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L’AFFAIRE ERGENEKON AGITE LA TURQUIE, L’AKP ECHAPPE A LA DISSOLUTION

Le 1^{er} juillet, une opération policière lancée simultanément à Istanbul, Ankara, Trébizonde, Malatya, qui a mobilisé près de 6 000 policiers, a abouti à l’arrestation de 21 personnes, toutes opposantes à l’AKP, le parti au pouvoir. Dix seront finalement inculpées pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste ». Parmi elles, deux généraux à la retraite, Hursit Tolon et Sener Eruygur, deux anciens « faucons » au sein de l’armée.

Sener Eruygur préside toujours une très influente Association pour la pensée d’Atatürk à caractère fortement nationaliste, et fut un des meneurs, l’an passée, des manifestations « pro-laïques » hostiles à l’élection à la présidence d’Abdullah Gül. Le journal Radikal, qui multiplie les « révélations gênantes » pour l’institution militaire, le désigne aussi comme étant à l’origine de deux tentatives de putsch en 2003 et 2004, qui avaient notamment pour but

d’empêcher la signature du plan de paix pour Chypre, élaboré par Koffi Annan, le secrétaire général des Nations unies, ainsi que la réunification de l’île, prévue par ce même plan.

L’affaire dite « Ergenekon » a éclaté en 2007, quand un arsenal avait été découvert, dans une maison abandonnée près d’Istanbul. 80 personnalités influentes de la société turque sont sous les verrous, accusées d’être membres d’une organisation clandestine, « Ergenekon », d’inspiration ultra-nationaliste. Son but serait la déstabilisation de la Turquie, à

l'aide d'attentats « terroristes », imputés soit aux Kurdes soit aux islamistes, et d'assassinats ciblés, comme celui du journaliste d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink ou celui des missionnaires chrétiens de Malatya. Cette cellule clandestine serait ainsi un nouvel avatar de « l'Etat profond », ce réseau secret agissant au sein de l'Etat de façon quasi-autonome, depuis l'époque de la guerre froide. Parmi les inculpés, on trouve un nombre important de militaires à la retraite, des journalistes, des avocats, des membres de la classe politique une personnalité mafieuse...

Intervenant en pleine crise politique, alors que l'AKP est lui-même menacé de dissolution par la Haute-Cour, ce coup de filet a été présenté, par les opposants au pouvoir, comme une réplique du gouvernement à ses adversaires. Mais le journal Radikal, sous la plume d'Ismet Berkan, était (par avance) les 2500 pages de l'acte d'accusation, non encore révélé, au public, rédigé par le procureur après 13 mois d'enquête. Le journaliste se livre à une charge vigoureuse contre les généraux Hursit Tolon (ancien commandant en chef de la Première Armée) et Sener Eruygur, ancien chef de la Gendarmerie, en les accusant d'avoir été à l'origine de l'échec du plan de paix pour Chypre en 2003.

Quant au journal Taraf, tenu par le romancier libéral Ahmet Altan, il fait état d'un plan de déstabilisation de tout le pays. Le réseau Ergenekon devait ainsi organiser, le 7 juillet, dans quarante villes, des manifestations à caractère violent en faveur des juges chargés de statuer sur l'interdiction de l'AKP. L'une d'elles, à Gaziantep devait être menée par le général Tolon et le patron d'une chaîne

nationaliste. Lors de ces manifestations, il était prévu que des tireurs anonymes recrutés parmi des cellules ultranationalistes ouvrent le feu sur les manifestants, afin de monter l'opinion publique contre le gouvernement. Dans le même temps, plusieurs personnalités, dont des intellectuels et des journalistes, auraient été assassinées. Les troubles qui en auraient découlé auraient ainsi amené les citoyens turcs à soutenir un putsch militaire.

Une autre révélation du journal Taraf met l'armée dans l'embarras : A Daglica, localité située dans la région kurde de Hakkari, une embuscade attribuée au PKK, aurait été instrumentalisée par le commandement qui, informé de l'imminence de l'attaque, a choisi de laisser les soldats endurer le feu. Treize d'entre eux ont été tués dans l'affrontement. A la faveur de cette attaque, l'armée turque avait ainsi pu préparer et justifier son opération au nord de l'Irak, l'hiver dernier, pour, selon elle, éradiquer les bases du PKK installées au mont Qandil. Pour toute réponse aux accusations de Taraf, l'armée a menacé le

journal de venir chercher « par la force » les documents secrets qu'il affirme posséder et qui prouveraient ses dires.

Dans ce contexte agité, le 30 juillet, la décision de la Cour constitutionnelle est rendue au sujet de l'AKP : la majorité de 7 juges n'ayant pas été atteinte, à une voix près ce parti échappe à la dissolution et aux cinq ans d'inéligibilité qui avaient été requis pour 71 de ses membres. Mais jugé cependant coupable d'activités anti-laïques, il est condamné à reverser la moitié de son financement public actuel.

De l'avis des observateurs de la vie politique en Turquie, ce jugement mitigé peut être ainsi l'amorce d'une « trêve » entre le gouvernement et la classe judiciaire, appuyée par l'armée, après un début de mois mouvementé et très incertain pour la stabilité du pays. Les fortes pressions exercées par l'Union européenne et Washington pour éviter le scandale de l'interdiction d'un parti sorti victorieux des urnes ont également contribué à conduire la haute hiérarchie militaire à se résoudre à composer avec l'AKP.

IRAK :

LES KURDES RESOLUMENT OPPOSES A LA LOI ELECTORALE

Les élections des Conseils provinciaux, qui devraient normalement se tenir en octobre prochain, ont provoqué beaucoup de remous en Irak et suscité un grand mécontentement parmi les Kurdes. La question du report ou non de ces élections, en raison des situations sensibles et non encore résolues dans les districts kurdes hors de la Région du Kurdistan, fait en effet débat depuis plusieurs

mois. S'ajoute à cela la rédaction de la nouvelle loi électorale, qui doit statuer notamment sur les découpages de circonscriptions et le recensement des électeurs.

Si certains Irakiens demandent le report de ces élections, les Etats-Unis, eux, poussent fortement pour qu'elles soient maintenues. Avec la réduction des violences à Bagdad et le vote de la loi sur le partage des ressources tirées des hydrocarbures, ces élections représenteraient pour eux une

étape politique à forte portée symbolique, allant dans le sens d'une amélioration et d'une normalisation de la situation en Irak. De plus, le rééquilibrage des pouvoirs que ces élections mettraient en place pourraient apaiser les tensions locales... ou les aviver. Car le bloc de l'Alliance kurde au Parlement de Bagdad a boycotté le vote de cette loi, qui propose de diviser Kirkouk en quatre circonscriptions et répartit les pouvoirs des Kurdes, Arabes et Turkmènes à 32% chacun, 4% allant aux autres minorités (et non sur la base du recensement de 1957, donc). Le partage des sièges du Conseil provincial se ferait donc, selon les vœux d'une centaine de députés arabes et turkmènes, avec 10 Kurdes, 10 Arabes, 10 Turkmènes et 2 chrétiens.

Mais les Kurdes rejettent cette répartition qui, selon, eux, est très loin de refléter la véritable démographie de Kirkouk et donc, le vote réel des électeurs, rendu par avance inutile, comme le souligne Mahmoud Othman, député de l'Alliance kurde : « Si vous réservez les sièges avant même les élections, pourquoi voter dans ce cas ? » La loi prévoyait aussi le retrait de Kirkouk des Peshmergas et l'implantation de soldats irakiens venus du centre et du sud pour assurer la sécurité, ce qui n'est pas vu d'un bon œil par la population kurde.

Aussi, le vote de la loi, survenu le 22 juillet, alors que seulement 140 députés sur 275 étaient présents, est apparu d'emblée comme sujet à caution. Les deux vice-présidents du Parlement, le chiite cheikh Khalid al-Attiya et le Kurde Aref Tayfour ont aussi boycotté le vote, tandis que des manifestations populaires étaient organisées dans toutes les villes de la Région du

Kurdistan, pour protester contre son adoption. Plusieurs milliers de personnes ont ainsi défilé à Erbil, capitale de la Région du Kurdistan, certaines brandissant même des pancartes assimilant Mahmoud Mashadani, le président du Parlement irakien, à Saddam Hussein. A Suleymanieh, en plus de manifester, des milliers de protestataires ont adressé au gouverneur une requête à destination du Parlement irakien. A Duhok, le 31 juillet, des manifestants ont de même présenté une déclaration contestant la loi, destinée au Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, au président irakien, au président du Kurdistan et à d'autres officiels du pays.

Par ailleurs, deux jours après son vote par l'Assemblée nationale irakienne, la loi électorale a été finalement rejetée par le Conseil présidentiel, le président de l'Irak Jalal Talabani et son vice-président Adel Abdel Mahdi, ayant mis leur veto, jugeant que cette loi contenait des irrégularités constitutionnelles et des violations de procédures. Toute loi votée devant être approuvée à l'unanimité par les trois membres de ce Conseil, les députés se sont ainsi vus contraints de réviser le projet de loi, ce qui rend encore plus incertain le respect de la date prévue pour ces élections.

Ce rejet apparaît aussi comme un camouflet, de la part de la présidence irakienne, envers les USA et le Premier ministre Nouri Al-Maliki. Mais selon Jalal Talabani, le climat et les conditions dans lesquels la loi a été votée ne pouvaient que causer « d'énormes dommages à l'unité du pays ».

Pour leur part, et en réaction contre ce vote, les membres

kurdes du Conseil provincial de Kirkouk ont, dans un appel, boycotté cette fois par les Arabes et les Turkmènes, réclamé le rattachement de Kirkouk à la Région du Kurdistan. « Nous présentons une requête, signée par 24 membres sur 41, demandant l'annexion de Kirkouk à la Région du Kurdistan d'Irak », a déclaré Mohammed Kamal, membre de ce conseil, à Voice of Iraq, ajoutant que la soumission de cette requête au Parlement d'Irak était « un droit constitutionnel. »

Naturellement, la réaction des autres blocs politiques ne s'est pas fait attendre. Mohammed al-Jubouri, un membre arabe du Conseil provincial, a indiqué son refus radical que Kirkouk devienne « une partie du Kurdistan », en y voyant les germes d'une future guerre civile. Interrogé par la radio Al-Sharqiya, le représentant turkmène du même Conseil, Fawzi Akram, a déclaré que cette annonce des Kurdes confirmait les craintes turkmènes et a appelé le président Talabani à « adopter une position constitutionnelle face à cette demande. »

Mais interrogé par cette même radio, Awat Muhammad, de la liste Fraternité kurde à Kirkouk, a tenu un langage plus nuancé : « Nous souhaitons sincèrement que les négociations des blocs parlementaires à Bagdad parviennent à une solution satisfaisante concernant cette loi sur l'élection des conseils provinciaux en Irak. Malheureusement, la loi a été approuvée le 22 juillet par le Conseil des représentants irakiens, en l'absence des représentants du peuple kurde et de Kirkouk. Cela a entraîné une crise. La seule option possible était d'avoir recours à la Constitution. Nous avons jugé

que la solution appropriée était de demander à la présidence du Conseil provincial une requête, signée par la majorité des membres, adressé au Conseil présidentiel, afin d'appliquer la loi sur la formation des régions. Ce qui signifie que notre gouvernorat a demandé à rejoindre la Région du Kurdistan. C'est une demande légale, qui ne doit pas être interprétée comme une rupture par le Centre, ou comme une décision unilatérale. »

L'article 119 de la Constitution irakienne stipule en effet qu'un ou plusieurs gouvernorats ont le droit de s'organiser en régions, sur la base d'une requête, qui devra être approuvée par référendum, et que cette requête peut être constituée de deux façons : soit appuyée par 1/3 des membres de chaque conseil provincial, soit par 1/10 des électeurs de chaque gouvernorats.

Mais Mahmud Othman, député de l'Alliance kurde, a indiqué que le gouvernement de la Région du Kurdistan n'avait pas l'intention d'annexer Kirkouk, tout en confirmant que le Conseil provincial avait fait parvenir sa demande au gouvernement fédéral, au Gouvernement du Kurdistan, et aux parlements de Bagdad et d'Erbil. »

Dans le même temps, les attaques terroristes ne faiblissaient pas à Kirkouk, où un attentat suicide, survenu le 28 juillet, lors d'une manifestation kurde contre cette loi, a tué une vingtaine de personnes et blessé de nombreuses autres, l'attaque ayant déclenché un mouvement de panique dans la foule qui a contribué à aggraver le bilan des victimes. Selon Najat Hassan, responsable du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan à

Kirkouk, quand des manifestants kurdes, fuyant les lieux de l'explosion se sont rapprochés des bureaux d'autres partis politiques, les gardes ont tiré en l'air pour les éloigner, provoquant alors la riposte de personnes armées au sein de la foule. Le docteur Sharzad Hamed Aziz, de l'hôpital Azaadi de Kirkouk, a fait état de 22 morts et de 120 blessés, dont 30 grièvement.

Deux jours auparavant, c'est un journaliste kurde de 23 ans,

Soran Mammah Hammah, qui était tué par des inconnus, dans cette même ville, alors qu'il rentrait à pied à son domicile. Les assassins se sont enfuis en voiture. Reporters sans frontières, dans sa condamnation du meurtre, a ajouté que Soran Mammah Hammah « écrivait des articles très critiques contre des hommes politiques locaux et des responsables de la sécurité et avait reçu des menaces qui l'enjoignaient de cesser ses enquêtes. »

TURQUIE : TROIS TOURISTES ALLEMANDS ENLEVÉS PUIS LIBÉRÉS PAR LE PKK

Le 9 juillet, trois alpinistes allemands, Helmut Johann, Martin Georpe et Lars Holper Reime, ont été enlevés sur le Mont Ararat par le PKK, enlèvement confirmé par l'agence de presse kurde Firat, dès le lendemain. Ces Allemands faisaient partie d'un groupe de 13 alpinistes. Ils ont été enlevés alors qu'ils campaient sur le mont Ararat à une altitude de 3.200 mètres. Cinq combattants kurdes sont arrivés et ont emmené les trois hommes.

Les motifs avancés dans le communiqué des forces de la guérilla kurde étaient la « politique hostile de l'Allemagne à l'égard du PKK : « Les touristes allemands ne seront pas relâchés tant que le gouvernement allemand n'annoncera pas qu'il a abandonné sa politique hostile à l'égard du peuple kurde et du PKK. » Le mouvement a également assuré que les trois otages étaient en bonne santé, n'avaient pas été maltraités et a appelé aussi à la fin des opérations militaires dans la zone de l'enlèvement.

Selon l'hebdomadaire Der

Spiegel, à la fin du mois de juin le conseil exécutif du PKK avait adressé une mise en garde au gouvernement d'Angela Merkel contre les « conséquences négatives » de sa politique envers le parti. Depuis plusieurs années, l'Allemagne a procédé à de nombreuses arrestations et procès à l'encontre de responsables du PKK vivant sur son sol. En juin dernier, le ministre allemand de l'Intérieur, Wolfgang Schäuble, avait interdit le travail dans son pays des équipes de la télévision kurde Roj TV, basée au Danemark, et avait ordonné la fermeture de la société de production VIKO Fernseh Produktion GmbH, basée à Wuppertal, qui produisait des émissions pour la chaîne kurde. Ce parti, classé sur les listes des « organisations terroristes » de l'Union européenne, est interdit depuis une quinzaine d'année en Allemagne, ce qui ne l'empêche pas d'être présent de façon clandestine, ou sous couvert d'associations diverses, l'Allemagne abritant la plus forte communauté kurde en Europe (plus d'un demi-million), très majoritairement venue du Kurdistan de Turquie. Selon l'Office allemand pour la

protection de la Constitution, il y aurait au moins 11.500 membres actifs répertoriés dans ce pays.

Comme prévu, le ministre allemand des Affaires étrangères, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a immédiatement rejeté les conditions formulées par le PKK pour la libération des otages, qu'il a exigée sans contrepartie: « La République fédérale ne répond pas au chantage. » Le ministre de l'Intérieur, Wolfgang Schäuble, a, de même, affirmé qu'il n'y aurait aucune négociation possible: « Il est hors de question pour nous de négocier avec le PKK sur l'application des lois allemandes ». Wolfgang Schäuble a aussi annoncé l'envoi d'enquêteurs de la police criminelle allemande en Turquie. Pour sa part, Angela Merkel a appelé à la libération immédiate des otages et a refusé aussi l'éventualité de céder au « chantage ».

Le même jour, en visite à Bagdad, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a fait état de la « volonté » des gouvernements irakiens et kurdes de combattre le PK: « Nous avons obtenu le soutien du gouvernement Maliki et du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien contre le PKK. Le PKK est une menace, pas seulement pour l'Irak et la Turquie, mais pour toute la région. Nous n'autorisons pas de telles organisations à empoisonner les relations entre nos deux pays. Il y a une compréhension commune du problème. Il y a une volonté commune de défaire l'organisation ».

L'enlèvement des trois Allemands n'a pas interrompu les affrontements entre l'armée turque et le PKK, et le 11 juillet, les autorités turques annonçaient la mort de dix combattants

kurdes, dans un accrochage avec l'armée près de Sirnak. Un milicien « gardien de village » a également été tué. Dans le même temps, des troupes paramilitaires turques investissaient le mont Ararat, déclaré zone interdite, pour tenter de libérer les alpinistes, ce qui a déclenché un nouveau communiqué du PKK, le 14 juillet, appelant, cette fois, à l'arrêt des opérations militaires. Le mouvement se déclarait « prêt à relâcher les trois touristes allemands à la condition que la Turquie interrompe ses attaques militaires dans la région où ils ont été capturés et que la libération se fasse sous l'égide d'une organisation internationale comme la Croix Rouge ». La porte-parole de l'organisation kurde, Sozdar Avesta, qui s'exprimait du mont Qandil, dans le Kurdistan d'Irak, a précisé que les Allemands étaient en bonne santé.

Mais les combats se sont poursuivis près des frontières iraniennes et irakiennes, faisant 33 victimes de plus parmi la guérilla, selon les sources turques, contre deux morts parmi les soldats.

Finalement, comme cela était prévisible dès le début de l'affaire, les alpinistes ont été libérés par le PKK le 20 juillet, apparemment sans contrepartie, et ont été récupérés par les forces turques. Le gouverneur de la province d'Agri (Ararat), dans une conférence de presse, a bien sûr affirmé que la pression militaire exercée autour des ravisseurs les avaient obligés à cette libération, mais il est en fait peu probable que le PKK ait eu l'intention de garder indéfiniment ces otages. Ce genre d'enlèvements, s'il s'est déjà produit, est resté plutôt rare de la part de ce mouvement et n'a jamais abouti à de longues détentions. Il s'agit plutôt de coups d'éclat visant à frapper les opinions publiques turque et internationale.

De retour en Allemagne, l'un des trois alpinistes, Lars Holger Reime, a déclaré qu'ils avaient été « relativement bien traités » par les guérilleros en confiant que leur crainte majeure, durant leur détention, était une intervention militaire turque, qui les aurait fatalement gravement exposés.

IRAN : AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DENONCE LES DISCRIMINATIONS ENVERS LES KURDES

Amnesty International a publié le 29 juillet un rapport qui dénonce l'Iran et sa répression contre les minorités, répression qui va en s'intensifiant, selon l'organisation de défense des droits de l'Homme.

Amnesty dénonce ainsi tout un éventail de discriminations et d'abus des droits de l'Homme exercés à l'encontre des 12 millions de Kurdes vivant en

Iran, soit 15% de la population totale du pays. Ces discriminations peuvent être aussi bien religieuses que culturelles, les Kurdes étant majoritairement sunnites et non chiites. Mais elles concernent aussi les questions de logement, d'emploi, d'éducation. Enfin, les media kurdes dénonçant les atteintes aux droits de l'Homme sont tout particulièrement pris pour cible par les autorités: « La constitution iranienne proclame l'égalité de tous les Iraniens

devant la loi. Mais, comme le montre notre rapport, ce n'est pas la réalité pour les Kurdes d'Iran, a déclaré un des responsables de l'organisation. « Le gouvernement iranien n'a pas pris de mesures suffisantes pour éradiquer les discriminations, ou pour mettre fin au cycle de la violence contre les femmes, et punir les responsables. »

Le rapport insiste sur la situation critique des femmes kurdes, doublement persécutées en tant que minorité ethnique défavorisée, et aussi par les interdits tant religieux que culturels qui frappent leur condition : inégalité dans l'accès à l'éducation, mariages précoces et forcés, violence domestique allant jusqu'au crime d'honneur ou bien entraînant des suicides. Pourtant, selon Amnesty International, les femmes kurdes sont un pilier majeur de l'activité économique au Kurdistan et il est vrai que dans tout l'Iran, les conséquences démographiques de la guerre avec l'Irak ont fait chuter la population masculine.

« Les femmes kurdes sont victimes de violences quotidiennes et rencontrent des discriminations officielles de la part de l'Etat, mais aussi de la part d'autres groupes ou d'individus, ceci incluant leur propre famille. Les autorités iraniennes doivent exercer une vigilance constante pour éradiquer la violence contre les femmes dans les foyers et dans leur communauté, mais cela n'est pas le cas » recommande le rapport. Mais le code de lois iraniennes étant fondé sur une interprétation extrêmement passéiste et rigoriste de la sharia shiite. Ainsi, dans certains cas, il est légal pour un homme de battre sa femme, permettant, par exemple, à un homme de frapper son épouse sous certaines conditions et l'âge légal

du mariage pour les filles a été abaissé à neuf ans. La pratique religieuse officielle étant elle-même dans de nombreux cas plus discriminatoire et plus oppressive que les modes de vie traditionnels des minorités les plus défavorisées, on ne voit pas bien comment l'Etat pourrait contribuer à améliorer cet état de choses.

Par ailleurs, Amnesty International indique qu'en ce qui concerne les droits culturels des Kurdes, par exemple le port de leurs vêtements traditionnels, leurs musiques, ils sont généralement respectés, et la langue kurde est utilisée dans des media. Cependant, l'organisation fait état d'actes d'intimidation ou de répression dirigés contre l'identité kurde, sous couvert de « sécurité intérieure » et de lutte contre la guérilla du PJAK. Sont évoqués plusieurs cas d'emprisonnements abusifs, de procès iniques, et de nombreuses condamnations à mort.

Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydariyan et Farhad Vakili, ont été ainsi convaincus du délit de « moharebeh » (ennemi de Dieu), et condamnés à mort, alors que leurs jugements ont été tous entachés de graves irrégularités et que les détenus ont été très sérieusement torturés. Ils étaient accusés d'allégeance ou d'appartenance au PKK (soit sa branche iranienne, le PJAK). Ali Heydariyan et Farhad Vakili ont été condamnés en plus à dix ans de prison pour « falsification de documents » et, selon la loi iranienne, ils doivent d'abord purger leur peine de détention avant d'être exécutés.

Farzad Kamangar, un enseignant de 32 ans, a constamment nié les accusations portées contre lui et a révélé que les autorités lui

avaient demandé d'écrire une lettre demandant leur clémence. Son refus a été interprété comme un aveu de culpabilité. Depuis le 11 juillet, sa sentence a été confirmée et il peut être exécuté à tout moment. Le 21 juillet, un rassemblement d'un millier de personnes s'est tenu dans la capitale provinciale kurde de Sanandaj, pour dénoncer cette sentence et l'emprisonnement des autres détenus.

En mai dernier, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand a été condamné à onze ans de prison par la 15^{ème} Chambre de la Cour évolutionnaire de Téhéran, soit dix ans pour avoir menacé « la sécurité de l'Etat en fondant l'Organisation des droits de l'Homme au Kurdistan (HROK) », et un an pour « propagande contre le système ». Le procès s'est déroulé à huit-clos, comme cela arrive fréquemment dans ce genre d'affaires politiques, ce qui est régulièrement dénoncé par les avocats de la défense en raison de toutes les irrégularités de procédure que cela permet. Amnesty International a déclaré considérer Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand comme un prisonnier d'opinion, détenu uniquement pour avoir utilisé pacifiquement de ses droits à la liberté d'expression et d'association, durant l'exercice de sa présidence à la tête de HROK, et aussi en tant que journaliste. Il faut rappeler que l'Iran est signataire de la Convention internationale sur les droits civils et politiques, laquelle garantit justement de telles activités.

Hana Abdi, étudiante en psychologie, a été arrêtée le 4 novembre 2007, alors qu'elle se trouvait chez son grand-père, à Sanandaj. Détenue au secret trois mois durant, elle a été condamnée à cinq ans de prison,

en juin dernier, peine qu'elle devra purger dans une autre province, et donc loin de sa famille et de ses amis, ce qui rendra les conditions de son emprisonnement encore plus difficiles. Selon son avocat, la 2ème Chambre de la Cour révolutionnaire de Sanandaj l'a

jugée coupable de « collecte et de collusion pour fomenter un crime contre la sécurité nationale. » Elle est en fait membre active de la « Campagne pour l'égalité », lancée par des femmes iraniennes pour mettre fin aux discriminations légales qu'elles

rencontrent en Iran. Amnesty International donne de la même façon, le statut de prisonnière d'opinion à Hana Abdi.

En plus des Kurdes, ce rapport de 57 pages fait état de discriminations à l'encontre des Arabes de l'Ahwaz et des Baloutches.

ERBIL : LE GOUVERNEMENT ORGANISE UN DEBAT SUR LA PEINE DE MORT

A l'initiative du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, une conférence s'est tenue à Erbil pour débattre d'une réduction éventuelle de la peine de mort au Kurdistan d'Irak, comme l'explique l'organisateur de la conférence, le Docteur Shwan Muhammad, ministre des Droits de l'Homme pour la région kurde : « Nous travaillons à faire réduire l'usage de la peine capitale au Kurdistan, en accord avec les lois irakiennes. »

Des représentants du ministère, des avocats, des juges, des responsables d'organisations locales et internationales, ainsi qu'un certain nombre de députés du Parlement kurde y assistaient. Selon le ministre des Droits de l'Homme, les participants étaient réunis pour donner leur avis sur les moyens de réduire l'usage de la peine de mort et de suggérer des modifications à apporter à la loi antiterroriste. Cette loi, votée initialement le 16 août 2006, prévoit en effet l'usage de la peine capitale, mais pour une durée de deux ans seulement. Ainsi, cette disposition devait expirer en

août 2008. C'est l'opportunité de ce calendrier qui a permis au ministre Shwan Muhammad de poser les prémices d'un débat futur sur l'abolition de la peine capitale, abolition qu'il présente comme un objectif majeur de la part de son ministère. Mais le principal obstacle à cette abolition est la menace terroriste qui pèse sur tout l'Irak, et pèse sur le vote parlementaire et l'opinion publique. Cependant, Shwan Muhammad se montre relativement optimiste, même si le parlement d'Erbil a reconduit, le 29 juin dernier, cette loi anti-terreur pour deux ans encore, soit jusqu'au 16 juillet 2010 : « Quand cette menace aura disparu, alors le Parlement travaillera avec nous, afin d'arriver à l'abolition complète de la peine capitale au Kurdistan ».

« Les commissions parlementaires des droits de l'Homme et des Affaires intérieures ont insisté sur l'importance du projet et affirmé que cette loi mériterait plus d'analyses et d'amendements » a déclaré Tariq Jawher, un conseiller d'Adnan Mufti, le porte-

parole du Parlement, tout en soulignant que la loi, telle qu'elle a été reconduite, a subi quelques améliorations, par exemple le raccourcissement du délai de jugement pour les inculpés, dans les affaires de terrorisme. Mais cela ne satisfait pleinement ni le ministre des Droits de l'Homme, ni les organisations non-gouvernementales.

Autre intervenant à ce débat, le général de brigade Mustafa Ali Bawil-gha, directeur de la prison centrale d'Erbil a exposé qu'avec ou sans la peine de mort, son principal souci était d'assurer la paix et la sécurité dans le pays, avant de conclure : « Si, sans cette sentence, la population est en sécurité, alors abolissons la peine de mort. »

Selon les statistiques du ministère des Droits de l'Homme, 34 personnes ont été condamnées à mort en trois ans. Mais la peine capitale a été décrétée et utilisée dès la première année du parlement autonome kurde, en 1992, ce qui fait un total de 89 condamnations, dont trois femmes. 25 sentences ont été réellement exécutées, 7 en 2002, le reste en 2006, 2007 et 2008. Toutes ces exécutions ont eu lieu à Erbil, sauf l'une, à Duhok.

AINSI QUE...

ISTANBUL : UN ATTENTAT FAIT 17 VICTIMES

Un double attentat survenu à Istanbul le 27 juillet a fait 17 morts et plusieurs dizaines de blessés, dont certains très gravement. Deux bombes posées dans des conteneurs à ordures ont explosé à dix minutes d'intervalle, dans une rue piétonne de la partie européenne d'Istanbul, à Gungoren, un quartier populaire.

Le gouverneur de la ville, Mohammad Güler, a immédiatement accusé le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK). Cette accusation a été relayée par la chaîne d'information NTV, ainsi que par de nombreux journaux, dont Hürriyet et Vatan. Le leader du CHP, Deniz Baykal, a de même désigné le mouvement kurde comme responsable, tout comme le gouvernement turc.

Mais le fait que cet attentat se produise le jour même du début des délibérations de la Cour constitutionnelle, qui devait statuer sur l'interdiction ou non de l'AKP pour « activités anti-laïques », le fait aussi qu'il intervienne dans un contexte politique troublé par les élaboussures politico-médiatiques de l'affaire « Ergenekon », font aussi penser à une possible tentative de déstabilisation du pays de la part des réseaux liés à « l'Etat profond ». Si le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a lui aussi désigné le PKK, il a cependant modéré ses propos en appelant les media à la prudence : « S'il vous plaît, ne donnez pas de nom au terrorisme. Laissez les forces de sécurité étudier leurs dossiers et lui donner un nom. »

La BBC a diffusé opportunément un entretien avec le chef des forces armées du PKK, Murat Karayilan, entretien datant de plusieurs semaines, dans lequel ce dernier évoquait de possibles attaques contre des « cibles économiques et militaires dans des villes turques », en représailles des incursions armées turques contre ses bases.

Mais le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan n'a pas tardé à démentir toute implication dans cet attentat. La « thèse du PKK » a été cependant maintenue par le ministre de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, qui a annoncé l'arrestation de dix suspects, et l'inculpation de huit d'entre eux pour « appartenance au PKK ».

Parmi eux, deux de ces hommes auraient été aperçus non loin des lieux de l'attentat, peu avant l'explosion, avec « un comportement suspect ».

Cependant, le chef du service de renseignement allemand (BND), Ernst Uhrlau, met en doute cette version dans le quotidien allemand Bild. Selon lui, ce type d'attentat « ne colle pas vraiment avec le PKK » et il y voit plutôt une action d'islamistes liés à Al-Qaïda : « La technique employée dans l'attaque, le lieu, et le moment choisi rappellent plutôt un contexte islamiste ou turco-turque. Nous savons que des terroristes islamistes sont également au travail en Turquie, où ils participent à un Djihad global. »

SYRIE : ARRESTATION D'UN LEADER KURDE

Le 21 juillet, le chef du Parti de la Gauche kurde (PGK) un parti interdit en Syrie, a été arrêté à Damas par les services de sécurité. C'est l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'Homme en Syrie (ONDHS), qui a

annoncé la nouvelle, dans un communiqué dénonçant cette « mesure anticonstitutionnelle ». Elle a indiqué que Mohammad Moussa, âgé de 56 ans, a déjà subi des pressions policières dans le passé. Les services de sécurité de la ville kurde de Hassaké l'avaient ainsi plusieurs fois convoqué et interrogé sur ses activités ainsi que sur ses déclarations à la presse arabe.

Selon l'ONDHS « le mandat d'arrêt n'a pas été émis par les autorités judiciaires mais par les services de sécurité en vertu de la loi d'urgence en vigueur en Syrie depuis 45 ans. » Aussi l'organisation exige des autorités syriennes qu'elles renoncent « à leur droit absolu qu'elles se sont octroyé d'une manière illégale au nom de la loi d'urgence pour mener des arrestations », en demandant la libération immédiate du leader kurde.

Quant au Parti de la Gauche kurde, il demande également que son secrétaire général soit relâché, dans une déclaration faite à l'AFP : « Mohammad Moussa est un nationaliste qui défend les intérêts et les droits légitimes du peuple kurde ainsi que ceux de tout le peuple syrien ».

SULEÏMANIEH : LE GENERAL JAY GARNER PRÔNE LE FEDERALISME EN IRAK

Dans un entretien accordé au magazine The Window, un journal universitaire de Suleïmanieh, Jay Garner, en visite au Kurdistan d'Irak, revient sur les années qui ont suivi la chute du régime baathiste en Irak et les conséquences politiques pour le Kurdistan.

