal negotiations since June, a month before Mr. Raisi, a conservative Iranian jurist, won the presidential election. American officials say they have been expecting that he will seek to start the negotiations anew, demanding far more sanctions relief for Iran.

"We have to be careful," Mr. Albright, the institute's head, said Friday at a news conference, "not to let them scare us."

Biden administration officials have not commented on the atomic agency's reports, which was distributed on a confidential basis to member nations but has been widely circulated in recent days. On Friday, asked about Iran during a trip to Germany, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken acknowledged that Iran's progress had been so rapid that restoring the old deal might soon make no sense.



American officials say they have been expecting President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran to seek to restart negotiations, demanding more relief from sanctions. Credit...Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

"I'm not going to put a date on it," he told reporters, "but we are getting closer to the point at which a strict return to compliance" with the old deal "does not reproduce the benefits that agreement achieved."

He said that "as time goes on and as Iran continues to make advances in its nuclear program, including spinning more sophisticated centrifuges, enriching more material, learning more, there is a point at which it would be very difficult to regain all of the benefits" of the restrictions Iran agreed to six years ago. "We're not at that point yet, but it's getting closer," he added.

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The next few weeks are regarded as critical. The opening of the United Nations General Assembly is traditionally a moment for backroom diplomacy, especially on Iran, and officials of the new Iranian government, including the

new foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, are expected to make debut appearances. Considered a hard-liner, the 56-year-old Mr. Amir Abdollahian has indicated a willingness to renew the agreement — but on terms that the new government can say are vastly improved.

Outside experts say that both Iran and North Korea, which fired a new cruise missile on Sunday that demonstrated an ability to avoid missile defenses, see this as a moment to test the Biden administration.

"There's an eerie similarity between what we're seeing in Iran with enrichment and in North Korea with the cruise missile test," said Rose Gottemoeller, a former arms control official in several administrations who now works at Stanford University. "They're both trying to set the negotiating table in their favor as the Biden administration finally turns to them."

On Sunday, Iranian officials reached a temporary agreement with the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael M. Grossi, to let the agency reset monitoring devices

that help measure the progress of the country's nuclear program. In recent months, agency inspectors have been blinded in their efforts to monitor some facilities, a growing source of concern to American officials, who fear that nuclear material could be diverted.

The accord heads off an immediate inspection crisis, assuming the inspectors are allowed to gain access to their cameras and other equipment and get them operating again. But it does not address the country's drive to restore its uranium production — and to enrich at levels far higher, and thus far closer to bomb-grade material, than it did before 2015.

That accord sharply limited the overall amount of uranium the Iranians could stockpile; while Tehran respected the accord for the

first year or so after Mr. Trump withdrew, eventually it said that if Washington would not abide by the agreement, it would not, either.

The agreement limited the country to fuel enriched to 3.7 percent purity, a level that can be used in nuclear power plants but not for a weapon. At first, the Iranians pushed some production to 20 percent, saying they needed fuel enriched to that level to supply a research reactor provided to Iran by the United States before the 1979 Iranian revolution, for producing medical isotopes.

But then Iran went further. In April, it started enriching its uranium stockpile to 60 percent after its main nuclear site was sabotaged — almost certainly by Israel — in

an attack that was believed to destroy some of its whirling centrifuges, which spin at supersonic speeds to enrich uranium. Another attack several months later took out parts of a centrifuge manufacturing plant.

Because of the physics of nuclear enrichment, it takes far longer to get from low-enriched uranium to 60 percent purity than it does to make the last leap to 90 percent, the level ordinarily used in nuclear weapons. That makes the 60 percent level particularly threatening.

Iran's supply of 60 percent enriched uranium is not yet sufficient for a weapon. But it has spent the summer installing newer, high-performance centrifuges that could quickly bolster its stockpile. Even then, keeping a large quan-

tity of highly enriched uranium on hand is not sufficient to produce a bomb, nuclear experts agree.

The fuel must be converted to metal — a step the Iranians are also experimenting with, the international atomic agency reports — and then into a full warhead. Those steps would take additional months and perhaps years, depending on technical skill.

Israeli officials have vowed to disrupt each step; last year, they killed Iran's top nuclear scientist in an ambush. A decade ago, the United States and Israel jointly put together a sophisticated cyberattack to disable Iran's production capability; while it was successful, the Iranians recovered.



14 Septembre 2021

## La CEDH condamne la Turquie pour la détention provisoire injustifiée d'un maire

La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme (CEDH) a condamné mardi la Turquie pour le placement en détention provisoire d'un maire kurde en raison de ses activités et déclarations, une mesure "pas nécessaire dans une société démocratique".

Les autorités turques ont reproché à Tuncer Bakirhan, maire de la ville de Siirt, agglomération d'environ 130.000 habitants située dans le sud-est du pays, d'avoir "fait de la propagande" et "d'être membre" du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Cette organisation est qualifiée de "terroriste" par Ankara. Elu en 2014

sous l'étiquette du "Parti de la paix et de la démocratie", un parti d'opposition, il a été placé en détention provisoire et relevé de ses fonctions en novembre 2016. Il a été libéré en octobre 2019, mais la cour d'assises de Siirt l'a condamné à 10 ans et 18 jours d'emprisonnement ce même mois. La procédure à son encontre est toujours en cours.

La CEDH "observe que le requérant a été privé de sa liberté pendant environ deux ans et 11 mois dont plus de deux ans et huit mois sous le régime de détention provisoire. Elle juge qu'il n'existait pas de motifs suffisants pour ordonner la privation de liberté du requé-

rant dans l'attente de son jugement". "Pour la Cour, les activités reprochées au requérant revêtent un caractère clairement politique", poursuit le bras judiciaire du Conseil de l'Europe, basé à Strasbourg. "Vu le caractère fondamental du libre jeu du débat politique dans une société démocratique, la Cour n'a décelé aucune raison impérieuse susceptible de justifier la gravité de la mesure incriminée", ajoute la CEDH. "Elle estime que le fait de priver de sa liberté le requérant, un élu du peuple, pour une telle durée en raison de ses activités politiques s'analyse en une ingérence manifestement disproportionnée aux buts légi-

times poursuivis. La privation de liberté en question n'était pas donc pas nécessaire dans une société démocratique", conclut-elle.

La Turquie est régulièrement condamnée par la CEDH, notamment pour des emprisonnements irréguliers. Estimant qu'elle a ici violé les articles 5.3 (droit à la liberté et à la sûreté) et 10 (liberté d'expression) de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, la CEDH la condamne à verser 10.000 euros au requérant pour dommage moral, et 3.000 euros pour frais et dépens.





## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief September 14, 2021

### Iran

The Iranian regime acted on its previous threats to carry out operations in Iraqi Kurdistan by dispatching warplanes, UAVs, and at least one suicide drone to attack Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) positions near Erbil Governorate's Choman and Sadikan subdistricts on Thursday and Friday. The Cooperation Center for Iranian Kurdistan's Political Parties (CCIKP) condemned the attacks, which damaged property but caused no reported casualties, and accused the Iranian regime of "running away from dozens of internal crises by creating another." The CCIKP also called for the Government of Iraq (GOI), Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), international community, and freedom seekers to "put an end to the regime's violations."

The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights reported Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps intelligence officers (Ettela'at) tortured a Kurdish activist named Yasir Mangori to death in Urmia. Moreover, Iranian security forces detained eight Kurds in Mehabad, two siblings, Bahrouz and Rasul Azizi, in Sanandaj (Sena), Kamil Salahi in Baneh, and a teenager named Mohammed Fardani in Sardasht. Lastly, Mehabad's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish man named Saed Fathi to four years and two months in prison for "membership in a Kurdish opposition party."

Iranian border guards killed a Kurdish border porter (kolbar) named Rasul Karimi and wounded three near Baneh on Saturday. Iranian border guards also wounded two shepherds in the same area on Friday. Lastly, Iranian authorities killed a kolbar named Sirwan Golzari near Marivan, and another was injured

when he fell from a cliff near Nowsud.

### Iraq

Iranian-backed militias targeted US personnel stationed at Erbil International Airport with two suicide drones late Saturday, but US defense systems shot down both drones and ensured the attack caused no casualties and minimal disruption of airport activities. The US and KRG both condemned the attacks, while several Kurdish officials also blamed a lack of cooperation between Iraqi forces and the Peshmerga in the "Disputed Territories" for creating a security environment favorable to Iranian proxies and called for the implementation of several previous agreements intended to facilitate joint operations. Saturday's attack, which was the sixth in Erbil since September 2020, coincided with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Khadimi's visit to Tehran that was intended to reduce the number of Iranian proxy operations in Iraq.

ISIS (Da'esh) again exploited the fragile security situation in the "Disputed Territories" by killing a police officer and three civilians near Makhmour on Saturday. That said, the US provided the Peshmerga and Iraqi forces with additional equipment to bolster their ability to combat terrorist organizations.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) ended its four-year absence from Kirkuk by launching a parliamentary election campaign in the governorate. KDP candidate Shakhwan Abdullah claimed the party intends to reopen its Kirkuk headquarters, which was occupied and closed by Iraqi security forces on October 16, 2017, next week. Meanwhile, Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has formed a committee to supervise the nation's parlia-

mentary elections scheduled for October 10, though lack of primary services and sectarian and ethnic tensions have led to expectations of low voter turnout.

- Turkish warplanes injured two civilians and damaged homes in Sulaymaniyah Governorate's Sangaser subdistrict last Tuesday. Ongoing Turkish operations in Iraqi Kurdistan, which Turkey has repeatedly claimed are targeting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), have killed dozens of civilians and forced the evacuation of hundreds of villages.

### Syria

The League of Arab States (LAS) held its 156th session of foreign ministers in Cairo on Thursday and released a statement that rejected Turkish aggression in Turkey and Libya and called for Turkey to stop "hosting radical groups" and withdraw its forces from Arab states. The LAS statement also denounced Iran's "continuous interference in Arab affairs" and emphasized the necessity of Iran halting its support of groups that fuel conflicts on Arab soil.

The Turkish military and its Islamist proxies shelled several villages in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-controlled territory near Ain Essa, Tal Tamer, and Manbij last week. Turkish artillery strikes also wounded two Syrian Arab Army (SAA) personnel west of Turkish-occupied Giri Sip (Tal Abyad). That said, the SDF announced it repelled Turkish-backed fighters' attempt to infiltrate several areas northwest of Manbij.

The head of the SDF's Office of Media and Information, Farhad Shami, released footage that purportedly shows several members of the Turkish-backed "Sunni Hawk" group torturing a

civilian. Simultaneously, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported Turkish proxies in Afrin arbitrarily arrested five Kurdish civilians, seized a Kurdish man's house, and imposed levies on residents in Barrad village for harvesting their crops.

### Turkey

In an op-ed published in Turkish news outlets, the jailed Kurdish politician and former head of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş called on Turkey's components to work together in the upcoming "most important" elections. "Kurds, Alevis, conservatives, socialists, Kemalists, democratic nationalists, should be able to act together over common ground," said Demirtaş, claiming that if not, then Turkey's ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) will try to make its "authoritarian regime permanent." Demirtaş's remarks come as the HDP faces closure by the government and Turkish opposition parties have yet to form any alliances for the 2023 elections.

On Thursday, the 5th High Criminal Court in Diyarbakir (Amed) held a new hearing for the jailed Kurdish politician and co-founder of the Rosa Women's Association, Ayla Akat Ata. The Turkish government has accused Ata of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" in what has become known as the "Kobani Trial." Furthermore, during a hearing against another prominent Kurdish activist, Ayşe Gökkan, the judge had lawyers removed and court police attempted to arrest several of those related to Gökkan who were in attendance. Meanwhile, the Turkish police arrested a human rights activist named Tahir Tüyben in Mersin for social media posts.



## Inspired by Turkey and US silence, Iran attacks Kurdistan

Last week, commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) threatened attacks on the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The warning came from the commander of the IRGC, General Mohammad Pakpour, who vowed a “decisive and crushing” response to the activity of the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties. The following day, the commander of the Hamzeh brigade of the IRGC, Mohammad Taghi Osanloo repeated Pakpour’s threats by warning civilians to “stay far” from the Kurdish parties’ buildings. These direct threats come a month after the Iranian regime asked Iraq to expel the Kurdish opposition groups in Iraq, which are primarily based in the town of Koya in the Kurdistan Region.

On both Thursday and Friday, Iranian jets and suicide drones attacked areas of Kurdistan Region bordering Iran, targeting positions of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), one of the larger Iranian opposition parties. The attacks did not result in any casualties, but the KDPI officials warned of potential further aggression by the Iranian regime and the possibility of ground operations, similar to those Turkey launched in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Iranian Kurds have long struggled with the brutal policies of the regime. Their political parties have been exiled for 42 years and have settled in Iraqi Kurdistan as a last option of survival. Yet, the Iranian regime has continued to target these groups inside Iraqi Kurdistan through various methods. For example, in 2018, Iranian long-range missiles hit the headquarters of the Iranian Kurdish parties, killing 18 and injuring 50, including senior opposition figures. In addition, assassinations of Kurdish opposition

leaders and figures have been a main tactic of the Iranian regime since 1979. For example, Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela’at) assassinated Abdulrahman Ghassemloo, a Kurdish leader and former Secretary of the KDPI. After being invited to Vienna under the guise of peace talks with Iranian officials, Ghassemloo was killed by the regime for his role in leading opposition to the Islamic regime establishment. Following Ghassemloo’s ambush, Iranian agents also assassinated his successor, Sadeq Sharafkandi, and two of his colleagues inside a restaurant in Berlin. The assassination culture of the regime has continued; as recently as last month, a senior KDPI official was killed inside his hotel in Erbil.

The Cooperation Center for Iranian Kurdistan’s Political Parties (CCIKP), an umbrella organization uniting the Kurdish opposition parties, replied to the Iranian threats and accused the regime of creating issues abroad to “escape” the internal crisis and mismanagement they face inside Iran. Indeed the Iranian regime uses attacks on the Kurds as a tactic to distract the public from the economic issues they created and the poverty, unemployment, and isolation, which they have precipitated. By attacking the Kurds, the Iranian regime is replicating what Turkey has successfully done. In Turkey, when faced with an economic crisis, its authoritarian president Recep Tayyip Erdogan responded by launching wars on Syrian and Turkey’s Kurds, distracting the public from the issue and boosting nationalism among Turks to fight for “Turkish national security.” Erdogan succeeded in ethnically cleansing the Kurds of Syria. Some of this success can also be attributed to wrongful US policies. However, this tactic failed to abate Turkish

economic decline and unemployment, which reappeared only a few months later. Erdogan has repeated this tactic on many occasions, but today he is running out of options and is now focusing his efforts on trying to shut down the only pro-Kurdish party in Turkey to ensure his continuation in power.

This same tactic has been utilized by the 42-year-old Iranian regime as the public has become exhausted from failed economic policies, countless human rights violations, and regional intervention and support of terror groups. In the past decade, on many occasions, millions of Iranians, including Kurds, have held massive anti-government demonstrations. However, as a result, thousands of Iranians were killed on the street by the IRGC, which has been designated as a terrorist group by the US. Inspired by Erdogan and his military invasion into the Kurdistan Region under the pretext of fighting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), the Iranian regime appears to be doing the same by using the presence of Iranian Kurdish parties as a pretext to launch war on the Kurds, therefore, distracting its public and rallying nationalist support.

Both Turkey and Iran are undermining Iraqi sovereignty and the existence of the Kurdistan Regions, and most importantly, placing the US in an even more challenging position in Iraq. Moreover, the Iranian attacks come amidst the busy month of snap parliamentary elections in Iraq in which Iran is backing many of its Iraqi proxies to take more power and further pressure the US to leave the country, like Afghanistan.

Controversial US position

Since 2003, the US has voiced concerns over and rejected Iran’s

meddling in Iraq, a reasonable approach toward a regime that destabilized Iraq and the region at large. However, when it comes to the Kurds, who have served as America’s true allies and friends, the policymakers have remained silent. For example, when Iran acted alongside the Iraqi forces in the aftermath of the independence referendum in unleashing its Iraqi proxies on the Kurds on October 16, 2017, the US sided with Baghdad and, thus, Iran as well. As a result, Kurds lost 50% of their territories, and the US lost significant leverage in the region. Today, those areas, known as the “Disputed Territories,” are lawless with strong ISIS (Da’esh) reemergence. If the US is against Iran’s intervention and aggression in Iraq, it should act without exception, like those we see for the Kurds. By remaining silent in the face of violence against the Kurds, the US is standing against its very same policy of “one Iraq” that was implemented in 2003. The US has maintained a similar policy in Turkey, either remaining silent or taking Turkey’s side on the ongoing Turkish military operation in Iraq.

The Iraqi government is vocal with statements but has done little to prevent Turkish or Iranian aggression. For example, Baghdad could rally support among the UN’s Security Council to address the breaching of its borders by both countries and, yet, the Iraqi government has not done so. In addition, the US might heed Baghdad if the latter were serious about protecting its “Iraqis” including the Kurdish people. In the face of apparent abandonment by Iraq and the US, the future of the Kurdish region remains unclear. Unless these countries act to protect the Kurdish region, the recent Iranian aggression will further undermine its stability and very existence.



September 14, 2021  
By Loyal Shakir

## Kurdish female mayor of Raqqa wins international award

The female Kurdish mayor of Raqqa, the one-time de facto capital of the so-called caliphate of the Islamic State group (ISIS), was a recipient of an international mayoral award on Tuesday.

Leila Mustafa was honored with the 2021 World Mayor Jury Award, recognized for her efforts to rebuild her war-torn city.

Originally an engineer, Mustafa became the city's mayor when she was 30, serving with an Arab co-chair, according to the World Mayor award. Her mission is to rebuild her city that witnessed horrific crimes of ISIS and was reduced to rubble in the battle to oust the terror group, while building reconciliation among the city's people and creating a civil society. ISIS seized control of large

swathes of Iraq and Syria in 2014. The last of its so-called caliphate was defeated in Syria in 2019. Raqqa served as the de facto capital of the group and was subjected to heavy aerial and ground offensives in the battle to liberate the city.