Jay Montgomery Garner, général

maintenant à la retraite de l'armée américaine, avait dirigé en 1991 l'opération Safe Haven, qui avait permis d'endiguer l'exode massif des Kurdes en instaurant une zone de protection aérienne, qui devait constituer le noyau politique et administratif de l'actuel Région du Kurdistan. En 2003, à la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein, il avait été nommé par son pays à la tête du Bureau pour la reconstruction et l'aide humanitaire en Irak, mais n'était resté en poste qu'un mois, remplacé très vite par Paul Bremer et l'Autorité provisoire de la Coalition. Jay Garner reconnaît lui-même que s'il savait que cette mission serait courte, il ne l'avait tout de même pas envisagé qu'elle se termine aussi rapidement : « La raison de mon remplacement était que je ne suis pas un diplomate. Je n'ai jamais exercé aucune fonction diplomatique. »

Mais il est à noter que Jay Gardner prône pour l'Irak une solution fédérale, seul moyen pour que ce pays survive, selon lui, ce qui allait totalement à l'encontre de la politique centralisatrice qu'avait voulu mettre en place Paul Bremer dans un premier temps. Pour l'ancien général, un système fédéral pourrait apporter une issue rapide à l'enlisement du conflit, sans affaiblir le gouvernement central, qui resterait décisionnaire sur les questions de politique étrangère, des devises, des impôts, des frontières : « Si l'Amérique avait opté, dès le début, pour le fédéralisme, elle n'aurait pas eu à faire face aux problèmes actuels. Si nous voulons un Irak stable, il faut en faire un Etat fédéral. »

Se présentant lui-même comme un « ami des Kurdes », Gardner reste plus évasif sur les

sentiments de l'actuel gouvernement américain envers eux : « Je ne peux pas parler des relations stratégiques entre les Kurdes et l'Amérique, parce que je ne fais pas partie de l'administration américaine. Je suis incapable de dire ce que George Bush, Dick Cheney et Condoleza Rice pensent des relations entre l'Amérique et les Kurdes. »

Mais l'ancien officier est plus direct sur la situation irakienne. S'il est très approuvé envers le « succès kurde », le reste de l'Irak est, pour lui, un désappointement : « Cinq ans après la guerre en Irak, la situation reste décevante. En fait, l'Amérique a réussi dans une certaine mesure, à renforcer la sécurité, mais si l'on regarde le processus politique, il est très lent, et le Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan est la seule « success story » de l'Irak. » Succès qui, selon lui est dû principalement à deux points : la libération des Kurdes de la Région du joug baathiste, par les troupes de la Coalition, dix-sept ans auparavant, mais aussi à la population kurde elle-même : « Regardez la structure du GRK : il y a beaucoup de femmes à l'intérieur, particulièrement à Suleïmanieh. Sur cinq directeurs de projets, trois sont des femmes. Cela montre une volonté de la part du GRK, d'avoir des membres féminins. Il y a, au Kurdistan, une constitution qui octroie des droits aux minorités. Nous pouvons dire que, pour le reste de l'Irak, le Kurdistan pourrait être un modèle. En Irak, les Kurdes ont beaucoup souffert ; cependant ils ont été capables de perdurer. Actuellement, les Kurdes disposent de ressources naturelles variées, mais ce qui est important, est la méthode pour user de ces ressources. Ainsi, il faudrait encourager les

jeunes à rester dans leur pays. »

Enfin, sur l'éventuelle question d'implantation de bases militaires au Kurdistan, le général américain soutient entièrement cette option : « J'ai toujours soutenu l'idée d'une base militaire US au Kurdistan d'Irak Pas une très grande base, mais une petite base militaire consistant en une force aérienne et une brigade. C'est important car cela renforcerait les relations entre les Kurdes et l'Amérique. Ce serait aussi envoyer le message aux pays du Moyen-Orient que l'Amérique y restera, à long terme, pour assurer la stabilité. »

DIYARBAKIR : LA LUTTE DES MAIRES POUR L'USAGE ADMINISTRATIF DU KURDE

En reportage à Diyarbakir, la radio Voice of America est revenue sur la lutte de l'ancien maire de Sur, Abdullah Demirtas, qui avait voulu introduire la langue kurde dans les services proposés par la municipalité. La publication de brochures d'informations en kurde lui avait valu d'être accusé de « nuisances au public en abusant de sa position » (article 257) et de l'usage illégal de « lettres anti-turques », c'est-à-dire non comprises dans l'alphabet turc, en vertu de l'article 222 (décrété à l'origine pour abroger l'alphabet ottoman). Ayant échappé à l'emprisonnement, Abudallah Demirtas n'en a pas moins été démis de ses fonctions, malgré le soutien de ses électeurs, en majorité kurdophones. Depuis 1991, l'usage du kurde, auparavant interdit, a été officiellement autorisé, surtout en privé, et dans les publications non-officielles, mais fait encore face à de nombreuses restrictions, en qui concerne

l'enseignement, les media, l'usage public et administratif.

« Quand j'ai été élu, raconte Abdullah Demirtas, j'ai ordonné une enquête auprès de la population. Une énorme majorité souhaitait avoir accès à des services municipaux dans sa langue maternelle, soit le kurde à 72%, le turc à 24% et l'arabe à 2%. Par conséquent, j'ai ordonné que les informations sur les formations et les services de la municipalité soient disponibles dans ces langues. Mais le ministre de l'Intérieur a jugé cela illégal, car le turc est la seule langue officielle. J'ai été démis de mes fonctions et les autorités ont retenu contre moi 20 chefs d'accusation pour ces publications en kurde. »

Mais interrogés par les journalistes, les Kurdes présents considèrent toujours Abdullah Demirtas comme leur maire, et insistent sur leur attachement à l'usage de leur langue, surtout qu'un certain nombre d'entre eux ne comprennent que très mal le turc. Ainsi, Z. Corun, une Kurde de 70 ans, a grandi dans un petit village, en un temps où très peu de filles étaient scolarisées. Sa famille et elle-même ont été déplacées de force à Diyarbakir, il y a quinze ans, après que leur village a été détruit par l'armée turque, dans ses combats contre le PKK. En plus de la dure adaptation dans un environnement urbain, entaché de pauvreté et de violence, les difficultés linguistiques ajoutent à la

détresse de ces paysans déracinés : « J'étais si heureuse quand le maire a introduit ces services en kurde », raconte Z. Corun. « Jusque-là, tout ce qui était officiel se faisait en turc. Quand j'ai eu besoin d'aide pour mon mari, qui était malade, j'avais toujours peur que l'on se moque de moi quand j'essayais de parler en turc. C'est humiliant à mon âge ! Mais avec notre maire, c'était différent. Les officiels nous saluaient en kurde. Toutes les informations étaient dans notre langue. Cela a changé ma vie. Mais quand il y a un bon maire, qui fait quelque chose pour le peuple, l'Etat se débarrasse toujours de lui. »

Bien que des mesures aient été officiellement prises, de la part du gouvernement turc, pour alléger les interdictions pesant sur le kurde, surtout en raison des injonctions de l'Union européenne, la plupart de la classe politique turque reste fortement opposée à l'usage officiel du kurde.

Selon Kemal Kirisci, professeur en sciences politiques à l'université Bosphore d'Istanbul, cette opposition a pour fondement principal, la crainte d'une désintégration du pays : « Qui est réellement turc, au sens ethnique de ce terme ? Quand vous grattez la surface d'un Turc, vous trouvez rapidement en-dessous que beaucoup d'entre eux sont des descendants de Bosniaques, de Tatars, de Turcs des Balkans, de Pomaks, peut-être d'Arabes dans le sud-

est, et de Kurdes à coup sûr. Une telle composition sociale génère une grande inquiétude parmi les officiels et dans l'opinion publique, car ils pensent que si l'on donne un statut particulier à un groupe, alors la prochaine étape sera que d'autres voudront la même chose. »

Mais depuis 85 ans, c'est-à-dire depuis sa fondation, toutes les crispations et les peurs de la république turque n'ont pu résoudre le problème posé par les revendications constantes des Kurdes, et une identité qui résiste jusqu'ici à toutes les politiques, souvent brutales, d'assimilation. Sans un changement de politique radicale envers le problème kurde, il y a peu de chance que cet état de guerre, plus moins ouverte, se résorbe dans les régions du Kurdistan de Turquie.

« J'ai rencontré un maire à Londres, raconte Abdullah Demirtas, et je lui ai demandé si c'était un crime de fournir des informations en des langues autres que l'anglais. Il m'a répondu que ce n'était pas un crime du tout. Ce qui semble normal dans le monde, est ici illégal. Mais je crois que la force de toute société est dans sa diversité. Cela m'a brisé le coeur de m'entendre dire, toute ma vie durant, que je suis un Turc et que ma langue maternelle est le turc. » Pour l'avoir nié l'ancien maire de Sur s'est vu qualifié de terroriste, comme tant d'autres de ses compatriotes.

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Bagdad veut lancer un appel d'offres aux majors pour accroître sa production de brut

Le pétrole irakien, otage des dissensions politiques

PÉTROLE ET GAZ EN ABONDANCE

L'exploitation pétrolière a débuté en Irak dans les années 1920, à la suite de partages âprement négociés lors de la conférence de San Remo (1920) entre les vainqueurs de la première guerre mondiale. La Compagnie française des pétroles (CFP, future Total) est créée en 1924 pour exploiter les champs irakiens. **La production irakienne** a atteint un pic de 2,3 millions de barils/jour à la veille de la guerre contre l'Iran, en 1980. Il faut attendre 1989 et la fin de cette guerre pour que la production dépasse 2,8 mb/j, un chiffre qui ne sera plus atteint avant 2002 du fait des sanctions internationales décrétées après l'invasion du Koweït par l'Irak, en 1990. **Les réserves** du pays en pétrole sont estimées à 115 milliards de barils, celles de gaz à 35 trillions de mètres cubes.

Les grands « pétroliers » amorcent leur retour

Sur les 120 candidats initiaux qui se sont déclarés intéressés par le marché irakien, une quarantaine de compagnies étrangères, dont ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch-Shell, Total et British Petroleum – qui détenaient, avec Chevron, l'essentiel des droits d'exploitation en Irak de 1929 jusqu'à la nationalisation totale de l'exploitation de l'or noir par Saddam Hussein en 1972 – ont été autorisées à concourir pour des « contrats de service à long terme », d'une durée de vingt à vingt-cinq ans. Ces contrats impliquent, de leur part, de lourds investissements de modernisation de l'appareil de production en échange d'une partie – qui reste à définir – du pétrole extrait.

Détenteur des troisièmes réserves prouvées de pétrole au monde avec 115 milliards de barils, l'Irak s'appretait à lancer lundi 30 juin, son premier appel d'offres international pour développer et augmenter la production d'une dizaine de ses gisements, déjà exploités mais manquant terriblement d'équipements modernes.

Les entreprises qui seront finalement choisies « seront les premières à avoir le droit de développer les gisements », a indiqué un porte-parole du ministère du Pétrole, Assim Jihad. Il faudra d'abord que le Parlement vote la nouvelle loi nationale sur le pétrole qui languit depuis seize mois à l'Assemblée à cause des querelles de souveraineté et de partage des profits entre l'Etat fédéral central et les 18 provinces du pays. Les diverses factions politiques débattent depuis des mois sur la quatrième version de ce projet de loi qui doit aussi définir les conditions dans lesquelles les étrangers peuvent investir, sans parvenir à trouver un accord entre elles.

Samedi, le gouvernement a annoncé la constitution d'une « commission » mixte avec les Kurdes qui contrôlent les trois provinces du nord et qui, jouissant d'une large autonomie, ont signé, contre l'avis de Bagdad, 17 contrats d'exploration et d'exportation avec une vingtaine de petites compagnies pétrolières étrangères. Le gouvernement central, qui n'a pas été consulté, les juge « illégaux ». Les Kurdes rétorquent que leur propre loi sur le pétrole a été « constitutionnellement votée » en août 2007 par leur propre assemblée autonome. La nouvelle « commission mixte » créée avec eux vise, à terme, à trouver un arrangement.

A Bagdad, le ministre du Pétrole, Hus-

sein Sharistani a apparemment décidé de lancer son appel d'offres sur la base des textes en vigueur sous Saddam Hussein. Une fois attribué, chaque contrat conclu devrait donc être théoriquement approuvé par une majorité des 275 élus du Parlement.

Parce qu'en dépit des indiscutables progrès réalisés sur le terrain l'insécurité demeure très forte dans tout le pays ; parce qu'en dépit d'une petite amélioration toute récente, la corruption, les sabotages et les détournements restent très conséquents, et parce qu'enfin l'exploitation nationale de brut continue de souffrir de l'absence quasi-totale d'investissements depuis dix-sept ans au moins – dont douze années de sanctions onusiennes –, l'Irak, cinq ans après l'invasion anglo-américaine de mars 2003, n'est toujours pas parvenu à produire autant que sous la dictature : 2,5 millions de barils par jour ce mois-ci – un record depuis 2003 – contre une moyenne de 2,9 millions en 2002.

Selon les chiffres fournis par Washington, les Etats Unis ont investi 1,83 milliard de dollars depuis 5 ans dans l'industrie pétrolière irakienne – et surtout sa « sécurisation » –, pratiquement en pure perte. Environ 85 % de la production (2,2 millions de barils/jour en juin) sont exportés, pour un tiers du total via les oléoducs qui relient les champs de Kirkouk (nord du pays) au terminal pétrolier de Ceyhan en Turquie, les deux tiers restant via les tankers géants qui viennent quotidiennement s'amarrer au sud, près des riches gisements de la région de Bassora.

Au nord, le gouvernement qui paye les tribus arabes sunnites de la région pour protéger les oléoducs contre les attaques de la guérilla commence à obtenir des résultats – forte baisse des attentats depuis six mois –, tandis qu'au sud, l'of-

fensive militaire lancée en mars contre les milices chiites de Bassora qui détournent l'or noir par camions-citernes entiers, commence elle aussi à produire ses effets. Il reste que sur les 7 000 km d'oléoducs qui traversent le pays en tous sens, près des deux tiers ne sont plus opérationnels et que, là aussi, de gros investissements sont nécessaires.

Hussein Sharistani estime que les contrats possiblement attribués aux majors étrangères peuvent augmenter la production d'un demi-million de barils/jour dès la fin de l'année. Pour l'Agence internationale de l'énergie, la simple réparation et modernisation des

Cinq ans après l'invasion anglo-américaine, l'Irak n'est toujours pas parvenu à produire autant de pétrole que sous la dictature de Saddam Hussein



Des soldats américains devant des réservoirs de pétrole vides à Youssoufiya, au sud de Bagdad : l'exploitation irakienne de brut continue de souffrir de l'absence quasi totale d'investissements depuis seize ans au moins. MAURICIO LIMA/AFP

27 gisements en exploitation – sur les 80 mis au jour dans le pays alors que des régions entières n'ont même jamais encore été prospectées – pourrait permettre de doubler pratiquement la production en cinq ans. Selon David Fyfe, un analyste de l'Agence, la simple mise en production des champs découverts et non exploités permettrait à l'Irak d'atteindre 6 millions de barils/jours, c'est-à-dire un peu

plus de la moitié de la production saoudienne qui s'établit actuellement à un peu plus de 9,3 millions de barils/jours.

Quand on sait qu'une étude du Cato Institute, un centre de recherche libéral américain, estime que 1 % seulement d'augmentation de la production globale de pétrole (autour de 83 millions de barils/jour) peut provoquer une baisse de 10 % sur les prix, on imagine ce que la pleine rentrée de l'Irak sur le marché interna-

tional pourrait produire. D'autant, affirmait récemment Hussein Sharistani, que les réserves « probables », quoique non encore « prouvées », de l'Irak, pourraient en fait dépasser les 220 milliards de barils. ■

PATRICE CLAUDE

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L'industrie du racket vise de plus en plus les responsables de la communauté chrétienne

EN IRAK, l'industrie du racket et du rapt est devenue l'une des plus prospères et vise tout particulièrement une communauté chrétienne qui a pourtant déjà payé un lourd tribut à la guerre. Dans ce pays où elle est très antérieure à celle de l'islam, la présence chrétienne n'est plus que de 600 000 personnes (3 % de la population). Outre le dynamitage d'une quinzaine d'églises depuis quatre ans à Bagdad, à Mossoul et à Kirkouk, 16 prêtres et évêques ont été enlevés. Quatre ont été tués, dont l'un d'entre eux égorgé. M^{gr} Faraj Rahho, archevêque chaldéen de Mossoul, enlevé le 29 février, a été retrouvé mort (avec trois autres jeunes hommes) le 13 mars.

Malgré les protestations internationales suscitées par ce dernier assassinat, les pressions et les intimidations ont repris, après quelques semaines d'accalmie. Les responsables des Eglises irakiennes se plaignent de campagnes de harcèlement visant les évêques, les prêtres, les religieux, responsables de communautés chrétiennes réputées mieux organisées, plus solvables et plus vulnérables. Ils craignent le retour à la *jezzia* (capitation), ce mot des premiers temps de l'islam qui, dans la bouche des fondamentalistes, désigne encore la contribution financière des chrétiens – et autres non-musulmans – à l'effort de guerre sainte, *djihad*, à laquelle ils ne peuvent participer.

« Nous sommes appelés au téléphone nuit et jour par des voix anonymes, devenus les otages de visages inconnus », se plaint M^{gr} Georges Casmoussa, archevêque syriaque catholique de Mossoul (70 000 chrétiens), récemment invité au Parlement européen, puis à Paris par Pax Christi et l'Œuvre d'Orient. « Ces appels ne sont pas forcément menaçants, et sont même parfois polis. Mais il s'agit toujours de nous soutirer de l'argent », ajoute

l'homme d'Eglise. Tous les prétextes sont bons : une aide humanitaire, un secours pour des malades, des blessés, une opération chirurgicale, etc.

Ces appels anonymes, émanant de personnes informées des activités de la communauté chrétienne, des jours de quête et de la générosité des fidèles, réclament parfois des « sommes exorbitantes ». Ils viennent de « résistants » qui invoquent l'effort de « guerre sainte » auquel chaque Irakien serait tenu, d'une manière ou d'une autre, de contribuer. Ils savent en outre que les responsables du clergé chrétien ne quitteront pas le pays, à la différence de leurs fidèles, contraints souvent par l'insécurité et la situation économique à partir. L'intimidation verbale fait place parfois à la menace d'enlèvement : « Quand la pression ne fait pas d'effet, les griffes sortent », souligne M^{gr} Casmoussa.

« Coups mortels »

Ces tentatives de rançonnement préoccupent de plus en plus le clergé et contribuent au « calvaire » qu'il dit subir dans un pays où toutes les plaintes se heurtent à l'impuissance des autorités locales. Evêques et prêtres cherchent à s'en sortir « par la diplomatie, quelques bons mots et la patience ». Obligés de « marchander », ils acceptent des dépannages financiers pour de « seuls motifs humains ». Interrogé sur sa propre réaction, l'archevêque de Mossoul dit avec humour : « Nos trois lignes de téléphone ne marchent plus, mais nous ne les faisons pas réparer. »

Las, il s'emporte : « Ce ne sont pas des adversaires que nous avons en face de nous et auxquels nous pourrions répondre en vérité. Nous voudrions voir des visages, plutôt qu'entendre des voix inconnues. Quels personnages se camouflent derrière ces

coups de fil ? » Céder ou résister ? Beaucoup de chrétiens pensent, en Irak, que c'est pour avoir refusé ce chantage que M^{gr} Rahho, archevêque de Mossoul, a été enlevé et assassiné. Mais son collègue syriaque catholique dit n'en détenir aucune preuve. « Il n'y a eu aucune enquête sur cet assassinat », se lamente-t-il.

Cette insécurité altère le climat de « convivialité » qui existait entre ces chrétiens de Mossoul ou de Bagdad, les notables musulmans et les autorités civiles. « Les menaces viennent peut-être de simples racketteurs, de pêcheurs en eaux troubles ou de fondamentalistes, mais ils nous donnent des coups mortels », conclut M^{gr} Casmoussa, qui ne voit guère d'avenir pacifique pour les siens : « Avec les bombardements d'églises et les enlèvements de prêtres, avec le retour à un régime de "dhimmitude" [tolérance condescendante], avec un exode qui continue, les chrétiens d'Irak sont en train de réécrire l'histoire de ceux de Turquie quand, à la fin de la première guerre, tout le sud de ce pays fut vidé de ses populations chrétiennes, pourtant de très vieille implantation. Si cela se produisait, ce serait une terrible catastrophe pour l'Irak et le monde. » ■

HENRI TINCQ

AP Associated Press

Arrestation en Turquie de deux généraux à la retraite

01 juillet 2008 - AP

DEUX GÉNÉRAUX à la retraite soupçonnés de fomenter un coup d'Etat contre le gouvernement dirigé par les islamistes modérés ont été arrêtés mardi, selon la télévision privée CNN-Turquie, à l'heure où la Cour constitutionnelle se penchait sur la demande d'interdiction de l'AKP.

Hürsüt Tolon et Sener Eruygur sont les plus importants ex-gradés interpellés à ce jour dans le cadre de l'enquête sur le mouvement ultranationaliste "Ergenekon", selon la chaîne privée CNN-Turquie.

Eruygur était l'un des principaux organisateurs des grandes manifestations de masse l'année dernière, qui ont vu des centaines de milliers de Turcs défilier pour la défense de la laïcité, de laquelle l'armée turque se considère comme garante.

Un journaliste connu pour son opposition au gouvernement et le président de la Chambre de commerce d'Ankara ont également été arrêtés, selon la chaîne turque.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a quant à lui fait état de 20 arrestations en tout, ajoutant que la police recherchait quatre autres personnes. Il a démenti que ces interpellations aient des motifs politiques.



Ces arrestations intervenaient quelques heures avant la première audience devant la Cour constitutionnelle consacrée à la mise en cause du parti au pouvoir, le Parti de la Justice et du Développement, par le procureur Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya. Ce dernier réclame son interdiction, l'accusant de mettre à mal les fondements laïques de la Turquie moderne, inscrits dans la Constitution.

En mars, le procureur Yalçinkaya avait donc demandé à la Cour constitutionnelle d'interdire l'AKP et d'exclure 71 personnes de toute activité politique pendant cinq ans, dont Erdogan et le président Abdullah Gül.

Devant la Cour, Yalçinkaya a réaffirmé son point de vue mardi, selon l'agence Anatolie. Au cours

d'une audience à huis clos, il a estimé qu'il existait un danger "clair et immédiat" que le parti au pouvoir cherche à imposer la loi islamique en Turquie.

En janvier, huit personnes avaient été inculpées de tentative d'organisation d'une rébellion armée contre le gouvernement, la presse affirmant qu'ils étaient membres d'"Ergenekon" et étaient accusés de fomenter une série d'attentats et d'assassinats. Parmi leurs cibles auraient figuré des dirigeants kurdes, ainsi que le Prix Nobel de littérature Orhan Pamuk, dans le collimateur des nationalistes pour ses commentaires sur le génocide arménien.

labre.be

02 juillet 2008

TURQUIE

LE PAYS EST AU BORD DU CHAOS POLITIQUE

La Cour constitutionnelle devrait frapper d'interdiction le Parti au pouvoir, l'AKP. Tandis que les autorités continuent de démanteler un réseau putschiste kémaliste.

Jérôme Bastion

La concomitance, mardi, de deux événements spectaculaires - et aisément qualifiables de préoccupants dans n'importe quelle démocratie - a mis le pays en émoi et poussé les tensions politiques qui traversent le pays depuis le printemps 2007 à leur paroxysme.

L'ouverture du procès en interdiction du parti de la Justice et du Développement (AKP, au pouvoir), avec la présentation du réquisitoire du procureur de la Cour de Cassation devant la Cour constitutionnelle, était attendue. Sans surprise, Abdurrahmane Yalçinkaya a affirmé que l'instauration de la charia (loi coranique) par l'AKP était un danger "clair et immédiat", et qu'en conséquence, le parti du Premier ministre Erdogan devait être interdit.

Mais, au même moment, un nouveau coup de filet à Istanbul, Ankara et Trabzon au sein des cercles ultrakémalistes, qui a vu deux généraux en retraite placés en garde à vue, n'a pas manqué de jeter le trouble. Le complot présumé du groupe Ergenekon (du nom d'une petite vallée mythique en Asie centrale d'où les Turcs auraient entamé leur "conquête de l'ouest", il y a dix siècles) avait été mis au jour en juin 2007 avec la découverte d'un arsenal terroriste dans une maison louée sur la rive asiatique d'Istanbul par d'anciens militaires reconvertis dans l'Association de la pensée kémaliste (ADD).

Une série d'arrestations retentissantes s'en était suivie, qui comprenait, hormis les militaires en question, un ancien général responsable du renseignement à la gendarmerie (Veli Küçük), un ancien président de l'Université d'Istanbul (Kemal Alemdaroglu), un leader de parti d'extrême gauche connu pour ses liens avec les services de renseignements militaires (Dogu Perinçek), un avocat d'extrême droite rendu célèbre par ses procès ouverts contre le journaliste arménien assassiné Aërant Dink (Kemal Kerinçsiz), le porte-parole de l'église orthodoxe turque (et non grecque), ainsi que des mafieux et des journalistes.

Un coup d'Etat en gestation

Jusqu'à hier, 49 personnes étaient détenues dans l'attente d'un procès qui promettait d'éclairer la volonté de préparer les conditions d'un coup d'Etat en perpétrant des actes terroristes contre des personnalités politiques au pouvoir ou de l'opposition kurde, de hauts juges, et des intellectuels comme le prix Nobel de Littérature Orhan Pamuk, depuis exilé. Une sacrée boîte de Pandore dénoncée par l'opposition social-démocrate et kémaliste comme un "complot américain", et qui attendait toujours l'annonce d'un acte d'accusation.

Peu après la vingtaine d'arrestations de mardi, parmi lesquelles les généraux en retraite Hürsüt Tolon (ancien numéro 2 de l'armée de terre) et Sener Eruygur (secré-



taire général de l'Association de la pensée kémaliste), le procureur de la République en charge de l'enquête annonçait opportunément la publication "prochaine" de cet acte d'accusation. Y figureront sans doute le président de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie d'Ankara, Sinan Aygün, également arrêté et dans les locaux duquel la police aurait retrouvé une arme de poing, ainsi que le chef du bureau du journal kémaliste "Cumhuriyet" à Ankara.

Au moment où l'AKP livre un combat désespéré pour sa survie politique - alors que tous les analystes prévoient un verdict d'interdiction du parti par la Cour constitutionnelle - cette chasse à l'homme inquiète pour la stabilité politique du pays, déjà mise à mal ces derniers mois. Pour le leader de l'opposition social-démocrate Deniz Baykal, "la Turquie est au bord de la rupture".

U.S. helped Iraqis on oil contracts

Scope of advisers' influence on decisions remains unclear

By Andrew E. Kramer

A group of American advisers led by a small State Department team played an integral part in drawing up contracts between the Iraqi government and five major Western oil companies to develop some of the largest fields in Iraq, U.S. officials say.

The disclosure, on the eve of the contracts' announcement, is the first confirmation of such direct Bush administration involvement and is sure to stoke criticism of the deals. On Monday, Iraq invited bids for the development of its largest oil field. The country has pre-qualified 41 foreign firms.

In their role as advisers to the Iraqi Oil Ministry, U.S. government lawyers and private sector consultants provided template contracts and detailed suggestions on drafting the contracts, advisers and a senior State Department official said.

It is unclear how much influence their work had on the Iraqi Oil Ministry's decisions.

The advisers themselves, who along with the diplomatic official spoke only on condition of anonymity, said that their involvement was only to help an understaffed Iraqi ministry with technical and legal details of the contracts and that they in no way helped to choose which companies got the deals. Repeated inquiries left with the Oil Ministry's press office were not returned.

At a time of rising oil prices, the no-bid contracts, which were expected to be awarded Monday to Exxon Mobil, Shell, BP, Total and Chevron as well as several smaller oil companies, are coming as a rare prize to the industry in a country with some of the world's largest untapped fields and potential for vast profits.

The deals have been criticized by opponents of the Iraq war, who accuse the Bush administration of working behind the scenes to ensure Western access to Iraqi oil fields even as most other oil exporting countries have been sharply limiting the roles of international oil companies in development.

Though enriched by high prices, the companies are starved for new fields. The U.S. government, too, has eagerly encouraged investment anywhere in the world that could bring new oil online to alleviate the exceptionally tight global supply, which is a cause of high prices.

Iraq is particularly attractive in that light, because in addition to its vast reserves, it also has the potential to bring new sources of oil onto the market relatively cheaply. This potential is closer to being realized as sabotage on oil export pipelines has declined with improved security. U.S. military officials say the pipelines now have excess capa-

city, waiting for output to increase.

But any perception of U.S. meddling in Iraq's oil policies threatens to further inflame opinion against the United States, particularly in Arab countries that are skeptical of American intentions in Iraq.

"We pretend it is not a centerpiece of our motivation, yet we keep confirming that it is," said Frederick Barton, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a research organization in Washington. "And we undermine our own veracity by citing issues like sovereignty, when we have our hands right in the middle of it."

U.S. officials are directly advising Iraq on a host of issues, from electricity to education. But they have avoided the

'We undermine our own veracity by citing issues like sovereignty.'

limelight when questions turn to how Iraq should manage its vast oil endowment, insisting that it is a decision that must be left to the Iraqi government. The State Department advisers on the Western contracts say they purposely avoid trying to shape Iraqi policy.

"They have not negotiated with the international oil companies since the 1970s," said the senior State Department official, who was speaking about Iraqi oil officials and who was directly involved in shaping U.S. energy policy in Iraq.

The advice on the drafting of the contracts was not binding, he said, and sometimes the ministry chose to ignore it. "The ministry did not have to take our advice," he said, noting that the Iraqis had also turned to the Norwegian government for counsel. "It has been their sole decision."

The advisers say they were not involved in advancing the oil companies' interests but rather treated the Oil Ministry as a client, the State Department official said. "I do not see this as a conflict of interest," he said.

A potential area of criticism, however, is that only Western companies got the bigger oil contracts. In particular, Russian companies that have experience in Iraq and had sought development contracts are still waiting.

Earlier in the occupation of Iraq, U.S. advisers supported the Oil Ministry's effort to dismiss claims by the Russian company Lukoil to a large deal from the era of Saddam Hussein. The ministry maintains that Saddam's government canceled the contract three months before the invasion.

Lukoil says the attempt to cancel the

deal was illegal because Saddam had not appealed to international arbitration first, as required in the contract terms.

The new oil contracts have become a significant political issue within the United States.

Three Democratic senators, led by Charles Schumer of New York, sent a letter to the State Department last week asking that the deals be delayed until the Iraqi Parliament passed a hydrocarbons law outlining the distribution of oil revenues and regulatory matters.

They contend that the contracts could deepen political tensions in Iraq and endanger American soldiers.

This assertion prompted objections by the Bush administration and the secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, who said the deals were purely commercial matters.

Dana Perino, the White House spokeswoman, said, "Iraq is a sovereign country, and it can make decisions based on how it feels that it wants to move forward in its development of its oil resources."

Rice, speaking earlier on Fox News, said: "The United States government has stayed out of the matter of awarding the Iraq oil contracts. It's a private sector matter."

Advisers from the State, Commerce, Energy and Interior departments are assigned to work with the Iraqi Oil Ministry, according to the senior diplomat. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development has contracted with Management Systems International, a Washington consulting firm, to advise the oil and other ministries.

The agency program is called Tatweer, the Arabic word for development.

Samir Abid, a Canadian of Iraqi origin and employee of the Tatweer program, said in an interview, "The legal department of the Ministry of Oil passed us a draft of the contract. They passed it to us and asked for our comments because we were mentoring them."

"It was an exercise in deciding how best to do these contracts. I don't know if they used our comments or not."

In a statement, the Agency for International Development said its advisers had reviewed the oil company contracts, known as Technical Support Agreements contracts: "At the request of the Ministry of Oil, the Tatweer Energy Team has done a review of the format, structure and clarity of language of blank draft contracts."

The statement said that the team did not have access to confidential information from the oil companies. The advice, consultants said, was necessary because the Oil Ministry has suffered from an exodus of qualified employees.

NEW DETENTIONS LINK GENERALS TO ERGENEKON NETWORK

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

The detention of four retired high-ranking generals yesterday along with dozens of others has extended an investigation into an illegal organization to include two failed coup attempts allegedly devised by currently retired force commanders against the current government in 2004.

Twenty-one people, including two former army commanders, a journalist and the leader of a business group, were detained in operations in the cities of Ankara, İstanbul, Antalya and Trabzon yesterday morning as part of an investigation into a powerful and illegal organization suspected of plotting to overthrow the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government. Retired Gen. Şener Eruygur, retired Gen. Hurşit Tolon, retired Gen. İlker Güven and former Gendarmerie General Command Intelligence Department head Levent Ersöz as well as Ankara Chamber of Commerce (ATO) Chairman Sinan Aygün and the Ankara bureau chief of the radically secularist Cumhuriyet daily Mustafa Balbay were among those taken into police custody early in the morning.

The four generals are being mentioned as potential accomplices in a diary allegedly kept by a former navy commander detailing failed plans to overthrow the AK Party.

Eruygur was a leading figure among the orga-



Police search Cumhuriyet daily Ankara office after detention of representative Mustafa Balbay

nizers of so-called republican rallies held ahead of July elections last year in protest of the AK Party government. His name was also mentioned in documents leaked to the press proving the existence of two failed coup attempts called Ayışığı and Sarıkız, plotted when Eruygur was still in the army. Tolon was known for making frequent appearances at symposiums and conferences organized by ultranationalists. This is the first time generals of such high rank are being detained in Turkey.

Eruygur is also head of the secularist Atatürkist Thought Association (ADD), named after the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Birol Başaran, former head of the ADD's Kadıköy chapter and chairman of the Nationalist Businessmen's Association (USİAD), and ADD Kadıköy's current Chairman Coşkun Gürel, a former colonel, were also detained.

The İstanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office ordered

the detentions, reports said. The police also carried out searches at the Ankara office of Cumhuriyet, the ADD's İstanbul office and ATO's headquarters in the capital.

The editor-in-chief of the ultranationalist Tercüman daily, Ufuk Büyükçebe, and writer and strategy expert Erol Mütercimler were also detained in yesterday's raids. The dailies' offices were searched by police teams looking for former AK Party deputy Turhan Çömez, also on suspicion of links to Ergenekon.

A newspaper had reported yesterday morning that Çömez was out of the country to study English abroad.

The seven individuals detained in Ankara, including three of the generals, ATO Chairman Aygun and journalist Balbay, two detained in Antalya and one person detained in Trabzon were brought to İstanbul in the evening for interrogation.

The Ergenekon investigation under which yesterday's detentions were made began in the summer of 2007 when a house filled with arms and ammunition in İstanbul's Ümraniye district was uncovered. As the investigation expanded, a structure suspected of responsibility for a number of politically motivated murders, including that of ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in January 2007, and attacks at newspapers and judicial entities to foment chaos and engineer a military takeover. Forty-nine people including former members of the army, journalists, drug lords and academics have been detained in the operation so far.

Analysts say the Ergenekon group is part of the shadowy "deep state," code for hard-line nationalists in Turkey's security forces and state bureaucracy ready to take the law into their own hands to accomplish their own agenda.

Meanwhile, reports yesterday said the chief prosecutor on the Ergenekon case, Zekeriya Öz, said he was very close to completing his indictment and expected to submit it to a court by the end of this week.

The investigation has significantly increased political tension in the country. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had previously said a closure case against his party on charges of anti-secularism was a response to the government's determination in the Ergenekon operation, while others have claimed that the government is using the Ergenekon investigation to suppress its opponents.

Cüneyt Arcayürek, a columnist at the Cumhuriyet daily, held a press conference at noon yesterday to comment on the Ankara bureau chief's detention, saying, "It is in no way a coincidence that such things are happening at a time when the closure case is being heard at the Constitutional Court."

A lawyer for Cumhuriyet here said the police had seized two laptops and dozens of CDs.

Erdoğan responded to questions from the press over the news of the recent detentions at noon in front of Parliament. "We hope the investigation will be concluded as soon as possible," he said, adding, "We hope the darkness will be illuminated at the end of this investigation."

The detentions came hours ahead of a hearing in the case in which a chief prosecutor is seeking to have the ruling AK Party shut down for



Retired Gen. Şener Eruygur, Retired Gen. Hurşit Tolon, Journalist Mustafa Balbay, ATO chairman Sinan Aygün

alleged Islamist activities. The prosecutor is due to make an oral argument to the Constitutional Court -- another part of Turkey's secularist establishment. The AK Party denies the prosecutor's charges, saying they are politically motivated.

Novelist Orhan Pamuk, who was prosecuted under a law banning insults to Turkish identity, and members of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) -- seen by nationalists as a threat to national sovereignty -- were reportedly on the Ergenekon hit list.

Strange connections

The Ergenekon investigation began as the continuation of an investigation into a house used as an ammunition depot in June of last year. Revelations emanating from the investigation thus far have shown that many of the attacks attributed to separatist or Islamist groups or seen as hate crimes against minorities were actually "inside jobs" by people connected to Ergenekon.

People such as the lawyer of Yasin Aydın, one of the suspects charged in the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, have appeared in court as suspects in the Ergenekon operation.

The investigation into the gang has exposed links between an attack on the Council of State in 2006, threats and attacks against people accused of being unpatriotic and a 1996 car crash known as the Susurluk incident, which revealed links between a police chief, a convicted ultranationalist fugitive and a member of Parliament as well as links to the plans of some groups in Turkey's powerful military to overthrow the government.

Some of the nearly 50 suspects under detention and awaiting trial so far include Veli Küçük, a retired major general who is also the alleged founder of an illegal intelligence unit in the gendarmerie, the existence of which is denied by officials; Workers' Party (İP) leader Doğu Perinçek; controversial ultranationalist lawyer Kemal Kerinçsiz, who filed countless suits against Turkish writers and intellectuals at odds with Turkey's official policies; Fikret Karadağ, a retired army colonel; Sevgi Erenerol, the press spokesperson for a shady group called the

Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate; and Sami Hoştan, a key figure in the Susurluk investigation. Ali Yasak, a well-known gangster linked to the figures in the Susurluk incident, was also detained in the operation.

Ayışığı and Sarıkız

A Turkish political newsweekly closed in April in 2007 after its owner said he couldn't handle police harassment after the magazine published reports revealing that former force commanders had plotted to overthrow the AK Party.

The March 29, 2007 issue of *Nokta* magazine had published lengthy excerpts from a diary allegedly written by former Navy Forces Commander Adm. Özden Örnek. According to the diary, some former force commanders had planned two separate coups with the code-names Sarıkız (Blonde Girl) and Ayışığı (Moonlight). After the story, the magazine's offices were raided by the police for three days as part of an investigation by the public prosecutor's office in Istanbul's Bakırköy district, acting on a

complaint filed by Örnek.

Initially, Adm. Örnek had admitted the diary belonged to him; however, following widespread public attention and reactions against the reports of the coup attempt, Örnek later said the diary was not his.

The magazine's editor-in-chief, Alper Görmüş, was tried, risking up to seven years in prison for "publicly slandering and insulting Adm. Örnek," but was acquitted.

United Press International

U.S. denies supporting PKK rebels

ANKARA, Turkey, July 1, 2008 (UPI) -- U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson denied media claims U.S. covert operation agencies worked with a Kurdish separatist group.

Seymour Hersh wrote in the latest edition of *The New Yorker* magazine that the CIA and Special Forces units within the U.S. military worked with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, or PJAK, to target Iranian interests.

"The Kurdish party, PJAK, which has also been reported to be covertly supported by the United States, has been operating against Iran from bases in northern Iraq for at least three years," he wrote.

Speaking to reporters in Ankara, Wilson said the United States does not

work with either group as they are listed by the U.S. State Department as foreign terrorist organizations, *Today's Zaman* noted.

"The U.S. does not cooperate with PJAK. We have no relations with PJAK. We look at PJAK as a terrorist organization," he said.

PJAK and PKK militants operate in northern Iraq Kurdistan and along the border with Iran. The Turkish military launched a major offensive against PKK fighters in December using U.S.-supplied intelligence regarding rebel movements.

The issue of intelligence sharing sparked a dispute between Washington and Ankara when Turkish military officials revealed they had shared intelligence with Iran regarding PKK activity.

United Press International

Sunni group warns Assyrians in Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq, July 2, 2008 (UPI) -

An alleged affiliate of al-Qaida in Iraq addressed a letter to the Assyrian community in Mosul warning them against cooperating with the United States.

A group calling itself "The Battalion of Just Punishment, Jihad Base in Mesopotamia" sent a letter to churches in northern Iraq threatening the Assyrian community for collaborating with U.S. forces and for seeking to establish an autonomous police force, Assyrian International News Agency said Wednesday.

"We caution and warn anyone who tries to rob us through dealings with the Americans or through the spreading of American forces and/or police to protect the Holy Shrines in the Islamic

Republic of Iraq, that these shrines would remain target of the freedom fighters," the AINA translation of the letter read.

The Assyrian community in northern Iraq witnessed widespread persecution since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, particularly from Islamic militant groups such as Al-Qaida.

"We remind the dhimmi people that Iraq is for the noble Iraqis and not for how you are now," the letter said, using the Koranic term for those with fewer legal and social rights than Muslims under Shariah law.

Assyrian analysts who have seen the letter said some of its references suggest it came from Ansar Al-Islam, the Kurdish group allegedly linked to al-Qaida.

REUTERS

UN: Still time for Iraq local elections this year

July 2, 2008 - BAGHDAD (Reuters)

Iraq will have time to hold provincial elections before the end of the year if parliament passes a new electoral law this month, the U.N. special representative to Baghdad said on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has said the polls, seen as crucial to national reconciliation, will be held on Oct 1. But legislators said last month there was little chance of getting the law passed soon enough to allow preparations for a vote by then.

"We can indeed have elections before the end of the year if parliament approves the electoral law before the end of July," U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura told reporters after meeting Maliki.

"There is no reason for this electoral law not to be approved because most of the issues can be solved. We still have one month but it is a crucial month."

Parliament is scheduled to take a summer recess in August.

The electoral commission has said it needs three months to prepare once the law has been passed. The United Nations is providing technical assistance to the commission.

Washington says the elections will promote reconciliation by boosting the participation of minority Sunni Arabs in politics. Sunni Arabs boycotted the last local polls in January 2005.

Analysts say the elections will also be the battleground for a fierce power struggle among majority Shi'ites.

Lawmakers have said debate on the provincial elections law has bogged down over a dispute between Arab and Kurdish lawmakers over what to do about voting in the disputed oil rich city of Kirkuk in northern Iraq.

The fate of the Kurdish city Kirkuk, is already one of the most divisive issues in

Iraq.

Minority Kurds, who control the northern autonomous Kurdistan region, see Kirkuk as their ancient capital and want a constitutionally mandated referendum to be held to decide its status. Arabs encouraged to move there under Saddam Hussein want the city to stay under Baghdad and have been wary of a vote.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of majority Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmen. lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem."

The article 140 in Iraqi constitution calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months, July 2008.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry. In a statement, Maliki said it was necessary to hold the elections on time.

The issue of Kirkuk should not hinder the process, he said.

The separate referendum on Kirkuk's status was supposed to have been held before the end of 2007 but was delayed for six months because few preparations had been carried out. The latest deadline for the referendum has also elapsed.

U. S. officials condoned Hunt-Kurd oil deal-documents

REUTERS

July 3, 2008 WASHINGTON (Reuters) —

U.S. officials condoned Hunt Oil Co efforts to obtain an exploration deal with Iraq's Kurdish regional government, contrary to public statements discouraging it, according to documents cited by a congressional committee.

When the agreement was announced in September, it was criticized as undermining efforts to strengthen Iraq central government, which still had no national oil revenue-sharing law.

Bush administration officials expressed public concern and denied any knowledge of the contract.

On Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman released e-mails and letters obtained by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee that appeared to show the opposite.

"Contrary to the denials of administration officials, advisors to the president and officials in the State and Commerce Departments knew about Hunt Oil's interest in the Kurdish region months before the contract was executed," Waxman, a California Democrat, wrote in a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In one e-mail, Hunt Oil's general manager wrote: "There was no communication to me or in my presence made by any of the 9 state department officials with whom I met ... that Hunt should not pursue our course of action leading to a contract. In fact, there was ample opportunity to do so, but it did not happen."

Spokesmen for the State Department and Hunt Oil were not immediately available for comment.

State Department spokesman Tom Casey said on Wednesday that "we continue to stand by our previous statements that the U.S. government made its objections to this arrangement known both to the company as well as to the

KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government)," The Washington Post reported.

Waxman's office released documents dating to June 2007, saying they raised questions about U.S. involvement in recently announced negotiations between the Iraqi government and major U.S. and multinational oil companies.

He told Rice he was seeking information about a possible U.S. role in the efforts of those companies to obtain Iraqi contracts.

"You and other administration officials have denied playing any role in these contracts. In the case of Hunt Oil, however, similar denials appear to have been misleading," Waxman wrote.

The government of Iraq's northern Kurdish region announced on September 8, 2007, that it had signed a gas and oil production sharing contract with a unit of Hunt Oil and with Impulse Energy Corp.

Hunt Oil Chief Executive Ray Hunt denied that his ties to the Bush family and the Republican Party helped his company cut a deal with the largely autonomous region. Hunt said in a Wall Street Journal interview in October the company received no government advice before striking the deal.

"The fact is, as a matter of policy, we never have and never will go to the government of the U.S. and ask the government's advice on anything we do from a business point of view," he was quoted as saying.

Iraq has the world's third-largest oil reserves, which are mainly in the north and the south of the country.

Kurdish officials have clashed with Baghdad over the national oil law, which will determine how contracts are awarded and how revenues are distributed. The northern Iraqi region has signed several exploration deals with foreign firms, which Baghdad says are illegal.

KURDISHGLOBE

03 July 2008

No agreement on oil law

KRG Prime Minister stands firm on KRG oil contracts.

By Bassim Khidhir
The Kurdish Globe

Even as KRG and Baghdad fail to reach an agreement regarding KRG's oil contracts, KRG and South Korea sign a new oil contract. After several days of talks on the draft oil law and KRG's oil contracts, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani this week returned to Kurdistan. No agreements were made, only a promise to continue talking through a new political committee. "The committee formed during my visit to Baghdad is composed of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, myself, vice presidents Tareq al-Hashimi and Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Deputy Premier Dr. Barham Saleh, and Roz Nouri Shawais, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) politburo," Barzani said during a press conference in Erbil on Saturday.

"The committee, which will start its work next week, aims to reach a solution for the issue of oil contracts and the law on oil and gas," he added. Barzani again defended KRG's oil contracts, saying that they are legal and constitutional contracts that meet international standards. "No power in Baghdad can annul these contracts.

Those who call for them to be annulled are dreamers," he added.

Despite the lack of an agreement, a South Korean consortium has forged a deal to explore eight oilfields in Iraqi Kurdistan in return for major construction projects in the region. The oilfields are believed to hold 7.2 billion barrels of untapped crude oil, said the state-run Korea National Oil Corp. (KNOC) "Our side will be able to secure 1.9 billion barrels," KNOC senior executive vice president Suh Moon-Kyu told reporters, adding that exploration could begin as soon as two months. In return, South Korean companies will invest \$2.1 billion in the region's infrastructure development, he said. Five of the fields are near Erbil in northern Kurdistan, where South Korea has about 650 troops aiding in reconstruction. South Korea imports almost all its oil and gas and is seeking worldwide exploration deals and stakes in foreign energy firms.

The deal went ahead despite protests from Iraq's central government about other exploration projects in Kurdistan that have not been approved by Baghdad. In January, Iraq suspended an annual contract with South Korea's top oil refiner to export 90,000 barrels a day after Seoul agreed with Kurdistan to explore the Bazian field-estimated to contain 500 million barrels. Moon-Kyu said the latest deal would not require approval from

Baghdad. "Negotiations between Kurdistan authorities and the Iraqi central government have been proceeding well," he said. South Korea will nevertheless send a government delegation for talks with Baghdad on this issue, he said. An international oil expert says the model contract proposed by Baghdad's Oil Ministry "would be disastrous for Iraq."

"They would lose trillions of dollars for the Iraqi people." Dr. Pedro van Meurs, an internationally renowned expert on petroleum fiscal regimes, said the production-sharing contract (PSC) model currently applied by the KRG is far better for Iraq's national interests than the risk-service contracts (RSC) that have been proposed by the Ministry of Oil in Baghdad. The KRG contracts "would be considered in the national interests by many host governments because it does provide the framework for an optimal level of production and recovery of oil and gas from the reservoirs while creating a high value of government revenues," van Meurs stated. Furthermore, his study finds that the RSC model "completely misaligns the interests of the investor and the host government in terms of cost efficiency," pointing out that under the proposed model "a poor



development plan and high costs result in a reward of high profits for the investor," and concluding that "by fundamentally misaligning the interests of the investor and the host government and actually strongly encouraging investors to incur and declare higher costs, the RSC model exposes Iraq to considerable risks of lower government revenues than would otherwise be obtainable."

Dr. van Meurs estimates that if the Baghdad Ministry of Oil's proposed model were followed instead of the current PSC, the present value economic losses to Iraq from Kurdistan Region's oil potential alone would be up to \$450 billion USD, assuming 30 billion barrels of new oil potential at \$100 per barrel.

Warnings continue to fly over Iran crisis

Diplomacy is key, Bush says, but force remains 'on the table'

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON: With tension and warnings continuing to swirl around Iran and its nuclear program, President George W. Bush said again Wednesday that the United States continued to prefer diplomacy but that, as always, "all options are on the table."

When asked about the threat by Iran to disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz if it were attacked, Bush spoke emphatically: "I have always said that all options are on table, but the first option for the United States is to solve this problem diplomatically. That is why we've been pursuing multi-lateral diplomacy" in an effort to resolve the Iranian nuclear standoff.

Bush also acknowledged that it had been a "tough month" in Afghanistan — more U.S. and coalition troops died there in June than in any month since their forces invaded in 2001, making it the second straight month that combat deaths exceeded those in Iraq.

But Bush said it had been difficult for the Taliban and Al Qaeda as well, and he declined to say whether he might order more troops sent there before the end of the year, weeks before his presidency comes to a close.

The president's comments came as he took questions from reporters while explaining his hopes for the summit meeting next week in Japan of the Group of 8 industrialized countries, which is expected to focus on soaring global energy prices, the food crisis affecting many countries, climate change, trade and terrorism.

The meeting begins Monday in Toyako on the northern island of Hokkaido.

Bush's comments on Iran essentially restated administration policy, but they came as the region has seen a succession of warnings, threats and, this week, a perplexingly cooperative tone from some in Tehran.

When U.S. officials said that an Israeli military exercise last month appeared to be a rehearsal for a potential air attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, Tehran threatened that an assault might lead it to close the Strait of Hor-

muz, a choke point at the mouth of the Gulf through which 40 percent of the world's oil passes.

Then, on Wednesday, the commander of U.S. naval forces in the Gulf said the U.S. Navy and its regional allies would stop any such Iranian action. "We will not allow Iran to close it," Vice Admiral Kevin Cosgriff, commander of the 5th Fleet, said after a regional security meeting in Abu Dhabi, The Associated Press reported.

Asked whether he would discourage Israel from attacking Iran, Bush said Wednesday that he had made it "very clear to all parties that the first option" should be diplomatic.

He again warned Tehran that it would face increasing isolation if it continued its nuclear enrichment activities.

Later, at a Pentagon briefing, Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, underscored the U.S. preference for diplomatic pressure, saying it would be "extremely stressful" for a severely stretched U.S. military to be drawn into a fight with Iran.

Two top Iranian officials have sounded conciliatory notes in recent days about the prospects for ending the nuclear impasse.

In New York, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Wednesday that he did not believe that Israel or the United States would attack while the United States was bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq, and amid strains within the Israeli government. "We do not foresee such a possibility at the moment," he told The AP, saying that for Israel to launch an attack now would be "craziness."

In Tehran, Ali Akbar Velayati, a top adviser to the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned Tuesday against "provocative" remarks on the standoff.

The violence in Afghanistan has surged as American deaths in Iraq have dropped. Among the U.S.-led forces in the two countries, 46 service members were killed last month in Afghanistan, compared with 31 in Iraq.

"It has been a tough month in Afghanistan but it has also been a tough

'It has been a tough month in Afghanistan but it has also been a tough month for the Taliban.'

month for the Taliban," Bush said. "One reason why there have been more deaths is because our troops are taking the fight to a tough enemy."

Senior military leaders have pledged to increase the number of troops in Afghanistan next year. But in the meantime, Bush said, "We're constantly reviewing troop needs, troop levels." A recent Pentagon report painted a stark

picture of security inside the country — a militant force that had "coalesced into a resilient insurgency" and a central government in Kabul that still could not extend its reach into the hinterlands.

Roughly 32,000 American troops are deployed in Afghanistan, up from 25,000 in 2005. The Pentagon is now considering sending an additional 7,000 troops. The coalition also includes 38,000 troops from dozens of other countries who are operating under NATO leadership.

Still, U.S. commanders in Kabul and military officials in Washington have said that coalition force levels were still too low.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates has repeatedly urged NATO nations to commit more troops, but his pleas have brought few results.

Intelligence reports describe an increasingly complex enemy. The Pentagon report released last week describes the potential for "two distinct insurgencies in Afghanistan": a Taliban-led insurgency based in the southern city of Kandahar, and a confederation of militant groups in eastern Afghanistan that occasionally finds refuge in Pakistan's tribal areas.

U.S. military and intelligence officials are almost unanimous about the most significant factor fueling the Afghan insurgency: The ability of militant groups to operate with relative impunity inside Pakistan.

On economic issues, Bush again defended his administration's support for a "strong dollar," even as the currency's decline has contributed to record gas prices at home, and said that any climate change agreement with mandatory goals could only be effective if it included fast-growing India and China, a persistent sticking point.

He also urged the G-8 countries to show "accountability" on their earlier commitments, linking that to an issue he hopes will represent a signal foreign achievement of his presidency: progress against HIV and AIDS in Africa.

"We need people who not only make promises but write checks," Bush said. "Accountability is really important when it comes to our work on the continent of Africa."

Yet even as he said he feared that some countries might backtrack on the aid they promised at the G-8 meeting in Scotland in 2005, the reauthorization of his administration's own aid program remains stalled in Congress amid objections from some Republicans over its cost.

Turkey arrests 21 as plotters

2 retired generals among the ultra-nationalists seized

From news reports

ANKARA: The Turkish authorities detained at least 21 ultra-nationalists, including 2 prominent retired generals, on Tuesday in an investigation into a suspected plot against the government.

The arrests were made shortly before the Constitutional Court began hearing a legal case in which the governing Justice and Development Party, known as AK from its initials in Turkish, is charged with trying to establish an Islamic state.

Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya, the top prosecutor in Turkey, has accused AK of violating secularism, which is protected by the Turkish Constitution, and has asked that the party be closed.

Yalcinkaya also has asked that President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and about 70 other party officials be barred from politics for five years.

A ruling in his favor could lead to parliamentary elections, analysts say.

Turkish stocks and the lira fell sharply Tuesday as traders and political analysts worried that the political uncertainty would damage Ankara's hopes of joining the European Union.

Erdogan said the detentions were linked to a long-running investigation into Ergenekon, a shadowy, ultra-nationalist and hard-line secularist group that is suspected of planning bombings and assassinations calculated to trigger an army takeover.

"It is not the AK party which they cannot tolerate. What they can't tolerate is democracy, the national will, the people's feelings and thoughts," Erdogan said.

The Ankara police said that 24 people had been detained, but later the prosecutor's office told the state news agency that 21 were in detention and 3 were being sought.

The news agency said that among those detained were the retired generals Hursit Tolon and Sener Eruygur, the former chief of gendarmerie forces and head of a powerful secularist association.

Tolon and Eruygur were the highest-ranking former soldiers to be arrested so far, CNN-Turk television said.

Eruygur was a major organizer in anti-government rallies last year, when hundreds of thousands protested what they considered government attempts to undermine secularism.

The Milliyet daily newspaper said on its Web site that a retired brigadier general and a retired vice admiral had also been detained. The chairman of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, Sinan Aygun, also was detained, as was Mustafa Balbay, a senior journalist for the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet.

"These are prominent people and



Osman Orsal/Reuters

Demonstrators in Istanbul chanting slogans against the arrests on Tuesday of suspected plotters against the government.

their common point is their loyalty to secularism," Mustafa Ozyurek, a senior lawmaker in the main opposition party CHP, or Republican People's Party, told the broadcaster NTV. He said the government "wants to turn society into an empire of fear."

Many see the Constitutional Court case, filed in March, as the last stand by Turkey's secular old guard — a powerful class that includes the military and judiciary — that is trying to hang onto power.

The military's attempt to stare down Erdogan last year led to pro-AK retaliation at the ballot boxes and now it is turning to its judicial allies to try to stop Erdogan. A ruling by the court is expected in the next few months.

Turkey has had four military coups in the last 50 years, only two involving armed force. The most recent was a 1997 "soft coup," when the generals, using a combination of public and behind-the-scenes pressure, edged from power a government that the military considered Islamist.

Political analysts say Ergenekon is part of the "deep state," a term used to describe the hard-line nationalists in Turkey's security forces and state bureaucracy who are ready to take the law into their own hands for the sake of their agenda.

More than 40 people, including a retired general, lawyers and politicians have been arrested over the past year for suspected links to Ergenekon. The military, which has repeatedly criticized the government, has denied any links to the group.

No formal charges have been brought against those who were detained on Tuesday, but the Anatolian news agency reported judicial sources as saying an indictment should be ready by the end of the week.

Shortly after the detentions, Yalcinkaya, the chief prosecutor, outlined his case to close the AK party, which was re-elected last year. Turkish courts have banned more than 20 parties for alleged Islamist or Kurdish separatist activities.

AK officials deny the charges and say they are politically motivated.

José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, has warned that banning the AK would have a "major impact" on relations with the EU.

In its defense, the party submitted more than 400 pages to the Constitutional Court in June, saying that closing the party would amount to overturning the results of a democratic election, which it won.

"It is not true that the party has become the focal point of activities against secularism," the party said in its defense arguments.

The case "is a violation of the right to free speech," it said, and "a violation of the right to free elections."

"There is no evidence to support the claim that the party poses a risk to democracy in the short or long term," the party argued.

The chief prosecutor has referred to a recent attempt by Parliament to abolish a ban on head scarves in universities as evidence that the party had become a

"focal point of anti-secular activity."

The Constitutional Court struck down the move, saying that it violated secularism, and upheld the ban, a decision that was a major defeat for Erdogan.

CHP, the opposition party, says Er-

dogan is packing ministries with his own people and must be stopped to preserve the secular nature of Turkey. Yet Erdogan says he also wants a secular state, one with more freedoms for its citizens.

Turkey's current struggle is the latest chapter in a history that began in the

1920s, when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, looking toward Europe, destroyed all connections to the East, changing the alphabet into Latin letters, placing mosques under state control and crushing the religious hierarchy.

(Reuters, AP, IHT)

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 3, 2008

Iraqi hints at delay on troop deal with U.S.

Security agreement faces many hurdles

By Alissa J. Rubin

BAGHDAD: Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari of Iraq appeared to lay the groundwork Wednesday for the possibility of a delay in the strategic security agreement under negotiation with the United States, which expires at the end of the year.

At a news conference in Baghdad, Zebari said that intense negotiations under way since early March had made headway, but that many difficult issues had yet to be decided, like the extent of Iraqi control over American operations and the right of American soldiers deployed here to detain suspects.

"The Americans cannot stay in Iraq without a legal authorization," after the United Nations mandate expires on Dec. 31, Zebari said. "We have three options: either we conclude a Status of Forces Agreement; or we have an interim agreement until a SOFA can be completed; or we go back to the Security Council at the end of the year and ask for another extension," he said.

An interim agreement, he said, could take the form of a memorandum of understanding and related documents, which would be less extensive than a formal security agreement.

Zebari's remarks were the most detailed public statement he has given about the negotiations with the United States over the future status of American forces in Iraq, now in its sixth year

of war that began with the American-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein in the spring of 2003.

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. government about Zebari's remarks. The Bush administration has said it expects to conclude an agreement, possibly by the end of this month.

On Tuesday, Zebari told Iraqi lawmakers that the Americans had capitulated on one area of contention in the negotiations: the legal status of private security contractors in the country. He said the United States had agreed to lift immunity for them, so they would be subject to prosecution under Iraqi laws.

The private security companies, like Blackwater USA, have reputations of using excessive force in protecting diplomatic and other foreign clients, and currently enjoy immunity from Iraqi law. That immunity became a political issue after a Blackwater shooting in Baghdad in September left 17 Iraqis dead.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune July 7, 2008

Emirates forgives Iraqi debt

Gift equals \$7 billion, according to official

The Associated Press

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates canceled Iraq's debt Sunday and moved to restore a full diplomatic mission in Baghdad.

The development was considered evidence of improved security in Iraq and growing acceptance of its Shiite-led government by an Arab world dominated by Sunni Muslims.

The debt forgiveness and the naming of a new United Arab Emirates ambassador to Iraq were announced by the Abu Dhabi government shortly after Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki

of Iraq began a visit to the wealthy Gulf nation. The announcements are certain to bolster Maliki's standing at home.

Maliki, in office since May 2006, thanked the United Arab Emirates for the debt cancellation, telling a meeting with local businessmen in Abu Dhabi that it was a "swift and courageous" decision.

The Emirates' official news agency, WAM, quoted the nation's president, Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as saying he hoped canceling the debt would lighten the "economic burden" facing Iraqis, whom he urged to unite behind Maliki's government.

The news agency said the debt totaled \$4 billion, not counting interest; an Emirates official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media said it totaled \$7 billion when interest was included.

Maliki's American backers have pushed Gulf Arab states like the Emirates to restore ties with Iraq. Jordan, Iraq's neighbor to the west, named an ambassador last week, and Kuwait and Bahrain say they would soon follow suit.

Meanwhile, a top Iraqi official said Sunday that the U.S. side in negotiations with Iraq on a long-term security pact

had presented a list and a timetable for military facilities the United States wants to retain in Iraq.

Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani said that Iraq wanted to take charge of the estimated 20,000 detainees in U.S. custody and that it wanted to curb the authority of the U.S. military to arrest Iraqis. No comment was immediately available from the U.S. Embassy, which had declined in the past to comment on the negotiations.

Violence in Iraq is at its lowest level in four years, but attacks continue.

As Maliki's plane landed at Abu Dhabi, news broke of an assassination attempt against a Kurdish politician in Diyala Province. The politician, Muhammad Ramadan Issa of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and three other people were wounded when a roadside bomb hit their convoy. Seven people — Issa's wife, his mother-in-law, his brother, two of his sons and two bodyguards — were killed in the bombing, according to Sirwan Shukr, a local government official.

Also Sunday, a car bomb in the northern Shiite Baghdad district of Shaab killed 6 people and wounded 14, including three police officers, according to police and medical officials.

Le Monde
3 juillet 2008

Les révélations gênantes du journal turc « Taraf », bête noire de l'armée



Le général Hursit Tolon (au centre) escorté par la police après sa détention, à Ankara, mardi 1^{er} juillet. Vingt et une personnes ont été arrêtées, parmi lesquelles deux généraux – dont Hursit Tolon – connus comme des opposants radicaux au gouvernement de l'AKP. AP

Alors que les juges de la Cour constitutionnelle examinent la demande de dissolution de l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, le quotidien dénonce notamment une conspiration contre l'Etat

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

L'œil pétillant, le romancier Ahmet Altan dévoile la « une » de son journal, *Taraf*, posé sur son bureau : l'éditorial du jour, intitulé « A l'état-major », répond du tac au tac au commandant des forces armées, Yasar Büyükanit. Depuis quelques jours, le général et l'écrivain se livrent à un bras de fer par écrits interposés. A ce jeu, Ahmet Altan a déjà gagné. Le quotidien de tendance libérale qu'il a créé, en novembre, avec l'appui financier de son éditeur, ne vend que 25 000 exemplaires par jour. Mais en six mois, il est devenu le poil à gratter de la presse turque, grâce à une liberté de ton inédite.

Cet intellectuel batailleur, petit-fils de pacha ottoman, a mis de côté ses projets de romans pour partir en guerre « contre les coups d'Etat ». Au moment où les juges de la Cour constitutionnelle examinent la demande de dissolution du parti au pouvoir, l'AKP, les révélations embarrassantes se succèdent pour l'institution militaire qui reste, avec la justice, l'un des piliers du régime kémaliste. L'armée turque et ses alliés sont soupçonnés de manœuvrer en sous-main pour renverser le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Le 20 juin, grâce à une « fuite », *Taraf* a publié une série de documents confidentiels prétendant démontrer l'existence d'un plan pour faire chuter le gouvernement islam-conservateur et élaboré en septembre 2007, au lendemain de la victoire de l'AKP aux législatives. Cette conspiration prévoit, selon le journal, l'alignement des hauts magistrats sur la ligne politique des militaires et l'utilisation de certains journalistes, artistes et recteurs d'université pour influencer l'opinion publique. Elle préconise aussi l'emploi de la force dans la région kurde et la mise au ban du parti pro-kurde DTP. D'autres réseaux politiques clandestins en lutte contre le gouvernement ont déjà été débusqués dans le cadre de l'enquête

ouverte contre la cellule ultranationaliste Ergenekon. La police a lancé récemment une série d'arrestations musclées contre une brochette d'opposants notoires au gouvernement : avocats, officiers à la retraite, journalistes et dirigeants politiques. Vingt et une personnes ont encore été arrêtées, mardi 1^{er} juillet, parmi lesquels deux ex-généraux connus pour leurs positions radicales. Un coup de filet perçu comme une réponse de l'AKP à ses ennemis.

Lundi, l'état-major a démenti l'existence du plan dénoncé par *Taraf*. « Mais les faits ont montré qu'il existait puisque les juges sont montés au créneau et qu'une vaste campagne a été déclenchée contre l'AKP », estime Yasemin Congar, rédactrice en chef adjointe, qui parle d'un « coup d'Etat en douceur ». Le journal a également révélé qu'une ren-

contre secrète a eu lieu, début mars, entre le général Basbug, qui prendra la tête des forces armées en août, et le vice-président de la Cour constitutionnelle, Osman Paksit. Pour cette entrevue matinale au siège de l'état-major, les caméras de vidéosurveillance avaient été coupées. Deux semaines plus tard, une procédure contre le parti au pouvoir était ouverte. Embarrassés, les intéressés ont reconnu les faits.

Ces derniers jours, l'armée a de nouveau dû confirmer une révélation de *Taraf*. L'état-major avait été averti de l'imminence d'une attaque des rebelles kurdes du PKK contre ses troupes, juste avant l'embuscade de Daglica, à l'automne dernier, dans le sud-est du pays. Ce guet-apens

avait coûté la vie à 13 soldats et avait servi de déclencheur aux opérations transfrontalières lancées dans le nord de l'Irak. En s'attaquant frontalement à l'armée, Ahmet Altan s'expose. La presse nationaliste l'accuse déjà d'être financé par une puissante confrérie islamique. Beaucoup prédisent des ennuis judiciaires

Un plan prévoyait l'alignement des hauts magistrats sur la ligne politique des militaires

à *Taraf*. Comme *Nokta*, un hebdomadaire impertinent qui avait démontré l'existence de deux projets de coups d'Etat et que les juges ont fermé en 2007. « Nous avons mis un coup d'arrêt aux putschistes et le journal est déjà solidement ancré », rétorque l'écrivain journaliste qui se défend de prendre parti pour l'AKP. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Le Monde
Jeudi 3 juillet 2008

Les hussards de la Turquie kémaliste

Qui sont ces magistrats qui menacent d'interdire l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, en l'accusant d'islamiser la Turquie ? Portrait d'un corps qui se considère comme garant d'un modèle laïque, conservateur et isolationniste

GUILLAUME PERRIER



En 2007, à force de manifestations, les magistrats avaient obtenu l'annulation de l'élection d'Abdullah Gül à la présidence de la République. A.A./SIPA

Quel est le point commun entre le parti islam-conservateur au pouvoir en Turquie, l'association gay et lesbienne d'Istanbul et le site Internet YouTube ? Tous les trois sont les victimes récentes de la justice turque.

L'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, attend sa mort programmée. Jeudi 3 juillet, ses représentants doivent présenter leur défense devant la Cour constitutionnelle. Le parti du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, élu avec 47 % des suffrages à l'été 2007, est sous le coup d'une procédure en interdiction menée par les juges et dont l'issue ne fait plus de doute pour les Turcs.

L'AKP est accusé par la justice de comploter contre le régime laïque et de vouloir instaurer la charia avec l'assentiment des « impérialistes américains »... L'organisation homosexuelle, Lambda, a été interdite fin mai. Un tribunal d'Istanbul a estimé que ses activités étaient contraires aux « valeurs morales et à la structure familiale turque ».

Quant au site de partage de vidéos YouTube, c'est la quatrième fois en moins d'un an que la justice ordonne sa fermeture. A chaque fois pour le même motif : la mise en ligne par des internautes grecs de vidéos mettant en doute les mœurs sexuelles du fondateur de la République turque, Mustafa Kemal. Un

blasphème pour les gardiens de la République.

Critiquée pour ces procès controversés, la justice reste droit dans ses bottes, fidèle à sa ligne politique. « Il faut respecter les jugements, souffle un membre de la Cour de cassation, exaspéré. Les critiques sont totalement injustes. » Bruxelles réclame avec insistance une réforme de fond du système et une indépendance de la magistrature.

Le gouvernement turc aimerait en profiter pour la mettre au pas. Mais la corporation se rebiffe : elle se considère toujours, avec l'armée, comme le dernier rempart du régime kémaliste, garante d'un modèle à la fois laïque, conservateur et isolationniste. Et elle fait corps derrière les hauts magistrats de la Cour constitutionnelle, chargés d'instruire les procès contre l'AKP, mais aussi contre le parti kurde DTP. Les acteurs politiques, le mouvement d'opposition kémaliste (CHP) excepté, s'inquiètent de cette dérive. « C'est l'oligarchie des juges », dénonce un porte-parole de l'AKP.