Mustafa was featured in '9 days in Raqqa,' a documentary selected for the 2020 Cannes film festival. The film chronicles efforts to rebuild the city, freed from ISIS but facing a daunting challenge of rising from the ruins.

Thousands of people have returned to Raqqa since the war ended and the population is now an estimated at least 270,000, according to Save the Children, and 36% of the city's buildings are still destroyed. World Mayor has been honouring mayors since 2004. The 2021 World Mayor Project was



Raqqa Mayor Leila Mustafa won the 2021 World Mayor Jury Award on September 14, 2021.

launched at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and focused on stronger, fairer, and greener cities. The list of nine mayors honored included municipal leaders from various cities and communities where their work and goals have been valued and praised by citizens.

The 2021 World Mayor Prize was shared by the mayors of Rotterdam, Netherlands and Grigny, France.

Rudaw English reached to Mustafa, but she was not immediately available for comment.

AL-MONITOR

September 15, 2021

## Iran's intelligence accused of killing Kurdish political activist

Yasser Mangouri's family was informed of his death more than 50 days into his summoning in the northwestern city of Piranshahr.

Human rights groups and the family of Kurdish political activist Yasser Mangouri said he has died after being summoned by members of Iran's Intelligence Ministry. Mangouri's arrest occurred on July 17, but his death was officially conveyed to his family over 50 days later.

According to the Iranian Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), the body has yet to be handed over to the family, which continues to be kept in the dark about the exact circumstances surrounding his death. Since Mangouri was summoned and held incommunicado by Iran's intelligence forces, his family had

repeatedly approached the authorities for news on his whereabouts, but to no avail.

Hengaw, another advocacy website that monitors developments in Iranian Kurdistan, quoted sources as saying that Mangouri had been "killed under torture." According to a tally recorded by

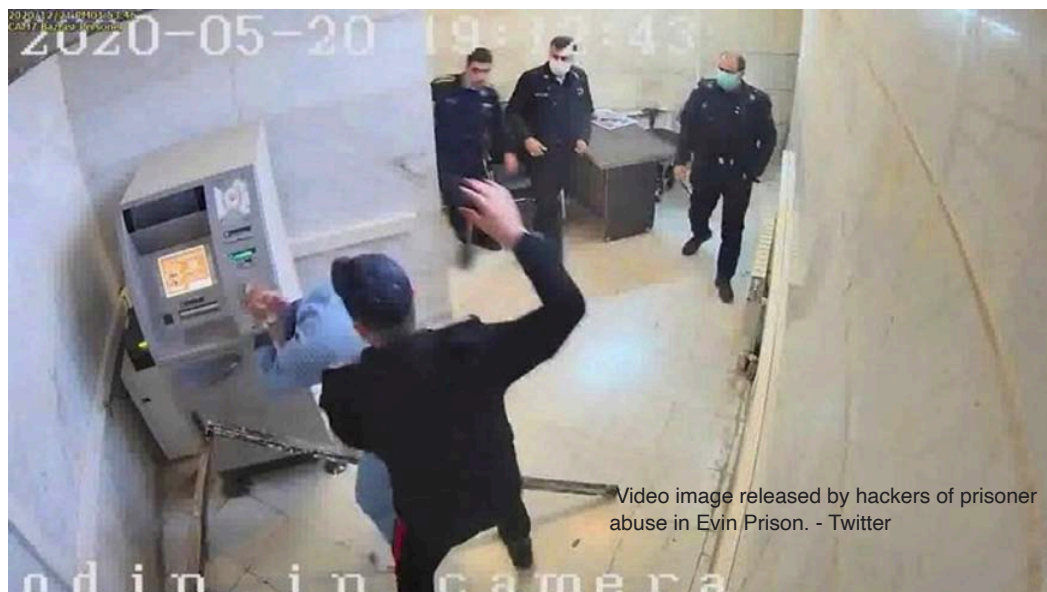
the same outlet, at least 23 Kurdish prisoners, including 15 political detainees, have been tortured to death in Iranian jails since 2017.

A welder by profession, Mangouri was the father of three and is said to have been previously investigated over his alleged



links to opposition groups. The exact nature and affiliation of those groups has not been specified, but Iran's Kurdish regions have for decades been treated with a securitized, zero-tolerance approach by the ruling Islamic Republic due to the anti-government activism by Kurdish movements and their sympathizers. Accused of pursuing separatist causes, most of those groups are currently based in northern Iraq, with many members also exiled across the Western world where they have also been subject to hunt-and-kill plots by Iran-linked agents.

Iranian authorities have in past cases promised investigations into the deaths of detainees. But rights activists argue that those pledges remain unfulfilled as they are solely meant to soothe public anger. In Mangouri's case, even an official promise remains missing and a speedy funeral is



Video image released by hackers of prisoner abuse in Evin Prison. - Twitter

expected to be held under tight security measures.

The death of 31-year-old Mangouri also followed a recent chain of serious cases of abuse, torture and deaths in Iranian prisons. Earlier this month, Hadi

Atazadeh — convicted of alcohol possession — was reported to have been lashed to death inside a prison in the northwestern city of Ahar. Iran's authorities denied the report, blaming the prisoner's death on multiple

causes, including deteriorating health. The country's judiciary is also reeling from a trail of CCTV videos leaked by a hacker group dropping the curtain on abuse against detainees in Tehran's notorious Evin prison.



September 15, 2021

## New York Kurdish Film Festival completes its fifth year with females in focus

This year's New York Kurdish Film and Cultural Festival completed its three-day program on Sunday, focusing this year on Kurdish women and their contributions to the development of feminism, human rights, literature, and an egalitarian society.

The programming predominantly features works made by Kurdish people but includes some Western perspectives on Kurdish life and struggle.

The festival was organized by its founder, New York-based educator and human rights activist Xeyal Qertel, who spoke to Kurdistan 24's Rahim Rashidi at the event.

"We are right now in New York

at a landmark theater, Angelika, to celebrate our fifth edition to introduce Kurdish culture to our American sisters and brothers and also to unite our Kurdish brothers and sisters (who) live in the diaspora," she said.

"In the meantime," she continued, "We aim to give voice to 40 million or so Kurds, who have no representations in New York or elsewhere, through our Kurdish cultural heritage; music cinema literature, and poetry."

Last month, she told Kurdistan 24 that, this year, "We are trying to show who Kurdish women are and what they are trying to do. They have con-

tributed significantly to human rights discourse, feminism, literature, and equitable and inclusive societal formation. This festival honors that."

Last year's program, with the theme of Kurdish unity, took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID-19 not only cost lives and made many sick and unemployed, but also created distance within our communities. People are striving to be able to gather again. Watching Kurdish film festivals alone at home does not really bring us together in the same way," Qertel said to Kurdistan 24 at the time.

The festival is sponsored by

Justice for Kurds, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung NY Office, NYU Kevorkian Center, the Kurdish Lobby in Australia, and also its community partners such as the Washington Kurdish Institute, Kat and Retaw Film Distributions, and the German Film Office.

"Our purpose is to give opportunity to Kurds who do not otherwise have the opportunity to claim their identity," she said at this year's event.

"We do not have a nation-state, but we still have culture, we still have music, we still have cinema to feel the unity; to unite us through universal language."





September 15, 2021  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## UN report adds to claims that Turkish-backed militias are committing war crimes in Syria

**A** new report issued on Tuesday by the United Nations' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria suggests that Turkish-backed groups in the embattled Middle Eastern nation have "committed torture, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, which constitute war crimes."

It stated that the Turkish-supported Syrian National Army (SNA) continues to unlawfully arrest Kurdish citizens in areas under their control in northern Syria such as in Tal Abyad, Afrin, and Ras al-Ain (Serekaniye).

"While detained, victims were often brought to makeshift facilities run by Syrian National Army brigades at the sub-district level," the report stated.

"The same brigades continued, as previously documented, to loot and appropriate civilian property along with detaining individuals, including agricultural land belonging to members of the Yazidi (Ezidi) minority group."

The report documents cases of women and girls being commonly detained, either at the same time as their male relatives or following the detention of their spouses who are suspected of having links to the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) or the



A Turkish-backed militia operates in the Kurdish-majority Syrian city of Afrin. (Photo: AFP)

People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara considers as the Syrian branch of the PKK, a group that has fought a decades-long insurgency against Turkey over Kurdish rights.

The UN report continued, "Female former detainees described being subjected to multiple rapes, beatings and torture by members of the Syrian National Army forces guarding them, and regularly denied food."

"Others," it added, "were threatened with rape during interrogation sessions, assaulted and harassed, including while being held in solitary confinement, which amplified fears and the intimidation."

The report detailed that, in exchanges with the commission, SNA leadership "stated that it was committed to respecting human rights in places of detention and providing fair trial guarantees," and that its military judicial system was investigating "Syrian National Army elements involved in violations, with a view to holding them accountable."

"Finally, in areas under effective Turkish control, Turkey has a responsibility to, as far as possible, ensure public order and safety, and to afford special protection to women and children," the report concluded. "Turkey remains bound by its human rights obligations vis-à-vis all individuals present in such territories."

In multiple previous UN reports on Syria, large numbers of potential war crimes and human rights violations by Turkish-backed groups have been well-documented.

Last year, for example, the commission said that Turkish-backed armed groups have subjected women, girls, men, and boys to sexual violence in Syrian areas occupied by Turkey.

In July, the US sanctioned a Turkish-backed militia in Syria called Ahrar al-Sharqiya for human rights violations against ethnic Kurds.



## Kirkuk Minute September 16, 2021

### Kirkuk

A week after a fierce attacks on federal police near Rashad sub-district, ISIS (Da'esh) launched another attack on Saturday near the same area, killing four federal police officers and wounding several more. Despite the federal government's launching of investigations and sending of military reinforcements, the security forces in Kirkuk and the disputed territories remain vulnerable to daily Da'esh attacks. Furthermore, the US-led coalition held a high-level meeting with Iraqi security officials over the security status of Kirkuk. At the same time, the head of the Iraqi National Security Agency, Abdul Ghani al Asadi, visited Kirkuk and held meetings with local and federal security leaders. In a press conference, Abdul Ghani said his visit was to stop the "negligence" of the security forces, address the recent Da'esh attacks, and develop a security plan for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

In a press conference, General Kawa Garip, the head of Kirkuk police, said that the local police would protect and transfer ballot boxes of the parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10th. General Garip also discussed the responsibilities of the security forces during elections. He said: "The security of the Kirkuk province has been divided into three axes," adding "the first and second axes have been given to local police, and the third to other

military forces." The third security axis mainly includes the Hawija district and its suburbs.

For the third time in two weeks, both the Turkish-backed Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition rejected the return of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces to Kirkuk. After two months of agreement between Baghdad and Erbil, three joint brigades of Peshmerga and federal forces were set to be formed for deployment in the disputed territories. In a press conference, both parties also called for delaying Kirkuk's parliamentary elections for a week to "ensure international and Baghdad supervision" for election transparency. The parties acknowledged the deterioration of security in the Hawija district of Kirkuk and, yet, rejected the return of the Peshmerga forces. Observers described the anti-Kurdish rhetoric as an attempt to encourage the Turkmen and Arab populations to participate in the upcoming elections as the new election laws make it more difficult for small parties to win seats. In addition, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has recorded 40 election law violations in Kirkuk, including the hanging of posters and campaign materials in prohibited areas by different candidates from various parties.

Dozens of Sar Chinar neighborhood residents held a protest against the administration's decision to demolish a park and convert it

into a strip mall. Protesters called upon Kirkuk's acting governor to reverse the decision. Since October 16, 2017, investors backed by Iranian-supported militias have converted soccer fields, parks, and playgrounds into markets and malls. Separately, the Kirkuk health department warned that the province is facing a significant increase the incidence of coronavirus and 95% of these cases have been severe.

Several former government contractors, known as "petrodollar employees," have held a protest against the cancellation of their contracts since October 16, 2017. The protestors demand the reinstatement of their contracts. From 2011 to October of 2017, the former governor Najmaldin Karim hired 6,000 locals from the oil share budget known as "Petro-dollar," but the acting governor appointed by Baghdad annulled their contracts.

### Khanaqin

Two Iraqi soldiers were killed, and four more were injured by Da'esh near Halwan Bridge between Jalawla (Golala) and Khanaqin last Tuesday.

### Tuz Khurmatu

Tuz Khurmatu's Endowments and Religious Affairs Department (ERAD) issued a new regulation, preventing election candidates who are Imams and Sheikhs of mosques from delivering Friday prayers until after the elections. The

ERAD's decision aims to prevent mosques from becoming a platform for election campaigns by candidates.

The Kurdish parties failed to unite under one candidate in Tuz, resulting in the likely loss of 28,000 Kurdish votes. In the last two weeks, several public figures and community leaders mediated talks among the Kurdish parties in hopes of consolidating the Kurdish voting bloc behind one candidate but, unfortunately, their attempts failed and two different candidates have been put forth by the Kurds.

### Makhmour

ISIS (Da'esh) again exploited the fragile security situation in the "Disputed Territories" by killing four civilians and wounding eight members of Iranian-backed militias in al Khatab village near Makhmour on Saturday. On Tuesday, the Security Cell announced the neutralization of three Da'esh terrorists near Makhmour's Khashaf village. The area remains the main hub of Da'esh.

### Shingal (Sinjar)

The spokesperson for the Sunni Arab tribes north and west of Mosul, Mozahem Hawaii, accused Iranian-backed militias of the "forceful confiscation" of voter cards from Sunnis near Shingal. Hawaii claimed the militia's moves aimed to ensure the militia-backed candidate's win by decreasing Sunni voting rates.

## Le moral de l'EI en Irak est en hausse après la chute de Kaboul

**N**eveu de l'ancien président du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani, le général Sirwan Barzani est commandant d'une unité des forces kurdes peshmergas et à la tête de la compagnie de télécoms Korek. Disant craindre une résurgence de l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), il appelle au maintien des troupes américaines en Irak, notamment des forces de combat dont le retrait est programmé au 31 décembre.

Pourquoi demandez-vous le maintien des forces de combat américaines ?

Nous avons vu ce qui est arrivé après la décision, en 2011, de l'ancien président Barack Obama de retirer les troupes américaines : l'organisation Etat islamique est arrivée. Pour l'équilibre de la région et du Kurdistan irakien, il faut que les forces de la coalition internationale anti-EI restent. Nous avons besoin de leur technologie. Nous n'avons pas de drones pour contrôler les mouvements des djihadistes ni de caméras thermiques. Le gouvernement fédéral de Bagdad ne nous autorise pas à en acquérir. Le maintien des troupes américaines est aussi important pour le moral de la population, des déplacés, et pour que les chrétiens se sentent en sécurité.

Après le retrait d'Afghanistan et la chute de Kaboul aux mains des talibans, craignez-vous que les Etats-Unis décident de retirer totalement leurs troupes d'Irak ?

Ils nous assurent jusqu'à aujourd'hui qu'ils continueront à

soutenir l'ensemble de l'Irak. Je ne pense pas qu'ils répéteront le scénario afghan. Nous redoutons un scénario identique à celui de 2014, quand l'armée irakienne s'est effondrée face à l'EI. Elle a aujourd'hui davantage d'expérience, elle s'est aguerrie dans la lutte contre l'EI. Mais la mentalité qui a soutenu l'expansion djihadiste – les problèmes entre chiites et sunnites – demeure. Les djihadistes sont des musulmans radicaux qui lavent le cerveau des gens. Il faut que les Américains continuent à nous aider avec des conseillers, de la technologie militaire, du renseignement.

Lors de sa visite en Irak et au Kurdistan irakien fin août, le président Emmanuel Macron vous a assuré du soutien de la France. Quel peut être ce soutien ?

La promesse du président Macron est très importante pour nous. La France a déjà fait beaucoup depuis le début de la guerre et jusqu'à maintenant. Cela dépendra de son budget et de ses capacités. Les Français peuvent faire plus avec les forces spéciales en matière de formation, dans le partage des renseignements et la surveillance des mouvements de l'EI.

La présence accrue de milices chiites dans les régions sunnites est-elle de nature à alimenter la résurgence de l'EI ?

Certains disent que la présence des milices chiites est nécessaire car il n'y a pas assez de forces pour contrôler ces régions. Il faut accroître les effectifs de la police locale car les populations locales lui font davantage confiance. Beau-

coup de déplacés préfèrent rester dans les camps au Kurdistan irakien, dans des conditions de vie difficiles, parce qu'ils ne se sentent pas en sécurité chez eux. C'est éloquent.

Estimez-vous que la menace posée par l'EI s'est accrue ?

On observe une hausse des activités de l'EI. Il y en a tous les deux ou trois jours. Ils opèrent avec des lunettes de vision nocturne et s'orientent avec des GPS dans mon secteur, les montagnes de Qarachogh. Nous-mêmes n'avons pas de lunettes de vision nocturne car Bagdad ne nous autorise pas à en avoir. On voit une répétition du scénario qui a eu lieu en 2013 [avant la conquête d'un tiers de l'Irak et de la Syrie par l'EI].

Leur moral est en hausse après ce qu'ils ont vu en Afghanistan, la chute de Kaboul. On estime à 7 000 le nombre de djihadistes dans tout l'Irak – à 99 % des locaux –, et l'équivalent en Syrie. Ils sont présents depuis la frontière avec l'Iran jusqu'à la frontière avec la Syrie. Ils ne peuvent pas traverser cette frontière aussi facilement qu'avant car les troupes irakiennes la gardent.

Beaucoup des attaques perpétrées par l'EI se déroulent dans les zones disputées entre Bagdad et Erbil. Un accord de coopération sécuritaire n'a été trouvé que fin août. Pourquoi ce blocage ?