Chaque semaine, ou presque, les tribunaux font l'actualité. Ces derniers mois, les procès pour délit d'opinion contre des intellectuels, dont le Prix Nobel de littérature en 2006, Örfan Pamuk, avaient déjà sérieusement entamé la crédibilité de la justice. Les accu-

« Les juges et les procureurs sont les prototypes de l'idéologie militariste »

Ümit Kardas
un ancien juge militaire
devenu avocat

sés avaient évoqué le génocide arménien ou critiqué les opérations militaires contre les rebelles kurdes du PKK. Pour certains procureurs sourcilleux, il s'agit d'une « insulte à l'identité turque » ou d'une menace contre la sécurité de l'Etat. Mais il y a eu aussi ce maire d'un village de la mer Noire, emprisonné pour avoir mâché du chewing-gum au cours d'une cérémonie en hommage à Mustafa Kemal. Ou cet instituteur à la retraite poursuivi pour avoir critiqué la loi antitabac, entrée en vigueur en avril.

Des dizaines de cas similaires ont éclorés à travers le pays, selon l'agence de presse indépendante Bianet. Début juin, une militante voilée invitée sur un plateau de télévision faisait remarquer : « On ne peut pas attendre de moi que j'adore Atatürk, alors que les gens m'oppriment au nom d'Atatürk. » Sans surprise, le lendemain, un procureur d'Istanbul

ouvrait des poursuites. « C'est un comportement hérité de la junte militaire de 1980 », explique Mustafa Sentop, professeur de droit à l'université Marmara d'Istanbul. A l'époque, toute critique du coup d'Etat et des généraux putschistes était systématiquement punie.

Ce qui caractérise avant tout les magistrats, c'est « une mentalité de petit notable de province », selon Volkan

Aytar, chargé de recherche à la Fondation turque des études économiques et sociales (Tesev). Pour lui, la justice est un frein à la démocratisation de la Turquie. Il a mené une étude avec le sociologue Mithat Sancar afin d'ausculter et de définir cet « esprit des juges », ce comportement de caste supérieure. « La plupart des magistrats voient les réformes comme subversives, dit-il. Ils se considèrent comme les gardiens d'un régime du passé. Comme les militaires, ils vivent coupés du reste de la société. C'est une dérive un peu sectaire. »

Quel est le rôle d'un magistrat ? « Protéger les intérêts de l'Etat », répondent 60 % des juges et procureurs qui ont rempli le questionnaire des deux chercheurs. « Rendre la justice » arrive bien après. Une majorité des magistrats interrogés estiment même que les droits de l'homme peuvent constituer « une menace pour la sécurité de l'Etat ».

Ce comportement est exacerbé dans le Sud-Est, à majorité kurde, et dès qu'il est question de droit des minorités ou de liberté religieuse. Dans le collimateur, le maire kurde de Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, visé par vingt-quatre procès en moins de cinq ans, pour des motifs tels que l'infraction à la loi sur l'alphabet ou la publication de tracts en langue kurde. « On ne peut pas parler d'un Etat de droit, en conclut Ümit Kardas, un ancien juge militaire devenu avocat. Les juges et les procureurs sont les prototypes de l'idéologie militariste. Et le droit est un instrument. »

Dans son bureau, à Ankara, Constitution à la main, le vice-président du Haut Conseil des juges et des procureurs (HSYK) réfute tout parti pris politique. « Nous ne protégeons pas les intérêts de l'Etat, se défend Kadir Özbek, juge à la Cour de cassation. La polémique avec le parti au pouvoir est une bataille pour l'indépendance de la justice. Notre réaction est un réflexe d'autodéfense. Nous n'aimons pas que le Parlement ou le gouvernement intervienne dans nos affaires. »

Pour sauver « la République en danger », juges et procureurs font corps.

Physiquement. Comme lors des grands défilés pour la laïcité, en avril 2007, devant le mausolée monumental de Mustafa Kemal, pour faire obstacle à la candi-

dature d'Abdullah Gül à la présidence de la République. Ils avaient annulé son élection un mois plus tard. En 2006, ils étaient descendus en robe de fonction pour les funérailles de l'un des leurs, juge au Conseil d'Etat, tué par balles en pleine audience par un avocat.

Ce jour-là, ils avaient vocalement insulté les ministres qui s'étaient risqués aux obsèques, à la mosquée Kocatepe d'Ankara. Pour eux, le tireur, Alparslan Aslan, ne pouvait avoir agi que par fanatisme religieux, et l'AKP en était responsable. Depuis, une enquête a été ouverte contre une cellule d'activistes ultranationalistes, composée d'anciens militaires, d'avocats et de journalistes, soupçonnée d'avoir commandité cette attaque pour mettre le feu aux poudres.

Sur le campus de l'académie de justice, à Ankara, le prestige de la profession demeure intact. « Oui, nous avons un rôle particulier : protéger la Constitution et la laïcité », revendique Nurak Baygül, une future juge. Dans cette école de formation de la magistrature, créée en 2004, les étudiants se montrent tout de même bien plus critiques que leurs aînés. Question de génération. « Bien sûr, il faut réformer le système, admet Serkan Yildiz, apprenti procureur. Et appliquer les standards européens, notamment sur les droits de l'homme. »

L'Union européenne a financé, dans cette académie, un programme d'enseignement consacré aux droits de l'homme et à la jurisprudence de la Cour européenne de Strasbourg. Mais le directeur de l'école, Sezai Ural, lui-même magistrat, reconnaît devoir faire face à des résistances idéologiques de la bureaucratie. « Nous avons du mal à donner notre avis sur le contenu de l'enseignement, constate-t-il prudemment. La culture du

droit aujourd'hui doit être internationale. Le problème c'est que, comme les Français, nous sommes très étatistes. Et les juges sont toujours les plus orthodoxes. »

A l'écart des manœuvres politiques, dans les longues allées grises de l'immense palais de justice d'Ankara, la justice est plus souvent source de crainte que de respect. Au deuxième étage, couloir de gauche, deux femmes, recroquevillées sur un banc, attendent leurs maris devant la troisième chambre correctionnelle. Le juge leur a refusé l'accès à la salle d'audience. A l'intérieur, les deux hommes, vendeurs ambulants de fruits et légumes, sont jugés pour travail illégal. « En plus, ils ont été tabassés par les policiers municipaux », gémit l'une des femmes. Les deux marchands ressortent furibards, avec une amende de 2 500 livres turques (environ 1 300 euros). Trois ou quatre mois de leur salaire.

Plus loin, un homme déambule de bureau en bureau, une pile de documents sous le bras. Son fils, raconte ce retraité de 60 ans, est en prison depuis 2000 pour avoir volé une voiture. « Il n'a toujours pas été jugé, explique Ekrem Kars. Il a subi des tortures. Je vais déposer un recours devant la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme. » Il passe le plus clair de son temps dans ce palais de justice. « Maintenant tout le monde me connaît ici. Mais la justice, c'est pour les riches. Moi je n'ai qu'une retraite de 520 livres turques par mois, et mon fils est en prison. »

L'amertume est largement partagée. Délais d'attente interminables, accueil du public déplorable... Les tribunaux sont loin de satisfaire les attentes. « L'institution judiciaire doit aussi être un service. Or elle n'est pas du tout orientée vers le citoyen », constate Seda Kalem, qui a mené une étude baptisée Justice Watch pour le centre de recherche sur les droits de l'homme de l'université Bilgi, à Istanbul. Selon elle, 60 % des citoyens turcs ne croient pas en une justice équitable. ■

L'AKP, le parti au pouvoir à Ankara, cherche à échapper à l'interdiction

LE FIGARO

4 juillet 2008

TURQUIE

La formation islamo-conservatrice est accusée par la justice de vouloir instaurer la charia en Turquie.

Istanbul

POUR plaider sa cause, c'est un avocat aguerri que le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) a envoyé hier devant les juges : Cemil Çiçek, vice-premier

ministre, avait déjà assuré la défense du Parti de la vertu, défunte formation islamiste dissoute par cette même Cour constitutionnelle en 2001. Pour l'AKP, menacée d'interdiction pour cause « d'activités antilaïques », cette plaidoirie à huis clos constitue une étape cruciale dans la lutte engagée pour sa survie politique. L'arrestation, cette semaine, de deux généraux en retraite, suspectés d'avoir fomenté un plan pour faire tomber le

gouvernement islamo-conservateur, a exacerbé les tensions.

Mardi, le procureur général de la Cour de cassation, à l'origine de la plainte contre l'AKP, a été le premier à présenter ses arguments

aux onze juges. Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya a réclamé la fermeture de la formation du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, estimant qu'elle cherchait à « instaurer un régime basé sur la charia » en pratiquant la *takiye* (« la dissimulation ») et que ce projet représentait

« une menace évidente et imminente ». Selon le magistrat, l'annulation par la Cour constitutionnelle, au mois de juin, des réformes qui autorisaient le foulard dans les universités a renforcé ses accusations contre l'AKP. Cette décision a largement été perçue comme un signe prémonitoire de la dissolution du Parti de la justice et du développement.

Secondé par Bekir Bozdag, le vice-président du groupe parlementaire de l'AKP, Cemil Çiçek,

devait axer la défense sur les réformes européennes menées par son gouvernement, l'attachement à la laïcité de son parti, et s'attacher à démontrer que les accusations étaient infondées.

Une nouvelle formation

Dans ce procès, le chef du gouvernement et 69 cadres du parti sont également visés par une interdiction d'appartenir à un parti politique pendant cinq ans. « *Le procureur en chef a collecté des preuves en faisant une recherche sur Google pendant un week-end* », a dénoncé l'AKP dans sa défense écrite. Le réquisitoire du procureur de la Cour de cassation contre les personnalités de l'AKP s'appuie surtout sur des déclarations parues dans les médias. « *On n'y trouve pas beaucoup d'actes ou d'actions constituant la base d'un crime* », dit l'éditorialiste politique Ismet Berkan, qui souligne : « *Savoir si les preuves en sont réellement ne semble pas importer* », ni dans ce procès, ni dans celui contre le parti pro-kurde du DTP. Également menacé de fermeture, cette fois-ci pour « *activités contre la souveraineté de l'Etat* ».

L'AKP, qui pourrait être fixée sur son sort cet été, semble déjà convaincue qu'elle va perdre la procédure. Le ministère de l'Intérieur a indiqué qu'une demande avait été déposée pour enregistrer une nouvelle formation politique. Le Nouveau Parti, symbolisé par un soleil, serait le successeur de l'AKP et de son emblème en forme d'ampoule électrique.

LAURE MARCHAND

Arrestations

La Turquie écartelée entre islamistes et laïcs

Jour après jour, le bras de fer se durcit entre les deux Turquie, opposant les laïco-kémalistes de la haute bureaucratie et de l'armée avec les islamo-conservateurs au pouvoir de l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement) du Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A travers l'appareil d'Etat et par juges interposés, chaque camp tente de prendre l'avantage. « *Il n'y a pas une tentative de coup d'Etat mais deux* », s'inquiète le grand quotidien *Hürriyet*, alors que les milieux économiques se préoccupent des risques de déstabilisation de ce pays qui, depuis octobre 2005, a entamé les négociations d'adhésion avec l'Union euro-

Les milieux économiques se préoccupent des risques de déstabilisation de ce pays qui, depuis octobre 2005, a entamé les négociations d'adhésion avec l'Union européenne.

péenne. Un coup de filet mené dans les milieux laïcs, héritiers proclamés de Mustafa Kemal, qui fonda une république jacobine sur les décombres de l'Empire ottoman, a encore accru la tension. « *C'est un coup d'Etat de l'AKP* », s'insurge Deniz Baykal, leader du très kémaliste Parti républicain du peuple, principale force de l'opposition. La Cour constitutionnelle examine par ailleurs depuis mars une requête d'interdiction pour « *activités antilaïques* » de l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir depuis 2002, qui a triomphé à nouveau en juillet 2007 en remportant 47% des voix. Les libéraux et l'AKP dénoncent depuis des mois ce « *coup d'Etat judiciaire* ».

Chaos. Le parquet d'Istanbul a confirmé hier les inculpations de deux généraux retraités, Hursit Tolon et Sener Eruygur, ancien patron de la gendarmerie, pour « *avoir constitué et dirigé une bande armée* ». Ils avaient été interpellés mardi en même temps que dix-neuf autres personnalités, dont le président de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie d'Ankara et Mustafa Balbay, chef du

bureau d'Ankara du quotidien *Cumhuriyet*, porte-voix du kémalisme de gauche. Tous sont accusés de liens avec l'organisation Ergenekon - du nom du berceau mythique du peuple turc en Asie centrale - qui aurait planifié des attentats pour créer le chaos instaurant le climat favorable à un coup d'Etat.

Représailles. Par trois fois - en 1960, 1971 et 1980 -, l'armée avait pris le pouvoir et en 1997 ses pressions entraînaient la démission du Premier ministre islamiste Necmettin Erbakan. Ces interpellations se sont déroulées au moment même où, devant la Cour constitutionnelle, le procureur général de la Cassation exposait son réquisitoire contre le parti au pouvoir. Il demandait notamment l'interdiction d'activité

politique pour 71 dirigeants, dont le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président de la République, Abdullah Gül. L'AKP assure avoir renoncé à l'islamisme et se pose en force démocrate proeuropéenne, mais ses adversaires soupçonnent le parti de mener une islamisation rampante du pays. Ainsi ce parti avait levé, en février, l'interdiction du port du foulard à l'université, mesure qui fut finalement bloquée par la Cour constitutionnelle.

Pour beaucoup d'observateurs, il ne fait guère de doute que ces rebondissements dans l'affaire Ergenekon sont des représailles de l'AKP contre ses ad-

versaires « *laïcards* ». Commencée il y a treize mois, cette enquête a déjà entraîné une quarantaine d'inculpations et suscité de nombreuses interrogations, notamment en raison du black-out officiel entourant la procédure : « *Veut-on démanteler une organisation terroriste ou veut-on intimider un bloc qui mène l'opposition la plus virulente contre l'AKP?* » s'interroge Ruzen Cakir, intellectuel libéral et spécialiste de l'islam politique

turc, relevant dans un éditorial du quotidien *Vatan* qu'il s'agit avant tout d'une lutte de pouvoir : « *Les personnes et les institutions les plus influentes dans l'administration ne veulent pas céder leur place et les nouveaux arrivants ne veulent pas partager le pouvoir avec les anciens.* »

Le conflit est au sein même de l'Etat. L'armée reste ainsi un bastion kémaliste pur et dur. Le ministère de l'Intérieur, lui, est

depuis des années infiltré par les islamistes qui commencent aussi à pousser leurs pions au sein de l'appareil judiciaire. Dans cette bataille, la presse est polarisée, et chaque média y va de ses révélations plus ou moins pilotées. Le procureur d'Istanbul devrait enfin bientôt rendre publiques les quelque 2 500 pages de l'acte d'accusation dans l'enquête Ergenekon.

◀ MARC SEMO

Stratégie de tension ?

« *Il ne restait que quatre jours avant le chaos* », titrait le grand quotidien populaire *Sabah*, récemment acquis par un homme d'affaires proche de l'AKP, au lendemain du coup de filet Ergenekon. Il affirmait que les comploteurs avaient prévu, le 7 juillet, « *des manifestations non autorisées dans une quarantaine de villes pour accroître la tension* » et que selon les documents saisis par les enquêteurs « *des hommes de main devaient organiser des attentats contre des personnalités connues* ».

AFP

LE KURDISTAN IRAKIEN CRITIQUE LES OFFRES DE BAGDAD AUX MAJORS PÉTROLIÈRES

MADRID, 1 juil 2008 (AFP)

- LE MINISTRE des Ressources naturelles de la région semi-autonome du Kurdistan irakien a critiqué durement mardi à Madrid la proposition par Bagdad de contrats de services aux compagnies internationales sur plusieurs champs pétroliers et gaziers irakiens.

Ces accords de service "vont probablement échouer. Nous ne les encourageons pas, ce n'est ni dans l'intérêt de l'Irak, ni dans celui des compagnies", a déclaré Ashti Hawrami, dans la lettre d'information du XIXe Congrès mondial du pétrole réuni depuis dimanche à Madrid.

Bagdad a annoncé lundi qu'il n'avait pas trouvé d'accord avec les géants mondiaux du pétrole pour des contrats d'assistance technique à court terme, les jugeant trop gourmands, mais qu'il avait proposé des "contrats de service" à plus long terme à 41 compagnies pétrolières étrangères pour "six gisements pétroliers et deux gisements gaziers", selon le ministère irakien du Pétrole.

Les entreprises étrangères ont deux mois pour faire connaître leurs intentions, avant une période de six mois pour affiner leur offre.

"Depuis quand les majors sont-elles des consultants ?", s'est interrogé M. Hawrami dans WPC News, en référence à ces contrats qui n'offrent pas aux pétroliers l'exploitation proprement dite des gisements. "C'est un piège" pour les majors, a-t-il affirmé.

"Toute personne sensée ne signerait pas" de type d'accords, a-t-il dit, ajoutant: "si vous n'avez pas de cadre légal, cela va se terminer dans les larmes".

La région du Kurdistan et le pouvoir central irakien s'affrontent sur la gestion de la ressource pétrolière.

Le gouvernement kurde a déjà signé des contrats d'exploration et d'exportation de brut avec des compagnies internationales après avoir adopté son propre arsenal législatif en août, déclenchant la colère de Bagdad, qui nie la validité de ces contrats.

Les députés irakiens tardent à approuver une loi sur le pétrole qui vise notamment à cadrer la redistribution des revenus pétroliers entre les 18 provinces irakiennes, un texte que les Etats-Unis considèrent comme crucial pour la stabilisation de l'Irak.

AFP

LE CHEF PRÉSUMÉ DU PKK EN EUROPE INCARCÉRÉ EN FRANCE

PARIS, 4 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE CHEF présumé de l'organisation séparatiste kurde PKK en Europe, Nedim Seven, a été incarcéré en juin en France pour avoir violé le contrôle judiciaire qui lui était imposé dans une affaire de financement du terrorisme, a indiqué vendredi une source proche du dossier.

Sous le coup d'un mandat d'arrêt international et d'un mandat d'arrêt européen, Nedim Seven, 40 ans, avait été interpellé courant mars par les autorités italiennes à l'aéroport de Rome en possession d'un faux passeport diplomatique. Il s'appropriait alors à se rendre en Arménie, avait révélé la presse italienne.

M. Seven, qui était auparavant considéré comme le "trésorier" du PKK en Europe, avait été inculpé en février 2007 par un juge antiterroriste parisien

avec 14 autres personnes, notamment pour blanchiment et financement du terrorisme.

Soupçonnés d'avoir participé au financement d'attentats commis en Turquie par le TAK, les "Faucons de la liberté", une émanation du PKK, ainsi qu'à des combats au Kurdistan irakien, les quinze Kurdes avaient été placés en détention provisoire avant que la cour d'appel ne les remette quelques semaines plus tard en liberté sous contrôle judiciaire.

Ce contrôle leur interdisait de quitter la région parisienne où ils devaient régulièrement pointer.

Mais en septembre 2007, Nedim Seven avait disparu. A son retour en France le 19 juin, il avait immédiatement été placé en détention provisoire.

AFP

TURQUIE: DEUX REBELLES KURDES TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS AVEC L'ARMÉE

ANKARA, 5 juil 2008 (AFP)

DEUX REBELLES kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) ont été tués par des militaires turcs au cours d'affrontements dans le sud-est de la Turquie, a annoncé l'armée samedi.

Les combats sont survenus vendredi dans une zone montagneuse de la province d'Hakkari, à la frontière avec l'Irak et l'Iran, pendant une opération de l'armée, a précisé l'état-major dans un communiqué diffusé sur son site internet.

Les soldats ont également saisi 46 fusils ainsi que divers équipements et

documents appartenant aux rebelles, selon ce communiqué.

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, menant plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situées dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatoliens, à la population en majorité kurde, un conflit qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

AFP

LE PRÉSIDENT IRAKIEN AFFIRME SON SOUTIEN AU GOUVERNEMENT CONTESTÉ D'ERDOGAN

ATHENES, 6 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PRESIDENT irakien Jalal Talabani a affirmé son soutien au gouvernement turc face à ses opposants laïcs et nationalistes, et appelé les séparatistes kurdes du PKK à déposer les armes, dans un entretien publié dimanche par le quotidien grec Elefthertypia.

Le bras de fer en cours actuellement en Turquie entre le parti de la justice et du développement au pouvoir (AKP) et les tenants de la laïcité, au premier rang desquels l'armée, "inquiète" l'Irak et une interdiction de l'AKP serait "un retour en arrière", a-t-il affirmé M. Talabani.

Il a exprimé l'espoir que dans ce cas, les dirigeants de l'AKP "fondent un nouveau parti et continuent d'avoir la majorité".

Issu de la mouvance islamiste, le parti du Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan est menacé de dissolution par la Cour constitutionnelle turque pour activités anti-laïques.



Kurde d'Irak, M. Talabani a souligné que les "bonnes relations" de Bagdad "avec le gouvernement turc" ne sont pas affectées par les raids menés depuis la mi-décembre par l'armée turque contre le PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. "Nous comprenons qui sont derrière ces bombardements", a-t-il ajouté.

Mais il a souligné son opposition à ce que le PKK -- considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne et qui se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie -- utilise l'Irak comme une base arrière.

"Nous avons souvent appelé nos frères kurdes de Turquie à arrêter la guerre et à passer à la lutte politique. S'ils ne le font pas, nous leur demandons de quitter l'Irak (...), s'ils refusent de nous écouter, ils

fournissent des prétextes à certains cercles turcs", a-t-il relevé.

M. Talabani a accordé cet entretien au cours d'une visite à Athènes la semaine dernière pour une réunion de l'Internationale socialiste.

OPERATION DEFUSES TIME BOMB FOR CHAOS CAMPAIGN

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

A nationwide crackdown on a shadowy network of military officials, business leaders, journalists and criminals foiled a plot to sow the seeds of chaos in preparation for an eventual coup, documents seized by the police have revealed.

Documents seized in raids on Tuesday and Wednesday, during which more than 20 people were detained, including three retired senior army generals, show that the ultranationalist Ergenekon group was planning to start a bloody campaign within the first week of July. Handwritten by retired Gen. Şener Eruygur, former commander of the gendarmerie forces who now heads the staunchly secularist Atatürkist Thought Association (ADD), the documents talk of a four-stage plan that would have started with unauthorized anti-government rallies beginning as early as July 7 and eventually lead to a coup and establishment of a new government. As part of the campaign of chaos, public confidence in the government and its economic performance was also to be undermined.

The documents reveal that this week's detentions were a measure to pre-empt the planned chaos operation. Critics argue that it was a countermeasure by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which faces a closure case at the Constitutional Court, noting that the detentions came on the very same day when the state prosecutor argued for closure at the top court.

The documents were seized in an army facility where retired Gen. Eruygur and his friends frequently gathered. According to the documents, rallies backed by Eruygur's ADD were to start at the same time in 40 provinces on July 7 with the aim of provoking clashes between police and demonstrators. The group also intended to campaign to show that the Turkish economy, which has begun to slow after several years of stellar growth, was declining sharply.

The second leg involved a number of assassinations of senior members of the judiciary by a team of 30 men under the orders of an individual referred to in the documents as O.G. The third part of the plan envisioned campaigns to show that Turkey's economy was in severe decline. The powerful chairman of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce (ATO), Sinan Aygün, also detained on Tuesday, would make public statements declaring that the economy was in a state of alarming decline. Another important part of the plan included intervening in this year's Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) meeting to prevent promotion of members of the military known as "pro-NATO" to higher ranks.

During this process Tercüman daily Editor-in-Chief Ufuk Büyükeçlebi, the Cumhuriyet newspaper's Ankara representative Mustafa Balbay and their partners in the media would publish news stories emphasizing that the country is in a period of crisis. ATO Chairman Aygün would not only be making statements that the country's economy was in bad shape, but would also set up a political party that would offer an alternative to the AK Party.

The aim was to create the atmosphere of chaos

necessary for a coup d'état. Daily Yeni Şafak said Aygün's new party was to replace the government once the AK Party was unseated.

Journalist Tuncay Özkan, who had been expected to play a key role in the planned rallies, appeared to confirm the preparations, saying he was determined to go ahead with plans to hold "Defend the Judiciary" rallies this weekend. In a statement, Özkan said newspapers that reported the planned rallies as preparations for an eventual coup were trying to undermine participation in the rallies. He said, however, that the rallies would be held as planned.

'You love Atatürk? Hard to say'

Media reports noted that Aygün, who was detained on Tuesday, shouted at the police officer handcuffing him "I am being taken away because I love Atatürk!" The officer reportedly replied, "Dear president, you say you like Atatürk, but there is no Atatürk [picture] on the money you have in your safe," reminding him of the 3 million euros found in the ATO president's vault at his family home. In another safe at his home they also discovered gold jewelry. The money and the jewelry were not confiscated after Aygün declared that they were his personal savings.

The police reports filed regarding retired Gen. Hürşit Tolon's detention said Tolon was detained because "there were records of phone conversations indicating the possibility of him fleeing." The report caused observers to believe that Tolon's home phones had been tapped. Meanwhile, prosecutors granted the police their request to extend the detention period of those detained on Tuesday for another 24 hours.

Calls for Gül to intervene

The Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) also released a statement, calling for the investigative process to be sped up and conducted fairly. The statement warned that the investigation was increasing polarization in society.

In a statement released Thursday on the Ergenekon investigation, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli stressed that tension and distrust have been growing in Turkey over the past few years. The statement said although illegitimate groups absolutely had to be pursued, the prosecution had to avoid holding people for long periods without presenting a serious accusation or having prepared an indictment. Bahçeli also criticized recent news stories in some media organs about alleged plans by higher-ranking members of the military to engage in psychological warfare against the AK Party government, referring to these as attempts to slander the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK).

Bahçeli also called on President Abdullah Gül to act. "Regarding this issue, the responsibility lies with the president's office," he said, warning that if the TSK was put in the position of having to defend itself this would damage the army.

A similar request had come from former Chief of General Staff retired Gen. Hilmi Özkök on Wednesday. Other MHP members yesterday, including MHP Secretary-General Mehmet Şandır, made statements criticizing the detentions and calling on Gül to act.

Grand Unity Party (BBP) leader and deputy Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu made a similar call yesterday.

He also urged the prosecution to speed up the indictment process.

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Deniz Baykal fiercely criticized the operation and the detentions, saying the detentions were not part of a judicial process but of a "political settling of accounts." There were also protests in İstanbul by members of the ADD, the members of which met in front of İstanbul Police Department headquarters to protest the operation. Zekeriya Beyaz, a former dean of Marmara University's theology department, was also among the protestors. "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk]," the protestors chanted.

Meanwhile, retired Gen. Veli Küçük, who has been detained since the first Ergenekon raid in January, filed charges yesterday against various newspapers over reports about him.

In a statement he made from prison, Workers' Party (İP) leader Doğu Perinçek, also detained as part of the Ergenekon investigation, claimed that the operation was being conducted by the US. "The operation is being carried out directly by US authorities," he said, claiming that Prime



Eruygur's Atatürkist Thought Association staged anti government Republican rallies last year.

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had made a secret deal with the US government.

Court orders destruction of Ümraniye bombs

Bombs that were uncovered by a police raid on a house in İstanbul's Ümraniye district last summer were destroyed last year upon a decision by the İstanbul 10th High Criminal Court based on the danger they posed, the İstanbul Prosecutor's Office said yesterday. The bombs had been seized at the house in Ümraniye along with other ammunition and triggered an investigation into a shadowy crime network called Ergenekon, which is suspected of responsibility for a number of politically motivated murders, including that of ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in January 2007, and attacks on newspapers and judicial entities to invoke chaos and engineer a military takeover. Forty-nine people, including former members of the military, journalists, drug lords and academics, have been detained in the operation so far.

Gen. Eruygur: fervent coup enthusiast

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Gen. Şener Eruygur, detained on Tuesday on charges of involvement in a coup plot against the governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party), formerly headed the Gendarmerie General Command (JGK) and is the currently chairman of the Atatürkist Thought Association (ADD), which last year organized the so-called republican rallies to undermine the AK Party

A well-known hard-liner, Eruygur last year was shown to have played a central role in two aborted attempts to unseat the government in 2004. The first -- codenamed "Sarı kız" (Blonde Girl) -- was a plan for a direct military intervention that foundered because of opposition from then-Chief of General Staff Gen. Hilmi Özkök. The second coup attempt was called "Ay ışığı" (Moonlight).

Eruygur's name is mentioned in journal entries by former Naval Commander Adm. Özden Örnek, who, along with a number of other former commanders, was allegedly plotting to stage those two military coups.

Örnek, who has reportedly kept a journal since 1957, is said to have recorded details about the plans to stage the Sarıkız coup and his journal also suggests that then-Gendarmerie Commander Gen. Eruygur planned the Ay ışığı coup by himself following resistance to Özkök's Sarıkız.

After parts of the journal were published in newsweekly Nokta last year, the police raided the magazine and the publisher closed it down, saying he could no longer stand the pressure being put on him. Meanwhile, the magazine's editor-in chief, Alper Görmüş, faced prison charges but was later acquitted. However, Görmüş appealed his own acquittal because he said there should have been an investigation into the magazine's reports about the journal so it would be proven that he was publishing the truth and the coup plotters would be charged.

In another development, Turkey's Taraf daily reported on June 7 the existence of a group set

up in 2002 called the Republican Work Group (CÇG) which was set up within the JGK following the election of the AK Party in the November 2002 elections. The new group, established by Eruygur, has been involved in activities to influence politics and the social atmosphere in Turkey. Eruygur was appointed JGK commander in 2002, the year the AK Party entered office. The CÇG's goal was to overthrow the government -- perceived by the secular establishment as a threat to the secular order of the nation -- utilizing the judiciary and academics as well as other segments of society.

The Taraf daily cited its source as an unnamed military officer who provided a CD on which information about the CÇG was stored in slide-shows and text documents. The daily continued its report on June 8, noting that university rectors and civil society groups were among those working in cooperation with the CÇG. According to information on the CD, the CÇG has no legal standing and is not shown as being a part of the military's official organizational structure.

The CÇG has initiated a number of activities, reports and events since early 2003. It has blacklisted a multitude of individuals, agencies, schools, civil society groups, business owners and public agencies and their employees for their religious affiliations, Taraf said.

Notes from Adm. Örnek's journal

"...Upon the suggestion of Gendarmerie Forces Commander Gen. Şener Eruygur, we went to the social facilities of the gendarmerie. ... We decided to form an action plan on our own. We were first going to take control of the media, so I was going to invite M.Ö. for that purpose. We were going to keep in contact with rectors and arrange for students to engage in demonstrations. We were going to act in unison with unions. We were going to get posters hung in the streets. We were going to contact associations and incite them against the government. We were going to do all of this across the country, and it would be known as Sarıkız."

"...They all gathered at the headquarters of the gendarmerie, and Gen. Eruygur showed them the preparations I had been shown on Tuesday

and had them listen to a number of voice recordings that belong to some high-ranking government officials. Most of them were advisors to the [Justice and Development Party] AKP and in the recordings they share their ideas on how they are planning to handle the Cyprus problem. At the end of the briefing, the commander of the Air Forces [Gen. İbrahim Firtına] and the commander of the Gendarmerie Forces [Eruygur] started pressing for a revolution on March 10. ... Eruygur's target is



to become the commander of the Land Forces. ... The current commander of the Land Forces [Gen. Aytac Yalman] told me how Eruygur is digging a pit for [Chief of General Staff Gen.] Yaşar [Büyükanıt]. To me, the commander of the Gendarmerie Forces was acting a little unfairly and in an overly ambitious manner."

"... We gathered in my house with the commanders of the air forces, the navy, the army and the gendarmerie forces at 2 p.m. ... The second topic again turned out to be the same one, 'We should topple these fellows,' was what we discussed. Şener and the air guy [Firtına] are pressing too much for this. Şener can't get it out of his mind; he repeats the same thing every two words. So does the air guy. If we don't want to give away Cyprus, our furthest limit is April 9, 2004. Whatever we must do, we should do before that."

MP warns Iraq will be plunged into a new war if Iran is attacked

Iraq will be plunged into a new war if Israel or the US launches an attack on Iran, Iraqi leaders have warned. Iranian retaliation would take place in Iraq, said Dr Mahmoud Othman, the influential Iraqi MP.

The Iraqi government's main allies are the US and Iran, whose governments openly detest each other. The Iraqi government may be militarily dependent on the 140,000 US troops in the country, but its Shia and Kurdish leaders have long been allied to Iran. Iraqi leaders have to continually perform a balancing act in which they seek to avoid alienating either coun-

try.

The balancing act has become more difficult for Iraq since George Bush successfully requested \$400m (£200m) from Congress last year to fund covert operations aimed at destabilising the Iranian leadership. Some of these operations are likely to be launched from Iraqi territory with the help of Iranian militants opposed to Tehran.

The most effective of these opponent groups is the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), which enraged the Iraqi government by staging a conference last month at Camp Ashraf, north-east of Baghdad. It demanded the



closure of the Iranian embassy and the expulsion of all Iranian agents in Iraq. "It was a huge meeting" said Dr Othman. "All the tribes and political leaders who are against Iran, but are also against the Iraqi government, were there." He said the anti-Iranian meeting could not have taken place without US permission.

The Americans disarmed the 3,700 MEK militants, who had long been allied to Saddam Hussein, at Camp Ashraf in 2003, but they remain well-organised and well-financed. The extent of their support within Iran remains unknown, but they are extremely effective as an intelligence

and propaganda organisation.

Though the MEK is on the State Department's list of terrorist groups, the Pentagon and other US institutions have been periodically friendly to it. The US task force charged by Mr Bush with destabilising the Iranian government is likely to co-operate with it.

In reaction to the conference, the Iraqi government, the US and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have started secret talks on

the future of the MEK with the Iraqi government pressing for their expulsion from Iraq. Dr Othman, who speaks to the MEK frequently by phone, said: "I pressed them to get out of Iraq voluntarily because they are a card in the hands of the Americans."

An embarrassing aspect of the American pin-prick war against Iran is that many of its instruments were previously on the payroll of Saddam Hussein. The MEK even played a role in 1991 in helping to crush the uprising against the Baathist regime at the

end of the Gulf war. The dissidents from Arab districts in southern Iran around Ahwaz were funded by Saddam Hussein's intelligence organisations, which orchestrated the seizure of the Iranian embassy in London in 1980 which was supposedly carried out by Arab nationalists from Iran.

The one community in Iran most likely to oppose the Tehran government is the Iranian Kurds. There have been an increasing number of attacks by PJAK, the Iranian wing of the Turkish PKK, which claims to be a

separate party.

Based in the Kandil mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan, PJAK has carried out frequent raids into Iran and has reportedly been able to win local support. But it would be extremely dangerous for the US to be seen as a supporter of PJAK as this would offend the Turks who have a military co-operation agreement with Iran against terrorism.

Guardian

July 6, 2008

Turkish coup plot awakens fear of violent nationalism

Evidence of a conspiracy to overthrow the pro-Western Islamist government has laid bare the resentment of the country's secular elite in a divided country, reports Robert Tait in Istanbul

Robert Tait in Istanbul

In a recent declaration, Turkish nationalists identified what they described as the 'six arrows' of the country's proper identity: nationalism, secularism, statism, republicanism, populism and revolutionism. Judging by the events of last week, it is the last arrow - revolution - that has preoccupied the more radical in recent months.

In an extraordinary raid which led to the arrests of 21 people allegedly tied to Ergenekon, a shadowy nationalist grouping, police uncovered documents that revealed plans for a sustained campaign of terror and intimidation against the Islamist government due to begin this week. A perfect storm of disruption was to be whipped up, beginning with a groundswell of popular protest, followed by a wave of assassinations and bombings, culminating in an economic crisis and army coup. Turkey's moderate Islamist government would be ousted in favour of a right-wing secular dictatorship. The documents appeared to identify a 30-member assassination squad targeting judges and other prominent figures.

The episode is only the latest trauma to convulse the Turkish body politic. As the raids took place, the AKP government, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul, was defending itself in court from accusations that it is trying to transform Turkey into a hardline Islamic state. If the AKP fails to convince the judges, 71 leading figures in the party, including Erdogan and Gul, risk being banned from politics for five years. Increasingly, Turkish democracy appears vulnerable to a vicious power struggle between a secular establishment and the affluent but religiously conservative middle class.

According to Professor Soli Ozel, of Istanbul's Bilgi University, the more fanatical nationalists are determined to bring down the AKP, which despite its Islamist origins is pro-Western and pro-EU. "They are trying to pump up a modern urban Turkish nationalism with a racist tinge," said Ozel. "They are anti-Western and want to ally Turkey with Russia, China and even Iran. It's very schizophrenic and full of paradoxes."

The Ergenekon group is named after a legendary mountain in Asia where the ancient Turks are said to have taken refuge from the Mongols.



A pro secular demonstrator chants slogans against the government in Istanbul. Photograph: Tolga Bozoglu/EPA

Those arrested in dawn raids in Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya and Trabzon included two recently retired army generals, Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon. Eruygur, a former head of the paramilitary gendarmerie for internal security, is chairman of the Kemalist Thought Association, a group dedicated to Ataturk's ideals of modernism, which include subjugating religion to the state. He is believed to have played a central role in two previous failed coup attempts against the AKP, which was re-elected in a landslide last July. Nationalist lawyers, prominent secular journalists, far-right politicians and even a mafia boss have also been detained.

The inquiry began after a cache of hand grenades was found in an Istanbul slum in June last year. Investigators claim to have since uncovered evidence of a motley coalition of secular nationalists colluding in a catalogue of past atrocities, including bomb attacks, a grenade attack on a newspaper and the murder last year of a Turkish-Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink. The alleged aim was to destabilise the AKP government by creating a climate of chaos.

Critics were quick to question the authenticity of the documents and accuse the AKP of instigating a witchhunt against its opponents, using its friends in the police. Nevertheless the detention of two former senior army commanders carried huge symbolic weight in a country where the military has always played the decisive political role since Ataturk established the modern Turkish state in 1923.

So, too, did the timing. The arrests came hours

before the chief prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya, appeared before the constitutional court in Ankara to argue that the AKP should be closed for allegedly undermining Turkey's secular system. The case against the AKP is contained in a 162-page indictment accusing the AKP of trying to create an Islamic state, a charge it denies.

Given the conspiratorial game that Turkish politics has become, cynics are suggesting that the Ergenekon case will be used as a bargaining counter to ensure the survival of the AKP.

The constitutional court had been widely expected to close the party when it delivers its verdict, probably next month. But with prosecutors saying they are ready to press terrorism-related charges against up to 60 suspects in the Ergenekon case, some

suspect a deal has already been struck with moderate army commanders to try to avoid closure.

Eruygur's arrest inside a military residential compound may provide a clue, since many believe it could not have happened without army top brass approval. Erdogan recently met General Ilker Basbug, due to take over soon as head of the army. Basbug appealed for calm after last week's arrests, but avoided condemning them. "We all have to be acting with more common sense, more carefully and more responsibly," he said.

"The arrests were a pretty coup for the AKP," said Professor Ozel. "Many people think this couldn't have happened without the tacit approval of the military, at least from the legalists within it. If there is a tacit agreement with the military and they are working with the Prime Minister, you can expect that the court has decided that the AKP is not such a big threat after all."

Whatever the outcome of the forthcoming battle of wills between Turkey's nationalists and Islamists, the latest tremors in Turkey's political landscape have revealed the enduring shadow of the country's 'deep state'. Secretive nationalist elements in the security apparatus are believed to have been behind a host of atrocities against the Kurds and other minorities, including the Alevi, a heterodox Islamic sect, during the 1990s. But, according to Ozel, if the Ergenekon trial ends in prosecutions 'maybe that kind of nationalism in Turkey is going to weaken'.



Voices of Iraq
July 7, 2008.

Regions committee head proposes solution to Kirkuk issue

BAGHDAD July 7, 2008. (VOI)- — The chairman of the Committee of Regions and non-Regional Provinces on Monday said he will submit a proposal to the Parliament outlining scientific and statistical bases upon which he said a census of Kirkuk city's population should be conducted. Speaking to VOI, Hashem al-Taaie said that the main point of dispute is around "the database upon which voters should rely."

"I will call on the Parliament to rely on results reached by Iraqi university professors of human geography and politics in order to determine the population of the province," the committee chairman noted.

According to al-Taaie, who is also a member of the Sunni Iraqi Accordance Front (IAF) (40 seats), the three disputing parties have agreed on the 1957 census, but disagreed on all others conducted afterwards.

The chairman described the recommendations submitted by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Iraq Staffan de Mistura on four disputed districts as a "political reading" of the proposals put forward by parliamentary committees.

In early June, de Mistura presented a number of recommendations on four disputed districts to the Iraqi government. The UN official recommended that Akra and Makhmour districts be administered by the Kurds, and al-Hamdaniya and Mandali districts by the central government.

Most Iraqi political forces expressed their categorical rejection of de Mistura's recommendations.

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in the Kurdish city of Kirkuk and other disputed areas.

Kurds seek to include the city in the autonomous Iraq's Kurdistan region, while Sunni Muslims, Turkmen and Shiites oppose the incorporation. The article currently stipulates that all Arabs in Kirkuk be returned to their original locations in southern and central Iraqi areas, and formerly displaced residents returned to Kirkuk.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months to end in July 2008.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of majority Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmen. lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem."

The article 140 in Iraqi constitution calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months, July 2008.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

TODAYS ZAMAN 07 July 2008

Democracy tree grows in Abant as Turks and Kurds bond

TODAY'S ZAMAN - ABDULLAH BOZKURT - BOLU

It was in 2000 that liberal and conservative intellectuals in Turkey came together for the first time to address difficult questions in a highly civilized and respectable manner.

To mark the occasion, they planted a pine tree in the backyard of the famous Abant Palace resort hotel near the northwestern city of Bolu. Organizers named the small plant "the democracy tree," as they thought it might represent the beginning of new era for a country plagued by sharp divisions and deeply rooted animosity. People of various orientations posed together in front of the tree to send the message of unity in diversity.

The Abant Platform took its name from this initial gathering place, and it has since undertaken many challenging issues in major world capitals, from Washington to Paris. Eight years later the same group has returned to the Abant Palace only to see that their democracy tree has grown and that its height has reached 25 feet. It was rooted firmly in the ground and it has clearly flourished in this beautiful mountainous region. Just like the tree, the Abant Platform must have felt confident enough to tackle the most pressing issue Turkey has faced so far: the Kurdish issue.

A diverse group of participants who all have high stakes in solving the issue came together for a three-day marathon meeting and exchanged ideas in a fair and open platform. The beauty of the forum is that you can express yourself freely and participate as a debater in addition to listening to a panel of speakers. It was a multi-faceted dialogue with differing opinions and competing ideas. Everyone has agreed that the issue is of

the utmost importance for all people living in Anatolia. The participants have felt the need to pursue more avenues in search of a solution, and they all expressed hope that the platform will pave the way to more dialogue on the issue.

Hüseyin Gülerce, a board member of the Journalists and Writers Foundation, which sponsored the forum, said: "This is a one-of-a-kind event in Turkey. Turks and Kurd do not feel uneasiness when talking to each other." He went on to say, "For the first time, the Kurdish issue is being discussed with a very wide and diverse group on live TV with no censorship." In fact, the whole proceeding was carried live by national network Mehtap TV, which is known for its cultural and social programming in Turkey. Thus, the debate was not confined to the 160 people who signed up for the platform; it was open to millions who were able to tune in and watch the discussions live.

Though the participants disagreed on the best way to handle the Kurdish issue on many occasions, all of them expressed strong commitment to common ideals, such as human rights, freedom and democracy. There was a music night of traditional folk music that brought a different flavor to the meetings here. Both Kurdish and Turkish songs performed by a live ensemble represented how both cultures have intertwined for centuries.

The democracy tree planted eight years ago here seemed to have borne fruit. If nothing else, all participants agreed on one thing: Full democ-

cracy is needed to solve Kurdish issues and Turkish issues alike. Ahmet Tan, a well respected Kurdish leader, summed it up saying: "The Kurdish issue is the issue of democratization in Turkey. Kurds cannot solve their problems just by focusing on the Kurdish issue."

Ayhan Aktar, a writer and professor, dared to question to audience in the room: "Can anybody



The Abant Platform concluded yesterday after an outcome assessment was read by Kurdish intellectual Altan Tan.

identify who is a Turk and who is a Kurd in this place?" He went on to say, "I think many would make mistakes in pointing out ethnic identities." He stressed, "We do not have any clear distinction or physical separation between Kurds and

Turks." The numbers and statistics prove Aktar's point. Today about 60 percent of Kurds live in western provinces, rather than the Southeast, where the ethnic Kurdish population was traditionally concentrated. They have been integrated through interracial marriages, migration and social and cultural development.

The platform brought together people from government and security agencies in addition to academia and community organizations. Remarks by Bolu Governor Halil İbrahim Akpınar were welcomed by all the participants. He spoke of the need for further democratization in Turkey and criticized abuse and torture, especially after the 1980 military coup. He received warm applause when he said: "Both Turks and Kurds are tired of this ongoing conflict. Let's reconcile our communities. Families do not want to embrace the body bags of their sons and daughters; they want to greet them as cheerful brides and grooms who are happy about their futures."

Cevat Öndeş, retired deputy head of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), talked about the cultural heritage and common history shared by Turks and Kurds, saying: "We have lived in this land for centuries. We need to have a national will and determination for true democracy."

The platform provided an excellent venue for exposing changes in the mentality of traditional approaches. Star daily editor-in-chief Mustafa Karaalioğlu said Turkey has started to see changes in the attitudes of the military bureaucratic elite and political parties in approaching Kurdish issues. He explained that such groups no longer seem to be using "us and them" approaches.

At the Abant Platform, all agreed to reject armed and military conflict as a solution to the problem. Öndeş stressed that Kurdish politics must reject armed struggle and dismiss any policy of weakening the central government. Justice and Development Party (AK Party) deputy Mücahit Fındıklı blames hawks on both side and points out their absence from the platform.

Many at the forum mentioned the ongoing conflict between the public and the statist bureaucratic elite. Professor Naci Bostancı of Gazi University was among those who said the conflict between the elite and the public in Turkey is not confined to the Kurdish issue. He said we need to understand the recent history of Turkey correctly. Bejan Matur, a Kurdish poet and writer, expressed her optimism that the problems would be solved in the framework of democracy and integration with the European Union. A prominent businessman from Diyarbakır, Şah İsmail Bedirhanoğlu, on the other hand, said: "Whenever democratization efforts in the country have increased, the clashes and armed fighting have also risen. When we started [EU] accession talks in 2004, PKK terrorism surged again. That shows that some people on either side of the aisle do not want peace and that they feed on violence."

Both Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals agreed that some circles do not want peace in the region. Altan Tan describes the conflict as an "alliance of hawks." Another Kurdish intellectual, Ümit Fırat, said hawks in the Turkish state have been trying to uproot an entire population since the establishment of the republic and that in many occasions they replaced local Kurdish

names with Turkish ones. Like many others at the forum, Fırat demanded a new civil constitution that is in line with universal values and democratic principles.

The Abant Platform may have added new fertilizer to the ground where the democracy tree is planted by offering honest and fair discussion about the search for a solution to the Kurdish issue. People who came here as hesitant and recalcitrant players were able to overcome their suspicions and bond together firmly with the common goal of maintaining dialogue and investing in the future of this country.

[REACTIONS]

Participants welcome Abant declaration Mehmet Kaya (Chairman, Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce): It is important and inclusive. I welcome it. Amnesty should be included.

Mücahit Fındıklı (AK Party deputy from Malatya): Ethical and human, it is a declaration to politicians as well as to the public. We are like the art of ebru [paper marbling], where different colors come together.

Rojbin Tugan Kalkan (lawyer and human rights activist): I found important clauses in the declaration. The total rejection of violence is insufficient. We have to include a clause that will offer solutions to young people who took up arms and went to the mountains.

Professor İhsan Dağı (academic and writer): The rejection of violence is important in the document. What is lacking: We need references to political conjecture. Political representation of Kurds and impediments should be cited. The rejection of closure cases against the Justice and Development Party [AK Party] and the Democratic Society Party [DTP] should be included. The Kurdish issue should not be state-centric; civic and community organizations should also be included. The EU anchor needs to be emphasized.

Sedat Yurttaşlı (activist): I was not expecting such a powerful declaration. It is an important and positive step. Important findings are in the document. We should stress that armed conflict does not contribute to the solution, including cross-border operations.

Fikri Akyüz (journalist): My optimism has increased. I heard what I wanted to hear. If you use the word "assimilation," this might spur reactions. It's an irritating term. It should be removed from the document.

[FINAL DECLARATION]

Kurdish Problem: Seeking Peace and a Future Together

The Abant Platform wishes to declare to the public the following views that have emerged from the meeting:

Having become one of Turkey's highest-priority and most important problems, the Kurdish problem is in need of a solution contingent on the formation of an atmosphere of healthy dialogue, the ending of prejudice and the establishment of mutual trust. In creating a language that promotes a solution, the media's responsibility, sensitivity and style will contribute significantly. The aim of this platform is to foster efforts to help create a suitable climate, lan-

guage and ground for a solution. Toward this end:

The aim is to have sound and dynamic channels of communication in order to put an end to the lack of dialogue rather than trying to convince the parties to come to terms around a solution program. As a chief principle, we defend the free expression and discussion of any sort of ideas unless they contain open calls for violence, and expect respect from everyone for the right all people and groups to express their various thoughts and ideas.

We consider the absolute rejection of any sort of violence and any methods that involve violence an indispensable prerequisite for the solution of the Kurdish problem. We reject the assimilation policies toward Kurds and other elements. We oppose the use of Turkish-Kurdish separation as a means of mutual homogenization, otherization and alienation.

It is a must to confess that very bitter events have in the past transpired with respect to the Kurdish problem. These bitter events should be remembered as an experience for the prevention of similar events and should never be turned into a feud.

No one has been given a power of attorney by the masses. Therefore, we see the making of statements on behalf of a community and claims to having representative power as a style and method of judgment that makes it more difficult to find a solution.

It is of utmost importance to uphold the honor and dignity of the people of the region in order to realize our longing to live together and to improve economic development in our eastern and southeastern regions, which have a large Kurdish population.

In addition, it is compulsory to completely and unhesitatingly recognize all social, cultural and political rights included in all international laws about fundamental human rights.

Respect for one's native language is part of respecting the person. We think that the right to speak one's native language and to use it in teaching and education is an indispensable human right, and that opposing this right cannot have any justification. Conditions for a comprehensive amnesty law should be created.

We reject all practices that overstep the bounds of the state of law with respect to the Kurdish problem.

As the Abant Platform, we believe that this meeting makes a contribution to the creation and maintenance of a confidence-inspiring atmosphere committed to the supremacy of law and democracy.

Our search for a solution that aims for peace and a future draws strength from the centuries-old will to live together in unity.

Kurds, alongside all groups in Iraq, are our brothers. We see it a compulsory move to develop friendly ties with the federal Kurdish administration. Sustaining the democratization process in Turkey is also compulsory for solving the Kurdish problem. In this regard, the maintenance of the current EU perspective would facilitate both the continuation of the democratic process and the solution to the Kurdish problem.

Jul 8th 2008

The Economist

Kurdistan diary

MOUNTAINS AND WATERFALLS

An unconventional holiday in "The Other Iraq"

Monday | Tuesday

Monday

Standing in a crowded amusement park near Rawanduz, in northern Iraq, waiting to get on a small, mountainside toboggan-run while sucking an ice-lolly that claimed to imitate a watermelon (but more closely resembled chilled, sweetened, pulverised cotton wool), I cannot help but feel that my expectations of Kurdistan have been confounded.

Iraqi Kurdistan is not an obvious holiday destination. But when offered the opportunity to spend a week here, I jumped at it. While the rest of Iraq remains mired in conflict, the north is relatively peaceful. After the years of suffering under Saddam Hussein, the Kurds have finally been able to take their fate in their own hands. They are busily building a future.

The Kurdish Regional Government has launched a public-relations campaign, touting northern Iraq as "The Other Iraq"—a tourist-friendly destination. But few beyond thrill-seekers and war-zone tourists seem to have got the message. The only visitors I come across are either Kurds from the north or Arabs seeking relief from the relentless awfulness of the rest of the country. But the bustling tea-stalls are a hint of how much Kurdistan has changed from the years under Saddam.

I meet only two other Westerners during my time in Kurdistan, grizzled men from Johannesburg and



eight feet high. I can only assume this is there to catch us if we career off the track, to prevent us from plummeting down the side of the mountain. This does not inspire me with confidence. Neither does a sign warning of "danger of death". Still, onward, ever onward.

Halfway down the ride, we stop our little car to take photos. The mountains are beautiful beneath the cornflower-blue sky; olive and brown, with golden grasses all the way down, flecked with lilac flowers. The Kurds' proverbial only friends are a sight to behold.

Having survived this terror run, we drive on to the Bekhal waterfalls, one of the area's great natural landmarks. As our minivan trundles up the steep hills, we are soon forced to switch off the air-conditioning to ensure that the engine doesn't conk out halfway up. Sweatily munching a bag of fresh white mulberries, their skin blushed with pink, we watch a group of cyclists flash past.

It is worth the hot ride. The waterfalls are beautiful and hundreds of people are there to visit them. The waterfalls are not cordoned off. You are restrained only by your own daring in clambering up the slippery rocks. At every level, there are people picnicking, sipping tea, grilling meat, playing music.

Near expiration in the unforgiving sun, we plunge into the water, fully clothed. It is teeth-chatteringly cold but the relief is immense. We are dry within minutes.

As we climb higher, we come across a group of men playing drums and pipes. They motion to us to join them. Within minutes we are dancing in a line, lurching back and forth. It is striking just how similar this Kurdish dancing is to the Jewish dancing of my childhood. The same concentric circles, the same swaying, the same steps. But given the eagerness of most Kurds to stress their unique identity, I suspect few would be flattered by the comparison.

Tuesday

Halabja is a potent reminder of the Kurds' past. It is a grotty town. Arbil and Suleimaniyah are by no means the most beautiful cities in the world, but there is a warmth about them, a lively bustle that is missing here. About 15 miles from the Iranian border, Halabja's dusty streets feel weary and unloved. The

gruesome events of March 16th 1988, when Saddam Hussein dropped a series of chemical bombs on the town, killing some 5,000 people and injuring many thousands more, feel very close. Several memorials to those who perished are scattered throughout the town. We visit the main monument first: a grey, concrete monstrosity. The scaffolding that now covers it only accentuates its gloomy aspect. It is 88-foot tall, to commemorate the year in which the attack happened. Concrete girders surge upwards, culminating in a kind of claw, scrabbling at the sky. Each section is meant to represent a different part of Kurdistan. Inside, the names of those killed are inscribed upon the walls, in long, terrible lists.

Above them are quotes from those who condemned the atrocity.

Many of the names are now written in chalk. This is because angry demonstrators destroyed parts of the memorial in 2006, on the anniversary of the attack. Hikmat Aref from the Halabja Chemical Victims society explains that people were upset over how little help they had received: "the closest thing to show their anger about the lack of care was the monument".

Residents of Halabja are frustrated at the way they have been treated over the last 20 years. Each year, on the anniversary of the attacks, their suffering is recognised; but otherwise, many feel abandoned. Before visiting, I was told that the Kurds of Halabja are not like others in the region. They do not welcome visitors in the same way. The friendly openness that characterises the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan is missing. For them, their past is a very real part of their lives today. People who survived the attacks still need treatment for their injuries. There is a high rate of miscarriages locally. The many graves are a constant reminder of the thousands who perished.

The graveyard we visit feels like a strange mix of cemetery and children's playground. The colourful railings surrounding it sit in stark contrast to the row upon row of gravestones, each identical except for the name. In the middle there is a statue of a man carved in blue marble, gazing up to heaven, his hands clawing at his chest. We are each given a stem of fake flowers to lay at its base. Behind us, young men sprawl next to graves, relaxing in the orange evening sun. Even at rest, there seems to be no escape from reminders of Halabja's history.

There is one last statue to see before we leave town. It is of a father and his son. The man's story is known throughout Kurdistan. He and his wife had waited many years for a son but produced only daughters. Finally, they had a boy. The man was in the street with the baby when Halabja was gassed. He lay on the ground, desperately trying to protect his son with his body. Both died. A photo of him struggling to shield his child from the deadly fumes has become a tragic symbol of the events of that day. The statue is based on this picture.

While the rest of Kurdistan is looking forward, there is a sense that Halabja is still trying to break free from its horrific past



Arizona. (They looked rather more like employees of Blackwater than travellers from Thomas Cook.) Our conversation consisted largely of their dire warnings about the dangers of Kurdistan. But I am determined to prove them wrong. I am here to discover the delights of this Mesopotamian idyll, whatever and wherever they may be.

Back at the amusement park, I climb into the rickety car of the toboggan-run, fasten the slightly frayed seatbelt and cram my bag between my legs before we launch down the side of the mountain. On either side of the track are sheets of chicken wire, about



Irak: huit morts dans un attentat à la bombe contre un dirigeant kurde

BAGDAD, 6 juillet 2008 (Xinhua) –

- HUIT PERSONNES ont été tuées et deux autres blessées dimanche dans un attentat à la bombe contre le convoi d'un dirigeant kurde dans la province de Diyala (nord), a-t-on appris d'une source de la police provinciale.

L'attaque est survenue près de la ville de Qara Tabbah, à environ 150 km au nord-est de Bagdad lorsqu'une bombe placée en bordure de route a explosé et frappé le convoi de Muhammad Ramadhan Issa, dirigeant local de

l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (PUK), tuant cet homme, cinq des membres de sa famille et deux de ses gardes du corps, a déclaré cette source à l'agence Xinhua, sous couvert de l'anonymat.

Deux autres gardes du corps de M. Issa ont également été blessés dans cette attaque, a ajouté la source.

Le PUK, dirigé par le président irakien Jalal Talabani, est l'un des deux principaux partis des Kurdes en Irak.

6 juillet 2008



Turquie : Le pays rattrapé par les démons du putsch militaire

par Jérôme Bastion

Une nouvelle série de gardes à vue opérée, ce mardi, a mené deux anciens généraux « 4 étoiles » en prison, dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche. L'enquête sur le réseau ultra-kémaliste Ergenekon, censé préparer le terrain à un coup d'Etat militaire contre le gouvernement islamo-démocrate de M. Erdogan, réveille de douloureux souvenirs.

« Les pachas derrière les barreaux » ! A la lecture de la presse dominicale, la Turquie se frotte les yeux et ne peut s'empêcher de revivre l'expérience des trois coups d'Etat qui ont ponctué la vie politique du pays, en 1960, 1971 et 1980. Hürriyet fait ainsi le parallèle entre les longs interrogatoires du 12 mars (1971) et les quatre jours durant lesquels, depuis leur mise en garde à vue mardi 1er juillet, les 21 nouveaux suspects du réseau Ergenekon ont dû se justifier des accusations de vouloir créer le « chaos » dans le pays, pouvant justifier une intervention militaire.

Sauf que, cette fois, les rôles sont inversés : ce sont essentiellement des militaires, certes en retraite, qui ont été inculpés et écroués et qui devront répondre de leurs actes devant la justice. Et pas des moindres : il s'agit rien moins que de l'ancien commandant de la Première armée, le général Hürşit Tolon et de l'ancien commandant de la gendarmerie, le général Şener Eruygur ; ils seraient les « cerveaux » du complot. De quoi suggérer à certains, comme le quotidien Radikal, que « ceux qui ont mené à bien un coup d'Etat (soient aussi) jugés », allusion au général Kenan Evren dont la junte prit le pouvoir en 1980 et qui coule des jours heureux sur la riviéra turque.

Des dizaines d'arrestations

En attendant, au terme d'une enquête qui débuta en



Le général turc Hürşit Tolon (d) a été arrêté à Ankara le 1er juillet 2008. (Photo : Reuters)

juin 2007 avec la découverte d'un arsenal terroriste dans une maison d'Istanbul louée par des officiers à la retraite, tout le monde attend avec impatience la publication de l'acte d'accusation de ce qui s'annonce comme un procès retentissant, qui pourrait s'ouvrir au printemps prochain. L'opposition réclame que le procureur à l'origine de ces spectaculaires arrestations (58 incarcérations, parmi lesquelles celles de leaders politiques, d'avocats célèbres, d'anciens recteurs d'université, d'homme d'affaires, de mafieux et de journalistes, ainsi donc que de nombreux officiers) dévoile *sine die* les éléments matériels justifiant la procédure en cours.

L'opposition soupçonne en effet le gouvernement de « se venger » du recours en interdiction ouvert devant la Cour constitutionnelle contre le Parti de la justice et du développement, procès dont la première audience, ce mardi, coïncida justement avec le dernier coup de filet mené simultanément dans plusieurs villes du pays, y compris dans les logements militaires des généraux Tolon et Eruygur, une première. Une hypothèse cependant jugée « farfelue » par Ruşen Çakır, du journal *Vatan*. Le

Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a assuré ce vendredi que la publication de l'acte d'accusation était « imminente ». Annoncée pour le week-end, elle a de nouveau été retardée de quelques jours.

La Turquie retient son souffle

D'après les informations dont semble disposer la presse (*Sabah, Yeni Şafak, Radikal*), la raison de cette nouvelle série d'arrestations serait plutôt due à l'imminence de l'entrée du complot dans sa phase active. C'est ce lundi en effet que devaient être organisées dans le pays des dizaines de manifestations au cours desquelles des tireurs étaient présumés tirer dans la foule, suscitant la panique et menant à des affrontements. Un contexte similaire aux situations sanglantes des précédents coups d'Etat et qui était censé justifier un appel à une nouvelle intervention militaire. Un scénario machiavélique qui n'a fait l'objet d'aucune confirmation, ni même du moindre commentaire, que ce soit dans la classe politique ou à l'état-major. Comme si la simple évocation de cette machination trop plausible gênait ses complices objectifs (l'armée) et ses victimes prévisibles (la classe politique dans son ensemble et particulièrement le parti de gouvernement).

La Turquie retient donc son souffle, craignant la répétition de l'Histoire, dans l'attente de ce que la presse a déjà présenté comme « les deux procès du 21e siècle ». Deux procès qui, dans une sorte « d'équilibre de la terreur » comme on a présenté durant la guerre froide la menace nucléaire réciproque entre les deux blocs soviétique et occidental, sont de toute évidence intimement liés. Dans le cas présent, ce sont la mouvance politique issue de l'islamisme, au pouvoir depuis 6 ans, et l'appareil militaire-kémaliste, héritier d'Atatürk mais perdant progressivement le contrôle des institutions, qui se livrent une lutte apparemment à mort - au risque de franchir le Rubicon des principes démocratiques. Difficile en tous cas de prévoir à ce stade si - et comment - les deux camps parviendront à se neutraliser et à maintenir le pays sur la voie de la stabilité politique.



BAGDAD ET LES KURDES IRAKIENS ONT LA "VOLONTÉ" DE COMBATTRE LE PKK (ERDOGAN)

BAGDAD, 10 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PREMIER ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a affirmé jeudi à Bagdad que les gouvernements d'Irak et du Kurdistan irakien l'avaient assuré de leur "volonté" de combattre les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Nous avons obtenu le soutien du gouvernement Maliki et du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien contre le PKK. Le PKK est une menace, pas seulement pour l'Irak et la Turquie, mais pour toute la région", a déclaré M.

Erdogan.

"Nous n'autorisons pas de telles organisations à empoisonner les relations entre nos deux pays. Il y a une compréhension commune du problème. Il y a une volonté commune de défaire l'organisation", a insisté le Premier ministre turc.

M. Erdogan a également annoncé la formation d'un "Conseil suprême de coopération stratégique", qui comptera notamment les Premiers ministres des deux pays, pour aborder ensemble les sujets communs aux deux pays.

Depuis décembre, la Turquie a mené plusieurs interventions militaires contre les bases dans le nord de l'Irak du PKK, considérée comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Ces opérations, notamment des bombardements aériens, avaient provoqué de vives réactions de la part du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien, ainsi que du président irakien Jalal Talabani, un Kurde.

L'Orient
LE JOUR

07 juillet 2008

Omer Taspinar, directeur du programme sur la Turquie au Brookings Institute, décrypte les relations entre l'armée et le parti au pouvoir

« LA PROCÉDURE D'INTERDICTION DE L'AKP EST UN COUP D'ÉTAT JUDICIAIRE »

Le dossier réalisé par Karine JAMMAL

La procédure d'interdiction lancée par la Cour suprême contre le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), au pouvoir en Turquie et accusé par les laïcs d'islamiser le pays, pourrait aboutir d'ici à la fin de l'été à l'interdiction du parti. Une décision qui pourrait également entraîner le pays dans une période de turbulences politiques. Omer Taspinar, du programme sur la Turquie au Brookings Institute, décrypte, pour « L'Orient-le Jour », les tenants et les aboutissants du bras de fer entre l'AKP et l'armée, gardien de la laïcité turque.

Q- Pourquoi la procédure d'interdiction de l'AKP est-elle lancée aujourd'hui ?

R- « La Turquie vit aujourd'hui une période de grande tension entre l'armée et le parti au pouvoir sur la question de la laïcité. Mais, cette situation n'est pas nouvelle. Cette tension existe depuis plus d'un an. L'armée et les laïcs ont en effet mal digéré la décision de l'AKP de nommer Abdullah Gül au poste de président. Abdullah Gül, un pro-islam dont la femme et la fille sont voilées. Il faut rappeler un point important, aux dernières élections législatives, en 2007, l'AKP a recueilli 47 % des voix, un score historique en Turquie. À partir de là, nombreux sont ceux, notamment dans les milieux laïcs (fonctionnaires, académiciens, classe moyenne), qui ont eu peur d'un plan caché d'islamisation du pays à long terme. »

Q- Dans cette tentative d'interdire l'AKP, la question de la laïcité est-elle l'enjeu principal ?

R- « Cela va plus loin que la laïcité, cette dernière n'est qu'une partie du problème. La laïcité turque ressemble à la laïcité de combat de la IIIe République en France, au système jacobin qui voulait tous les deux limiter le rôle de l'Église catholique. Cette interprétation de la laïcité à la française pose aujourd'hui de grands problèmes en Turquie. Les citoyens turcs sont à la recherche d'une autre forme laïcité, plus dans le sens d'un sécularisme.

Outre la question de la laïcité, se cache derrière cette procédure d'interdiction le manque de confiance des kémalistes envers l'AKP, notamment sur le dossier kurde. L'AKP est considérée comme trop libérale envers les Kurdes. L'AKP est favorable à des concessions culturelles aux Kurdes, notamment qu'ils parlent leur langue. Ce parti serait même d'accord pour donner aux Kurdes la

possibilité d'avoir des droits démocratiques, même au niveau politique.

L'AKP est également favorable à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne et cette prise de position dérange les milieux kémalistes. Pour eux, derrière une adhésion à l'UE se cache un projet de diminution du rôle de l'armée.

Chypre est un autre dossier polémique entre l'armée et l'AKP. En 2004, le parti au pouvoir a fait des concessions et donné son accord au projet de l'ONU pour la réunification de l'île, alors que l'armée était totalement contre. L'armée voit l'AKP comme un parti qui peut compromettre trop facilement les intérêts nationaux au profit de l'UE.

En outre, l'AKP entretient de bonnes relations avec les États-Unis contrairement aux kémalistes. Les relations entre l'armée et le Pentagone se sont notamment dégradées suite au refus turc de participer à la guerre en Irak. »

Q- La procédure d'interdiction de l'AKP est-elle démocratique ?

R- « C'est une procédure antidémocratique, un coup d'État judiciaire. Les militaires savent qu'ils ne peuvent pas faire un coup d'État traditionnel. L'armée sait qu'il n'est pas réaliste de faire un coup d'État contre 47 % de la population. Donc les militaires luttent contre le projet politique de l'AKP en faisant bouger les juges et la presse laïque pour créer une véritable guerre psychologique contre l'AKP. Ils font circuler la rumeur d'un grand danger islamique et créent un climat social tendu. En fait, c'est une façon d'éliminer un parti d'une manière "plus démocratique", un genre de "coup d'État camouflé". »

Q- L'AKP a-t-il effectivement un grand projet caché d'islamisation ?

R- « Certaines personnes le pensent. Le parti a un discours plutôt conservateur dans les grandes lignes, mais je ne vois pas une situation de "takkiyeh", c'est-à-dire une stratégie de l'AKP visant à cacher ses véritables intentions. L'AKP est un parti qui devient de plus en plus séculaire. En outre, le pouvoir corrompt, l'AKP va faire des fautes et c'est uniquement le processus démocratique qui va trancher. Le système pourrait se défaire de cette formation politique de manière naturelle, sans coup d'État judiciaire. »

Q- Et la population turque dans tout cela ?

R- La population turque sympathise avec l'AKP. Quand le système essaie de

marginaliser le parti au pouvoir, ce sentiment de sympathie s'accroît. Il faut également se souvenir que 60 % des femmes turques portent le foulard. En outre, s'il y avait des élections demain, l'AKP gagnerait sûrement plus de 45 % des voix parce qu'il n'y a pas d'alternative à l'AKP. Il n'y a pas de parti de gauche, l'armée constitue l'opposition. Le Parti républicain n'a pas de vraie relation avec le peuple, le parti nationaliste n'a que 10 à 15 % des voix. »

Q- Comment réagira l'AKP si la justice décide son interdiction ?