Des procédures sont prévues dans l'article 140 de la Constitution pour résoudre ce problème historique mais cela fait

quinze ans que Bagdad refuse de l'appliquer [il prévoit l'organisation d'un référendum d'autodétermination dans les régions disputées]. Après deux ans de discussions, nous avons trouvé un accord pour créer deux brigades conjointes composées de peshmergas et de troupes de l'armée irakienne. Elles devraient être mises en place d'ici deux à trois semaines. Cela va permettre de résoudre beaucoup des problèmes sécuritaires de la région. Mais les autres problèmes entre Bagdad et Erbil demeurent. Si on applique l'article 140, les gens pourront décider s'ils veulent vivre sous l'autorité du gouvernement fédéral ou du gouvernement autonome du Kurdistan irakien, et cela résoudra 99 % du problème.

Les forces turques, qui occupent des bases au Kurdistan irakien, mènent une offensive en Irak contre le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), une organisation classée terroriste par Ankara. Des civils ont été tués. Pourquoi laisser la Turquie opérer ?

Malheureusement des civils meurent parfois dans ces opérations. Mais, cela n'est pas de notre responsabilité car notre espace aérien comme les frontières sont sous l'autorité de Bagdad. La Turquie a demandé à l'Irak qu'elle ne laisse pas le PKK l'attaquer depuis son territoire. La Turquie se sert de l'excuse du PKK pour poursuivre ses opérations. La décision revient à Bagdad et à Ankara. Nous ne pouvons pas nous battre contre l'armée turque.



## AHEAD OF COMMEMORATION: Reason for demonstration ban in Mardin: 'Musa Anter'

**T**he Governor's Office of Mardin has banned protest demonstrations and events in Turkey's southeastern province for 15 days.

As the reason for the demonstration ban, the written statement of the Governor's Office has referred to the commemoration to be held at the grave of journalist and Kurdish scholar Apê Musa (Musa Anter) in Nusaybin district's Sitîlîlê (Akarsu) village today (September 20).

What happened? On September 20, 1992, Musa Anter attended the Culture-Art Festival in Diyarbakır, signing his books. An armed attack was launched against Anter and his nephew, journalist and writer Orhan Miroğlu. Anter lost his life while Miroğlu was wounded.

Arguing that the organizers of the commemoration to be held today have connections with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the statement has read, "Musa Anter, publishing the newspaper named İleri Yurt, was killed in an armed attack launched in Diyarbakır's Seyrantepe neighborhood on September 20, 1992. As commemoration ceremonies will be held by the PKK/KCK terrorist organization and the people supporting it at his grave in Mardin/Nusaybin/Akarsu town and at the scene of the incident..." Referring to the novel coro-



Photo: Mezopotamya Agency (MA)

navirus (COVID-19) as a reason for banning demonstrations as well, the Governor's Office has also recalled that former Justice Minister Mehmet Topaç was killed on September 29, 1994.

### **About Musa Anter**

Author, journalist and activist. Assassinated in the southeastern Diyarbakır city in 1992.

On September 20, 1992, Musa Anter attended the Culture-Art Festival in Diyarbakır, signed his books. An armed attack was launched against Anter and his nephew, journalist and writer Orhan Miroğlu in Cumhuriyet Neighborhood. Anter died, Miroğlu was wounded.

The attack was allegedly conducted by Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Organization (JİTEM), a controversial wing and intelligence agency of the gendarmerie.

It was during the 1937-38 Dersim Revolt that he was taken into custody for the first time. He was among the founders of Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths, the Labor Party of People, Mezopotamya Cultural Center and İstanbul Kurdish Institute.

After leaving the Faculty of Law in the third year, Musa Anter started writing for Şark Postası and Dicle Kaynağı. He was imprisoned in 1959 because of his Kurdish poem

"Qimil/Kımıl" published on İleri Yurt newspaper. Anter was also faced with life imprisonment in the lawsuit known as 49s. He was arrested in 1963, sent to exile in 1967 and imprisoned after the military coups in 1971 and 1980.

Throughout his life, Anter wrote for İleri Yurt, Dicle-Fırat, Barış Dünyası, Deng, Yön, Azadiye Welat, Yeni Ülke, Özgür Gündem, Rewşen and Tewlo. He also published seven books and one Kurdish-Turkish Dictionary.

Born in Mardin in 1920, Musa Anter completed his secondary and high school education in Adana and studied law at İstanbul University.



21 Septembre 2021  
Wladimir van Wilgenburg

## Kurdish author faces up to 22 year prison sentence in Turkey

**K**urdish PEN member, author and poet Meral Şimşek will have the seventh hearing of her trial, where she could face up to 22 years in prison, on Tuesday.

She is accused of "membership in a terrorist organization" and "making terrorist propaganda." The court case is being held at the Malatya 2nd High Criminal Court. The prosecution demands imprisonment of up to 22 years for Şimşek.

"The indictment presents among other things the poems Şimşek shared on her social media accounts and awards on which congratulations text is inscribed in Kurdish as evidence against Şimşek," the Turkish non-profit organization the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) said.

MLSA is monitoring the hearing.

In August, PEN International



Kurdish author Meral Şimşek (Photo: Media and Law Studies Association/Twitter)

said, "Meral Şimşek is being targeted for her writings" and

called "for all charges against her to be dropped."



September 20, 2021

## German election: Iranian refugee wants a seat in the Bundestag

**H**e fled Iran a decade ago. Now Shoan Vaisi is standing for Germany's parliament. The Left Party candidate and former professional wrestler has a political mission.

Images of desperate people, panicked and fearful, risking their lives to flee the extremist Taliban —the tragedy in Afghanistan stirs up memories for Shoan Vaisi. "I know this from my own history. How it is to have to flee from death. When you are so desperate that you try to escape at any cost," Vaisi told DW.

In 2011, he had to flee Iran. As a member of a left-wing organization, he had organized demonstrations and readings of

banned books, campaigned for equal rights between women and men, and spoke out about the oppression of the Kurdish minority. In doing so, Vaisi, who is a Kurd himself, drew the wrath of the Iranian authorities. He was threatened with imprisonment or torture, at the very least. He had no choice but to flee his home city of Sanandaj, near the border with Iraq. For five months he struggled to make his way to Germany, via Turkey and Greece.

He found safety here, but it took a long time for him for the emigrant to feel that he had truly arrived. He did not speak German, his Iranian qualification for university entrance was not recognized and a job see-

med a long way off. Vaisi had to start again from nothing. He took evening classes, studied for German qualifications and looked for work.

As a former professional wrestler who made it on the Iranian national team, Vaisi brought enough perseverance and discipline to overcome all obstacles. Today, 10 years later, he sees himself as having "arrived." He's at home in the city of Essen, in the former industrial Rhur area of North Rhine-Westphalia. "I totally feel like an Essener," he says with a laugh, in fluent German.

Vaisi is currently studying social work and is employed as a social worker, translator and in-

terpreter for Kurdish and Persian languages. He has been a German citizen since 2017. He and his wife, whom he met in Germany, have a daughter. He is still competitive in sport — fighting for his local wrestling club in the second-tier federal league. Vaisi is considered by many to be a prime example of successful integration.

Now Vaisi has focused on his next goal: he wants to enter the Bundestag for the North Rhine-Westphalia branch of the socialist Left Party. If he succeeds, he would be the first former politically persecuted person to win a seat in Germany's federal parliament. "In the year 2021, it is more necessary than ever for a diverse

society that people from under-privileged groups are represented in the Bundestag," he says.

As a politician he wants to combat poverty and inequality and provide better prospects for children and young people, who often also have a migration history.

Above all, he believes the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated existing social imbalances.

Another important concern of his is a more humane migration policy. Earlier in his life he had focused on internal problems in Iran. "But when I fled, other points were added: the global inequality that leads to people fleeing, how they are

treated, but also the arrival in Germany, how people integrate and the discussion about it— those were the original reasons why I started to get involved in politics again in Germany."

Hate, incitement from right-wing extremists

Vaisi decided to run for the Bundestag shortly after Tareq Alaows withdrew his candidacy. Alaows, a former law student who fled Syria six years ago, had wanted to enter parliament as a member of the Green Party. In March, the 32-year-old ended his bid because of threats against him and those close to him, as well as experiences of racism.

"I was shocked by that. My

candidacy is an answer to his withdrawal," says Vaisi.

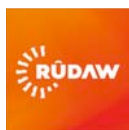
Vaisi is disappointed that Alaows did not experience more support. "I wish there was more of an outcry. That is simply unacceptable," he says. "In 2021, a refugee in Germany was threatened and pushed back from political life. I have the impression that this has just been accepted. Sure, there were a few tweets expressing regret, that it was sad. But what does that count for?"

In any case, Vaisi does not want to be intimidated by hatred. He won't give the agitators that pleasure. Since standing as a candidate he has experienced inhuman comments via social media. In the meantime, however, he has been able to deal with it in

such a way that it has not dampened his resolve.

On Twitter he wrote: "The threats against Alaows have shown how alarming the idea of a refugee sitting in the Bundestag is for the racists in Germany. I would like to make their nightmare a reality."

Vaisi also receives plenty of support. Many people, including supporters of the rival conservative Christian Democrat or neoliberal Free Democrat parties, write urging him to continue and to remain strong. "In addition, people who, like me, came to Germany as refugees, write to tell me that they want to get into politics because of me. That is part of what I wanted to achieve. My candidacy has helped get the ball rolling.



September 21, 2021  
By Khazan Jangiz

## Two Kurdish kolbars killed by Turkish drone strike: human rights monitor

**T**wo kolbars were killed and several others injured on Monday when a Turkish drone struck a group of them on the Turkish side of the border with Iran, a human rights organization reported.

"The kolbars, all from the village of Kuran [in Urmia], were on their way to Turkey and were attacked by a drone. The bodies of 21-year-old Sozdar and 18-year-old Alishan are still in Turkey. The rest of the group are being held in detention by the Turkish army," family members of the deceased told Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) on Tuesday.

Kuran village lies on the border with Turkey, located in Iran's West Azerbaijan province.

Sozdar Ahmadi and Alishan

Ahmadi's bodies were reportedly transferred to a Turkish border town by Turkish military, KHRN said. Eight other kolbars, some of them wounded, have been detained.

Semi-official news agency Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) confirmed the deaths and arrests.

Kolbars are porters who transport untaxed goods on their backs over the mountainous Kurdistan Region-Iran and Iran-Turkey borders, through treacherous terrain, unforgiving weather, and armed, expectant border guards.

They are constantly being targeted by Iranian and Turkish border guards as well as being victims of natural disasters. Many are pushed into the profession by poverty and a lack

of alternative employment, particularly in Iran's Kurdish provinces.

Mohammad Taghi Osanloo, commander of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shuhada brigade, which is responsible for most of the Kurdish areas in Iran, said "there are no kolbars in the area" and claimed those who pass through those routes are smugglers, according to ILNA.

Osanloo said the government had closed down those routes and those "who work out of these passages under the name of kolbari are transporting smuggled goods."

Two brothers from the same village were also killed last year. Shamzin Ahmadi died in July due to his injuries after

being shot by Iranian border guards. His brother, Arsalan Ahmadi had been shot and killed in May by Turkish border guards.

Seventeen-year-old Behnam Samadi in April told Rudaw English about the way he was brutally tortured by Turkish soldiers on the border.

According to data compiled by KHRN from January to August in 2021, at least 30 kolbars died and 94 were wounded by various incidents, including shootings by border guards, accidents and sicknesses.

An estimated 52 kolbars were killed and 147 injured in 2020, according to data given to Rudaw English by KHRN. Forty-six of those killed were shot by Iranian or Turkish border guards.





# Kurdistan's Weekly Brief September 21, 2021

## Iran

The Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammed Bagheri, vowed more attacks on "anti-revolutionary groups" would follow the regime's recent operations targeting Iranian Kurdish opposition parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. Bagheri also called for the eviction of US forces stationed at the Harir Airbase in Erbil, calling their presence a "conspiracy" and stating, "We will not tolerate the presence of the Harir base near our borders holding counter-revolutionary conspiracy meetings inside this base." Meanwhile, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDP-I) released photos of several Iranian drones it claims to have shot down that featured components produced in the US, UK, China, and Poland. Simultaneously, the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights reported the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) clashed with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) near Oshnavieh (Shinno).

Turkish authorities deported nine Iranian Kurds to Syria after they were arrested while attempting to enter Europe and seek asylum. When the asylum seekers claimed they were Syrian to avoid being returned to Iran to face persecution, Turkish authorities handed them over to Turkish-backed Syrian groups. The Kurdish refugees' families were offered no information or status updates by the Turkish government but received several calls from Syria demanding a ransom for their relatives' release.

Iranian border guards killed a Kurdish border porter (kolbar) named Mohammed Qaderi on Thursday near Baneh and another on the same day named Omed Mohammedzadah near Sardasht. Moreover, a kolbar named Shawkat Qurbani died

from a heart attack near Nowdeshah on Friday. Also, on Friday, a Turkish airstrike killed two kolbars near Urmia. Turkey has now killed at least 15 kolbars in 2021.

Several Kurdish human rights groups reported Iranian intelligence officers (Ettela'at) in Naqadah tortured two Kurdish men, Assad Ramin and Dawood Rahimi, to death last week. Ramin and Rahimi were arrested on September 6 for "membership in Kurdish opposition parties." Iranian authorities also detained an animal rights activist named Faiq Sawjblaghi in Piranshahr and a Kurdish man named Anwar Rasoli in Baneh.

## Iraq

The Turkish military hit several areas along the Iraq-Turkey border with air and artillery strikes, including Duhok Governorate's Avashin and Darkar subdistrict. Concurrently, unknown gunmen assassinated a senior member of the PKK named Yousif Murad in Sulaymaniyah on Friday and wounded a PKK-affiliated individual on Saturday. The PKK accused Turkey, who has assassinated several PKK members in Iraqi Kurdistan since 2019, of being behind Friday and Saturday's attacks.

ISIS (Da'esh) terrorists killed four Iraqi Federal Police officers near Rashad and carried out several operations in Kirkuk Governorate's Hawija District. Da'esh's ongoing insurgency in the "Disputed Territories" has also forced the evacuation of villages near Makhmour and spurred the head of Iraq's National Security Service (NSS), Abdul Ghani al Asadi, to meet with local and federal security officials in Kirkuk to discuss the situation. At the same time, the deployment of joint Peshmerga-Iraqi brigades in the re-

gion was delayed over political issues and is now set to move forward after Iraq's parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10.

The KRG welcomed the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) unanimous decision to extend the mandate of the UN team investigating Da'esh's crimes against humanity, including the Yazidi genocide, by one year. The extension, which was requested by the Government of Iraq (GOI), was complemented by UN Secretary-General António Guterres' appointment of a German lawyer named Christian Ritscher as the mission's new special adviser.

## Syria

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced a Turkish drone strike and indirect fire attacks perpetrated by Turkey's Islamist proxies killed four civilians in Dibis village, west of Ain Essa, on Friday. Turkish-backed fighters also shelled Manbij and the Christian town of Tal Tamer. Turkey and its Islamist allies began targeting senior SDF commanders and launching an increasing number of attacks on SDF-controlled areas in July.

The SDF released 92 more Syrian families from al Hawl camp who were cleared of involvement with Da'esh or criminal activities. The released families are from Hasakah, Aleppo, Tabqa, and Deir Ez Zor and received sponsorship from Arab tribal leaders in northeastern Syria. That said, al Hawl continues to hold thousands of Da'esh operatives and their relatives, including many foreign citizens. On another note, the SDF reported its Anti-Terror Units (YAT), backed by the US-led coalition, captured 27 Da'esh terrorists responsible for bom-

bings and assassinations in Tabqa.

## Turkey

The Turkish government continues to crack down on Kurdish politicians and activists. On Monday, the fourth "Kobani Trial" against 108 politicians of the Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) resumed. Turkish authorities prevented journalists and observers from attending the hearing. The court will hold another session on September 23 despite multi requests by the HDP lawyers for further postponement due to health issues of the defendants. After six and half years of protests held by Turkish Kurds against the Da'esh attack on Syrian Kurds, the Turkish court of Ankara accepted the "Kobani Trial" from the prosecutor. Separately, a Turkish court in Aydin sentenced 8 Kurds to six years and three months for "membership of a terrorist organization." Meanwhile, in a high-profile court session, the Kurdish politician and women's rights activist, Rojbin Çetin, defended herself in Kurdish language and said, "I am a woman activist, a politician, a human rights defender. The work I carried out was legal work that I did in front of the public and the press. I demand to be acquitted." The Turkish government accuses Çetin of affiliation with the PKK. The court postponed her hearing to November of this year. Furthermore, the HDP continued its public rallies to gather support before the resumption of the court hearing of its final case. "No matter what they do, they will not be able to prevent the HDP from using its power to bring peace, democracy, and freedom to this country. We will continue our struggle in the elections," said HDP co-chair, Mithat Sancar.

## “Notturmo” : scènes de l’après-guerre ordinaire au Moyen-Orient

Le réalisateur acclamé de *Fuocoammare*, Gianfranco Rosi, signe un documentaire crépusculaire, tableau à la fois tragique et sublime de régions meurtries dans le nord de l’Irak et de la Syrie. Le film, qui sort en France ce 22 septembre, pose à nouveau la question de l’esthétisation du malheur. Voici ce qu’en a pensé la presse italienne.

*Notturmo* de Gianfranco Rosi n’est pas un film de guerre, mais la guerre s’y ressent dans presque chaque plan : à la cadence des soldats qui défilent à l’aube (ou était-ce au crépuscule ?) dans sa scène d’ouverture ; aux pleurs et aux lamentations de mères – que l’on devine kurdes – filmées en train d’arpenter les cellules où leurs fils ont été torturés et exécutés, quelque part aux confins de l’Irak, de la Syrie et de la Turquie ; aux paroles d’enfants rescapés de Mossoul ou de Raqqa, qui relatent les atrocités innommables commises par l’État islamique ; ou encore aux longs silences qui ponctuent le film.

C’est aussi un film “dont on sort un peu déboussolé”, prévient le site milanais Linkiesta. Le contempler donne l’impression de “regarder le monde avec les mains sur les yeux, les doigts écartés” : on le saisit par bribes, sans que jamais se dessine une image complète. Et tout au long, on s’interroge :

Qui étaient ces personnages sans nom ? Quels sont ces lieux que l’on nous montre ? Fruit de trois ans de tournage aux frontières de l’Irak, de la

Syrie, mais aussi du Liban, *Notturmo* a été projeté pour la première fois il y a un peu plus d’un an à la Mostra de Venise, où le film était en compétition. Comme le relate Linkiesta, il a valu à son réalisateur dix minutes d’applaudissements dans la salle, suivis, à l’extérieur, d’une polémique que ce site qualifie d’“inhérente à son cinéma”.