R- « Il y aura un autre parti avec une autre forme et un autre nom. Il faut également bien comprendre la logique du système kémaliste : chaque fois qu'un parti a été interdit, il est réapparu avec un message politique plus modéré, et non plus islamiste. On pourrait donc imaginer que si l'AKP est interdit, la nouvelle forme politique que prendra ce parti ne posera plus la question du foulard. »

Q- Quel serait l'impact d'une interdiction de l'AKP par rapport à la question de l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne, alors que la France vient de prendre la présidence tournante de l'UE ?

R- « La Turquie et la France ont de bonnes relations économiques, il y a un lobby pro-turc très important au niveau du business. Le problème de Nicolas Sarkozy est de définir la Turquie comme un pays européen. Le 23 juin dernier, le Sénat français a supprimé un amendement sur l'obligation d'un référendum en cas de nouvelle adhésion à l'UE. Quarante-sept députés de l'UMP ont immédiatement écrit une lettre au Sénat pour montrer leur opposition. Aujourd'hui, la France pourrait utiliser une éventuelle interdiction de l'AKP pour justifier et légitimer ses réticences à une adhésion turque à l'Europe. Si l'AKP est interdit, la France peut arguer que l'on ne peut poursuivre les négociations d'adhésion avec un pays qui cautionne des procédures non démocratiques. La Turquie a toutefois une carte en main : si la France est contre la Turquie dans l'Union européenne, Ankara pourrait être contre la France dans l'OTAN. C'est une sorte de chantage que la Turquie pourrait utiliser. »

Q- Comment se positionne la Turquie par rapport à l'Union pour la Méditerranée ?

R- « Pour la Turquie, l'Union pour la Méditerranée (UPM) est une façon de marginaliser, c'est une alternative à l'adhésion. Le fait que l'on ait proposé à la Turquie d'être le leader de l'Union pour la Méditerranée est vu, à Ankara, comme une ruse politique de la part de M. Sarkozy. Par ailleurs, la Turquie ne veut pas laisser à Sarkozy la possibilité de récupérer le dossier israélo-syrien, au travers du sommet de l'UPM, alors qu'Ankara joue un rôle de médiateur depuis plus d'un mois. »

Q- Précisément, quels sont les atouts de la Turquie sur le dossier syro-israélien ?

R- « La Turquie a un atout important : bien que pays musulman, elle entretient de bonnes relations avec Israël. Les deux pays ont signé un partenariat militaire et stratégique, l'aviation israélienne s'entraîne en Turquie. Le président israélien, Shimon Peres, a même prononcé un discours devant le Parlement turc. Coté syrien, Recep Tayyip Erdogan a de très bonnes relations avec Bachar el-Assad et se rend régulièrement à Damas. »

Q- Qu'a-t-elle à gagner de cette entreprise de médiation ?

R- « La Turquie a une ambition régionale. Tout en continuant de regarder vers l'Europe, elle veut revenir au Moyen-Orient. Je dirais même que nous sommes en présence d'un néo-ottomanisme, la Turquie veut montrer qu'elle a un rôle politique à jouer dans la région, sur le mode "soft power". Le modèle turc (pro-laïc, pro-occidental, forte économie) est important dans la région, il montre notamment qu'il n'y a pas de choc des civilisations.

Mais sur ce point aussi, nous retrouvons l'opposition entre l'AKP et l'armée. Alors que la vision néo-ottomane prône de bonnes relations avec le Moyen-Orient, une union entre Ankara et le monde arabe, l'armée considère que jouer un rôle dans la région tient de l'aventurisme. Pour les kémalistes, il faut rester neutre sur le dossier israélo-palestinien. L'armée estime que la Turquie ne doit pas aspirer à jouer un grand rôle régional. Pour l'armée, il faut d'abord s'occuper de Chypre, des Arméniens, des Kurdes... Bref, s'occuper de ce qui est important pour la Turquie. »

*Aux siècles passés, les chiites pouvaient avoir recours à la « takkieh », c'est-à-dire cacher leur véritable croyance, afin de protéger leur vie.

REUTERS

Six morts dans un attentat au consulat des Etats-Unis à Istanbul

9 juillet 2008, Reuters

UN ATTENTAT contre le consulat des Etats-Unis à Istanbul a coûté la vie à trois policiers et trois assaillants, rapporte le gouverneur de la ville.

Des témoins ont raconté que trois hommes sont sortis d'une voiture juste devant le haut mur d'enceinte de la mission diplomatique et ont ouvert le feu sur des policiers en faction.

Un policier est mort sur place et les deux autres ont succombé à leurs blessures à l'hôpital, a dit à la presse le gouverneur, Muammer Guler.

Citant des sources policières, la chaîne de télévision CNN Türk a rapporté que les trois hommes étaient soupçonnés d'appartenir à Al Qaïda. Deux personnes ont été arrêtées à Istanbul, dont le frère d'un des assaillants tués dans la fusillade, a ajouté CNN Türk.

Le porte-parole du département d'Etat américain, Sean McCormack a dit de son côté ne pouvoir ni exclure ni confirmer qu'il s'agisse de membres de l'organisation terroriste.

Le gouverneur a déclaré que les trois assaillants tués étaient turcs et avaient, semble-t-il, entre 25 et 30 ans.

Les Etats-Unis ont, comme le gouvernement turc, condamné cet attentat qui n'a pas été revendiqué.

"Il s'agit à l'évidence de terroristes responsables d'une attaque lâche et ignoble", a déclaré l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis en Turquie, Ross Wilson, lors d'une conférence de presse à Ankara. "Nos deux pays sont unis dans la lutte contre le terrorisme international", a-t-il ajouté.

La secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, s'est félicitée de la gestion de l'attaque par les autorités turques.

"Nous apprécions beaucoup ce qui a clairement été une réponse rapide et juste de la part du gouvernement pour gérer la situation de la sécurité devant notre consulat", a-t-elle dit.

QUINZE MINUTES DE FUSILLADE

Le Premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan s'est dit "grandement attristé par le martyre de nos trois policiers dans une attaque terroriste".

Des images de télévision ont montré quatre corps gisant sur le sol devant la mission diplomatique, située dans un quartier résidentiel qui surplombe le Bosphore.

Des aides-soignants procédaient à un massage cardiaque sur l'un des hommes qui étaient étendus sur le sol. La chemise de l'un d'eux était déchirée, un autre saignait de la tête.

"Ils (les assaillants) étaient quatre. Trois d'entre eux sont sortis de la voiture et ont tiré sur les policiers. Je les ai ensuite vus morts, étendus sur le sol, et il y avait d'autres morts parmi les policiers", a dit à Reuters Enis Yilmaz, qui se rendait au consulat pour y faire une demande de visa. Le quatrième homme, a-t-il dit, s'est enfui à bord d'un véhicule.

Ulus Durgut, 24 ans, qui se rendait lui aussi au complexe diplomatique, a raconté que la fusillade avait duré quinze minutes. "Les terroristes étaient des hommes barbus et portaient des cheveux longs", a-t-il dit, encore visiblement sous le choc.

Un autre témoin, Mutlu Gunes, un adolescent de 13 ans, a dit à la presse avoir vu plusieurs hommes charger des armes dans une Ford Focus avant prendre le chemin du consulat, non loin de là.

"Trois hommes sont alors sortis de la voiture. L'un d'eux a tiré sur un policier et l'a touché au torse et j'ai aussi vu un terroriste qui s'est suicidé après avoir été touché par la police. Après, je me suis caché sous une voiture", a-t-il dit.

Un autre jeune homme, Muhammet Nur, 15 ans, a été témoin de la fusillade, d'un café tout proche. "On a d'abord cru qu'ils étaient des policiers en civil et on était étonné que ces quatre-là portent des manteaux par ce temps, et puis ils ont sorti leurs armes", a-t-il dit.

La Turquie a connu ces dernières années des attaques armées imputées à un éventail de groupes différents - maoïstes, trotskistes, islamistes et séparatistes kurdes notamment.

Les plus graves ont eu lieu en novembre 2003 à Istanbul, où 62 personnes avaient été tuées lors d'attaques contre deux synagogues, une banque et le consulat de Grande-Bretagne.

AFP

TURQUIE: LE PKK CONFIRME LE RAPT D'ALPINISTES ALLEMANDS

ANKARA, 10 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PARTI des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a confirmé jeudi le rapt de trois alpinistes allemands dans l'est de la Turquie en raison de la politique "hostile" de l'Allemagne à l'égard des Kurdes et du PKK, a rapporté l'agence de presse pro-kurde Firat.

Selon un communiqué de l'aile militaire du PKK, le HPG, cité par l'agence, les trois alpinistes, qui se nomment Helmut Johann, Martin George et Lars Holper Reime, sont en bonne santé.

Les trois hommes ont été enlevés mercredi sur le Mont Ararat (Agri en Turc) en représailles à la répression menée par le gouvernement allemand à l'encontre du "peuple kurde et du PKK", affirme l'agence, proche de la rébellion kurde.

"Les touristes allemands ne seront pas relâchés tant que le gouvernement allemand n'annoncera pas qu'il a abandonné sa politique hostile à l'égard du peuple kurde et du PKK", selon le communiqué.

Le texte affirme que les trois alpinistes n'ont pas été maltraités et appelle les autorités turques à mettre fin aux opérations militaires déclenchées dans la zone de l'enlèvement pour obtenir la libération des otages.

Les trois Allemands, qui faisaient partie d'un groupe de 13 alpinistes, ont été enlevés alors qu'ils escaladaient le mont Agri, avait précisé mercredi le gouverneur de la province du même nom, Mehmet Cetin.

Cinq rebelles sont arrivés au campement des alpinistes situé à une altitude de 3.200 mètres et ont enlevé trois d'entre eux, a indiqué M. Cetin qui a ajouté que



la région avait été fermée aux alpinistes jusqu'à nouvel ordre.

Le Mont Agri, situé à proximité des frontières avec l'Iran et l'Arménie, est la plus haute montagne de Turquie avec une altitude de 5.137 mètres et a accueilli, selon la tradition biblique, l'arche de Noé.

Quelque 2,7 millions de Turcs, dont un million naturalisés et de nombreux Kurdes, vivent en Allemagne, formant de loin la première communauté étrangère du pays.

Depuis le début de l'année plusieurs dirigeants du PKK, dont Ayfer Kaya, ex-maîtresse présumée du chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Ocalan, emprisonné en Turquie, ont été arrêtés en

Allemagne.

Le PKK figure dans la liste des organisations classées comme terroristes par l'Union européenne.

Les enlèvements de touristes par des éléments du PKK sont rares bien que l'organisation ait dans le passé enlevé des soldats, des policiers et des journalistes turcs.

Le PKK, considéré également comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatolien, dont la population est en majorité kurde.

Ce conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts selon les chiffres officiels.

AFP

PLUS DE 11.000 KURDES EN ALLEMAGNE SOUTIENNENT ACTIVEMENT LE PKK (AUTORITÉS)

BERLIN, 10 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE GROUPE séparatiste kurde PKK, qui a revendiqué jeudi l'enlèvement de trois alpinistes allemands en Turquie pour protester contre la "répression" de Berlin à son encontre, est interdit en Allemagne depuis près de 15 ans.

Mais le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui opère sous des noms différents

mais demeure connu sous le nom de PKK, bénéficie toutefois de soutiens solides en Allemagne du fait de la présence depuis des années de près d'un demi million de Kurdes, la plupart de nationalité turque.

Quelque 11.500 d'entre eux sont d'ailleurs fichés comme soutenant activement le mouvement séparatiste, selon l'Office allemand pour la protection de la Constitution, chargée de la traque des organisations extrémistes.

Lors d'une visite en février en Allemagne, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait d'ailleurs ouvertement reproché aux Européens -- désignant notamment les Allemands-- de laisser le PKK recueillir des fonds chez eux et de relâcher les extrémistes qu'ils arrêtent.

Le PKK a récemment collecté cinq millions d'euros rien que dans un pays européen, avait affirmé M. Erdogan sans nommer ce pays.

Le PKK est interdit en Allemagne depuis novembre 1993, et est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par l'Union européenne depuis avril 2002.

Depuis plusieurs années déjà, pas un mois ne se passe en Allemagne sans l'annonce d'une arrestation ou l'ouverture du procès de militants du PKK.

Certains utilisent la menace pour recueillir des fonds auprès de la communauté kurde.

Par ailleurs, le mois dernier, le ministre allemand de l'Intérieur Wolfgang Schäuble avait interdit à la chaîne de télévision kurde Roj TV, basée au Danemark, de travailler sur le territoire allemand, affirmant qu'elle servait la propagande du PKK.

Le ministre avait également ordonné la fermeture d'une société de production télévisée, VIKO Fernseh Produktion GmbH, basée à Wuppertal, dans l'ouest de l'Allemagne, qui produisait des émissions pour Roj TV.

AFP

LA TURQUIE "VA DAVANTAGE SOUTENIR L'IRAK", QUI VA L'AIDER CONTRE LE PKK (ERDOGAN)

BAGDAD, 10 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PREMIER ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a promis, jeudi à Bagdad, que la Turquie allait "davantage soutenir l'Irak" dans sa stabilisation et sa reconstruction, et s'est réjoui que Bagdad lui ait dit vouloir lutter à ses côtés contre les séparatistes kurdes.

"Je vous assure que le gouvernement turc sera à vos côtés et vous soutiendra", a déclaré M. Erdogan lors d'une conférence de presse avec son homologue irakien Nouri al-Maliki, insistant sur la dimension "historique" de sa visite "après 18 ans d'interruption".

"Cette année est l'année de la reconstruction", a renchéri M. Maliki, disant vouloir "augmenter la production de pétrole et aider les autres industries à développer le pays", et appelant les entreprises turques à investir en Irak.

Les deux pays visent les 25 milliards de dollars d'échanges commerciaux annuels, selon M. Erdogan.

"Le futur de l'Irak est aussi le futur de notre région. Je crois que la démocratie aura bientôt raison des problèmes en Irak", a estimé le chef du gouvernement turc.

Il a indiqué qu'il rencontrerait désormais une fois par an son homologue irakien, et que les ministres des deux pays se verraient trois fois par an.

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement irakien et le Kurdistan irakien l'ont assuré de leur "volonté commune" de "défaire" les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), qui sont une menace "pour toute la région", a-t-il dit.

"Il y a une compréhension commune du problème", s'est réjoui M. Erdogan.

"Nous avons discuté de tous les sujets, y compris de Kirkouk", province du nord-est de l'Irak dont la moitié des habitants sont kurdes, a précisé le dirigeant turc.

Les Kurdes irakiens demandent à pouvoir annexer cette province. Ankara s'y oppose, craignant de voir se renforcer le Kurdistan irakien.

Depuis décembre, la Turquie a mené plusieurs interventions militaires dans le nord de l'Irak contre les bases du PKK, considérée comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Ces opérations, notamment des bombardements aériens, avaient provoqué de vives réactions de la part du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien, ainsi que du président irakien Jalal Talabani, un Kurde.

Le gouvernement turc affirme que 2.000 rebelles kurdes du PKK sont cachés de l'autre côté de sa frontière avec l'Irak. Le PKK se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.



M. Erdogan achèvera sa visite par un dîner avec M. Talabani.

Lors de la conférence de presse, le Premier ministre irakien a annoncé la formation d'un "Haut conseil de coopération stratégique", qui comptera notamment les Premiers ministres des deux pays et se réunira deux fois par an pour aborder des sujets communs: économie, approvisionnement en eau et lutte contre le terrorisme.

L'Irak mène actuellement une offensive diplomatique pour renforcer sa position régionale et normaliser ses relations avec ses voisins, alors que la situation du point de vue de la sécurité s'est améliorée depuis plusieurs mois.

Plusieurs pays, la Jordanie, les Emirats arabes unis, le Koweït et Bahreïn, ont ainsi nommé récemment des ambassadeurs en Irak.

Washington a également fait pression sur ses alliés arabes pour qu'ils normalisent leurs relations avec l'Irak afin de contrer l'influence de l'Iran, accusé d'ingérence chez son voisin irakien.

Sur le plan économique, "il y a un large éventail d'accords qui vont être discutés et signés dans les domaines du commerce, du tourisme et des échanges de technologie", avait indiqué jeudi matin à l'AFP un conseiller du Premier ministre irakien.

Aucune indication sur l'éventuelle signature de contrats n'a été donnée lors de la conférence de presse.

La Turquie est déjà un des partenaires commerciaux les plus actifs de l'Irak, lui fournissant notamment des biens de consommation.

AFP

TURQUIE: 10 REBELLES, UN MILICIEU KURDE TUÉ DANS DES COMBATS DANS LE SUD-EST

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 11 juil 2008 (AFP) -

DIX REBELLES kurdes et un membre d'une milice créée par les autorités turques pour contrer les rebelles, ont été tués dans des combats survenus avec l'armée dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont indiqué vendredi des sources de sécurité locales.

Les combats ont eu lieu tard jeudi aux abords du mont Kato, dans la province de Sirnak, proche de la frontière irakienne, a-t-on précisé de mêmes sources.

Le milicien kurde est un "gardien de village" kurde, une force paramilitaire formée par les autorités d'Ankara pour lutter avec les forces de sécurité turques contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

L'armée turque a renforcé son action contre le PKK depuis décembre, menant plusieurs raids aériens contre des bases rebelles situées dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a aussi effectué une incursion terrestre d'une semaine dans le Kurdistan irakien où Ankara affirme que plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes ont trouvé refuge.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatoliens, à la population en majorité kurde, un conflit qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

6 die as U.S. Consulate in Istanbul is attacked

From news reports

ISTANBUL: A group of unidentified gunmen opened fire Wednesday on Turkish security guards outside the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, the Turkish authorities said, and at least three police officers and three assailants were killed.

A fourth assailant escaped, officials said.

The late-morning attack was the first on a diplomatic mission in the city since 2003, when 62 people were killed in assaults on the British Consulate, a bank and two synagogues. While the motives for this attack were not immediately clear, Turkish officials described the gunmen as terrorists.

"Turkey struggles and will struggle against the mentalities that organize and stand behind these attacks until the very end," President Abdullah Gul said in a statement. "Everyone, after all, has seen that nothing can be achieved through terror."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which took place on a quiet street lined with apartment houses. But a police official in Istanbul told The Associated Press that the authorities suspected that Al Qaeda had been behind the attack. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief journalists on the investigation.

In a televised news conference, the Istanbul governor, Muammer Guler, said one of the police officers had died at the scene, after a gun battle that lasted nearly 10 minutes, and two others had died of bullet wounds in a hospital. One of the officers who were killed was part of the consulate security detail, while the other two were traffic police officers.

A police officer and a tow-truck driver were among the wounded.

The consulate is a fortified building with heavy security measures. Witnesses and news reports said that about 15 minutes before the attack, the three gunmen had been seen sitting in a gray car with another man — apparently the driver — parked in a carwash near the consulate.

About 10:30 a.m., the three, who looked to be 25 to 30 years old, left the vehicle, walked up to a police post at the main entrance of the consulate and opened fire, taking the officers by surprise.

"One of them approached a policeman while hiding his gun and shot him in the head," a bystander, Yavuz Erkut Yuksel, told CNN-Turk television.

In the ensuing clash, two of the officers fired back, killing all three attackers, according to news reports. The authorities said the three men had used handguns and a pump-action shotgun. The Istanbul chief prosecutor, Aykut Cengiz Engin, said at a televised news conference that "a fourth person coming to the attack site has escaped in the car."

One witness, Huseyin Tuzemen, was across the street from the consulate when the gunfire erupted.

"I was sitting at the café and there were suddenly some gunshots," he said. "I lay on the ground. I didn't see where the shots came from. I found myself in the fridge."

After the attack, crowds of onlookers and police officers milled around the walls 4.5 meters, or 15 feet, high that shelter the American compound. The police cordoned off the area. A helicopter hovered above. Television footage showed one body lying on the ground.

From the police post, visitors to the consulate usually climb steps to the hilltop consulate building, which some

terrorist attacks.

Several consular officers were absent from the building at the time of the attack, attending a meeting set up by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

The U.S. ambassador, Ross Wilson, said that the consul general in Istanbul, Sharon Wiener, had told him that the consulate staff was "safe and accounted for."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

said Wednesday that she did not know who was responsible but that she would soon speak with the Turkish foreign minister.

"Obviously, first of all, the United States deeply regrets the loss of life and condolences go out to the families of those who were killed," Rice said as she traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia.

"I know that some policemen were among those who died and we very much appreciate what was clearly a very rapid and proper response from the government to try to deal with the security situation in front of our consulate," she said.

Footage from a security camera at the site showed four armed and bearded men emerging from a car and killing the traffic policeman, then running toward a guard post about 45 meters away as other police officers fired back, the Dogan news agency reported.

The shootout caused panic and scattered people who were waiting in a line for visas. U.S. security personnel went inside the compound because they were not authorized to engage in armed action on Turkish soil, Dogan reported.

At least two of the attackers were Turkish nationals, said Guler, the Istanbul governor.

The police said they were pursuing at least one attacker who escaped in a car after the attack.

NTV television, citing police sources, said officials feared the car might be loaded with explosives. But the police would not confirm that report.

Over the years, Turkey, a close NATO ally of the United States, has experienced intermittent violence from a range of groups including leftists, rightists, Kurdish separatists and Islamic militants. (IHT, AP)



people say resembles a fortress.

The consulate was for many years located in the center of the city in a bustling area near Taksim Square.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in the United States, the consulate was relocated to the Istinye area near the Bosphorus to be better protected from



Azzaman
July 8, 2008

Kurdish official doubts 'legality' of oil deals

By Bassel al-Khateeb

The oil deals the Kurdish regional government and the central government in Baghdad are signing are illegal, according to a top Kurdish politician and legislator.

Mahmoud Othman, the head of the powerful Kurdish bloc in Iraqi parliament, described the signing of these deals as "a premature and out-of-lace move" in the absence of a national law organizing the exploitation of the country's oil riches.

The Kurds have signed about two dozen deals and the central government has agreed to let foreign oil giants to boost output from producing fields and is also mulling signing oil development contracts.

"The rush towards signing the contracts is anachronistic. So long as the draft oil and gas law remains unsigned, these deals will lack the

constitutional basis to kick them off the ground," Othman said.

Othman is the first senior Kurdish official to criticize the oil development deals the Kurdish regional government has signed.

Othman's opinion counts because he is seen by many across the country, particularly in Iraq's Kurdish enclave in the north, as a veteran politician whose stance Kurdish political leaders may not afford to ignore.

Othman warned that the sides' appetite to proceed ahead with the signing of oil deals in the absence of constitutional backing would backfire.

Under these circumstances, he said, conditions "will reach a point at which everyone will become motionless. A situation like this will not be in the country's interests."



He advised both the Kurdish regional government in Arbil and the central government in Baghdad to "wait until the draft oil and gas law is approved."

The law has stalled at the parliament mainly due to objections from Kurdish legislators.

Othman said it was time the country's Supreme Court looked into the

matter as Iraq's politicians are apparently unable to reach some sort of agreement on the draft law.

It is not clear why Othman made the remarks at a time he was a strong supporter of the deals the Kurds have signed.

Analysts say many Kurds have discovered that the deals they have signed with foreign firms are not "fair".

They say foreigners will reap most of the benefits as they are given "wide concessions" and large tax benefits.

The analysts also charge that almost all the Kurdish deals have been signed without the proper betting procedures.

BBC NEWS 10 July 2008

PKK sets German hostage demands

A Kurdish rebel group has vowed not to release three German tourists it has kidnapped unless Germany renounces its crackdown on the PKK.

The three climbers were seized from their camp on Mount Ararat in Turkey's eastern Agri province on Wednesday.

The PKK, defined as a terrorist organisation by the US, EU and Turkey, said all three men were in good health.

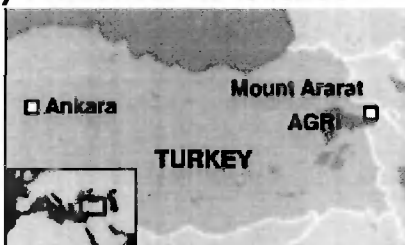
Analysts say that kidnapping, though used by the group during the 1990s, is now a rare tactic.

The Germans were part of a 13-member climbing team that had set up a camp at 3,200m (10,500ft) on the mountain, the highest in Turkey and a popular tourist destination.

PKK 'mouthpiece'

"The German tourists will not be released unless the German state announces that it has given up its hostile policies against the Kurdish people and the PKK," said the statement, published by a news agency close to the group.

In June, Germany banned a Kurdish television station which the country's inte-



rior minister said was a mouth piece for the armed group. Germany also extradited two PKK militants to Turkey last year.

A German government spokeswoman said officials were "working intensively" to resolve the hostage situation.

Mehmet Cetin, local governor of the eastern Agri region, said security forces had sealed the mountain off while they searched for the kidnapped climbers.

"The tourists are in good health, but the Turkish state needs to stop its operation in the field in order to ensure the safety" of the hostages, the PKK said according to Firat.

Turkey has in recent months stepped up its campaign against PKK bases in northern Iraq, in response to an increase in attacks by the group.

The PKK seeks autonomy for Kurds in south-eastern Turkey. More than 30,000 people have been killed since the group began its armed campaign in 1984.



Jul. 10, 2008

PKK: German hostages in good condition

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press Writer

Kurdish rebels refused Thursday to release three Germans hostages kidnapped this week until Berlin renounces a crackdown on the guerrilla group.

The rebels kidnapped the three climbers from Mount Ararat in far eastern Turkey late Tuesday, authorities said. A spokesman for the Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK, said the Germans were in good condition.

PKK spokesman Ahmed Danas told The Associated Press by telephone from northern Iraq that the group wants the German government to "change its policy" toward it.

"The German government treats us like enemies, and we don't want that," he said. "We ask them to change their policy. If they don't, we won't release

the German hostages."

In Berlin, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages, saying Germany "will not let itself be blackmailed."

PKK rebels have been fighting for autonomy in eastern Turkey since 1984. In the early 1990s, militants abducted foreign tourists and climbers to draw world attention to their cause; all were freed unharmed.

The PKK is banned in Germany, where authorities have arrested and tried suspected PKK members.

In Berlin, the Foreign Ministry warned that Germans face a further risk of "acts of revenge" following a government decision last month to ban all "economic support" for Roj TV, a station that Turkey says is a PKK propaganda machine.

Germany also warned against travel to Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeastern provinces. Britain also warned its citizens against "all but essential travel" to Mount Ararat.

The kidnapped Germans were part of a 13-member team of climbers camped at 10,500 feet. Mount Ararat is traditionally considered the site where Noah's biblical Ark ended after the great flood.

Danas refused to say whether the climbers were being held in Turkish or Iraqi territory.

Turkish paramilitary forces were scouring Agri province for the hostages, said Cemal Kaya, a top aide to the regional governor. In Berlin, a government spokeswoman said officials were "working intensively" for a resolution to the crisis.

July 11, 2008

SPIEGEL

KURDISH PROPAGANDA AND PATRIOTISM

How the PKK Operates in Europe

While the PKK concentrates on non-violent activities and propaganda work in Germany and Europe, in Turkey it is involved in a violent struggle for an autonomous Kurdish homeland. The kidnapping of three German tourists has put the issue firmly back on the political agenda in Berlin.

By Philipp Wittrock in Berlin

"Germany has declared war on the PKK. We can fight back. Every Kurd is a potential suicide bomber." These combative words were spoken by Abdullah Öcalan, head of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) back in 1996, three years after the group had been banned in Germany.

Öcalan soon watered down his statement: The PKK only wanted to fight Turks in Germany, not Germans, he said. Nevertheless the banning of the Kurdish separatist group was still interpreted as a declaration of war. It was a sign that Berlin had chosen Turkey's side in the Kurdish conflict that had been raging since the early 1980s.

The Kurdish terror campaign in Germany of the early 1990s, with its arson attacks, self-immolations, the blocking of motorways and storming of Turkish consulates may now be a thing of the bloody past. And PKK supporters in Europe may also have become a lot less militant following the arrest of Öcalan in 1999, but the movement is still kept under strict surveillance by German intelligence agencies.

With Tuesday's kidnapping of three German climbers on Mount Ararat, the Kurdish extremist military campaign is once again firmly on the political agenda in Berlin. On Thursday the PKK told the pro-Kurdish Firat news agency that as long as the German state did not end its "hostile policy against the Kurdish people and the PKK," the tourists from the state of Bavaria would not be released.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union. In the past few years the German state prosecutor has filed charges against an increasing number of suspects, and many high-ranking PKK officials have been successfully prosecuted.

There is a huge support based for the PKK in Germany, which is home to an estimated 500,000 Kurds. According to a recent report from Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, there are around 11,500 supporters of the Kongra-Gel, the name the PKK adopted in 2003.

Following a Double-Pronged Strategy

German intelligence agencies believe that Kongra-Gel is pursuing a double-pronged strategy. In Western Europe it concentrates on non-violent propaganda work with demonstrations, marches, culture

festivals and various campaigns in order to attract new supporters or to get Kurds to demand better prison conditions for Öcalan.

Meanwhile in Turkey the armed wing of the PKK, named the People's Defense Forces (HPG) since 2000, has been fighting for an independent Kurdistan, or at the very least cultural and political autonomy for the Kurdish people in southeastern Turkey. It is this group that was responsible for the kidnapping of the three Germans this week.

Last autumn the conflict between the Kurdish separatists and the Turkish military escalated, with a number of deaths on both sides. The Turkish parliament then granted the army authorization for one year to launch military operations into northern Iraq, where many of the thousands of Kurdish guerrillas have been hiding out.

In Europe the Kongra-Gel organized huge demonstrations against the measure, during which there were clashes with Turkish nationalists. The demonstrations had originally been planned as part of a campaign that had begun last summer to bring attention to Öcalan's poor health.

While the imprisoned Öcalan is still regarded as the ideological leader of the PKK, Zübeyir Aydar, a lawyer living in Belgium, is now officially the leader of the Kongra-Gel. However, German intelligence agencies are convinced that the real leader of the movement is Murat Karayilan, the chairman of the so-called Executive Council. He is thought to be hiding in the Kandil Mountains in northern Iraq.

Last September a video message from Karayilan was shown at the International Kurdish Culture Festival in Gelsenkirchen, which was attended by around 40,000 Kurds. According to a report from German intelligence, he called on the Kurds of Europe to: "Strengthen your fight, wherever you are. Those who are in a position to do so should join the guerrillas; those who cannot, should fulfil their patriotic duty."

Financing the 'Freedom Fight'

According to the German domestic intelligence agency, Kongra-Gel has recently reorganized its structure in Germany. Instead of being divided into three regions, northern, middle and southern Germany, there are now seven so-called "Eyalets," which each encompass 28 districts. The leaders of the units are appointed by the European PKK leadership. The authorities consider

these organizational units and their officials to be acting in a conspiratorial manner. "Command and Obey" is their principle for implementing strategies.

There are numerous contact points for sympathizers, with associations spread across the country, such as the "Kurdish Women's Movement in Europe" or the youth group "Komalen Civan."

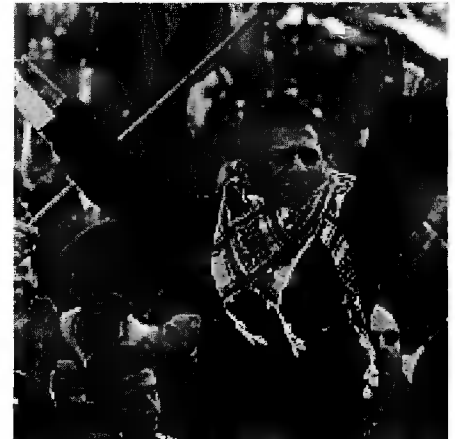
According to the intelligence agencies, Kongra-Gel collects millions of euros in Germany each year for its "freedom fight." The organization usually demands that its supporters donate one month's wages per year, and those unwilling to cough up are expressly reminded that they have to pay this "tax." It is uncertain where exactly this money then goes. The lion's share is assumed to be funnelled towards the movement's European institutions and its extensive propaganda apparatus.

Kongra-Gel's main propaganda tools in Germany are thought to be the *Yenir Özgür Politika* newspaper -- which is largely filled with news provided by the Netherlands-based Firat news agency -- and Roj TV, a Denmark-based television station that was banned in Germany on June 19.

It is assumed that the ban on Roj TV was the immediate impetus behind this week's kidnapping. In May the station's two studios in Wuppertal and Berlin were raided and investigators seized a number of files and photographs. One of the studios was immediately closed down and then a few weeks later the station was banned, with Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble saying it was a mouthpiece for the PKK.

Kurds across Europe protested against the closing of the station. "This latest repressive measure is proof that German politicians are willingly meeting the repeated demands from the Turkish state to destroy the structures of the Kurdish movement," said Azadi, a legal aid organization for Kurds based in Düsseldorf.

The editor-in-chief of Roj TV in Belgium, Sores Toprak, denies that the station is a PKK mouthpiece. "Naturally we do not glamorize the armed operations, even if some people claim we do. However, there is a war in Turkey and we show



A demonstrator demanding freedom for imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan in Berlin in November.

these images," he told SPIEGEL ONLINE. "We address the problems in Turkey," he said, adding that the PKK and other Kurdish organizations must be given a voice. **Berlin Will 'not Be Blackmailed'**

Toprak said the banning of the Roj TV was just the tip of the iceberg, accusing the German authorities of carrying out searches in private homes and Kurdish associations and fining and imprisoning Kurds.

On Thursday the PKK issued its political demands for the release of the hostages through the Firat agency. At the same time it said that the Germans were being well treated and were doing well. The guerrillas said they felt no enmity towards the German people.

The Kurdish separatists are unlikely to persuade the German government to meet their demands. "Germany does not allow itself to be blackmailed," Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Thursday.

It is unlikely the Kurdish rebels ever really thought they could force Germany to shift its policy. Indeed, the kidnappings are likely intended as a show of strength, the PKK demonstrating its capacity to take action. The Turkish military offensive has put the Kurdish militants under pressure, Heinz Kramer of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs explained to the Associated Press on Thursday.

By taking the three Germans hostages, the PKK has definitely succeeded in grabbing people's attention -- just like it did back in the 1990s when its militants repeatedly kidnapped Western tourists. In 1993 alone they took 19 tourists hostage. All were later released.

Los Angeles Times July 11, 2008

Iraq to help Turkey fight Kurdish rebels

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on a historic visit to Baghdad, in turn says he hopes to increase trade between the countries.

By Alexandra Zavis Los Angeles Times

BAGHDAD — Prime Minister Nouri Maliki on Thursday promised to help his Turkish counterpart crack down on Kurdish guerrillas along Turkey's border, as Iraq attempts to mend relations with its neighbors.

The pledge was made during a visit by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the first by a Turkish leader to Baghdad in 18 years. The visit was a diplomatic victory for Maliki, who has been touring regional capitals in a bid to persuade his counterparts to normalize relations with Iraq and help the country rebuild.

In another sign of progress, Kuwait said Thursday that it planned to appoint an ambassador to Iraq, its first since then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded the country in 1990.

Iraq maintains important economic ties with its neighbors but has been diplomatically isolated since U.S.-led forces toppled Hussein's Sunni Arab regime in April 2003. Of Iraq's neighbors, only Turkey and Iran, which also are its only non-Arab neighbors, have maintained full embassies in Baghdad.

Baghdad's relations with Ankara have been strained by the activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, a guerrilla group that uses bases in northern Iraq to fight for Kurdish autonomy in southeastern Turkey. The United States and Turkey have designated the PKK a terrorist group.

Using intelligence supplied by the U.S., Turkey sent thousands of ground troops across the border in February to attack PKK bases, drawing protests from Iraqi leaders.

Turkish officials said at the time that Iraq was not doing enough to crush the rebels, who are holed up in the mountains of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdistan region. But Erdogan said Thursday at a news conference with Maliki that he had received assurances of support from authorities in Baghdad and the north. "This terrorist organization is not only Turkey's enemy but also an enemy to Iraq," Erdogan said. "We will not allow this organization to poison the relationship between the two countries."

In return, Erdogan said he hoped to increase the value of trade between Turkey and Iraq to \$25 billion in the next three years from \$3.5 billion in 2007. He also urged Iraq's other neighbors to do



more to promote stability in the troubled country. "The future of Iraq is the future of the region," Erdogan said.

"It is important to give more support on both the bilateral and regional level."

The leaders signed an agreement establishing a ministerial-level council to advance relations on the cultural, political, security, economic and energy fronts.

Maliki underscored the two countries' "long-standing shared interests and challenges, such as the threat of terrorism which seeks to destabilize the region as whole."

"Our successes against terrorists and criminals have prepared us to start reconstruction and attracting investment," Maliki said.

With violence levels in Iraq at a four-year low, Maliki has turned his attention to improving relations with regional countries, many of them Sunni Arab nations suspicious of Iraq's close ties with Shiite-led Iran. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited in March, the only other leader of a neighboring country to travel to Iraq since Hussein was ousted.

Arab countries also have been put off by the level of

violence in Iraq. Sunni Arab militants have targeted diplomats in a bid to isolate the Shiite-led Iraqi government. An envoy whom Egypt sent to Iraq in 2005 with the intention of moving toward full diplomatic relations was kidnapped and killed.

Maliki's recent crackdowns against Shiite Muslim militants in Baghdad and southern Iraq appear to have boosted regional confidence in his government. U.S. officials also have been pressing reluctant Arab countries to restore diplomatic ties.

Jordan and the United Arab Emirates have designated envoys, and Bahrain has indicated that it will do so soon. Jordan's King Abdullah II had been expected to visit Iraq this week but postponed the trip without explanation.

Although less pervasive, violence continues in Iraq. A suicide car bomber targeting an Iraqi army patrol Thursday in west Baghdad killed four civilians and injured 10, police said. Across town, a roadside bomb targeting traffic policemen killed one person and injured five.

And in the northern city of Mosul, gunmen assassinated the Iraqi brigadier general who was responsible for issuing identification documents, police said.



Voices of Iraq
July 15, 2008

Parliament postpones provincial elections law in Kirkuk-MP

BAGHDAD, July 15 (VOI) - A lawmaker from the main Shiite bloc on Tuesday unveiled the Parliament's decision to postpone presenting the draft law on the provincial councils' elections until political blocs agreed on its details.

"The most agreed upon proposal was to hold the provincial councils elections at their scheduled time and to postpone holding them in Kirkuk until political blocs could reach a solution for its electoral process," Hassan al-Suneid, a key MP from the United Iraqi Coalition (UIC), told Aswat al-Iraq - Voices of Iraq - (VOI).

U.S. officials have described the provincial elections as one of several benchmarks, along with the reduction of violence in Baghdad and approval of a hydrocarbon resource sharing law, by which they are assessing the progress of Iraq's national government. Many U.S. officials and Iraqi leaders say new provincial elections would produce a political balance, ease resentment of disenfranchised factions, and help stabilize security.

Parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani announced the postponement of Tuesday's session after Kurdish Coalition MPs walked out in a protest against the inclusion of the draft law of provincial councils in today's session. Fouad Maasoum, the leader of the KC, said in a press conference, "The Kurdistan Coalition and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) had to postpone the debate on this particular draft to ensure that all parties may have a chance to reach a settle-

ment over the law's items."

The options before the KC were either to accept the proposal to divide Kirkuk into four electoral constituencies or to depend on the 1957 statistics in the upcoming elections in the city," Maasoum revealed.

Muhammad Mahdi al-Bayyati, a Turcoman legislator, had told VOI in statements that more than 110 deputies from different blocs had tabled a proposal to the Iraqi Parliament to divide Kirkuk into four constituencies and distribute election percentages on the basis of 32 percent for each of the Kurds, Arabs and Turcomans, and 4 percent for the remaining minorities.

The proposal was then turned down by the KC.

Spokesman for the KC, Friad Rawndozi, had said on Monday that there would be no voting on the draft law on provincial councils during today's session, expecting a relevant debate to take place on Thursday. The law on provincial council elections, seen as supplementary to the law on regions and non-regional provinces, which was approved by the Parliament in February, has sparked heated controversy among political blocs. The draft law on provincial council elections proposes an open slate system, which gives voters influence on the position of the candidates placed on the party list and allows an individual voting system.

Les Occidentaux affichent leur perplexité face au régime iranien sur le nucléaire

Les grandes puissances du G8 misent sur la Russie pour inciter Téhéran à respecter ses obligations. Elles sont divisées sur la perspective de nouvelles sanctions.

TOYAKO (Japon)
ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE

À leur deuxième jour de leur sommet au Japon, les dirigeants du G8 ont discuté, mardi 8 juillet, au cours d'un dîner, de la crise qui se prolonge autour du programme nucléaire iranien. Ils ont diffusé un communiqué appelant la République islamique à suspendre ses activités liées à l'enrichissement d'uranium, et à « répondre positivement » à l'offre de coopération transmise le 14 juin par les grandes puissances.

Cet appel n'a toutefois pas été assorti d'un délai fixé à l'Iran, alors que le président américain, George Bush, en avait émis l'idée devant ses pairs lors du repas. Il avait suggéré de déterminer « un laps de temps raisonnable », de l'ordre d'un mois, au-delà duquel l'Iran serait exposé à de nouvelles sanctions.

Cette proposition, qui a été un temps discutée, n'a pas été retenue. « Nous exprimons nos sérieuses craintes concernant les risques de prolifération que pose le programme nucléaire iranien et l'omission continue par l'Iran de remplir ses obligations internationales », dit le communiqué du G8.

Les six puissances traitant le dossier nucléaire iranien (Etats-Unis, Royaume-Uni, France, Russie, Chine, Allemagne) ont décidé de dépêcher le haut représentant européen Javier Solana à Téhéran, pour tenter d'obtenir une clarification de la position iranienne, avait annoncé Nicolas Sarkozy dans la journée.

Cette reprise des manœuvres diplomati-

ques intervient au moment où les spéculations sur une possibilité de frappe militaire israélienne se font de nouveau insistantes. Le 4 juillet, l'Iran a transmis une réponse à l'offre des « Six » sans que son contenu soit révélé publiquement. Ce texte fait cependant l'impasse sur la suspension exigée de l'enrichissement d'uranium.

Aucune date n'a été annoncée pour le déplacement de M. Solana. « *Quand on aura les résultats, chaque pays, par les canaux qui sont les siens, essaiera d'en savoir un peu plus sur les intentions du régime iranien* », a commenté M. Sarkozy, dont les propos reflétaient la perplexité en vigueur dans les capitales occidentales et à Moscou face à l'opacité du pouvoir à Téhéran et aux luttes d'influence qui s'y livrent. « *C'est compliqué* », a dit le président français.

« *Ya-t-il une seule source de pouvoir en Iran ? Quelle est la sincérité de la proposition [iranienne] qui a été faite ?* » s'est-il interrogé devant des journalistes.

Un rôle important semble désormais dévolu à la Russie pour tenter d'inciter l'Iran à obtempérer. Lors du dîner du G8, c'est au président russe, Dmitri Medvedev, qu'a été confiée la tâche d'ouvrir le débat sur le

nucléaire iranien. Il a souligné sa préférence pour une solution négociée, et insisté sur l'importance du travail de vérification des activités iraniennes par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA). Tant que les documents diplomatiques sont étudiés, a-t-il dit, il ne serait pas judicieux d'aller vers de nouvelles sanctions.

M. Bush a ensuite fait une remarque qui en dit long sur l'échéance qui semble peser de plus en plus sur les événements : le prochain changement d'administration à Washington. Il a dit que cela l'intéresserait de savoir si, au lendemain de son départ de la Maison Blanche, comme cela

avait été le cas pour Jimmy Carter, les Iraniens feraient un « geste majeur ». C'était en référence à la crise des otages américains de 1979-1980 qui avait trouvé son dénouement au lendemain seulement de l'arrivée au pouvoir de Ronald Reagan.

Lors du dîner, M. Sarkozy a observé que chacun autour de la table savait que l'Iran cherchait à se doter d'une capacité nucléaire militaire tout en bâtissant un arsenal de missiles, et que chacun connaissait aussi les sentiments que cela suscitait en Israël. Des sanctions plus fortes sont nécessaires, a-t-il dit, avec en même temps des propositions de dialogue ouvertes. S'adressant à Dmitri Medvedev, il a déclaré que la Russie jouait un rôle utile et courageux.

Le premier ministre britannique, Gordon Brown, a dit qu'il partageait ce point de vue, ajoutant qu'il y avait débat sur la date à laquelle l'Iran serait en mesure de se doter d'une bombe nucléaire. Il a exprimé son soutien à un projet russe – mis en avant depuis 2005 – de fournir l'Iran en uranium enrichi.

« Chaque pays, par les canaux qui sont les siens, essaiera d'en savoir un peu plus sur les intentions du régime iranien »

Nicolas Sarkozy

La chancelière allemande Angela Merkel a commenté que les Iraniens semblaient vouloir jouer la montre, et qu'ils étaient

maîtres dans l'art du marchandage. Elle a ajouté qu'il fallait réfléchir avant de passer à de nouvelles sanctions. Le 23 juin, l'Union européenne a déjà gelé les avoirs de la plus grande banque iranienne, Melli.

Les grandes puissances apparaissent ainsi incertaines sur la position de l'Iran, divisées sur la pertinence de nouvelles sanctions, et disposées à accorder encore du temps à la République islamique, en misant sur le camp dit des « pragmatiques » à Téhéran. La diplomatie semble suspendue, dans un contexte d'incertitudes quant aux intentions que pourrait avoir Israël. ■

NATALIE NOUGAYRÈDE

DIPLOMATIE

Les Emirats arabes unis décident d'annuler la dette irakienne

LA FÉDÉRATION des Emirats arabes unis a annoncé, dimanche 6 juillet, l'annulation de la dette de l'Irak, estimée à 7 mil-

liards de dollars (sur un total de près de 70 milliards), et nommé un ambassadeur à Bagdad. Ces deux mesures ont salué le début de la visite à Abou Dhabi, qui assure la présidence de la fédération, du premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki.

Le président de la fédération, Khalifa Ben Zayed Al-Nahiyane, a espéré que cette annulation « allégera les charges financières du gouvernement irakien » et affirmé que son pays n'« hésitera pas à soutenir moralement et matériellement l'Irak ».

Aucun ambassadeur arabe n'est pré-

sent dans la capitale irakienne en raison de l'insécurité qui y règne. Des représentations arabes y sont toutefois toujours ouvertes. La fédération des Emirats arabes unis avait annoncé son intention de procéder à la nomination d'un ambassadeur en mai. La nomination d'Abdallah Ibrahim Al-Shehi intervient à la veille d'une visite à Bagdad du roi de Jordanie, la première d'un dirigeant arabe depuis l'invasion américaine de 2003. – (AFP, AP.) ■

« On est passé du parti unique à une mafia familiale... »

SYRIE Notre ami Bachar



Bachar al-Assad n'est plus le despote traité en paria par l'Occident, qui le soupçonnait d'avoir ordonné l'assassinat de Rafic Hariri. Tandis que la libéralisation économique se poursuit, et malgré un régime policier redouté, le président syrien participera dimanche au sommet de l'Union pour la Méditerranée et assistera lundi au défilé du 14-Juillet...

De notre envoyé spécial,
Christophe Boltanski

Son arrivée à l'improviste provoque l'émoi dans la salle. Faut-il se lever pour accueillir le rais alors que la pièce a déjà commencé ? Le public échange des regards inquiets mêlés de malice. Le retardataire vient-il en spectateur ou interpréter son propre rôle ? Après tout, il est chez lui. Le théâtre, à l'instar de centaines d'autres lieux à Damas, porte son patronyme. Et l'histoire qui se joue est un peu la sienne.

En ce 16 mai 2008, Bachar al-Assad assiste à la dernière de « Richard III », la tragédie de Shakespeare, transposée dans un Moyen-Orient de feu et de sang. « *Le récit d'une suc-*

cession qui tourne au cauchemar », selon le metteur en scène, un Anglo-Koweïtien, Sulayman al-Bassam. L'occasion surtout de brosser le portrait d'un despote arabe. Un leader féroce qui élimine ses rivaux et règne par la terreur. Quand un sbire annonce à Richard que « 99,9% » de ses sujets viennent de voter pour lui, Bachar, reconduit un an plus tôt avec 97,62% des suffrages, éclate de rire. Tout monarque absolu a besoin d'un bouffon, d'un miroir grossissant où se regarder. « *Notre président était content* », se borne à dire un acteur avec une infinie prudence.

L'homme qui dirige la Syrie depuis huit ans a pris de l'assurance. Il se sent suffisamment fort pour pratiquer l'autodérision, voire le cynisme. Fini le jeune ophtalmologue éduqué à

Londres, poli et timide, qui semblait douter de lui-même. Fini l'héritier par défaut pour cause de mort accidentelle de son frère aîné, Bassel, un guerrier, lui, dans la lignée du père, Hafez al-Assad. Fini également le paria soupçonné du meurtre en 2005 de l'ex-Premier ministre

libanais Rafic Hariri. Chef du dernier régime baassiste de la planète, il était perçu comme un vestige de l'histoire, appelé à disparaître, déjà chassé du Liban, boycotté par les Occidentaux, menacé par la justice internationale. Dans les chancelleries, après avoir parié en vain sur ses velléités de réforme, on raillait sa faiblesse, on le déclarait prisonnier du système. « *Un nul !* » disait, en privé, Jacques Chirac de celui qu'il avait d'abord couvé. Un mépris mué en haine après l'assassinat de son ami Hariri.

Bachar tient aujourd'hui sa revanche. Ses alliés au pays du Cèdre, Hezbollah en tête, n'ont jamais été aussi puissants.



Syrie

Capitale : Damas.
Superficie : 185 180 km².
Population : 19,4 millions d'habitants.
Population urbaine : 50,6%.
PIB par habitant : 4 117 \$ (France : 30 693 \$).
Religion : islam, christianisme.
Régime : république présidentielle autoritaire.
Chef d'Etat : Bachar al-Assad.
Principales activités économiques : agriculture (blé, orge, coton), industrie (pétrole, textile, agroalimentaire), tourisme.

Sources : « l'Etat du monde 2008 », « l'Annuaire stratégique 2007 ».

L'armée américaine qui campait à ses portes ne sait plus comment sortir du borborygme irakien. Et la France de Nicolas Sarkozy s'apprête à l'accueillir à bras ouverts. Mieux, à le réintroduire dans le concert des nations. Au cours du sommet de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, le 13 juillet, il s'entretiendra avec plusieurs dirigeants européens. « *Ça va être un jour très excitant qui démontrera la fin totale de notre isolement* », proclame Abdallah al-Dardari, son vice-Premier ministre pour les Affaires économiques. Ce dernier, attendu lui-même à Paris le 20 juillet, prévoit de relancer la coopération entre les deux pays, de rouvrir de vieux dossiers en souffrance, comme la commande d'Airbus. « *L'ère Chirac est terminée* », dit-il. Des retrouvailles dont chaque détail a été négocié à Damas, à la mi-juin, par le secrétaire général de l'Élysée, Claude Guéant, et le conseiller diplomatique, Jean-David Levitte.

« *C'était un package* », dit-on dans l'entourage de Bachar.

Un retournement spectaculaire digne de Hafez. Le fils a appliqué les recettes du père : garder deux fers au feu, entretenir le désordre chez ses voisins, et surtout jouer la montre. « *Rien ne vaut l'immobilisme. Ici, c'est le comble de la manœuvre*, ironise un diplomate. *En 2005, ils ont décidé de revenir aux fondamentaux : dire non à tout, faire en sorte que les Américains s'embourbent en Irak... Autant être craint. On peut monnayer sa capacité de nuisance.* » Une attitude qui a permis à Bachar de se poser en champion du front du refus. « *L'Ouest a cru à tort, parce qu'il était jeune et avait étudié à Londres, qu'il allait céder sur tout*, s'écrit Waddah Abd el-Rabbo, directeur de « Al-Watan », un journal privé progouvernemental. *Il a tenu tête aux Etats-Unis. Il incarne la résistance arabe.* » A mesure qu'il prend goût au pouvoir, le rais laisse développer un culte à sa personne. Dans cette partie du monde, l'autorité du leader s'apprécie au nombre et à la taille de ses portraits. Au début, il se

Adonis-Guif-Latif-REA

SYRIE-ISRAËL

Le processus de paix passe par Ankara

Quand on l'interroge sur ses voyages en Turquie, il rit et dit qu'il « aime beaucoup Istanbul ». Le Dr Samir Taqi dirige le Centre d'Etudes orientales, le principal think tank de Damas. Il ferait partie aussi de ceux qui, via les autorités d'Ankara, ont négocié avec l'Etat hébreu. « Il aurait rencontré les Israéliens, il y a près d'un an, avec Assef Chawkat, le beau-frère du président », dit un bon connaisseur



Avec le 1er ministre turc Erdogan

du dossier. Ce spécialiste des relations internationales explique que « le cadre des pourparlers avec Israël est en train d'être fixé, mais on a besoin du soutien de la communauté internationale ». Mais la décision de Bachar d'éviter tout contact à Paris avec le Premier ministre Ehoud Olmert intrigue. « Sont-ils intéressés par la paix, demande un diplomate, ou seulement par le processus ? » ■

C. B.

montrait discret. Par respect filial ou volonté de changement. Aujourd'hui, son visage carré au front proéminent est partout. Sur les bâtiments officiels, à l'entrée du souk, même sur les petits trains pour touristes qui gravissent le mont Kassioum.

Mais il y a aussi un autre Bachar, qui se veut plus moderne, à l'image d'un pays en pleine ouverture économique. Un président qui ne jure que par les nouvelles technologies et la libéralisation à tous crins. Pendant longtemps, le régime prônait le socialisme sur son sol et faisait des affaires au Liban. Ou plutôt du trafic. Un vaste racket organisé. La perte de ses prébendes, consécutive au retrait de son armée, devait provoquer sa chute, croyait-on alors à l'Elysée. « On a pensé à tort que la prédation syrienne sur son voisin avait pris une telle ampleur qu'elle était devenue vitale », explique le politologue libanais Joseph Bahout. Privés de leurs anciennes rentes, les dirigeants syriens ont simplement « libanisé » leur économie. « Notre marché est aujourd'hui aussi ouvert, sinon plus, que celui du Liban », se félicite Abdallah al-Dardari. Et de citer toutes ses réformes : « Nous avons maintenant des banques et des écoles privées, notre propre système d'assurance, bientôt une Bourse... » Avec ses boutiques de luxe, ses cafés branchés, ses 4x4 rutilants, son golf 18 trous, Damas n'a plus rien à envier à Beyrouth, hormis sa liberté de parole.

Derrière les enseignes se cachent souvent les mêmes noms, ceux de parents ou d'associés des Assad. Firas Tlas, fils de l'ex-ministre de la Défense, est l'agent BMW. Majd Suleyman, dont le père supervisait la sécurité de la capitale, possède la première agence de pub, les pages jaunes, un quotidien à gros tirage... Les enfants de Mohammed Khuli, ex-chef des renseignements de l'armée de l'air, détiennent les principaux cafés huppés de la

ville. Tous des « fils de », comme leur président, qui ont préféré le monde des affaires à une carrière dans l'appareil sécuritaire. Il y a surtout Rami Makhoul, le cousin de Bachar, qui gère les intérêts de la famille et contrôle l'un des deux réseaux de téléphonie mobile du pays, Syriatel, des compagnies d'autobus et de taxis aériens, une école de commerce, les zones duty free... Un Etat dans l'Etat. Face à la grogne de la vieille bourgeoisie sunnite, deux holdings ont été créées afin d'« élargir le cercle ». Rami Makhoul, encore lui, a été placé à la tête du groupe le mieux loti. « On est passé



Ahmadinejad, Al-Assad et Nasrallah en effigie lors d'une manifestation à Damas

du parti unique à une mafia familiale », dénonce un intellectuel. Un clan alaouite resserré autour de Bachar. Un patriarche assez fort pour ôter certaines prérogatives à son beau-frère, Assef Chawkat, puissant chef des renseignements militaires, et enfin transférer le titre de première dame de sa mère à son épouse, Asma, une sunnite.

Le Baas, lui, ressemble à une coquille vide. Ses 2,5 millions de membres végètent dans des administrations au charme stalinien d'un gris uniforme. Ils subissent comme le reste de la population l'envolée des prix et la montée des inégalités. « On ne peut pas aller plus loin dans les réformes, sinon ça risquerait de provoquer un choc social », prévient Asa'ad Aboud,

rédacteur en chef d'« Al-Thawra » (« Révolution »), l'un des journaux officiels. Ces militants savent que le pouvoir de décision ne leur appartient plus depuis longtemps et que Bachar n'a jamais été baassiste, malgré son titre de secrétaire général du parti. « Quand on le voit dans un meeting à côté du secrétaire général adjoint, on comprend qu'il y a un problème, rit Waddah Abd el-Rabbo. Le look, le discours. Tout les sépare. »

En revanche, l'autre pilier du régime reste intact. Il est même plus fort que jamais. Trois hommes dans une Peugeot blanche approchent d'un rond-point. Tee-shirt, cheveux ras. « Des moukhabarat », chuchote un ingénieur. Des agents de la sécurité. Comment les a-t-il reconnus ? Au regard, à l'allure, au véhicule. « N'importe lequel peut sortir, stopper ma voiture et me taper dessus s'il le souhaite », ajoute-t-il. Un dissident s'éloigne du téléphone, de peur d'être écouté. « Vous avez retiré votre batterie ? » demande-t-il, inquiet. « Ne mentionnez aucun détail qui puisse m'identifier », lance un défenseur des droits de l'homme. « Tu seras en prison demain », lui répète son amie pendant l'entretien. Tout juste investi, Bachar avait promis des réformes, relâché 600 prisonniers politiques, laissé éclore des dizaines de forums de discussion. « Le printemps de Damas » n'avait duré que huit petits mois. Mais jusqu'en 2005 ses principales figures parlaient encore à visage découvert. Elles sont aujourd'hui sous les verrous, en exil ou réduites au silence. Douze leaders de la « Déclaration de Damas », ce collectif qui réclame une démocratisation pacifique du régime, doivent être bientôt présentés devant les juges. Les arrestations sont quotidiennes. Il suffit de critiquer le rais dans un café pour être embastillé. Fin juin, un journaliste a été condamné à six mois de prison pour avoir attaqué sur son blog la politique culturelle du gouvernement. Sous Bachar, fêru d'internet, « tous les sites indépendants sont fermés », dit le cinéaste Omar Amiralai, l'un des rares à prendre le risque d'être cité « pour tester les limites ». Une révolte à la prison de Sednayah, près de Damas, le 5 juillet,

aurait fait 25 victimes parmi les détenus, pour la plupart des islamistes. La torture continue, malgré la signature par la Syrie en 2004 d'un traité international prohibant son usage. A Alep, le mois dernier, une femme a appris par hasard le décès de son mari emprisonné alors qu'elle demandait un certificat à l'état civil. Les moukhabarat avaient informé l'administration, pas la famille, qui attend toujours le corps. Lors de leur visite, les deux émissaires de Nicolas Sarkozy ont conseillé au président de faire un geste, de libérer quelques prisonniers, pour calmer la polémique suscitée par sa venue à Paris. Réponse de Bachar : « C'est une question de politique intérieure. »

CHRISTOPHE BOLTANSKI

Un réseau ultranationaliste aurait fomenté des putschs

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

L'acte d'accusation du procureur d'Istanbul pourrait peser plus de 2 500 pages. L'enquête sur la cellule ultranationaliste Ergenekon, accusée de fomenter des coups d'Etat contre le gouvernement islamo-conservateur de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, laisse apparaître une partie des réseaux politiques clandestins qui sévissent en Turquie.

Le coup de filet d'au moins 6 000 policiers, lancé mardi 1^{er} juillet dans cinq villes, a permis l'arrestation de vingt et une personnalités, opposants affirmés au Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP). Parmi eux, selon le quotidien de gauche *Radikal* : les généraux à la retraite Hursit Tolon et Sener Eruygur, qui représentent l'aile dure de l'institution militaire, tous deux inculpés, dimanche, avec huit autres personnes, pour « appartenance à une organisation terroriste ».

Selon le journal pro-gouvernemental *Sabah*, ils s'apprétaient, le 7 juillet, à lancer une série de manifestations destinées à semer le chaos. Le général Eruygur, ancien chef de la gendarmerie turque, est le président de la très nationaliste Association pour la pensée d'Atatürk, à l'origine

notamment des grandes parades « laïques » de 2007, organisées pour tenter d'empêcher l'élection à la présidence de la République d'Abdullah Gül, issu de l'AKP. Le même officier est l'un des cerveaux présumés de deux tentatives de coups d'Etat avortées en 2003 et 2004 et révélées par la publication dans la presse des carnets de bord de l'Amiral Ornek, alors chef de la Marine turque. Baptisées « la fille blonde » et « clair de lune », ces deux putschs devaient notamment empêcher la signature du plan de paix pour Chypre élaboré par le secrétaire général des Nations unies de l'époque, Koffi Annan. Il prévoyait la réunification de l'île, au grand dam d'une partie de l'armée qui veut garder la mainmise sur ce territoire.

Armée secrète

Depuis 2007 et la découverte d'un gros arsenal dans une maison délabrée des faubourgs d'Istanbul, ce sont près de 80 personnalités qui sont sous les verrous et soupçonnées d'appartenir à Ergenekon : de nombreux militaires à la retraite, des journalistes, des avocats, un ancien recteur d'université, le chef d'un petit parti nationaliste d'extrême gauche, le président de la chambre de commerce d'Anka-

ra et une figure du milieu mafieux... La découverte de cette mouvance clandestine met au jour une partie de ce que la Turquie connaissait sous le nom d'« *Etat profond* » : une armée secrète gravitant dans les sphères de l'Etat, héritière des cellules anticommunistes créées pendant la guerre froide et recyclée dans la contre-guerrilla séparatiste kurde et la lutte contre « les ennemis de l'intérieur ». Ergenekon est soupçonnée d'avoir joué un rôle dans plusieurs affaires sanglantes depuis 2006 : un attentat contre les juges du Conseil d'Etat, des grenades lancées contre un journal nationaliste, le meurtre de missionnaires chrétiens ou du journaliste arménien Hrant Dink.

La puissance réelle du réseau demeure un mystère. Le gouvernement est accusé de profiter de cette affaire pour régler ses comptes avec l'opposition kémaliste. Selon un proche du dossier, les ramifications d'Ergenekon au sein de l'armée pourraient impliquer environ 70 officiers, plus radicaux que l'actuel état-major.

Selon la même source, un « consensus a obligatoirement été trouvé entre l'état-major et le gouvernement pour effectuer ces arrestations ». ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER

Trois randonneurs allemands sont retenus en otages par des séparatistes du PKK

ISTANBUL

CORRESPONDANCE

Le parti kurde de Turquie, le DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique), a proposé sa médiation, vendredi 11 juillet, par le biais de sa députée Emine Ayna, pour tenter de faire libérer les trois touristes allemands retenus en otages, depuis mercredi, par les rebelles séparatistes du PKK.

Partis à l'assaut du mont Ararat, les trois alpinistes ont été surpris par un groupe de combattants qui a fait irruption au camp de base, situé à 3 200 m d'altitude. Ces trois hommes auraient été enlevés pour protester « contre la politique hostile de l'Allemagne à

l'égard du peuple kurde et du PKK », selon un communiqué des « Forces de défense du peuple » (HPG), l'aile militaire du mouvement. « Les touristes allemands ne seront pas relâchés », tant que l'Allemagne ne modifiera pas sa politique, poursuit le document publié par l'agence kurde Firat.

Le ministre allemand des affaires étrangères, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a officiellement dénoncé « le chantage » des rebelles. Son porte-parole a exigé, vendredi, « la libération immédiate et sans conditions des trois hommes enlevés ». L'armée turque a déployé des troupes sur les contreforts du mont Ararat. Des poli-

ciers allemands ont été dépêchés pour participer aux opérations.

Les rebelles kurdes reprochent à Berlin d'avoir mené des opérations contre ses militants ces derniers mois. Les autorités allemandes estiment que plus de 11 000 Kurdes d'Allemagne soutiennent et financent le mouvement qui figure sur la liste des organisations terroristes de l'Union européenne. Fin juin, le ministre de l'intérieur Wolfgang Schäuble, a également interdit à la chaîne satellitaire Roj-TV, la vitrine du PKK qui émet depuis le Danemark, de travailler en Allemagne. ■

GUILLAUME PERRIER



TURQUIE: QUATRE MORTS DANS DES VIOLENCES DANS LE SUD-EST

DIYARBAKIR (TURQUIE), 12 juil 2008 (AFP)

TROIS SOLDATS et un civil ont été tués dans des violences dans le sud-est de la Turquie, ont annoncé samedi la presse et l'armée.

Deux des soldats sont morts lors de l'explosion d'une mine, placée par des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), alors qu'ils patrouillaient dans une région rurale de la province de Tunceli, a indiqué l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le troisième a été tué, vendredi soir, durant un affrontement avec des membres du PKK dans la province de Sirnak, près de la frontière avec l'Irak, a

indiqué l'armée sur son site internet ajoutant qu'une opération contre les rebelles était en cours.

L'explosion d'une autre mine, attribuée au PKK, a tué un villageois dans un champ à Bingol, selon la même source.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, a entamé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatoliens, à la population en majorité kurde, un conflit qui a fait plus de 37.000 morts.



TROIS ALLEMANDS ENLEVÉS: LE PKK DEMANDE UN CESSEZ-LE-FEU POUR LES LIBÉRER

MONTS QANDIL (Irak), 14 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PARTI des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) a appelé lundi la Turquie à interrompre ses opérations militaires à son encontre pour permettre la libération des trois otages allemands enlevés mercredi.

"Le PKK est prêt à relâcher les trois touristes allemands à la condition que la Turquie interrompe ses attaques militaires dans la région où ils ont été capturés et que la libération se fasse sous l'égide d'une organisation internationale comme la Croix Rouge", a déclaré à l'AFP la porte-parole de l'organisation kurde, Sozdar Avesta.

"Ils sont en bonne santé. Ils ont été arrêtés en réaction à ce que l'Allemagne fait. Nous demandons au gouvernement allemand d'avoir une autre politique à l'égard des Kurdes", a ajouté Mme Avesta, qui s'exprimait depuis les Monts Qandil (nord de l'Irak), refuge des rebelles du PKK.

Pour libérer les trois alpinistes, les troupes paramilitaires turques ont lancé une opération autour du mont Ararat (est de la Turquie) qui a été déclaré zone interdite jusqu'à nouvel ordre.

Dimanche, le PKK avait demandé à l'Allemagne de cesser sa politique "hostile" à son égard si elle voulait obtenir la libération des trois alpinistes, enlevés mercredi sur le mont Ararat.

Le PKK avait également indiqué qu'il ne libérerait pas les trois otages tant que Berlin ne renoncerait pas à la répression contre les militants du PKK et ses

sympathisants en Allemagne. On estime à environ 2,4 millions le nombre de Turcs vivant en Allemagne, dont 600.000 Kurdes.

Fin juin, le gouvernement allemand avait interdit à la chaîne de télévision kurde Roj TV, émettant depuis le Danemark, de diffuser ses programmes en Allemagne, affirmant qu'elle servait la propagande des extrémistes kurdes. Une société de production qui produisait des programmes pour Roj TV avait aussi été fermée.

Le PKK a déjà procédé par le passé à des enlèvements de touristes, de soldats et de policiers, mais n'emploie pas fréquemment cette tactique.

En visite à Bagdad jeudi dernier, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan avait indiqué que le gouvernement irakien et le Kurdistan irakien l'avaient assuré de leur "volonté commune" de "défaire" les séparatistes du PKK, qui sont pour Ankara une menace "pour toute la région".

Depuis décembre, la Turquie a mené plusieurs interventions militaires contre les bases dans le nord de l'Irak du PKK, considérée comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne.

Ces opérations, notamment des bombardements aériens, avaient provoqué de vives réactions de la part du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan irakien, ainsi que du président irakien Jalal Talabani, un Kurde.



DIX TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS DANS LE SUD-EST DE LA TURQUIE (ARMÉE)

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 juil 2008 (AFP)

DEUX SOLDATS turcs et huit combattants kurdes ont été tués au cours de récents combats dans le sud-est du pays, a annoncé lundi un porte-parole de l'armée.

Les deux soldats ont été tués au cours d'une opération lancée contre les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) sur le mont Cudi dans la province de Sirnak, selon le site internet de l'état-major turc.