Avec ses plans très travaillés et sa photographie à couper le souffle, Rosi a le tort aux yeux de certains d’“esthétiser la douleur”. En 2016, son documentaire *Fuocoammare* (Ours d’or à Berlin en 2016, et sorti au plus fort de la crise migratoire sur l’île de Lampedusa) s’était attiré le même genre de reproches. Déjà se posait déjà la question de “la mesure dans laquelle il est légitime de manipuler la réalité et de la remettre en scène afin d’en faire un objet cinématographique, avec l’ambition explicite d’être aussi un objet poétique”, rappelle le site spécialisé Cineforum.

Au plus près de ses sujets

Linkiesta le reconnaît :

‘*Notturmo*’ se préoccupe davantage de beauté que de précision. Un aspect qui n’est pas secondaire pour un documentaire.”

Le cinéaste assume et explique ainsi ses choix dans la note d’intention du long-métrage : “*Notturmo* est un film politique, qui ne prétend pourtant pas faire de la politique. Ce film ne cherche pas à déterminer les causes des conflits ni à dé mêler les innombrables ques-



Une image extraite du documentaire *Notturmo* de Gianfranco Rosi, au cinéma en France le 22 septembre 2021. PHOTO / METEORE FILMS

tions religieuses et territoriales en jeu. Je voulais simplement rester au plus près des hommes, des femmes et des enfants, dont la lutte métaphorise ce qui m’émeut absolument le plus : la vie des êtres humains.”

“Laisser résonner ce qui est encore vivant”

Le réalisateur explique avoir au départ voulu filmer toutes les scènes de nuit, avant de renoncer. À la nuit intégrale, il a préféré un clair-obscur plus à même, semble-t-il, de saisir l’entre-deux propre à ces zones sans nom (étendues de champs, marécages ponctués au loin de torchères, hôpital psychiatrique, base militaire... ) où le quotidien reprend ses droits alors que rôde encore la mort.

“Comme dans un nocturne de Chopin, ici aussi l’obscurité est un prétexte, une occasion de laisser résonner ce qui est encore vivant”, explique le cinéaste.

Rosi l’assume : il signe un film à la fois terrible et beau, constate le *Corriere della Sera*.

Sa préoccupation esthétique est-elle immorale ? Au contraire, pour ce quotidien italien, c’est dans le soin extrême apporté au cadre et à la lumière qui entoure ses sujets, dans la minutie avec laquelle sa caméra capte le moindre de leur souffle ou la plus imperceptible oscillation, que se lit “l’affection (et donc la préoccupation, l’attention) du réalisateur pour ses protagonistes”.

Comme un carnet de voyage

“Davantage qu’à un documentaire, *Notturmo* ressemble dès lors au carnet d’un de ces voyageurs du XIXe siècle soucieux de transmettre, de retour chez eux, le charme et la beauté des lieux visités, davantage que de décrypter la signification politique ou sociale de ce que leurs yeux avaient vu.”

Une interprétation qui ne fait toutefois pas entièrement justice à l’œuvre de Rosi, s’empresse d’ajouter le *Corriere*, qui note qu’“un film comme celui-ci possède indéniablement un sens ‘politique’, qui consiste précisément à refuser de donner des réponses”.



September 22, 2021  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## French square named after murdered Syrian Kurdish politician inaugurated

The French city of Lyon inaugurated the square named after the Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf, who was killed by Turkish-backed groups in Kurdish-led north-eastern Syria in October 2019, on Tuesday.

The Lyon City Council unanimously voted to name the square after Khalaf back in July.

Lyon Councillor Sonia Zdorovtsoff, who is responsible for the city's international relations, posted photos of the inauguration and tweeted that Khalaf "worked throughout her short life for a democratic, plural, and decentralized Syria."

Fanny Dubot, mayor of the seventh borough of Lyon, earlier wrote on social media that the naming of the square would be a tribute to Khalaf.

"The city council of #Lyon7 has approved the name of Hevrin Khalaf for the square," he tweeted. "This pays homage to the emblematic figure of peace in a country at war. Syrian, Kurdish, and a feminist, murdered at 35 years old. A tribute."

The Turkish-backed Ahrar al-Sharqiya group summarily executed Khalaf in mid-October 2019 as part of Ankara's cross-border offensive. Kurdistan 24 was one of the first news organizations to report the incident on October 12, 2019.

According to the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria report last year, one fighter involved in the extrajudicial killing of the Kurdish politician was jailed. The same report also documented multiple verified



The newly inaugurated Khalaf square in France (Photo: Sonia Zdorovtsoff/Twitter)

cases of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by Turkish-backed armed groups in the parts of Syria occupied by Turkey.

Suad Mustafa, the mother of Hevrin Khalaf, told Kurdistan 24 last year that she wants

those responsible for her daughter's murder to appear in front of an international court.

"A war crime has been committed against humanity, and the very same person who ordered those militants, must be held accountable in a just court," she stated.

The Washington Post

September 22, 2021  
Tallha Abdulrazaq

## The U.S. has no friends left in Iraq

Tensions between the United States and Iran have reached a new high in the past few days in a manner not seen since perhaps the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Events were kicked off last Friday night by a rocket attack against a military base near Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, that houses U.S. service personnel and other citizens. The attack killed an American contractor and wounded several service members, drawing the ire of the White House, which authorized

retaliatory strikes on Sunday against Kataib Hezbollah targets in Iraq and Syria, the pro-Iran Iraqi group cited by Washington as being responsible for the Kirkuk assault. The Trump administration intended to send a message not to cross the United States — unfortunately, that message was either not received or completely misread.

Not long after a funeral procession was held on Tuesday for the dozens of Shiite militants who were killed in the U.S.

strikes, a large crowd of angry Kataib Hezbollah supporters as well as members of other militant groups connected to Tehran marched into the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad and proceeded to storm the U.S. Embassy.

Iraqi protesters who have demonstrated against Iranian influence in their country since October have been mercilessly killed by Iraqi security forces in recent months. Yet it seems that activists loyal to establish-

ment-backed militias can gain access to a secured area without a single shot being fired. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is the largest of its kind in the world and was meant to project American might and presence in the region.

Instead of might, the besieging of the embassy showed that the United States could be humiliated. The militants, posing as "protesters" despite many wearing military fatigues and carrying militia banners,



smashed through the main gate, battered down doors and set fires inside the compound before setting up camp outside. Their actions are a slap to the face of America's self-perception as a force to be reckoned with and whose deterrence capability is enough to allow it to act unchallenged. As made clear by senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Washington aimed Sunday's retaliatory strikes at "detering Iran and protecting American lives."

Clearly, however, Iran did not get the memo. Accompanying

the pro-militant activists were some of Iran's top made men in Iraq, including U.S.-blacklisted terrorist and Kataib Hezbollah commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who had on Monday threatened his group's response "would be very tough on the American forces in Iraq." Also present was Qais al-Khazali, the leader of the wildly sectarian Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, who has vowed to not let up until the U.S. presence in Iraq, diplomatic or otherwise, is removed.

But perhaps the most galling of

all the attendees at the siege for U.S. officials is Faleh al-Fayyadh, the chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group that includes many clients of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. After all, it was not that long ago that the U.S. Air Force was providing close air support to the Iraqi security forces and allied militias in their fight against Islamic State militants. Fayyadh was a regular figure in security forums held in Washington, London and even Moscow, and had the ear of senior officials from the most

influential global powers.

Rather than curbing Iranian influence, the United States helped facilitate Tehran's inroads to eclipse Washington all while pouring billions of dollars into supporting a government already compromised, as the recent leaked Iran spy cables show.

What the siege showed was that the United States has no friends in Iraq, or at least none that are effective.

franceinfo:

23 Septembre 2021

## Cinéma : le documentaire "9 jours à Raqqa" montre la reconstruction de l'ancienne capitale de l'État islamique

**E**n représailles aux attaques du 13 novembre 2015, l'armée française ira bombarder le fief de l'État islamique à Raqqa (Syrie). Xavier de Lauzanne, réalisateur du documentaire "9 jours à Raqqa" est l'invité du journal de 23 heures de France Info.

Après le chaos, Raqqa (Syrie) tente de se reconstruire depuis plusieurs mois. La ville de décombres est devenue un laboratoire politique où une femme de 30 ans, Leïla Mustapha, maire de la ville, tente de redonner du sens à la vie entre communautés. "Par moment, à Raqqa, la réalité dépasse la fiction. Je ne sais pas qui aurait pu imaginer qu'une jeune femme devienne maire de la ville qui était la capitale de l'État islamique. Il y a quelques années, la femme



Comment Raqqa pouvait-elle être

était considérée comme un animal sous la barbarie de Daech", raconte Xavier de Lauzanne, réalisateur du documentaire "9 jours à Raqqa". Il ajoute que "le nord-est de la Syrie a été libéré par une coalition arabo-kurde, le FDS. Les Kurdes ont comme projet poli-

tique de mettre en avant le confédéralisme ethnique et religieux. Ils veulent aussi réconcilier les peuples et mettre en avant la parité homme-femme". Les acteurs du documentaire font tout de même part de leurs inquiétudes concernant le départ des

troupes américaines de l'Afghanistan à la fin du mois d'août. "Je veux me battre et reprendre ce qu'ils viennent de me prendre", témoigne Shaiq Hakimi qui était fonctionnaire à Kaboul (Afghanistan) avant la prise de pouvoir des talibans.



## Kirkuk Minute September 23, 2021

### Kirkuk

In an interview with the state-owned Iraqi News Agency, the acting governor of Kirkuk, Rakan Saed, said the Iraqi government has plans to arm the Arab tribes in Kirkuk to help the security forces after increased attacks by ISIS (Da'esh) in the province. Saed also said Iraq's Prime Minister al-Kadhimi had formed a committee to investigate the province's security breaches.

Last Thursday, September 16, a delegation of the Peshmerga forces carried out a reconnaissance in the disputed areas between Erbil and Kirkuk. Both Erbil and Baghdad agreed to form two joint divisions consisting of the Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi Army to deploy in suburbs of the disputed territories where Da'esh is active. The combined forces will fill the security vacuum left by the Peshmerga forces since October 16, 2017, when Iraqi security forces, including Iranian-backed militias, removed the Kurds from the area in the aftermath of the Independence Referendum held by the Kurds. It is unclear where the joint forces will deploy before the parliamentary elections on October 10, 2021. The troops will deploy in Kirkuk's Shwan, Perdi, Qara Hanjeer, Sargaran, Dibis, Layaln, and Daquq districts. The US-led

Coalition will arm and train the joint divisions.

Iraq's Joint Operations Command (JOC) released a statement clarifying "no changes" in areas where joint divisions will deploy. The JOC said joint divisions are established for anti-Da'esh operations without new changes in the security authorities. In recent weeks, the Turkish-backed Iraqi Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition have been spreading false information about the return of the Peshmerga forces and demanded Baghdad to prevent the Kurdish forces from returning.

In a press conference, Loay Arkan, the head of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) of Kirkuk, announced that elections would take place in the province as scheduled without any delays. Arkan said that the IHEC is ready to hold elections, and Parliament designated the date, and any delays will be unconstitutional. Both Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition called for postponing the parliamentary election in Kirkuk for a week. However, the IHEC formed a special committee from Baghdad to station and supervise the elections in Kirkuk. Though the IHEC Kirkuk staff and director will remain in position, the committee will have more authority over them, against

the laws of the IHEC to form such a committee under the pressure of Turkish proxies. 232 candidates compete in Kirkuk's three constituencies for 13 parliamentary seats, including a quota seat for the Christians. So far, 113 candidates have filed complaints about tearing down their posters amid high tension between the political parties and low expectations for election turnout.

Business and stand owners at the public wholesale produce market (Alwa) protested against the Ministry of Municipality for imposing a levy via an investing company. The protesters burned tires and blocked roads demanding reform on the "high" levy, which will obligate business owners to raise prices of their goods by 20%.

### Khanaqin

The Iranian-backed militia, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq prevented Kurdish candidates from launching campaigns and hanging posters in Jalawla (Golala), claiming the town "isn't stable" and campaigning "will stir tensions."

Despite Baghdad and Erbil reaching an agreement for Kurdish security forces (Asayesh) to operate in Khanaqin, the Diyala Operations Command does not allow them

to carry weapons but only share information with the police. The Kurdish officials said it appears Baghdad has renegeged on the agreement.

### Makhmour

As Da'esh continues to launch attacks daily and has a significant presence in the area, Iraqi forces plan to launch a military operation near the Qara Chokh mountain to target Da'esh hideouts and locations. Dozens of US airstrikes have targeted Da'esh terrorists, mainly on the Qara Chokh mountain since last year.

### Shingal

25 Yazidi candidates are running in Shingal and its sub districts in the upcoming parliamentary elections, including seven competing for the one quota seat. The rest are hoping to win a seat outside of the quota. Many of the Yazidi candidates are backed by different non-Yazidi political parties, raising anger among the community for the laws that allow that. Furthermore, the Yazidi religious leader (Baba Sheikh) Ali Shiekh Alias visited Shingal for the first time since becoming the new leader, attempting to ease the community's internal issues and division mainly caused the genocide they suffered by Da'esh in 2014.

## Comment Erdogan traque ses opposants jusqu'à Paris

**R**évélations. Des agents turcs mènent des opérations en toute impunité au cœur de l'Europe. En Belgique, une tentative d'assassinat a été déjouée ; en France, l'enquête sur le meurtre de trois opposantes, en 2013, reste mystérieusement bloquée.

Il faut montrer patte blanche pour être autorisé à franchir les deux portes sécurisées de l'immeuble de la rue Jean-Stas, à Bruxelles. Derrière la façade en pierres grises se dresse un petit bout du monde kurde. La bâtisse abrite le Congrès du peuple du Kurdistan (Kongra-Gel), organisation politique liée au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Son président, Zübeyir Aydar, n'en sort que rarement. Il se sait en danger, tout comme son bras droit, Remzi Kartal. «Les Turcs n'arrêtaient pas de chercher une occasion de nous tuer, soupire Aydar, calé dans un gros fauteuil en cuir du salon. En 2013, quand nos trois amies ont été assassinées à Paris, nous étions déjà sur leur liste, mais ils n'avaient pas réussi à nous atteindre. »

Réfugiés politiques, Kartal, ancien dentiste et député en Turquie, et Aydar, avocat âgé de 60 ans, sont sur la liste rouge du ministère de l'intérieur turc, celle des « terroristes » les plus recherchés. Une récompense de 10 millions de livres turques (1 million d'euros) est promise à qui conque permettra leur capture. Rompu aux menaces, Aydar prend celles qui lui parviennent en 2017 au sérieux et prévient la police. Il a été alerté d'un plan

qui viserait à les assassiner, lui et Kartal. Haci Akkulak, un ouvrier du bâtiment kurde vivant en Belgique, aurait été approché pour collecter des informations sur eux et les éliminer. Plusieurs scénarios, parfois rocambolesques, auraient été passés en revue pour y parvenir : on aurait envisagé d'empoisonner l'eau du samovar qui se trouve dans la cuisine du Kongra-Gel ou de mener une attaque à la kalachnikov dans le bâtiment ; le tueur devait être exfiltré en Turquie par bateau.

L'enquête belge, à laquelle nous avons eu accès, offre une plongée inédite au sein des activités clandestines que le régime turc mène en Europe. Des cellules reliées à l'Organisation nationale du renseignement (MIT), les services secrets turcs, traquent les opposants du président Recep Tayyip Erdogan en Allemagne, en Autriche, en Belgique, en France... Ces groupes déclinent et adaptent au terrain européen la guerre totale menée contre le PKK en Turquie, dans le nord de la Syrie et dans les montagnes irakiennes.

Dans l'affaire belge, quatre prévenus sont accusés de faire partie d'une association de malfaiteurs et d'avoir rejoint ou dirigé une organisation terroriste. Jugés à partir du 1er octobre devant le tribunal correctionnel de Bruxelles, ils encourent des peines pouvant aller jusqu'à quinze ans de prison. Sur le banc des accusés, à côté d'Haci Akkulak, l'ouvrier kurde, doit comparaître son employeur, Necati Demiroglu. Cet entrepreneur, établi à

Gand et sympathisant du mouvement islamiste Milli Görüs (Vision nationale), a mis en contact Akkulak avec son beau-frère, Yakup Koç, alias «le Colonel». L'épouse de Demiroglu dit que son frère «chasse les Kurdes». De 2002 à 2007, celui-ci était chargé de la sécurité au consulat de Turquie, à Boulogne-Billancourt. Il vit désormais en Turquie et circule entre la France et la Belgique. À des policiers belges qui l'ont contrôlé dans le cadre d'une opération de surveillance, il a montré une carte de police turque expirée. Le document attestait qu'il était affecté à la section antiterroriste, c'est-à-dire à la lutte contre le PKK. Après le coup d'Etat raté contre Erdogan en juillet 2016, il aurait été appelé pour «travailler au Palais». Dans une audition menée par la police fédérale belge, Demiroglu a déclaré que Yakup Koç aurait promis jusqu'à 50 000 euros à Akkulak pour des «informations sur le PKK». Koç aurait également demandé à Akkulak s'il était capable de «travailler avec des armes» pour assassiner les deux responsables kurdes. Le Colonel apparaît comme le chef du réseau.

« Petit Oiseau ». «Si l'exécutant chargé de la sale besogne se trouvait en Belgique, l'enquête a très vite montré que l'initiative du complot venait de France», déclare Jan Fermon, avocat d'Aydar et Kartal. Le quatrième suspect, Zeke-riya Çelikbilek, est un électricien franco-turc au chômage qui, à l'époque des faits, habitait à Reims. C'est lui qui supervise Akkulak. Dans une

conversation téléphonique enregistrée par la police belge, la recrue s'inquiète des modalités de son exfiltration une fois le « massacre » accompli. À la vue des éléments s'accumulant dans le dossier, le juge d'instruction belge, Patrick De Coster, avait adressé à la France, en 2017, une demande urgente d'entraide européenne pour « un attentat potentiellement imminent contre des politiciens kurdes de premier plan ». L'enquête préliminaire conduite par la Sdat (sous-direction antiterroriste de la police) pour la Belgique a dévoilé un second groupe de Turcs de la région parisienne qui gravite autour de Çelikbilek. L'un est un cousin de Yakup Koç, un autre, coutumier des bagarres violentes, perçoit le RSA, un troisième est entrepreneur dans le bâtiment... Mais leurs activités menées dans l'ombre font apparaître un réseau clandestin au service de la Turquie.

Ces individus échangent avec une grande prudence au téléphone. Ils sont formés au codage des informations. Certains espionnent les opposants turcs sur le sol français ou se livrent à des activités en Belgique pour « l'Etat ». Ils communiquent avec un numéro turc, qui est « susceptible d'être utilisé par Yakup Koç selon des renseignements fournis par la DGSI », précise une synthèse de la Sdat. « Cette information méfait dire que les services français avaient un œil sur Koç », commente Jan Fermon. Additionnés, les faits et gestes de Çelikbilek et ses comparses montrent « des liens avérés avec le sommet de l'appareil



sécuritaire à Ankara » ajoute-t-il. Contacté par Le Point, Çelikbilek n'a pas répondu à nos sollicitations.

Le 5 janvier 2018, le président Erdogan est en visite officielle à Paris. Hakan Fidan, chef du MIT et fidèle parmi les fidèles, ne le quitte pas. Dérouler le tapis rouge pour le dirigeant turc, alors très isolé sur la scène internationale, et à quelques jours du cinquième anniversaire de l'assassinat des trois militantes kurdes en 2023 près de la gare du Nord, est un cadeau inespéré. Leur mort n'est toujours pas élucidée, et de forts soupçons pèsent sur l'implication du MIT. Lors de la conférence de presse commune, à l'Élysée, avec son homologue turc, Emmanuel Macron ne prononce pas un mot sur cette affaire mais assure prendre «les mesures nécessaires sur notre sol pour lutter contre le PKK, que nous considérons comme une organisation terroriste ». Le lendemain, une manifestation est prévue à Paris pour réclamer justice. Erdogan fustige la présence de «terroristes» dans les rues de la capitale. En coulisses de sa visite, le Reis a averti Paris du lancement imminent de son opération militaire « Rameau d'olivier » à Afrin. L'enclave kurde de Syrie est alors administrée par les alliés kurdes de la France qui ont combattu Daech. En quelques heures, à Paris, Erdogan s'est livré à un coup de maître. Il a fait la démonstration que sa guerre contre les Kurdes était totale et s'affranchissait de toute autorisation.

Pour la venue de leur président, Çelikbilek et ses comparses sont sur le pont. Certains vont l'accueillir à l'aéroport avec des drapeaux turcs. D'autres sont invités à l'ambassade de Turquie. Sur une photo trouvée dans le téléphone de Çelikbilek, l'un d'eux, un colosse de 2,03 m et 130 kilos, surnommé «Petit Oiseau», se tient à côté d'un homme à la barbe blanche finement taillée devant l'Arc de triomphe. Durant sa garde à

vue, en 2018, Çelikbilek répond nonchalamment qu'il ignore son identité. Le vieil homme s'appelle Adnan Tanriverdi. Cet ancien général est le conseiller militaire de l'ombre d'Erdogan. Il a fondé Sadat, une société militaire privée dirigée par d'anciens officiers islamistes de l'armée turque, à qui le MIT sous-traite ses activités. En Syrie, en Libye, en Azerbaïdjan, l'entreprise encadre et arme des mercenaires. Interrogé en 2020 sur le déploiement de Sadat en Libye, Tanriverdi répondait : « La Turquie a, absolument besoin d'une compagnie de sécurité privée. Les Etats-Unis ont Black-water et la Russie a Wagner, nous avons Sadat. » Sur son site Internet, le groupe militaire propose notamment une formation «aux techniques de guerre non conventionnelle».

Au programme : «sabotage», «enlèvement»... Çelikbilek dit également ne pas savoir qui est le grand gaillard en manteau gris à côté de qui il apparaîtrait sur une photo prise sur les Champs-Élysées. C'est « un monsieur » à qui il a fait visiter Paris pendant la visite présidentielle. Quand il ne s'adonne pas aux joies du tourisme dans la capitale française, « monsieur » Seyit Sertçelik, ancien député de l'AKP proche des ultranationalistes Loups gris, est conseiller d'Erdogan pour la sécurité et la politique étrangère. Il parade à Afrin, désormais sous la coupe de Sadat et de ses milices islamistes proturques.

Parmi les photos extraites du téléphone de Çelikbilek, on en trouve aussi une de Yakup Koç, le Colonel, au côté de Seyit Sertçelik dans un bureau officiel. Pendant sa garde à vue, il lui est demandé si Sertçelik travaille pour le MIT. «Dans un ministère ou un truc comme ça, botte en touche Çelikbilek. Il m'avait promis de m'accueillir à Ankara et de me montrer à son tour la ville.» L'électricien

sans emploi a été autorisé à pénétrer dans l'enceinte du palais du Sultan : sur un cliché, il pose fièrement devant le complexe présidentiel aux 1200 pièces. «Nous sommes persuadés qu'il y a un lien très fort entre ce réseau et l'assassinat de nos trois amies à Paris», affirme Zübeyir Aydar. Le 9 janvier 2013, Sakine Cansiz, une des fondatrices du PKK, Fidan Dogan, chargée du lobbying politique en Europe, et Leyla Saylemez, une cadre de 24 ans, ont été tuées de plusieurs balles dans la tête dans un appartement du 10<sup>e</sup> arrondissement parisien. Le tueur présumé, Ömer Güney, est mort d'une tumeur au cerveau en 2016, quelques semaines avant son procès. L'enquête française et des révélations dans les médias turcs avaient montré les nombreuses connections entre le suspect et le MIT. Dans un enregistrement sonore antérieur à la mort des trois militantes, Ömer Güney détaillait à deux individus, qui apparaissaient comme ses supérieurs hiérarchiques, ses plans pour liquider quatre personnalités kurdes réfugiées en Europe. Parmi ses cibles se trouvait déjà Remzi Kartal, ciblé dans le complot belge en 2017. «Il ne faudra pas le louper», avait alors commenté l'un des interlocuteurs.

Zekeriya Çelikbilek pourrait peut-être apporter un nouvel éclairage sur le triple meurtre du 147, rue La Fayette. Selon les auditions de l'enquête belge, il s'est vanté d'y avoir joué un rôle et a désigné Ismail Hakki Musa, ambassadeur de Turquie en France jusqu'en mars 2021, comme « responsable de la coordination » du projet contre Aydar et Kartal. Mais, protégé par l'immunité diplomatique, ce dernier n'a pas été entendu par la justice française. Lorsque les trois militantes kurdes ont été assassinées, le diplomate était alors le numéro 2 du MIT, chargé des opérations extérieures. Çelikbilek n'a pas non plus encore été convoqué par le juge d'instruction

français qui a repris l'affaire. Et pour cause.

À la demande des parties civiles, une nouvelle information judiciaire a été ouverte en France en 2019. Dans ce dossier aux ramifications internationales, chaque information peut constituer une pièce du puzzle. Or ce n'est que depuis cet été que l'enquête française menée fin 2017 et début 2018 pour le compte de la Belgique a été transmise au juge d'instruction par le parquet antiterroriste.

Notes caviardées. Jusqu'alors, il n'avait pas reçu toute la procédure. Manquaient notamment les auditions par la Sdat de Zekeriya Çelikbilek et d'Adnan Tanriverdi. Ce dernier, à qui on demandait s'il était déjà arrivé à Çelikbilek de se livrer à des affaires illicites, rétorquait : « Vous devez le savoir mieux que moi, il travaillait pour vous avant. » En plus des services turcs, Çelikbilek, qui se savait surveillé par la police française, travaillait-il aussi pour un service français ? « Ces éléments permettent de comprendre l'étendue de ce réseau criminel en France et en Europe, réseau qui a peut-être des liens avec les services français, fulmine Antoine Comte, avocat des familles des victimes. Et il a fallu tout ce temps pour que le juge les reçoive ? Une fois de plus, on peut se demander si, au nom de la raison d'État, les gouvernements successifs français ne mettent pas la main sur le frein dès qu'il s'agit de l'élucidation de l'assassinat de ces trois femmes. »

Depuis le massacre de la rue La Fayette, les services de renseignements hexagonaux ne montrent pas beaucoup d'empressement à collaborer avec la justice française. La première juge d'instruction, Jeanne Duyé, avait demandé la déclassification des informations « protégées au titre du secret de la défense nationale » susceptibles, entre autres, de «mieux cerner» les

relations d'Ömer Güney avec le MIT. Les mois passant et la santé du suspect se dégradant rapidement, la juge avait dû réitérer sa requête. La DGSE avait fini par transmettre quelques éléments insignifiants. La DGSI avait communiqué 39 notes tellement caviardées qu'elles étaient inexploitable. Quelles informations étaient dissimulées sous les traits noirs opaques de ce secret d'État? Une note sur Sakine Cansiz, rédigée deux jours avant sa mort, était illisible. À son tour, le nouveau magistrat, Régis Pierre, a procédé à une demande de déclassification en juillet 2020. N'obtenant pas de réponse, il a

également dû adresser une relance au printemps. Ce n'est qu'au mois de juin que la Commission du secret de la défense nationale a rendu son avis. Des notes de la DGSI datant de 2016 à 2021, qui n'apportent rien de neuf, sont partiellement déclassifiées. Mais, concernant les notes caviardées transmises lors de la première instruction, la Commission a refusé de procéder à un réexamen, au motif qu'il n'y avait pas d'«élément nouveau». Ce qui signifie que le secret défense est maintenu. « Presque neuf ans après les faits, j'y vois la preuve que les autorités ont vraiment quelque chose à ca-

cher, affirme Antoine Comte. Et comment peut-on dire qu'il n'y a rien de nouveau alors que l'enquête cible désormais explicitement l'implication du MIT? » Des informations potentiellement essentielles pour élucider le crime demeurent inaccessibles.

Agit Polat, porte-parole du Conseil démocratique turc en France - chargé des relations publiques du PKK -, ne se fait guère d'illusions : « Si la France n'avait pas un intérêt politique dans cette affaire, il y a bien longtemps que le secret défense serait levé. » La Turquie est incontournable pour la France : elle gère les migrants,

collabore à la lutte contre les djihadistes français... Le sénateur Rémi Féraud a adressé ces six derniers mois deux questions aux ministères des Affaires étrangères et de l'intérieur sur les avancées de l'enquête. « Erdogan nous teste en permanence, à Afrin, en Libye, au Karabagh ou dans cette affaire, déclare-t-il. Accepter du terrorisme d'un Etat étranger sur son territoire, c'est prendre le risque que cela recommence. » Les plans échaudés par Çelikkilek et ses comparses depuis la France lui donneraient raison...



26 septembre, 2021

## Un Kurde meurt des suites de la torture dans une prison de Téhéran

Un kurde a été tué sous la torture dans la prison de Fashafoyeh, à Téhéran, a rapporté l'association Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).

Amir Hossein Hatami, un jeune kurde de 23 ans, originaire d'un village de Sirvan, dans la région kurde d'Illam, a été arrêté à Téhéran il y a environ deux semaines.

M. Hatami aurait été arrêté à la suite d'un délit mineur, selon l'association KHRN. Le détenu aurait transmis à son père, lors d'un échange téléphonique, au début de sa première semaine de détention, qu'il avait reçu « de violents coups de matraque à la tête ».

Selon le père Hatami, son fils Amir Hossein lui aurait dit qu'il



Rassemblement des proches d'Amir Hossein Hatami devant la prison de Fashafoyeh pour protester suite au décès du jeune homme. Samedi 25 septembre 2021, photo Kurdistan Human Rights Network.

devoir être transféré à l'hôpital. L'association KHRN indique que la demande de visite de la famille Hatami à l'hôpital a été refusée par l'administration pénitentiaire.

Samedi, des membres de la famille et des amis du jeune homme se sont rassemblés

devant la prison de Fashafoyeh pour protester. La foule en colère a demandé aux autorités de traduire en justice les responsables de la mort d'Hatami. Le père du jeune homme a d'abord refusé de recevoir le corps de son fils jusqu'à ce que la cause du décès soit officiellement confirmée. En début

de soirée, le corps d'Amir Hossein Hatami a finalement été ramené dans son village natal de Lerênî pour y être enterré. La prison de Fashafoyeh, située à 32 kilomètres au sud de Téhéran, est le plus grand centre de détention d'Iran avec environ 15 000 détenus.

### Exécutions extrajudiciaires en Iran

Les exécutions extrajudiciaires par le régime iranien sont fréquentes. Selon les données de l'organisation kurde de défense des droits humains Hengaw, au moins 23 prisonniers kurdes sont morts dans les centres de détention iraniens des suites de tortures entre 2017 et 2021. Au moins quinze d'entre eux étaient des prisonniers politiques.

## Writer Nurcan Kaya given deferred prison sentence for 2014 tweet

**H**uman rights advocate and writer Nurcan Kaya has been sentenced to 1 year and 3 months in prison for an 2014 tweet about the battle against ISIS in Kobani, a Kurdish town in northern Syria.

"Not only the Kurds but all people who live there are resisting," she had written on Twitter.

At the previous hearing on June 9, the prosecutor's office demanded a prison sentence of up to five years for "propagandizing for an illegal organization.

"Defending peace is not a crime"

Kaya, her attorney Veysel Ok and Diyarbakır Bar Chair Nahit Eren were present in today's final hearing at the Diyarbakır 9th Heavy Penal Court.

Making a statement against the prosecutor's opinion, Kaya said she wouldn't make a defense but explain what had happened.

She said that she stood trial because her social media posts as a human rights advocate annoyed the government. Her posts were within freedom of expression and they were quotations from the meetings she had attended, she noted.

Turkey has changed its position since the end of the "peace process" in the Kurdish question, but she wouldn't take a stand accordingly, said Kaya.

"Defending peace is not a crime. I'll continue to say peace against war. It is obvious that the reason I'm here today is not organization propaganda," she remarked.

Concluding her statement, Kaya

said, "Your decision will determine whether it is a crime to write articles for preventing rights violations and demanding peace."

"No evidence"

Attorney Ok said the prosecutor's office had launched an ex officio investigation and charged his client over a few tweets picked among thousands she had posted since 2014

Since it was not possible for the prosecutor to examine all posts, the attorney argued, the indictment was based on posts that include the words "Nurcan Kaya," "Kobani," "Kürt" and "organiza-tion."

"This is an indication of the ill-intention of the security officials. The prosecutor has not submitted evidence," Ok remarked.

His client stood trial because she "brings what happens in Diyarbakır to Turkey's west," said the attorney

"There is a Court of Cassation ruling regarding the evaluation of the context of the period, when the tweet dated 2014 that is subject to allegations," he noted. "It should be looked at what the politics and law said about Kobani in 2014."

"How can tweeting against a terrorist organization that the entire world sees as villains can be considered 'organization propaganda'?" he asked.

After a brief break following Ok's statement, the court sentenced Kaya to 1 years and 3 months in prison for "propagandizing for an illegal organization" and deferred the announcement of the verdict.

**LE FIGARO**

27 Septembre 2021

## Syrie : le rapatriement des familles françaises de djihadistes en question devant la CEDH

**L**a France enfreint-elle les droits humains de ses citoyens en ne rapatriant pas des femmes et enfants de djihadistes en Syrie ? La question sera soumise mercredi 29 septembre aux juges de la Grande Chambre, formation la plus importante de la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme (CEDH).

Instance judiciaire du Conseil de l'Europe, basée à Strasbourg, la CEDH se penchera

à 09H15 sur deux requêtes déposées en mai 2019 et octobre 2020 par les parents de Françaises parties avec leurs compagnons en Syrie où elles ont eu des enfants et qui sont désormais détenues dans des camps de réfugiés du nord-est syrien. Ces camps rassemblent des membres de familles de djihadistes et sont administrés par les Forces démocratiques syriennes (FDS), conduites par les Kurdes.

Les quatre parents de ces deux femmes, désignés uniquement par leurs initiales, ont demandé au ministère français des Affaires étrangères le rapatriement en France de leurs filles et petits-enfants. Dans les deux cas, le juge des référés du tribunal administratif rejeta leurs demandes et les pourvois devant le Conseil d'Etat, plus haute juridiction administrative en France, ont été rejetés en avril 2019 et septembre 2020. Depuis la chute

de l'organisation Etat islamique en 2019, Paris a rapatrié une trentaine d'enfants au cas par cas, majoritairement des orphelins, mais estime, en revanche, que les adultes, accusés de complicité avec l'organisation ultraradicale, devraient être jugés sur place.

**Traitements inhumains ?**

Saisie à l'encontre d'un Etat lorsque tous les recours nationaux sont épuisés, la



CEDH juge du respect par 47 Etats du continent européen de la Convention européenne des droits de l'Homme. Dans ce cas, les 17 juges de la Grande Chambre, dont le président de la CEDH, l'Islandais Robert Spano, devront déterminer si la France a violé l'article 3 de la convention qui interdit les traitements inhumains ou dégradants.

Les requérants allèguent également que ces refus de rapatriement sont contraires à un article indiquant que «nul ne peut être privé du droit d'entrée sur le territoire de l'Etat dont il est le ressortissant». Dans la première affaire, la fille des requérants, née en 1991, a quitté la France en 2014 pour rejoindre le territoire syrien contrôlé par l'Etat islamique avec son compagnon, mort en février 2018. Ils ont eu deux enfants nés en Syrie en 2014 et 2016. La femme et



La Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme (CEDH) se penchera sur deux requêtes par les parents de Françaises parties avec leurs compagnons en Syrie. mrallen / stock.adobe.com

ses enfants auraient été arrêtés en février 2019 et seraient depuis dans le camp d'Al-Hol (nord-est de la Syrie), explique la CEDH.

Dans la seconde affaire, très similaire, la fille des requérants est partie en juillet 2015 pour l'Irak puis pour la Syrie, où elle donna naissance à un enfant en janvier 2019. Elle a été retenue avec son bébé dans le camp d'Al-Hol à

compter de mars 2019, puis dans le camp de Roj, également contrôlé par les Kurdes. «Le père aurait été emprisonné dans une prison kurde», poursuit la cour. L'ONG Save the Children a déploré jeudi le décès depuis début 2021 de 62 enfants dans ces deux camps abritant, dans des conditions de vie décriées, des dizaines de milliers de déplacés, dont quelque 40.000 enfants.

### Une décision ultérieure

Après l'audience, les juges de la CEDH se retireront pour délibérer et rendront leur décision dans plusieurs mois. Celle-ci sera définitive. L'audience, publique mais avec un accès restreint en raison de la situation sanitaire, sera filmée et la vidéo sera mise en ligne sur le site internet de la CEDH à partir de 14H30. Si la France est pour l'heure le seul Etat européen attaqué devant la CEDH sur cette question, sept États membres du Conseil de l'Europe (Norvège, Danemark, Royaume-Uni, Pays-Bas, Belgique, Espagne et Suède) ont demandé à intervenir dans la procédure, ce qui a également été accordé à plusieurs organisations non gouvernementales, comme la Défenseure des droits ou l'ONG britannique de défense des droits Repriev.

## Kurdistan au féminin

27 septembre, 2021

Le Kurdistan à travers le regard féminin

# Sidika Avar: La missionnaire kémaliste qui turquifiait les fillettes kurdes arrachées à leurs familles

Dès la naissance de la Turquie, la turquification des Kurdes qui n'ont pas été exterminés complètement malgré les massacres de Dersim, Zilan, Koçgiri... s'est accélérée avec des internats construits dans les régions kurdes. Ces internats étaient de véritables machines à broyer les enfants kurdes qui devaient oublier leur langue, leur culture et qui devaient être de petits kémalistes plus royalistes que le roi.

Sidika Avar, une kémaliste au service de l'assimilation des fillettes kurdes

Un des personnages clés de cette assimilation forcée est Sidika Avar, une enseignante kémaliste repérée et envoyée dans la région kurde d'Elazığ par Atatürk dans les années 30. Elle a pour mission d'aller chercher des fillettes kurdes dans les campagnes les plus reculées de Dersim, Bingol, Elazığ... et de les turquifier dans l'internat de l'Institut des



filles à Elazığ. Ainsi, entre 1939 et 1959, avant de démissionner de son poste, Avar aura arraché d'innombrables fillettes

kurdes à leurs familles en prétendant les « éduquer » et les assimilera dans son internat pour fille d'Elazığ.

## Irak : l'appel à la normalisation des relations avec Israël qui ne passe pas

Plus de 300 personnes réunies en colloque à Erbil ont réclamé la normalisation des relations avec Israël. Une première mal accueillie par Bagdad. Des mandats d'arrêts ont été lancés contre plusieurs participants.

Il n'a jamais été question pour l'Irak de voir Israël comme un interlocuteur fréquentable. Mais les lignes de l'acceptable ont bougé au Moyen-Orient. Portés par les « accords d'Abraham », signés il y a un an par les Émirats arabes unis et le Bahreïn pour normaliser leurs relations avec Israël, 300 personnalités irakiennes se sont retrouvées, vendredi 24 septembre, en colloque à Erbil (Kurdistan irakien) pour réclamer l'entrée de Bagdad dans un processus de paix avec l'État hébreu.

« Aucune force n'a le droit de nous empêcher de lancer un tel appel », a défendu Sahar al-Taï, directrice de recherches au ministère de la Culture à Bagdad, présentée pour l'occasion sous son titre de présidente d'une ONG féministe.

L'appel a reçu les encouragements les plus vifs de l'État d'Israël. Mais l'événement serait sans doute passé inaperçu si Bagdad n'avait pas réagi si vertement. Le gouvernement central a dénoncé une « réunion illégale (qui) ne représente pas (l'opinion) des populations et des habitants des villes irakiennes ».

Dimanche 26 septembre, la

justice irakienne a lancé des mandats d'arrêt contre trois des participants – un chef tribal, un ancien député et Sahar al-Taï elle-même – pour le « rôle » qu'ils ont joué dans ce « crime ». De nouvelles poursuites judiciaires attendent les autres participants, une fois qu'ils seront identifiés par la justice.

Liens historiques avec Israël

Car c'est bien là un fait nouveau. Les 300 personnalités sunnites et chiïtes venues « de six gouvernorats – Bagdad, Mossoul, Salaheddine, Al-Anbar, Diyala et Babylone », selon le think tank américain Center for Peace Communications (CPC) qui a organisé le colloque, ont parlé à visage découvert.

« Ce n'est pas la première fois qu'on entend des positions en faveur d'Israël », défend Myriam Benraad, professeure associée en relations internationales à l'université internationale Schiller (1). « Il existe un lien fort entre les deux pays. L'Irak abritait l'une des communautés juives les plus importantes et les plus anciennes du Moyen-Orient, et les Kurdes ont joué un rôle historique dans leur exfiltration vers Israël. Mais en parler ouvertement, c'était risquer d'être arrêté. »



Les 300 personnalités sunnites et chiïtes venues au colloque à Erbil, vendredi 24 septembre, ont parlé à visage découvert. SAFIN HAMED /AFP

### Sortir l'Irak du giron iranien

«Le CPC a eu un rôle de catalyseur mais l'initiative en revient aux personnalités présentes lors de cette conférence. Leur objectif assumé était de briser un tabou et de promouvoir une autre vision de la société irakienne, plus inclusive et attentive à la diversité culturelle et religieuse », explique David Khalfa, lui-même chercheur au CPC sur le Proche-Orient. « Il s'agit aussi de l'insertion de l'Irak dans un jeu d'alliance avec le bloc des pays arabes sunnites signataires des accords d'Abraham face aux puissances régionales non arabes que sont l'Iran et la Turquie. » À deux semaines d'élections

législatives, prévues le 10 octobre, qui s'annoncent moribondes, le message s'adresse directement au gouvernement de Bagdad et aux milices chiïtes pro-Iran qui quadrillent le paysage sécuritaire et politique irakien. « Il ne faut pas oublier que l'Iran est l'ennemi numéro un d'Israël dans la région. C'est une façon de faire un pied de nez à ce gouvernement qui n'est pas représentatif de la population », observe Myriam Benraad. Et d'appeler la communauté internationale à soutenir l'initiative.

(1) Autrice de « Terrorisme : les affaires de la vengeance » (Ed. Le Cavalier Bleu, 204 p., 20 €)



September 28, 2021  
By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

## Two explosions in Syrian town of Jarabulus kill 2, injures 14

**T**wo people were reported killed and 14 injured by two explosions in the Turkish-occupied city of Jarabulus in the northern countryside of Syria's Aleppo province.

The UK-based war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, reported that two explosions went off today in Jarabulus, one near the local council. The second explosion was caused by a motorcycle bomb inside the city. At least two people are reported dead and 14 injured as a result of these explosions.

The Syrian state news agency SANA also reported that "the two explosions caused the injury of several civilians and the injury of a number of Turkish occupation mercenaries (Syrian rebel fighters)."

Jarabulus is a strategic town on the west bank of the Euphrates River on Syria's border with Turkey.

Turkey invaded Jarabulus with the consent of Russia



An explosion in Jarabulus killed 2 people on Sept. 28, 2021. (Photo: Bein Haber)

in August 2016 to deny US-backed Kurdish-led forces the control of the area, which was then under the control of the Islamic State.

Apart from Jarabulus, Turkish-backed groups also control al-Bab, Afrin, Serekaniye, Tal Abyad, and hundreds of villages. Turkey also has military observation posts in Idlib province.

Turkish-occupied areas have been plagued by regular attacks on Turkish-backed forces and indiscriminate bombings that have also killed civilians. The area sees frequent infighting between rival factions that also lead to civilian deaths.

No one has credibly claimed responsibility for these incidents. Nevertheless, the Tur-

kish state has blamed insurgents tied to the People's Protection Units (YPG) for similar deadly attacks in the past.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the YPG have rejected such accusations and condemned previous attacks of this nature.





28 Septembre 2021

## En Turquie, la «question kurde» à nouveau dans le débat public

Pour le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui a échoué à la résoudre malgré 19 années de pouvoir, cette question a tout du piège... C'est même carrément un tabou depuis que son parti est allié à la droite ultranationaliste.

C'est Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, dirigeant du principal parti d'opposition – le CHP, qui se revendique social-démocrate – qui a relancé le débat. Il y a dans ce pays « une question kurde que l'autorité politique n'arrive pas à résoudre depuis 35-40 ans », a déclaré Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, avant de soulever le point qui cristallise tous les débats : « Avec qui discuter et résoudre cette question kurde ? »

### Diviser l'opposition, la stratégie d'Erdogan

Kemal Kılıçdaroglu a reproché au pouvoir d'avoir tenté de négocier directement entre 2012 et 2015 avec le PKK, Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan – donc avec un groupe armé classé terroriste – alors que, selon lui, seul le Parlement devrait accueillir de tels débats. Et, au sein du Parlement, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu a désigné le parti prokurde, le HDP, comme un interlocuteur légitime. Or, la stratégie de Recep Tayyip Erdogan pour les élections de 2023 consiste à diviser l'opposition en présentant le HDP comme un parti lié au terrorisme.

Il est d'ailleurs actuellement menacé de fermeture par la Cour constitutionnelle. Ce genre de déclaration peut met-



Manifestation en soutien au HDP, à Istanbul, à Istanbul, le jeudi 18 mars 2021. AP - Emrah Gurel

tre en difficulté Recep Tayyip Erdogan pour au moins trois raisons. D'abord, elle montre que sa stratégie pour diviser l'opposition ne fonctionne pas vraiment. Le Bon parti, une formation d'opposition ultranationaliste peu susceptible d'être accusée de sympathies prokurdes, a réagi en soulignant lui aussi la légitimité du HDP au sein du Parlement. Ensuite, elle met le chef de l'État en difficulté vis-à-vis de son principal allié depuis 2015-2016, le parti ultranationaliste MHP, pour lequel il est hors de question de relancer le débat. Recep Tayyip Erdogan a d'ailleurs fini par répondre qu'il n'y avait « pas de question kurde

» en Turquie. Enfin, en tenant de tels propos, Recep Tayyip Erdogan se discrédite encore un peu plus au sein d'une large partie de l'électorat kurde, qui jouera pourtant un rôle clé aux prochaines élections.

### Quelle place pour les Kurdes en Turquie ?

Ce débat donne-t-il déjà le ton de la campagne qui précédera les élections, censées se tenir en juin 2023. La Cour constitutionnelle pourrait se prononcer début 2022 – peut-être même avant – sur l'interdiction du HDP. En affirmant qu'il n'y a « pas de question kurde »,

qu'elle a déjà été résolue, Recep Tayyip Erdogan assimile et réduit la question kurde à la lutte contre le PKK lequel est effectivement acculé en Turquie ces dernières années.

Mais ce que le HDP représente, ce que le principal parti d'opposition (CHP) suggère et ce que beaucoup d'électeurs entendent par « question kurde », c'est un débat beaucoup plus large sur la place, les droits et les libertés des citoyens kurdes en Turquie, qui représenteraient plus ou moins 15 % de la population. Et c'est ce débat-là que Recep Tayyip Erdogan ne veut plus, ne peut plus tenir.

## Hakkari transformée en prison à ciel ouvert par le régime turc

**T**raversée d'une multitude de points de contrôle et de zones militaires strictes, la province de Hakkari, au Nord-Kurdistan, a été transformée en prison à ciel ouvert par le régime islamo-nationaliste turc.

L'état permanent de guerre et d'urgence au Kurdistan du nord (Turquie) peut être observé le plus clairement à Hakkari (kurde : Colemêrg). Le simple fait d'entrer et de sortir de la province signifie des heures d'attente aux points de contrôle militaires. Des arrestations ont régulièrement lieu dans la région qui est une zone réglementée à 80%. Bien que l'agriculture et l'élevage soient les

principales sources de revenus dans cette province extrêmement pauvre, la plupart des pâturages et des alpages sont interdits d'accès par les autorités turques. Briser la volonté politique et chasser la population rurale

Hakkari est traditionnellement un bastion de la résistance kurde, ainsi qu'un fief électoral du Parti démocratique des Peuples (HDP). C'est dans cette région que le HDP a recueilli le plus de voix, 85%, lors des dernières élections. Afin de briser la résistance kurde, le gouverneur de la province a banni les manifestations publiques, une interdiction en vigueur depuis 2016. Alors que les partis

au pouvoir ont loisir d'organiser toutes sortes de rassemblements, les Kurdes sont empêchés d'organiser une quelconque activité. Les interdictions de manifestations sont prolongées tous les 15 jours depuis 2016. Il est même interdit d'allumer des bougies ou de faire voler des ballons. L'objectif des interdictions est d'inciter la population à quitter la région. Les villageois sont particulièrement affectés par le délabrement économique.

Autorisation spéciale pour aller à Berçelan

Les alpages de Berçelan sont connus comme le cœur de l'acti-

tivité pastorale à Hakkari. Située à environ 18 kilomètres du centre-ville, la zone était autrefois un important site de festivités et de villégiature. Aujourd'hui, les personnes voulant se rendre dans la zone doivent avoir un permis spécial délivré par le gouverneur, la police ou l'armée.

« Ce permis n'est pas donné à tout le monde, explique un éleveur de Hakkari. Nous ne pouvons même pas aller dans les alpages en famille. Des drones et des hélicoptères survolent la zone 24 heures sur 24. Il y a des soldats partout. Toute personne qui entre dans la région sans autorisation est arrêtée. »



September 28, 2021

## Kurdistan's Weekly Brief September 28, 2021

### Iran

Approximately 100 activists, religious leaders, and other public figures released a statement calling for the United Nations (UN), Amnesty International, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to condemn the Iranian regime's recent attacks on Kurdish opposition parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. The signatories also requested the international community and KRG mediate negotiations between the Iranian government and opposition parties like the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in the hopes of securing a peaceful solution to Iran's Kurdish question. That said, the Iranian government, emboldened by the US

withdrawal from Afghanistan, has shown little interest in such a process and threatened to launch additional operations targeting dissidents in Iraq.

Unknown assailants attacked a female Kurdish activist named Naska Afkhami's father's house with grenades in Sardasht on Thursday morning and caused extensive property damage. The attack followed Afkhami's release of the names of dozens of individuals responsible for sexually abusing women on social media. Dozens of activists then defied a government ban and held protests in the city calling for the prosecution of those suspected of sex crimes on Saturday. Iranian security forces arrested

several more Kurds as part of the regime's ongoing war on Kurdish rights, including Hassan Qodrati in Oshnavieh (Shinno), Garib Sharifzadeh in Saqqez, Loqman Pirkhezarian in Sanandaj, and Pihnam Khasarpanah in Divanderrah (Diwandara). Furthermore, the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights reported Iranian authorities tortured a jailed Kurdish man named Shahin Nasri to death for testifying about the regime's torture of Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari Sangari. At the same time, Bijar's Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced a Kurdish activist named Danish Mawlawi to five years in prison for "propaganda against the regime" and "membership of a Kurdish opposition party."

### Iraq

A US-based nonprofit organization called the Center for Peace Communications sponsored a conference in Erbil called as-Salam and al-Istirad (Peace and Reclamation) that was attended by hundreds of Shi'a and Sunni Arabs, activists, tribal leaders, and former military commanders on Thursday and Friday. The conference, which concluded with approximately 300 attendees calling for the normalization of relations between Iraq and Israel in line with the Abraham Accords, was met with fierce opposition from Iraq's Iranian-backed political parties and government officials. Moreover, the

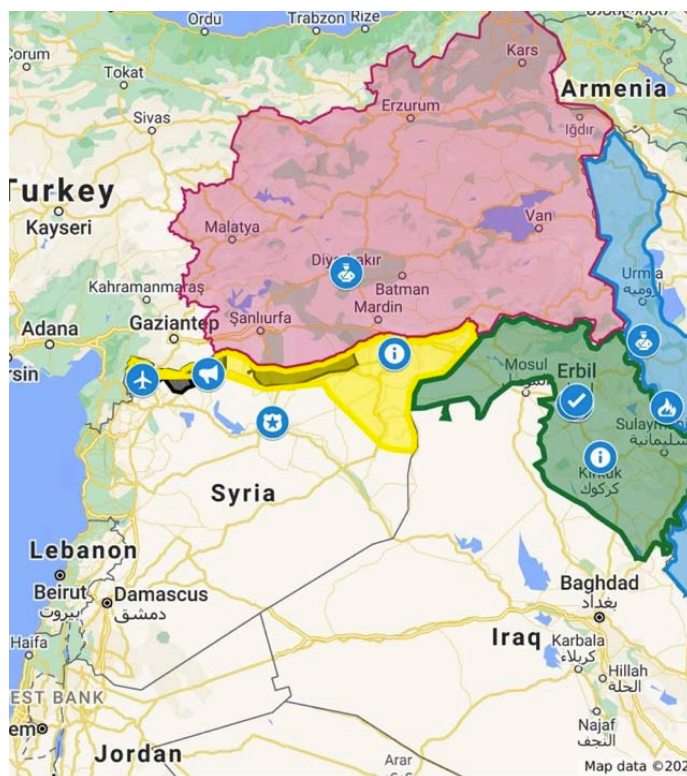
KRG, fearing the conference was a ploy hatched by Baghdad and Tehran to incite anti-Kurdish sentiment, rejected it and claimed to have “no previous information regarding its agenda.” The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and several Kurdish Islamist parties also refused to endorse the event.

Iraqi and Kurdish political parties brushed off fears of low voter turnout and continued campaigning for the parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10. Concurrently, Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) bowed to pressure from the Turkmen Front and the Arab Coalition by forming a committee of five non-Kurdish members to oversee elections in Kirkuk Governorate. Iraqi Kurds fear this move will limit the power of Kirkuk’s IHEC branch and facilitate voter fraud in favor of non-Kurdish candidates in the “Disputed Territories.”

US Consul General for Erbil Robert Palladino commemorated the consulate’s tenth anniversary on Wednesday by providing updates on the construction of what will be the largest US consulate in the world and reiterating the US’s commitment to Iraqi Kurdistan. “We believe that the United States and Kurdistan Region are better together,” said Palladino during the event attended by Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region Masrour Barzani and several other KRG officials. Prime Minister Barzani responded to Palladino’s remarks by saying, “The Kurdistan Region is better and stronger through your work and your presence.” Meanwhile, the US Consulate General Erbil announced more than four billion dollars had been granted to different sectors of Iraqi Kurdistan during the past decade. Finally, Spain announced plans to open a consulate in Erbil soon.

### Syria

After visiting Moscow, a Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) delegation arrived in Washington and



held a meeting with US officials and Congress. The delegation was led by Ilham Ahmed, the head of the SDC, and consisted of Gassan al Yousif, Co-chair of the Deir Ez Zor civil council, and Nazira Gowrie, Co-chair of al Jazeera. In a public event, Ahmed expressed “willingness to dialogue with Turkey and to resolve all disputes with it by peaceful means and dialogue.” Ahmed also revealed plans of the Autonomous Administration for North and East of Syria (AANES) to hold elections and their acceptance of “International monitoring to ensure the democracy and transparency of the elections.”

The Manbij Military Council (MMC), part of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), said that Turkey and its Syrian proxies attacked north of the city with 723 rockets in September. The MMC said the shellings targeted villages and areas north of Manbij, damaging the electrical system, homes, and farmlands. Meanwhile, Turkey resumed bombarding areas between the SDF control and the Turkish occupation, including north of the

Christian town, Tal Tamer, Ain Essa, and Marea. Kurdish media outlets also reported firings upon on Russian planes by Turkish proxies near Tal Tamer on Sunday.

The SDF announced the capture of three more ISIS (Da’esh) terrorists, who were “wanted terrorists” in Raqqa responsible for “hiding and transferring” Da’esh terrorists and “planning and carrying out assassinations.” Furthermore, with support of the US-led coalition, the SDF arrested another Da’esh terrorist in al Hasakah city, involved in “smuggling weapons.” Separately, in the early hours of Tuesday, September 28, more unknown airstrikes targeted Iranian-backed militias near Abu Kamal al Miadin on Iraqi-Syrian borders.

For the third time in a week, Russian jets struck Turkish-backed jihadists in Afrin, killing four Turkish-backed al Hamza militants and wounding a dozen. Both Russia and Turkey have been at odds in the recent week in the “de-escalation zone” simultaneously, the Syrian regime is

retaking more areas under the Syrian opposition.

### Turkey

The fourth “Kobani Trial” against 108 politicians of the Pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) adjourned due to the judge’s quarantine. The trials continued last Monday and Tuesday. The HDP Co-chair Pervin Buldan accused the judiciary system in Turkey of working by “orders from above” since the case had no legal base but has been politicized by the Turkish ruling party of Justice and Development (AKP) and its ally Nationalist Movement (MHP).

A court in Aydin sentenced an HDP Kurdish politician, Firat Keser to seven years and six months in prison for “membership of a terrorist organization.” Moreover, a criminal court in Diyarbakir (Amed) sentenced a Kurdish lawyer named Nurcan Kaya to one year and three months in prison for “making propaganda for a terrorist organization.” Meanwhile, another racist attack in Turkey targeted Kurdish agricultural workers in Düzce where a mob surrounded their residence and broke a window, demanding they leave since they “do not tolerate Kurds.” According to the victims, the police sided with the attackers and closed the case. Last Friday, the HDP lawmaker, Tülay Hatimogulları, also faced an attack on her home in Ankara when two men posed as “civilian police” and tried to break into her home. In a press conference, Hatimogulları said the prosecutors did not accept her case in court, accusing the government of putting more pressure on the HDP.

The HDP announced a new roadmap to tackle Turkey’s fundamental issues, including the Kurdish question. The road map “Call for Democracy, Justice, and Peace” was announced by both HDP Co-chairs Pervin Buldan and Mithat Sançar. The plan’s announcement came after months of HDP rallies in the Kurdish region and cities with HDP support base.



## Turkey's political realities clash with Erdogan's 2023 dreams

Since the last elections in 2019, two debates have dominated the Turkish political scene: the possibility of early elections and a new electoral system. Opposition parties have been calling for an early election while the government repeatedly initiates discussions about new election regulations.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as he was departing for the UN General Assembly gathering in New York, told the press that his AKP party will send the new election proposal to the Parliament to upon his return. The new law needs to be confirmed at least a year prior to the election day, according to existing laws. Senior AKP officials have been telling the public the new electoral law needs to be finalized by June 2022. Although it has almost become a tradition that the government will revise the rules of the game each electoral cycle, this time the public has been kept in the dark as to what the new system will be like, as polls show a gradual decline of AKP's popularity.

The only change that Erdogan has publicly confirmed with his de-facto coalition partner, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), is to lower the 10 percent electoral threshold. This national threshold, one of the highest in the world, was established after the 1980 military coup to keep the Islamists and the Kurds out of the parliament. Erdogan has promised multiple times to change this archaic rule. This time, he has announced it will be set at 7 percent, and some networks have even claimed it will be



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi, Russia, on Sept. 29. - VLADIMIR SMIRNOV/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

lowered to 5 percent. It is plausible, because MHP's vote share in several polls is below 10 percent. Details of the new proposals are not clear yet, but the government is concerned that the MHP's decreasing popularity is now becoming a burden for AKP.

MHP is an ultra-nationalist far-right party dating back to the 1960s with a youth branch known as the Gray Wolves (GW), with offices all around Turkey and Europe. Recently, the GW organization has come under scrutiny in Europe for their attacks against Armenians, and Kurds among others. France and Austria have banned the movement and other European countries may follow. Now the question whether to designate GW as a terrorist organization has also reached the US Congress.

Anti-immigrant and ultra-nationalist sentiment in Turkey is on the rise among all groups. So much so that Erdogan had to declare that Turkey "can no longer bear the burden of the new immigration wave."

Whenever security concerns and nationalistic feelings surge MHP traditionally has benefited from it in the polls. Yet not this time. How can we explain this puzzle? There are three main processes at work.

First, the ideological spectrum of political parties has changed since the switch in 2018 from a parliamentarian to executive presidential system, marked by a powerful executive branch and weak checks and balances. "The projected vote loss in the polls for both parties in the government should be read as the incompetence of the government to provide solutions to key problems of the country," Seren Selvin Korkmaz, a political analyst and executive director of IstanPol institute, told Al-Monitor. "Up till now, they have been fed by ideological stands. For MHP, it was ultra-nationalist and defense policies. Whenever there was a terror attack, or a flareup with Kurdish issues or a security concern, MHP's popularity would increase. Now it is the economic crisis."

MHP has also lost steam in its ideological stand. For example,

no one remembers the last time MHP members stood by the concerns of Turkic Uygurs. As uncontrolled migration into Turkey has skyrocketed, MHP stayed mum and aligned with AKP. "Turkish citizenship is devalued, now on sale to Arabs and where are MHP's top echelons?" said a junior member of MHP who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution. "Gray Wolves are a hierarchical organization where respect for elders is the norm. That is why you won't hear public complaints, but there is strong resentment among the grassroots"

The second explanation is that the ultra-nationalist movement has been divided within itself. While MHP's vote share projections are decreasing, the İyi (Good) Party, a breakaway group from the MHP which is now in opposition, is rising.

Plus, other opposition parties, such as Republican People's Party (CHP) have capitalized on the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment and growing security vulnerability. CHP's harsh criticism of the government's policies and the rising of unhappiness about changing demographics has compelled Erdogan to change his rhetoric about refugees. MHP, however, "has been slow and incompetent in controlling Erdogan's pro-Muslim Brotherhood and pro-Arab policies," said the junior MHP member. He argued that the leadership is happy to share the benefits of being in government and has given unconditional support to AKP. "Even when AKP changes their tune, and switches back to a nationalist

standpoint, we are still behind. We lost the cause," he added.

That said, the Good Party has several outspoken members on social media with a broad reach to provoke anti-Syrian, anti-Afghan, anti-refugee statements. Initially, Turkish elites both on the left and among the Islamists tried to soften these statements by speaking out against racism and discrimination, but the popular reaction was too broad and too strong to resist. They have quietly retreated.

Now, Erdogan and AKP are moving to "keep refugees out of sight, out of the news" said a scholar who works for a pro-government think tank, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We won't be hearing about problems with refugees or seeing many images about

them in the next couple of months. The conversation will be focused back to the 'Kurdish problem' because that is more divisive for the opposition, whereas anti-refugee sentiments not only unify the opposition but also help them to grow in numbers taken from the AKP-MHP base. So, all the media is told to curb their reporting on refugees."

Finally, MHP is now seen as part of the problem. Economic struggles, increased illegal immigration, youth unemployment, and corruption are all associated with the government, and MHP is now a part of the establishment. Yunus Sozen, an assistant professor of political science at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY, told Al-Monitor, "I believe that the national electoral threshold is not necessarily getting lowered

because the MHP votes are on the decline (although they seem to be), but it is probably because the MHP wanted to gain room for maneuver."

With a threshold at 7 percent, Sozen said, the MHP can participate in the election outside of electoral alliances, with more bargaining power. If the two coalition parties lowered the threshold to 7 percent, without any other changes, "that would be a big win for the MHP's bargaining power in the ruling alliance," Sozen said. If the ruling alliance continues, "the best-case scenario for the MHP is a parliamentary distribution of seats where the AKP does not acquire a parliamentary majority but is dependent on the MHP for that." If a 7 percent threshold is the only change, "it would tell me

that the AKP seems to acquiesce to dependency on the MHP in the parliament, in return for the presidency."

Although MHP has shared political power with AKP for the last five years, they have failed to expand their own political base. "AKP still needs MHP, but for how long, we ask?" said a senior AKP bureaucrat working for the military security agencies. "They might be discarded if their contributions diminish and they become a liability to Erdogan. Now it is clear that [MHP leader Devlet] Bahçeli is a hindrance to any sort of Kurdish outreach. The new election laws might have to take that into consideration. Bahçeli's ultra-nationalism has become anti-Kurdish rather than pro-Turkish, and that costs us."

Le Monde

29 Septembre 2021  
Par Par Sasha Loizot

## En Turquie, mobilisation étudiante sur fond de crise économique

A Istanbul et dans d'autres grandes villes turques, des centaines d'étudiants se mobilisent pour dénoncer leurs conditions de vie et inciter les autorités à agir.

**L**a nuit vient de tomber à Istanbul, vendredi 24 septembre. Sur les marches de la petite place, devant la mosquée de l'arrondissement de Sisli, sur la rive européenne, ils sont une vingtaine d'étudiants rassemblés pour un cinquième jour de veille. Plusieurs camarades passent leur apporter du thé et quelques biscuits pour tenir jusqu'au matin. Aucune bannière n'est affichée, pas d'affiliation politique revendiquée, mais un seul message : «

Nous ne pouvons pas nous loger. »

« Cela fait longtemps que le problème se pose », explique Kemal, 23 ans, un des étudiants à l'origine de la mobilisation. « Aujourd'hui, c'est devenu impossible de trouver un logement (...) alors nous avons décidé de manifester en allant dormir dans la rue. » A peine lancé, l'appel de Kemal et de ses amis a reçu un accueil retentissant sur les réseaux sociaux. Des centaines

d'étudiants se mobilisent désormais à Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Diyarbakir et d'autres villes de province. Chaque soir, ils se retrouvent en place publique pour dénoncer leurs conditions de vie et inciter les autorités à agir.

### Explosion du prix des loyers

L'initiative, qui met directement en question les orientations de la politique gouvernementale, n'est pas sans rappeler le mouvement étudiant du début

de l'année. Les étudiants de la prestigieuse université du Bosphore, à Istanbul, s'étaient alors mobilisés contre la nomination d'un recteur proche du pouvoir. Le gouvernement, lui, ne s'était pas engagé à considérer les étudiants comme des interlocuteurs.

« La Turquie est le pays qui dispose du plus grand nombre de lits et de résidences universitaires publiques, a déclaré le président Recep Tayyip Erdogan, en début de semaine, à la

sortie d'un conseil des ministres. Ceux qui dorment dans les parcs, les jardins et sur les bancs ces derniers jours n'ont rien à voir avec des étudiants, je vous le dis très clairement. Ces soi-disant étudiants ne sont qu'une nouvelle version de ceux qui étaient à Gezi [manifestations antigouvernementales de 2013]. »

Le prix des loyers dans les grandes villes a explosé ces derniers mois et nombre d'étudiants se retrouvent sans logement à quelques jours à peine de la rentrée universitaire. Kemal, lui, vivait dans le quartier d'Usküdar, sur la rive asiatique du Bosphore, avec cinq colocataires. Pour payer sa part des 2 000 livres turques (200 euros) de loyer, il a trouvé un petit boulot en parallèle de ces études : « Au bout d'un moment, j'ai arrêté d'aller à l'université, car je devais travailler. Mes priorités ont changé par la force des choses. J'essayais d'obtenir mon diplôme malgré tout, mais je n'ai pas réussi. » Faute de revenu régulier, il a dû quitter son appartement et a préféré changer d'université pour aller à Kocaeli, une ville de province, à 80 kilomètres du centre d'Istanbul. « Tous mes rêves sont partis en fumée », conclut-il, sans que sa déception entame sa détermination à poursuivre le combat. « Si nous ne trouvons pas de maison, nous ferons des étoiles notre toit et de nos sacs à dos nos oreillers », affichent-ils comme slogan : une formulation poétique qui a ému les rangs de l'opposition. Lundi 27 septembre, l'intervention des forces de police s'est soldée par une cinquantaine de gardes à vue à Istanbul et Izmir. Les étudiants ont été rapidement libérés et promettent de poursuivre le mouvement.

La Turquie compte 8 millions d'étudiants mais ne dispose que de 719 000 places en résidence universitaire. La colocation pourrait être une solution viable pour beaucoup d'entre



Rassemblement étudiant devant le parc de la mosquée Sisli, à Istanbul, le 24 septembre 2021. SINEM DISLI POUR « LE MONDE »

eux si les prix des loyers dans les grandes villes n'avaient pas explosé : « Depuis un an, et tout particulièrement ces cinq derniers mois, les loyers à Istanbul ont augmenté de 35 % à 40 % en moyenne. Mais on enregistre une augmentation de 100 à 150 % dans certains quartiers », confirme Nizamettin Asa, président de la chambre professionnelle des agents immobiliers d'Istanbul. « Seuil de la faim »

« Une de nos principales demandes, c'est l'augmentation des bourses, explique Hüseyin Arif, 21 ans, en deuxième année au département d'histoire de l'université du Bosphore. Elles sont de 650 livres turques pour l'instant [65 euros]. Je connais beaucoup de gens qui n'ont que ça, mais c'est impossible de vivre avec si peu d'argent. »

L'inflation galopante continue en effet de réduire les portions quotidiennes de nourriture dans les ménages les plus modestes du pays. Pour rendre compte de cette réalité, municipalités et syndicats utilisent

désormais comme donnée de référence le « seuil de la faim » et non plus uniquement le seuil de pauvreté : la confédération ouvrière Türk-İs estime ainsi en septembre 2021 qu'une famille de quatre personnes se trouverait en insécurité alimentaire en dessous de 3 049 livres turques, une somme supérieure au salaire minimum.

Aussi, la situation des étudiants souligne la gravité de la crise économique que traverse le pays ainsi que l'impasse dans laquelle se trouve aujourd'hui la jeunesse turque. Avec un taux de chômage qui avoisine les 26 % chez les jeunes, d'après les statistiques officielles, l'avenir est incertain et nombreux sont ceux qui partent tenter leur chance à l'étranger quand ils en ont les moyens.

« Il y a un climat de peur qui règne, mais il s'est fissuré avec les manifestations de l'université du Bosphore. Même si nous ne sommes que 200 ou 300 aujourd'hui, ceux qui sont au pouvoir savent parfaitement que nous représentons beau-

coup plus de personnes. Ils savent aussi très bien que ce sont eux les responsables de cette situation », assure Hüseyin Arif. En une semaine, les organisateurs de la mobilisation ont reçu près de 1 000 formulaires remplis d'étudiants de tout le pays racontant la précarité de leur situation. Un lien disponible sur leur compte Instagram invitait les étudiants à faire part de leur situation personnelle pour évaluer les besoins dans l'ensemble du pays.

La jeunesse turque née dans les années 2000 n'a connu que le pouvoir de l'AKP. Friande de réseaux sociaux, elle est très connectée et ouverte sur le monde. Cette « génération Z », selon l'expression largement utilisée en Turquie pour la désigner, fait l'objet de spéculations récurrentes dans l'espace public et intéresse tout particulièrement les partis politiques. Représentant 7 millions d'électeurs, elle est appelée à constituer un réservoir de voix décisif lors des élections législatives et présidentielle de 2023, l'année du centenaire de la République turque.



The New York Times

September 28, 2021  
By Vivian Yee

# ‘I Can’t Imagine a Good Future’: Young Iranians Increasingly Want Out

**A**mir, an engineering master’s student standing outside Tehran University, had thought about going into digital marketing, but worried that Iran’s government would restrict Instagram, as it had other apps. He had considered founding a start-up, but foresaw American sanctions and raging inflation blocking his way.

Every time he tried to plan, it seemed useless, said Amir, who at first would not give his real name. He was afraid of his country, he said, and he wanted to leave after graduation.

“I’m a person who’s 24 years old, and I can’t imagine my life when I’m 45,” he said. “I can’t imagine a good future for myself or for my country. Every day, I’m thinking about leaving. And every day, I’m thinking about, if I leave my country, what will happen to my family?”

This is life now for many educated urbanites in Tehran, the capital, who once pushed for loosening social restrictions and opening Iran to the world, and who saw the 2015 nuclear deal with the United States as a reason for hope.

But three years ago, President Donald J. Trump reneged on the agreement and reimposed harsh economic sanctions, leaving these Iranians feeling burned by the Americans and isolated under a newly elected president at home who is antithetical to their values — a hard-liner vowing further defiance of the West.

After years of sanctions, mismanagement and the pan-



Supporters of the campaign for the ultraconservative presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi, who won the election in June. Credit... Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

dem, it is easy to put numbers to Iran’s economic struggles. Since 2018, many prices have more than doubled, living standards have skidded and poverty has spread, especially among rural Iranians. All but the wealthiest have been brought low.

But there is no statistic for middle-class Iranians’ uncertainty and increasingly pinched aspirations. Their darkening mood can best be measured in missed milestones — in the rush to leave the country after graduation, in delayed marriages and declining birthrates. In conversations around Tehran during a recent visit, Iranians wavered between faith and despair, hope and practicality, wondering how to make the best of a situation beyond their control.

In Tehran for the day to run errands — he needed a phone,

she had government paperwork — Bardja Ariafar, 19, and Zahra Saberi, 24, sat on a bench in Daneshjoo Park, exercising one of the subtle social freedoms Iranians have carved out under the strict theocracy in recent years. Despite a ban on gender mixing in public, men and women now sit together in the open.

The friends work at Digikala, the Amazon of Iran, sorting goods in a warehouse in Karaj, a suburb now full of ex-Tehran residents seeking cheaper rents. Mr. Ariafar said he was supplementing his income as a computer programmer. Ms. Saberi, like many overqualified young Iranians, had not found a job that would let her use her Persian literature degree.

And when Ms. Saberi marries, she and her family will have to pay for their share of everything

the couple would need, from household appliances, new clothes and a customary mirror-and-candlesticks set to a house. The groom’s family will supply a gold-and-diamond jewelry set for the wedding.

But after Iran’s currency, the rial, lost about 70 percent of its value in just a few years, her family could no longer afford it.

The rial plunged from about 43,000 to the dollar in January 2018 to about 277,000 this week, a decline that forced the government last year to introduce a new unit, the toman, to slash four zeros off the bills. But everything from rents to clothing prices is based on the dollar because most raw materials are imported, so Iranians are spending much more of their incomes on much less.

In 2020, the percentage of Ira-

nians living on the equivalent of less than \$5.60 per day had risen to 13 percent from less than 10 percent a decade ago, according to an analysis by Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, a Virginia Tech economist. It was worse in rural areas, where about a quarter of the population lives in poverty, up from 22 percent in 2019.

Increasingly, Iran's middle class has felt the pressure. Mr. Arifafar's new smartphone cost him 70 percent of a month's wages.

"It's hard to succeed and develop in Iran," he said, "so maybe that's my only choice, to go abroad."

But for Ms. Saberi, leaving was not an option.

"This is my home, my land, my culture," she said. "I can't imagine leaving it. We have to make it better, not flee."

In July, Iranian authorities unveiled a solution to Iran's marriage and childbirth crisis: a state-sanctioned dating app. But for the young Iranians the authorities would like to start families, matches may not be the problem.

Standing in Tehran's Grand Bazaar, Zahra slid on a braided gold-and-diamond wedding ring, the jewelry store's overhead lights glinting off her hot-pink manicure.

"How much?" she asked, holding her finger up for her fiancé's inspection.

"We'll give a good discount," replied Milod, 38, the owner.

"Do you have any fake diamonds?"

"No, but I'll give you a good discount," he repeated.

"I don't want real diamonds," she said, removing the ring.

With the price of gold up tenfold, by jewelers' estimates, in the past few years, more couples have opted for costume jewelry.



Credit...Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

Others marry in small, hurried ceremonies, while saving up to leave. Some postpone marriage into their 30s; others are priced out.

The next step, too, has edged out of reach.

Iran's fertility rate dropped by nearly 30 percent from 2005 to 2020, to 1.8 children per woman in 2020, prompting a flurry of incentives.

Would-be parents are troubled by the possibility of further unrest, even war. No one knows whether the ultraconservative president, Ebrahim Raisi, will curb the few social freedoms that Iranians have carved out like the Western music throbbing through many cafes or even the tattoos snaking up young people's arms.

And will the economy ever become strong enough to give a child a good life?

Zahra Negarestan, 35, and Maysam Saleh, 38, got lucky — up to a point.

They married six months before Mr. Trump reimposed sanctions. Soon after, everything they were expected to buy before marrying doubled in price.

"It was bad then," Ms. Negarestan said. "We didn't think it could get worse."

The couple, who recently started a business selling pottery wheels, said they have both always wanted children. Yet they keep putting off a decision.

"You can either have a very objective view of things — to have a baby, I need insurance, I need a job with this much income," said Mr. Saleh, who works for a water treatment company and freelances in video production. "Or you can base it on faith — once you have a baby, God will provide. But on any given day, my practical side is winning."

Ms. Negarestan has held onto some optimism.

"Maybe," she said, "he or she will find a better way to live."

But if they have a baby and the country deteriorates, she said, they will leave. Between hope and despair, there is compromise.

For some, it involves getting married in fake jewels and a rented dress. For others, it involves smuggling.

Tehran's rich can still find Dutch coffee filters and baby carrots from California, at a price, thanks to a cottage industry of small-time sanctions-busters. On the capital's streets, late-model AirPods poke from ears,

and any traffic jam might include a shiny Range Rover.

When Fatemeh, 39, started working as an information technology engineer 17 years ago, she said she earned enough to save for a house and support a comfortable life. Three children and a steep economic decline later, however, she needed to pad her income.

After the 2018 sanctions, as foreign clothing stores disappeared or raised prices, she detected opportunity. Soon, she was paying Iranians in Turkey to buy products online and fly or drive them home.

Three years later, business is brisk. Her customers pay a 20 percent markup for foreign brands rather than resign themselves to Iranian ones.

"It's not like with the sanctions, you say, 'Goodbye lifestyle, goodbye everything that I wanted,'" she said. "We try to find a way around it."

Yet even after doubling her income, Fatemeh said she was barely keeping up. Her children's school costs four times what it did a few years ago, she said, and her grocery bill has quintupled.

With two more years' hard work, she said, she might just catch up to inflation — longer, if things got worse.





September 30, 2021

## President Nechirvan Barzani receives letter from France's Macron

**K**urdistan Region - France will continue the fight against terrorism and develop economic and social ties with the Kurdistan Region, French President Emmanuel Macron said in a letter sent to Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani on Thursday.

According to a statement, Macron in the letter expressed his gratitude for the "warm welcome" he received in Erbil last month. He added that France and the Kurdistan Region "have a historic and unmatched relationship that needs to be kept at a high level."

The French President also expressed his delight in meeting Masoud Barzani and the family of Hujam Surchi, a Peshmerga who was killed by the Islamic State (ISIS) in 2015.

"Be certain that France will continue in the fight against terrorism, and also developing economic and social ties with you," he added.

The letter comes a month after the French President visited Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

Macron was in Baghdad last month to attend a regional summit bringing together nine

Middle Eastern countries and France to discuss improving regional cooperation.

Following the summit, he visited the Kurdistan Region for the first time and met with local officials.

The visit came after President Barzani had in March visited Paris and met with the French president.

The relationship between Kurds and France goes back to the 1980s. Danielle Mitterrand, the first lady of France from 1981 to 1995, advocated for Kurds suffering under the regime of Saddam Hussein and

was instrumental in campaigning for the no-fly zone that allowed the Kurdistan Region to develop its current autonomy. She was affectionately known as the "Mother of Kurds", and inaugurated the first Kurdish parliament in 1992.

France was one of the first countries to open a consulate in the Kurdish capital of Erbil after the fall of Hussein's regime in 2003 and played a critical role in helping Kurds both in Iraq and in Syria in the war against ISIS, including in supplying arms and training to the Kurdish forces.



September 30;2021

## Kurdish music overcame harsh oppression

**D**espite being completely banned and brutally suppressed by Turkish, Iranian, Syrian, and Iraqi regimes for decades, Kurdish music has survived and thrived.

In the past, Kurdish musicians were arrested for their Kurdish songs and even killed by those regimes. Those regimes banned everything related to

Kurdish music and songs.

"Saddam's regime banned all kinds of books on Kurdish music," said Abdullah Jamal, a Kurdish music expert. "In the 1980s, when I was doing my masters in music, I had no sources, no books about Kurdish music. And if you had a book about it, you would have been arrested, or worse, killed."

Kurdish music is distinct from Arabic, Persian, Turkish, or Armenian music. It is unique in its vocals and rhythms.

Kurdish musical instruments include tanbur, saz, qernete, duduk, kaval, shimshal (long flute), zurna (oboe), drum, and daf.

Each village, each town, each

region in Kurdistan has its unique music. Siya Chamana, for instance, belongs only to the Hawraman region, where each village has its own different version. Hayran is another example that is a mark of Erbil city and its surroundings. Hayran is about mountains, romance, social and cultural stories, and anecdotes.



The New York Times

September 29, 2021

By Jane Arraf

# Talk of Iraq Recognizing Israel Prompts Threats of Arrest or Death

A conference promoting normalization, organized by a little-known American group, prompted a furor, pointing to the volatility and danger in Iraqi politics.

A conference last Friday in Iraq's Kurdistan Region looked routine enough, with speakers at a satin-draped table in the ballroom of a luxury hotel and men in suits and tribal robes in the audience.

But there was nothing routine about the agenda: pressing for Iraq to normalize relations with Israel, a rare and risky public stance in Iraq that has emerged as an unexpected flash point in the simmering tensions between the Kurds and central government. Participants are now facing arrest warrants, death threats and the loss of jobs.

A standoff has ensued between Iraqi security officials who want to seize those involved and the Kurdish authorities, who are refusing to turn over the wanted Iraqis who are their guests — despite the threat of attack by Iranian-backed militias. A key speaker has recanted and said he was tricked.

The uproar is a reminder of how volatile Iraq is, with political, economic and fighting power fragmented among competing players, with none more potent than those militias aligned with Tehran, Israel's most implacable foe.

The conference sponsor was a little-known nonprofit group based in Brooklyn, the Center for Peace Communications. Created in 2019, the group's stated goal is "to resolve identity-based conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa." In a tax filing it said more specifically that it "aims to roll back anti-Semitism



Iraqis attending a conference pressing for normalization with Israel this month in Erbil, Iraq. Credit... Safin Hamed / Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

and foster a culture of supportive relations with Israel."

"We knew that this would trigger enormous controversy and a backlash," said Joseph Braude, the center's founder and chief executive. "We nonetheless did it because the people in Iraq who wanted to do this asked for our help."

Iraq has historically backed the Palestinian cause, and is technically in a state of hostilities with Israel dating to Israel's founding in 1948, when more than 100,000 Iraqi Jews were expelled from the country. Iraqi law makes it a crime to "promote Zionist principles" and lists the punishment as death.

The conference in the Kurdish

capital of Erbil promoted reconciliation but seems to have achieved the opposite, triggering a sectarian skirmish between the mostly Sunni Muslim attendees and Iranian-backed Shiite paramilitary groups who have declared the attendees traitors. It has also stirred up dangerous disputes between competing Sunni forces two weeks before Iraqi elections.

As news of the conference spread, the Iraqi government and authorities in overwhelmingly Sunni Anbar Province issued arrest warrants for at least six Iraqis they said were involved in the conference, though one warrant was later withdrawn. Other attendees were dismissed from their government jobs. At several checkpoints between

Baghdad and Anbar province, militia fighters erected huge banners with the faces of those on the arrest warrants, declaring them guilty of treason.

The main speaker at the conference, Sheikh Wissam al-Hardan, from Anbar, is now under Kurdish protection along with other conference attendees facing threats. But the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which is semiautonomous from Baghdad, is also under threat.

The region, which broke away from Iraqi government control with U.S. help three decades ago, has faced increasing attacks, including drone strikes, linked to Iranian-backed militias because of a U.S. military base in Erbil.

“We will not delay in burning all the traitors’ locations with smart missiles and drones,” a group called Guardians of the Blood Brigade, which has claimed responsibility for previous attacks in Erbil, warned after the conference.

In his keynote speech to the conference, Sheikh Wissam described the expulsion of Iraqi Jews after the creation of Israel in 1948 as a major tragedy and said Iraq should recognize Israel, as the United Arab Emirates and several other Arab countries did last year. He warned against Iraq becoming like Lebanon, which he said had been swallowed whole by a militia — a reference to Hezbollah, backed by Iran.

After the speech, Sheikh Wissam, who was wounded fighting ISIS, was dismissed from the leadership of the Sunni Awakening movement, a collection of tribal forces that fought with the United States against Al Qaeda and later took on ISIS. The sheikh said he was deceived by the conference organizers and did not write the speech that he gave.

The day of the conference, The Wall Street Journal published an opinion piece under his name calling for normalization with Israel and praising the U.A.E. for doing so. Sheikh Wissam, who does not speak or read English, later said he did not know what was in the essay.

Mr. Braude, an American who speaks Arabic and has written extensively on Middle East affairs, said he had worked with the tribal leader, with input from a Journal editor, on writing the article and insisted that the sheikh knew what it said.

The newspaper’s senior director for communications, Steve Severinghaus, said The Wall Street Journal had worked through an intermediary, as it sometimes does when the writer does not speak English.

“We were told that Mr. al-Hardan had signed off on the edited ver-



Joseph Braude, the Center for Peace Communications founder, speaking to journalists in Erbil. Credit... Safin Hamed / Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

sion,” he said, referring to Sheikh Wissam.

Mr. Braude said the speech, delivered in Arabic, was a collaboration between him and Sheikh Wissam.

“I believe that he, like other attendees, is facing enormous pressure to recant,” said Mr. Braude.

“I think that, indeed, the participants knew exactly the kind of risks that they were taking,” he added, when asked about the repercussions. “We are doing everything we can to help them.”

Sheikh Wissam declined to be interviewed. An arrest warrant was also issued for his son, Ali Wissam al-Hardan, who said he

had dropped his father off at the event but did not attend himself.

The conference featured an address by a U.A.E. official, but Mr. Braude said the Emirates did not help finance the event. He is a fellow at the Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center, a think tank in Dubai, in the U.A.E., that researches political and social movements in the Muslim world.

The Center for Peace Communications is funded by American philanthropists and one European, he said, but he declined to name them. Its chairman is Dennis Ross, a retired senior U.S. State Department official, who spoke at the Erbil conference.

Mr. Braude has said that he spoke with the U.S. military

about job prospects in Iraq shortly after the 2003 invasion. He pleaded guilty in 2004 in New York to smuggling ancient cylinder seals looted from the Iraq Museum, which he said he had intended to turn over to the authorities.

The Iraqi Kurdistan government maintains unofficial security and other ties with Israel, but denied after the conference that it promoted normalization or had authorized any event doing so. But The New York Times has seen documentation that a senior official approved the conference, knew of its content in advance and offered logistical support.

While the conference linked the two issues, many Iraqis draw a sharp distinction between feeling an affinity for the country’s former Jewish community and openness to the state of Israel.

The Iraqi Jews — an ancient community and an integral part of Iraqi society — were pressured by the government to give up their citizenship and property and leave Iraq after the creation of Israel in 1948. Mr. Braude’s ancestors were part of that community.

“Iraq is not a monolith and people harbor different views about Jews,” Mr. Braude said. “I feel like this is a long-term effort.”

In the short term, it has put some people in danger. Ali al-Hardan, who along with his father was wounded fighting ISIS, said some Sunni extremist groups had declared killing him and his father halal — religiously permitted.

“Four times Al Qaeda tried to assassinate us,” he said. “One day they blew up our house in Baghdad. Now we are wanted by everyone.”

Falih Hassan and Awadh al-Taiee contributed reporting from Baghdad; Sangar Khaleel from Erbil, Iraq; and Nermeen al-Mufti from Kirkuk, Iraq.





September 30, 2021

## Washington to encourage US investment in Kurdistan Region: top official

**A** senior US official from the state department visited Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani in Erbil on Thursday, ensuring that Washington will encourage American companies to invest in the Region through a government-funded institution.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq and Iran Jennifer Gavito told Barzani that they will “encourage US investment in the Kurdistan Region, especially through DFC which provides financial support to investment projects,” referring to US government-funded Development Finance Corporation, according to a readout from Barzani’s office.

DFC invests in development projects around the world, especially in developing countries in the Middle East.

Gavito announced earlier in the day \$670,000 in additional funding to complete the restoration of a historic Hammam in Erbil citadel as well as creating an educational center for children there. “With this additional funding, the U.S. government’s contribution for the restoration of the Erbil Citadel totals more than \$1.5 million,” US consulate in Erbil said in a statement.



Gavito told President Barzani that they will encourage US investment in the Kurdistan. Date: September 30, 2021. Photo: Barzani’s office

Erbil’s citadel dates back to 4,000 years BC. It sits on a 110,000 square meter-circle at the heart of the Kurdistan Region capital, overlooking Shar Square and the central bazaar. It is a popular destination for tourists and locals with a souvenir shop, textile and geology museum.

Gavito, who assumed her current position in August, “reaffirmed the US commitment to continue supporting Peshmerga Ministry reforms and the reorganization of forces, and said that the US can also become a supporter and partner of the

Kurdistan Region in other areas like security, energy, economy, culture, and education,” according to the readout.

President Barzani thanked the US for its ongoing support to the Kurdistan Region and “reaffirmed the Kurdistan Region’s willingness to boost relations with the US as well as improving cooperation,” his office quoted him as saying. Barzani added that they will provide more opportunities for US investment.

Current US investment in the Kurdistan Region is

comparatively low. American companies currently operating mostly work in oil, construction and security.

Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani said in November 2020 that his government “supports high quality foreign investment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, particularly from the United States.”

“During this cabinet, more than 70 licenses have been awarded with an investment value of almost 2 billion dollars,” added Barzani who was sworn in as PM in July 2019.