Quatre combattants du PKK ont été tués lundi lors d'une autre opération dans les monts Incebal, dans la même province de Sirnak, a ajouté l'armée en précisant que quatre rebelles avaient été tués dans la même région la semaine

dernière.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par le gouvernement d'Ankara et plusieurs pays occidentaux, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie. Le conflit a déjà fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Depuis le mois de décembre l'armée turque a intensifié ses opérations contre le PKK avec, notamment le recours à des bombardements aériens. Elle était également entrée dans le nord de l'Irak pour y poursuivre des combattants du PKK.

Selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 membres de l'organisation ont trouvé refuge dans cette région de l'Irak.



BRUXELLES APPELLE LE PKK À LIBÉRER TROIS OTAGES ALLEMANDS EN TURQUIE

BERLIN, 20 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE VICE-PRESIDENT de la Commission Européenne, Günter Verheugen, a appelé dimanche le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) à libérer "sans condition" trois touristes allemands enlevés le 9 juillet en Turquie.

"J'appelle la direction du PKK à faire en sorte de relâcher immédiatement et sans condition" les otages enlevés par des rebelles séparatistes kurdes lors d'une excursion sur le Mont Ararat dans la province d'Agri (est de la Turquie), a dit M. Verheugen dans le quotidien allemand Bild am Sonntag.

"Avec de telles actions, le PKK nuit aux intérêts du peuple kurde. La violence ne va pas régler le conflit", a-t-il ajouté.

Le PKK a indiqué la semaine dernière qu'il garderait les trois alpinistes en otage jusqu'à ce que Berlin mette fin à la répression contre ses militants et ses sympathisants en Allemagne où vivent quelque 2,4 millions d'immigrés turcs, dont environ 600.000 Kurdes.

En début de semaine, un porte-parole du PKK a également posé comme condition à la libération des otages l'arrêt des opérations militaires d'Ankara dans la région d'Agri.

Les autorités allemandes ont rejeté ces demandes, qualifiées de chantage, et réclamé la libération immédiate des otages. Ceux-ci sont en bonne santé et toujours en Turquie, a indiqué mercredi le gouverneur local, Mehmet Cetin.

Le PKK, qui figure sur la liste des organisations classées comme terroristes par l'Union européenne, la Turquie et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatolien, dont la population est en majorité kurde.

Ce conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts selon les chiffres officiels.

Le PKK a déjà procédé par le passé à des enlèvements de touristes, de soldats et de policiers, mais n'emploie pas fréquemment cette tactique.

Disparate, shirtless and unrecognised: meet team Kurdistan

An independent Kurdish national team could have far-reaching consequences for their Iraqi counterparts - and the territorial integrity of Iraq itself

James Montague

President Barzani paused for a few moments, the question hanging in the air like an embarrassingly loud fart. Around an obscenely large presidential table in Barzani's heavily fortified compound in the hills of northern Iraq, western journalists peppered the leader of the Kurdish Regional Government with questions about his people's quest for self-determination. "What about the status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk?" they asked. "How many Kurdish troops will be bolstering the Iraqi army?" And most importantly: "When will you formally declare independence?" Any direct admission of independence - Barzani's ultimate goal - was still political dynamite and the president deftly deflected their probes, stressing his desire for a strong, federal Iraq of which Iraqi Kurdistan was a part.

In comparison, my question seemed rather trite. "Ahem, Mr President. Do you support the Kurdish FA's attempts to join Fifa?" The ultra-serious political scribes shook their heads in the silence that followed. But Barzani broke into a huge smile. "Being a footballer myself and having played football in the past, I strongly support the Kurdish attempts to join Fifa." Then he remembered where he was. "Even during the times when Saddam was in power I supported the Iraqi team. Now that he has gone I will still of course support them."

It was illuminating that his most explicit answer on Kurdish self-determination surrounded the status of the Kurdish football team. It shouldn't have been a surprise as Barzani - a veteran of the Iraqi Kurds' attempts to gain independence - understands one thing only too well: to be a proper nation, you have to have a proper national football team, and vice versa. That was in January 2007. Fast forward to last week when the Kurdish national team took their first step towards footballing recognition by making their international tournament debut. They were not playing against their Iraqi cousins, nor anyone else from the Fifa family. Instead they turned out against the likes of Samiland (representing the Sami people of northern Scandinavia) and Padania (a team representing those wanting independence for northern Italy) at the Viva World Cup in Sweden, a competition for national teams unrecognised by the rest of the footballing and political world. But their success in flying the Kurdish flag could have far-reaching consequences for the Iraqi national football team, not to mention the territorial integrity of Iraq itself.

The Viva World Cup was the brainchild of the New Federations board, an organisation representing those regions, such as Tibet, Chechnya and Kosovo, orphaned from the rest of the footballing world. Footballing recognition through Fifa is a heated political issue. It's not unusual for aggrieved territories with high designs on statehood to use their national football team as a battering ram to normalise claims for political recognition. Palestine was controversially successful in its bid to join Fifa, while Gibraltar passed Fifa's original criteria for membership, only to be denied when the Spanish government, angered that the move could be the first step towards a break for independence, got involved and threatened to remove all Spanish teams from European and international competition.

These 'countries' operate on the margins, tiptoeing around the game while trying not to antagonise the political heavyweights that surround them.

Unsurprisingly, the NF's existence, not to mention the Viva World Cup itself, has stirred up a few latent disputes. The first Viva World Cup in 2006 had to be moved from North Cyprus due to visa disputes and political wranglings. The new Cypriot government didn't want to rock the boat by inviting a stadium-load of potential political agitators to its shores. Only four teams managed to put a team together. This year's competition was meant to be different but, again, logistical and political problems meant only five teams made it. Not that this devalued the tournament for the Kurds. "This is the first time in Kurdistan's history that we have played in a tournament so it is historic," the Kurdish FA's president, Safeen Kanabi, a former player and coach, happily boasted shortly before Kurdistan drew 2-2 with Samiland. "We came across Viva through the Ministry of Sports and Youth, which got in touch with them and got an invitation to play."

The Kurds seem to have a strong case for both Fifa membership and independence. Somehow forgotten in the great post-Ottoman carve-up and spread across several countries, the Kurds' quest for statehood has seen them discriminated against from all sides. The Turkish government and the PKK waged civil war for decades; the Iranian Kurds were viewed with suspicion by the authorities too. But it was Iraq's Kurds that bore the brunt. Saddam's Anfal programme, an attempt to cleanse northern Iraq of its Kurdish identity, saw 182,000 people killed by the end of the 1980s, with 4,500 Kurdish villages simply wiped off the map. Like those in all other walks of life, footballers tasted the discrimination too. Kurds were unofficially banned from the Iraqi national team and discriminated against in the national league.

"The regime threatened us and said we weren't allowed to set up a Kurdish association and the players were prevented from joining the [national] team," explained Kanabi. "I played for 13 years at Erbil FC and for three years I was the team coach. Every day they harassed us and we weren't allowed to play football. We would hide the team in the back of a lorry and drive to different places to fool them and try to get a game. We participated in the Iraqi league but we were broken down and not allowed to be successful. They pressured the supporters not to come to Baghdad [for away matches]. They changed the referees. It was all organised by Saddam."

Perversely, the chaos that has gripped Iraq in the past five years has been a boon for the Kurds in general and for Erbil FC in particular. As the rest of Iraq collapsed into internecine warfare, the Kurdish north has been a beacon of safety and stability. The economy is booming, violence is a fraction of what it is in the capital thanks to the well-organised Peshmerga guerrillas, and the KRG effectively run the show. The result has been that footballers, fearing for their lives from both insurgents and criminal gangs, fled north. Erbil FC could take their pick. Now this former mid-table, much-maligned outfit are champions of Iraq and represented the country in this year's

Asian Champions League.

Yet outside of Iraqi Kurdistan's borders, the national team still faces many of the problems that have blighted its people for centuries. The issue of recruiting Kurdish players from its massive diaspora is hugely sensitive. "We have back-up players from Europe, from wider Kurdistan like the Iranian player Dana Kuhi, from Mahabad. We got 60-100 applicants from Australia, Sweden, Canada because it is a historical moment," said Kanabi. "But when we travel through Turkey we can't wear our Kurdistan outfits. We were told not to wear them because it is too sensitive, they removed all our T-shirts and tags from our bags. It's just too risky." The sensitivity of Turkish Kurds playing for Kurdistan has denied them access to a pool of professional players from a country that has reached the semi-finals of both the World Cup and the European Championships in the past six years.

"We haven't [recruited from Turkey] because we're not allowed to bring the Turkish Kurds to the national team," said Kanabi. "Turkey wouldn't allow it. It's just not an option. There are a few Kurdish players in the Turkish national team. The coach Fatih Terim, he is a Kurd, and Kazim Kazim [Colin Kazim Richards] is a Kurd. Of course they can't say this." The team's coach, Sulaiman Ramadan, has to make do with what he's got. The lack of Fifa membership makes his job harder as he has no power to demand that his players attend international matches. "I have 28 players to choose from and 18 of the best of them can't participate because the Iraqi league is on and so we have no power to ask them to play," lamented Ramadan. "The clubs didn't allow them to play because it's the Kurdish national team, especially as the Viva World Cup isn't official."

The ultimate goal is Fifa membership and independence. Which comes first is open to debate. Fifa, tiring of the political squabbles that made negative headlines, tightened the rules on membership, making it even harder for the likes of Kurdistan, Kosovo and Chechnya to join - though it won't stop them trying. "It's our dream, that is what we want, that is why we do all of this, to join Fifa but also to become a part of the Olympic family," said Kanabi. "It would mean a great deal but I don't think it's possible until we have an independent Kurdistan. Independence is the goal and [Fifa] membership is important because it is an official recognition of all the countries and once you are allowed you are part of the world. It is very simple: when you are part of a federal country you should be allowed to have your own flag and your own team. Look at the UK, you have England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales ..."

One problem is that any Kurdish footballing success could be detrimental to both the Iraqi national team and the country's unity. While Hawar Mullah Mohammad, who is widely regarded as the finest Kurdish player in the game, chooses to represent Iraq, his brother Hallkurd turns out for both Kurdistan and Iraq. Fifa membership would force them to choose one or the other, potentially denying the Iraqi team of many of its best players and undermining the Lions of Mesopotamia's *raison d'être* as Iraq's one remaining force for national unity. "It's not a

problem at the moment," explained coach Ramadan. "The Kurdistan FA hasn't gone to Baghdad [for permission]. They might hear about us after the Viva World Cup. They can participate in both teams, they don't have to choose [but] it is quite new and developing."

In the end, the loss of 18 of Kurdistan's best players was a bridge too far for Ramadan. A goalless draw against Aramean Syriac - the national team of the Aramaic-speaking Orthodox

Christians found across Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon - saw them narrowly miss out on a place in the final before they lost the third place play-off, to Samiland, 3-1. But for once the results didn't really matter. Their very appearance marked a step, albeit a small one, towards realising the twin goals of independence and Fifa membership, as important to the coach as to President Barzani. "My dream is raise the Kurdish flag, play professionally at tournaments and

bring forward the name of Kurdistan at the World Cup," Ramadan told me before leaving for training. "I believe football is a factor in that dream so, absolutely, this is a way of perusing an independent Kurdistan."

When Friday Comes: Football in the War Zone (Mainstream Publishing) by James Montague, a book about football and politics in the Middle East, is released on August 7

14 July 2008

BBC NEWS

Iraq faces dilemma over US troops

US presidential contender Barack Obama has repeatedly seized on statements attributed to Iraqi leaders to support his call for a troop withdrawal deadline.

By Jim Muir BBC News, Baghdad



Troop withdrawal has become a major issue in the US election campaign



Mr Maliki is under pressure to reject any infringement on Iraqi sovereignty



The UN mandate allowing US troops in Iraq expires at the end of 2008

The key statement cited by Mr Obama and others was made by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki last Monday in his address to Arab ambassadors in the United Arab Emirates.

The prime minister was widely quoted as saying that in the negotiations with the Americans on a Status of Forces Agreement to regulate the US troop presence from next year, "the direction is towards either a memorandum of understanding on their evacuation, or a memorandum of understanding on a timetable for their withdrawal".

That was the version of Mr Maliki's remarks put out in writing by his office in Baghdad. It was widely circulated by the news media, and caught much attention, including that of Mr Obama. There is only one problem. It is not what Mr Maliki actually said.

Mixed messages

In an audio recording of his remarks, heard by the BBC, the prime minister did not use the word "withdrawal".

What he actually said was: "The direction is towards either a memorandum of understanding on their evacuation, or a memorandum of understanding on programming their presence."

Mr Maliki's own office had inserted the word "withdrawal" in the written version, replacing the word "presence".

Contacted by the BBC, the prime minister's office had no explanation for the apparent contradiction. An official suggested the written version remained the authoritative one, although it is not what Mr Maliki said.

The impression of a hardening Iraqi government line was reinforced the following day by comments from the National Security Adviser, Muwaffaq al-Rubaie.

He was quoted as saying that Iraq would not accept any agreement which did not specify a deadline for a full withdrawal of US troops.

Significantly, Mr Rubaie was speaking immediately after a meeting with the senior Shiite clerical eminence, Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

But in subsequent remarks, Mr Rubaie rode back from a straightforward demand for a withdrawal deadline.

He said the talks were focused on agreeing on "timeline horizons, not specific dates", and said that withdrawal timings would depend on the readiness of the Iraqi security forces.

Militant elements

The confusion reflects the dilemma facing Iraqi government leaders. On the one hand, many of them - particularly among the Shia factions - face a public which regards the US presence as a problem rather than a solution.

With provincial elections coming up soon, they could be outflanked by more

militant elements such as the supporters of cleric Moqtada Sadr, who wants American forces out now and opposes negotiations that would cover their continued presence.

Yet the government knows that its own forces are not yet in a position to stand on their own against the two major challenges they face - the Sunni radicals of al-Qaeda and related groups, and the militant Shia militias which were partly suppressed in fierce battles this spring in Basra and Baghdad.

Both groups could simply bide their time awaiting the American withdrawal before making a comeback drive.

Violence has fallen off considerably from the horrendous levels of 2006 and the first half of 2007, but hundreds of people are still dying violent deaths every month.

Hence the ambiguity in statements by Iraqi leaders, who know that their own survival depends on US support continuing until Iraqi forces are genuinely able to stand alone.

Legal immunity

The indications are that the talks are now focusing not on deadlines for a complete withdrawal - but on phasing US troops out of Iraqi cities, and into a role providing logistical backing, firepower and air support, with a reduction of front-line troops.

"On substantive issues, there's not much daylight between the two sides," said a US official close to the troop talks with the Iraqi government.

"The troops will leave when the Iraqis are ready to take over. But they [Iraqi leaders] need to get what they need, and to get cover for it.

It is politics - how you package it, how you sell it to your people. They want our support, but they also want to show that there's progress towards sovereignty."

What the Iraqis see as issues of sovereignty have been a sticking-point in the talks, especially such items as a US demand for operational freedom and immunity from prosecution for US troops.

Officials admit that the negotiations are in a state of flux, and that the Status of Forces Agreement, which was to have been concluded this month, may end up being a simple protocol or memorandum of understanding giving some sort of legal basis for a continued US presence after the current UN mandate expires at the end of the year.

The issue has become highly politicised on both sides. Iraqi leaders will no doubt continue to make ambiguous statements. And US presidential contenders will no doubt continue to construe them to their own advantage.

But when Mr Obama visits Baghdad, as he is expected to later this month, he is unlikely to find that the Iraqi government is quite as set on demanding deadlines for US withdrawal as he would like to think.

Disagreements over Kirkuk's status could sideline voters

Without a decision on which government the province falls under, vote remains on hold

By James Warden, Stars and Stripes

KIRKUK, Iraq — While Iraqi politicians struggle to draft rules that allow them to hold elections this fall, disagreements on where Kirkuk belongs could leave voters in the province watching from the sidelines.

Iraq's presidential council is expected to order lawmakers to vote on election rules Tuesday if they can't reach an agreement before then, said Melissa Ward, governance adviser for the State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk. They could also agree to temporarily set aside issues surrounding Kirkuk in order to move forward in election discussions.

Were that to happen, leaders would likely postpone elections in Kirkuk until there's a decision on whether the province belongs with the Kurdistan Regional Government or the central government.

"The whole election law is languishing because of one issue: Kirkuk," Ward said.

Kirkuk is a historically Kurdish area whose oil fields are home to about 13 percent of Iraq's proven reserves. Saddam Hussein's regime displaced many Kurds with Arabs during the 1990s in a bid to control the province.

A compensation plan is available for Arabs and Kurds who want to move back to where they originally lived. But the lucrative oil money has made the sides suspicious of one another.

Many Iraqis fear that the Kurdistan Regional Government wants to secede and take the oil fields with it. Many Kurds fear that the central government would use the oil money to oppress them or withhold services as it did in the past.

No chance yet to decide

Voters were supposed to have a chance to decide where Kirkuk belongs in a referendum that the Iraqi Constitution required to take place by Dec. 31, 2007. The government extended that deadline six months when that date passed without any action. But leaders again failed to make any progress on a proposal to submit to voters, and the newer deadline also slipped by without a referendum.

Until voters decide where their province belongs, any provincial election results would be in jeopardy, Ward said.

That could be three or more years away, though, Ward said. Officials first need to find

out the proportion each ethnic group makes up in Kirkuk in order to establish representation in the provincial council. The province's last census was in 1957, and it has since undergone dramatic changes. Estimates on the city's size vary wildly from 800,000 to 1.5 million.

An official census would take a year to complete, she said. It would also need to be vetted by international monitors because of corruption allegations against the Kurdish authorities who control the government offices.

It's thought that Kurds from outside Kirkuk flooded the province in order to vote during the national elections of 2005. In one case, neutral monitors barred 82,000 people from voting when they couldn't prove residency with either their ration cards or official identification, standard documents every Iraqi possesses. However, Kurdish officials lobbied Baghdad and threatened to boycott the elections if the people weren't allowed to participate.

A faster alternative, Ward said, would be for the groups to mutually recognize an official ratio without actually counting everyone. Yet the sides have so far only proposed dubious ratios that benefit their own groups. The Arabs, for example, have recommended that they, the Kurds and the Turkoman population each receive equal shares of the tally — even though it's obvious Kirkuk has more Kurds than any other group — although it's not clear by how much.

"There's a whole lot of ability on all sides to manipulate the numbers," Ward said.

It would take another year to hold provincial council elections and probably take yet another year for the actual referendum, although those estimates are hardly written in stone.

"As to the timetable on that, your guess is as good as mine," Ward said.

In the meantime, Kirkuk could suffer for not having elections at the same time as the rest of the country. The current provincial government would most likely continue if elections aren't held, she said. But Iraq's new provincial-powers law delegates certain authority to the provinces starting after this election. If Kirkuk didn't have an election, it might not have all the powers of other provinces.

Peaceful at the moment

For now, Kirkuk residents appear to be quietly waiting for their chance to weigh in on the issue. Lt. Col. Dennis Sullivan, commander of 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, said everyone is working toward a political solution, not a military one. Sullivan's battalion is responsible for Kirkuk, yet security is good enough that the unit has only assigned a platoon to the city.

"[The referendum] has not been a flash point," he said. "When we took over we thought it would be."

Residents were surprisingly ambivalent about the delay. Sadik Athmon, a Kurdish hardware store owner, was one of many who said he wasn't worried.

"Personally, I'm going to vote in the referendum, and I hope this article gets passed," he said. "As long as it's an article in the constitution, it will be carried out."

Adnan, an Arabic man living in Kirkuk, said simply that it isn't time to have the referendum because the politicians are still working out the details. Mohammad Masir, a Kirkuk key maker, said he hasn't been following the issue at all.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "When it gets close, I'll make my decision."

Mahmood Azadeen, a shoe and clothing store owner with mixed Kurdish-Arabic ancestry, said he's just enjoying the growing prosperity and security like many people in the city.

"I have nothing to do with politics," he said. "All I care about is my business."



James Warden / S&S

Iraqi men play dominoes in one of Kirkuk's markets. The atmosphere in the markets and other areas is generally relaxed even though the province's status has not been resolved.

Iranian bank to be opened in Iraqi Kurdistan

Tehran, Iran, (ISNA) — The head of Iran-Iraq chamber of commerce Hussein Tizmaghz said on Sunday that an Iranian bank is to be opened in Sulaimaniyah city of Iraqi Kurdistan, north of Iraq.

Two other Iranian branches are to be inaugurated in the city, he said as meeting the head of Iraqi Kurdistan chamber of commerce and a number of businessmen.

The amount of bilateral commercial exchanges has reached over 2.8 billion dollars in 2007.

He also said establishing joint transportation companies and expanding tourism are among ways to raise cooperation between Iran and Iraqi autonomous region of Kurdistan.

Also his Kurdish counterpart said Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan have signed an agreement worth 20 million dollars in industry field.

Sulaimaniyah city, Kurdistan's cultural capital, is the cultural center of the Sorani-speaking Kurds and an important economic centre for Iraqi Kurdistan, 364 kilometers north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

Turkish officials charge group in alleged coup plot

The 86 accused in the indictment face terrorism-related charges. They are said to be ultranationalist secularists who wanted to drive out the Islamist-rooted ruling party.

By Laura King, Los Angeles Times

ISTANBUL, TURKEY -- In an explosive case that reflects political turmoil fueled by this country's religious-secular divide, Turkish prosecutors on Monday brought charges against 86 people for allegedly trying to overthrow the government.

Istanbul's chief prosecutor, Aykut Cengiz Engin, said a group that included retired military officials, academics, lawyers and writers stood accused of forming a shadowy ultranationalist network whose aim was to drive the Islamist-rooted ruling party from power.

The full list of suspects was not immediately released, but the accused, 48 of whom are in custody, face mainly terrorism-related charges that include membership in an illegal organization, authorities said.

Engin refrained from immediately unveiling the indictment, which reportedly runs nearly 2,500 pages and contains a wealth of information about the alleged coup plot. It is to be made public soon.

But speaking to reporters, the prosecutor provided broad outlines of the case, centering on a group called Ergenekon, named for a myth-shrouded valley that is believed by some nationalists to be the wellspring of Turkic civilization.

The organization's intent, in brief, was "destroying state authority," Engin said.

Authorities said the alleged plot hinged on triggering a military coup or an armed revolt that would topple the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose party last summer won reelection by a resounding margin.

Separately, and somewhat contradictorily, Turkey's Constitutional Court in Ankara has also taken up a case, this one seeking to ban Erdogan, his Justice and Development Party and dozens of its senior



members from politics for purportedly promoting an Islamist agenda that flies in the face of the secular constitution. A ruling in that case is expected this summer.

The political paralysis arising from the attempt to ban the ruling party has hammered Turkey's formerly robust economy and damaged its already faltering bid to join the European Union.

In the case of the coup suspects, a court has two weeks to decide whether to try them. Engin told reporters that the indictment would lay out the plans for a potentially violent overthrow and detail the group's possession of weapons.

The case came to light after police found an arms cache, consisting mainly of hand grenades, at the home of a retired military man last year, according to authorities.

The religious-secular struggle has for years been a theme in Turkish politics, but it came to full boil last summer when the ruling party, known in Turkey as AKP, insisted on choosing one of its own, Abdullah Gul, as president. The presidency had traditionally been considered something of a secular birthright,

with the position having first been held by Turkey's founding father, Kemal Ataturk, who enshrined the republic's secular principles in law.

Since last summer's elections, battle lines have been drawn between secularists, who gain support from the military, the judicial establishment, academia and some influential trade groups, and the AKP's more religiously observant loyalists.

Secularists reacted with fury when the government, despite denying any Islamist agenda, sought this year to lift a ban on Islamic head scarves in universities. In

the republic's early days, Ataturk had decreed that religious dress should not be allowed in government buildings and other official settings.

Erdogan and Gul both have wives and daughters who wear head scarves as a sign of piety.

The conspiracy case is also roiling the powerful military, which has been preoccupied with a months-long campaign against Kurdish separatists that has included forays into northern Iraq. Turkish news reports said military prosecutors had requested access to the indictment, a move interpreted to mean the army was conducting a parallel internal investigation of the coup plot.

More charges are being prepared in the case, Engin said -- probably including two retired senior generals who were arrested this month but were not among those charged Monday.

Also still under investigation are the reported "coup diaries" of an army general published by a Turkish magazine last year.



Voices of Iraq
July 15, 2008

MP calls to adopt 1957 census to resolve Kirkuk's elections

BAGHDAD, July 15 (VOI) - A lawmaker from the parliament's regions and provinces committee on Tuesday termed a proposal calling to adopt the 1957 census to determine the populations' proportions in the disputed city of Kirkuk as "the fairest solution."

Speaking at a press conference held in Baghdad, MP Hashim al-Taie, chief of the parliament's regions and provinces committee, said "the proposal to determine Kirkuk's population by adopting the 1957 census is the panacea that has gained the approval of most political provinces." The lawmaker accounted to approval of such a solution to disagreements and traded accusations between Iraqi denominations over demographic changes that took place before and after 2003.

Minority Kurds, who run the largely autonomous northern Kurdistan region, see Kirkuk as their ancient capital and want a constitutionally mandated referendum to be held to decide who controls the northern city.

Arabs encouraged to move there under late Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein want the multi-ethnic city to remain under central Iraqi government control and have been wary of a vote.

Arabs and Turkmen believe Kurds have stacked the city with Kurds since the downfall of Saddam in 2003 in an attempt to tip the demographic balance in their favor in any vote.

Some Arab and Turkmen lawmakers have suggested sharing power in the city evenly between Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds. But Kurdish lawmakers said the provincial election results should be used to determine who controls the city.

"Considering the 1957 census as an agreed base is the best means of resolving the stalemate over Kirkuk," Al-Taie noted.

"The 1957 census was agreed upon by various political factions and was recorded in documents with both the United Nations and the British government," the MP pointed out.

"Human geography specialists can calculate the national growth rate for denominations in Kirkuk from 1957 to date," he added, suggesting "the specialist statistical committee would pronounce 80 percent as rounded figure."

U.S. officials have described the provincial elections as one of several benchmarks, along with the reduction of violence in Baghdad and approval of a hydrocarbon resource sharing law, by which they are assessing the progress of Iraq's national government. Many U.S. officials and Iraqi leaders say new provincial elections would produce a political balance, ease resentment of disenfranchised factions, and help stabilize security.

Parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani announced the postponement of Tuesday's session after Kurdish Coalition MPs walked out in a protest against the inclusion of the draft law of provincial councils in today's session.



Voices of Iraq
July 16, 2008

The Kurdistan Coalition supports holding elections, rejects postponement

BAGHDAD, July 16 (VOI) – The Kurdistan Coalition (KC) said on Wednesday that it supports holding the provincial councils elections on time.

"The KC said it supports holding the elections in accordance to one law approved by the parliament and rejects any postponement," the KC said in a statement received by *Aswat al-Iraq – Voices of Iraq (VOI)*.

The KC, which has 55 seats, accused some bodies of trying to postpone the elections.

Parliament speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani announced the postponement of Tuesday's session after Kurdish Coalition MPs walked out in a protest against the inclusion of the draft law of provincial councils in today's session.

Fouad Maasoum, the leader of the KC, said in a press conference, "The Kurdistan Coalition and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) had to postpone the debate on this particular draft to ensure that all parties may have a chance to

reach a settlement over the law's items."

The options before the KC were either to accept the proposal to divide Kirkuk into four electoral constituencies or to depend on the 1957 statistics in the upcoming elections in the city," Maasoum revealed.

Spokesman for the KC, Friad Rawndozi, had said on Monday that there would be no voting on the draft law on provincial councils during today's session, expecting a relevant debate to take place on Thursday.

The law on provincial council elections, seen as supplementary to the law on regions and non-regional provinces, which was approved by the Parliament in February, has sparked heated controversy among political blocs.

The draft law on provincial council elections proposes an open slate system, which gives voters influence on the position of the candidates placed on the party list and allows an individual voting system.

Los Angeles Times

July 16, 2008

In Iraq, Kurd lawmakers walk out of Kirkuk election session

Legislators object to the choices offered them: postpone voting or share power evenly among the oil-rich city's three main ethnic groups.

By **Alexandra Zavis and Raheem Salman**

BAGHDAD -- An attempt to push through legislation needed to hold Iraq's provincial elections in the fall ended in disarray Tuesday when Kurdish lawmakers walked out of parliament over voting provisions in the disputed city of Kirkuk.

U.S. and Iraqi officials hope the polls scheduled for Oct. 1 can help ease tensions among Iraq's main ethnic and religious factions by giving groups that boycotted the last election, in 2005, a stake in power. But preparations have been held up because there is no law setting out procedures to be followed.

The United Nations' special representative in Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, has warned that it might not be possible to vote this year unless a bill is approved this month.

With the main political blocs deadlocked on key points, a parliamentary committee decided Sunday to put the bill to a vote and ask lawmakers to choose among several options.

Kurdish lawmakers objected to the choices available for Kirkuk: postpone voting until the future of the oil-rich city is decided or share power evenly among its three main ethnic groups -- Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens.

The question of who will control Kirkuk is one of the most explosive issues in Iraq. Kurds,

who were expelled from the city by the late Saddam Hussein and replaced with Arabs, want to include Kirkuk in their semiautonomous region to the north.

Arabs worry they would be relegated to second-class citizenship and want the city and its oil resources to remain under the control of the Arab-led central government.

Some Arab and Turkmen lawmakers support the option put before parliament Tuesday of electing a 32-member provincial council in which Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens are allocated 10 seats each. The other two seats would go to representatives of the city's Christian minority.

Kurdish lawmakers protested that Kirkuk should not be treated differently from other ethnically and religiously mixed cities in Iraq, many of which they argue are more violent.

"This is against the constitution and contradicts the principle of democracy," Fuad Maasoum, head of the Kurdish alliance, told journalists after walking out of the session.

Kurdish lawmakers contend that the results of the provincial elections should determine who gets how many seats. But the city's Arabs accuse the Kurds of stacking any vote by pressuring Arabs to leave and moving in more Kurds.

Kurdish lawmakers said they might be willing to accept a delay in voting, but only if consensus is reached on the matter with the other parties in Kirkuk. They asked to be given until Thursday to work out a compromise.

When parliament's Sunni Muslim speaker, Mahmoud Mashadani, refused to grant them the delay, the Kurds walked out.

The room then descended into chaos, with Arab lawmakers shouting and banging their desks for a vote to go ahead on the election law, and Mashadani insisting there was no quorum.

"If those members who take tens of thousands of dollars [in salaries] were responsible, we would not be in such a mess," Mashadani admonished them.

He then announced that he would deduct 5 million Iraqi dinars (about \$4,000) from the salary of any member who failed to attend parliament without a good reason -- a persistent problem for the body.

When lawmakers began to protest that it was the Kurds' fault that there was no quorum, Mashadani snapped back: "They left for reason. But those who were absent today, they knew that we had an important bill today. When they will they come? When?"



Al Jazeera
JULY 18, 2008

Ignoring a war in northern Iraq?

By **Ahmed Janabi**

Iraqi MPs and politicians have accused the Baghdad government of tolerating an Iranian military campaign on Iraq's northern territories.

They say the Iranian military has been bombing remote Iraqi Kurdish villages along the northern Iraq-Iran borders for months under the pretext that Iranian Kurdish rebels from the party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) are taking shelter there.

Hussain al-Jaff, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), told Al Jazeera: "The Kurdish people denounce the media blackout imposed on this topic. We really do not understand how the Iraqi government remains silent at bombing its own national soil."

Mohamad al-Talabani, Al Jazeera's correspondent in northern Iraq says the central government's inaction has fuelled mounting feelings of bitterness and resentment among Iraqi Kurds.

"The People here are very upset ... ordinary Kurds are questioning why there was swift rebuke of Turkey's attacks on Kurdish activists in northern Iraq, but the world is now silent when Iran is doing the same thing," he said.

Since 2006, Iranian forces have shelled the village of Haj Omran, 5km inside the Iraqi-Iranian, as well as Marado, Razda and Dolakoka townships.

Sami al-Askari, a Shia Arab MP from al-Islah al-Watani (National Reform) Movement told Al Jazeera Iraqi sovereignty must be exercised throughout the country.

"I cannot understand why the government has not raised this issue with Iran," he said.

Iranian shelling

Kurdish sources have told Al Jazeera that some 200 villages located in the Qalat Dizza, Qandil and Himreen mountains, 120km south of Kirkuk and near the border with Iran, have been shelled since December 2007.

In April 2008, Iranian artillery fired at villages located in the Kinera, Sawen,



Villages in Iraq's northern mountain areas have been shelled by Iranian forces since 2003 [GALLO/GETTY]

and Mamenda mountains.

Iranian media reported at the time that a senior commander with an outlawed breakaway faction of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) had been killed in the shelling.

Iranian officials have told the media that they are pursuing "terrorists" belonging to several Kurdish separatist groups, including the PKK, inside Iraq.

In late April, Iranian and Turkish officials met in Ankara to hammer out an anti-terrorism policy geared towards combatting Kurdish groups in north-

ern Iraq.

The Turkish military has been carrying out cross-border missions and air raids targeting the PKK inside Iraq since February 2008.

Devastated villages

During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) the northern strip of mountains, known as the Zagros range, nestled along the border was heavily shelled by both sides.

Following punitive sanctions slapped on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the bombed villages could not be rebuilt and lacked vital infrastructure.

Al-Talabani says the continued shelling has halted any reconstruction projects that were initiated since 2003 and has forced many villagers to flee their homes to seek refuge in nearby Sulaimaniyah.

Al-Jaff says the government needs to immediately intervene and alleviate the plight of the Kurdish refugees.

"What really bothers the Kurds and various politicians is the government's negligence towards the displaced and the destroyed infrastructure. Nothing whatsoever has been done for them. They are poor villagers; they work for their bread day by day," he told Al Jazeera.

Al Jazeera contacted Ali al-Dabagh, the Iraqi government spokesman, but his office said he was unavailable for comment.

Labid Abbawi, Iraq's deputy foreign minister, told Al Jazeera he could not immediately provide comment on why the Iraqi government had not protested Iranian shelling in the north.

Silence

Dhafir al-Ani, a Sunni Arab MP from al-Tawafuq (the Accordance) bloc accused the ruling coalition of blocking efforts to raise the issue in parliament because of its close links to Iran.

"Those MPs representing Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and other parties close to Iran have used their influence to prevent this issue from being raised in the parliament," he told Al Jazeera.

Hassan al-Sinaid, an MP from the Islamic Revolution in Iraq party, told Al Jazeera he declined to comment.

TODAYS ZAMAN

21 July 2008.

DTP congress seeks to establish 'umbrella party'

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) held its general congress yesterday in Ankara, with only Ahmet Türk running for the party chairmanship.

AYŞE KARABAT ANKARA

The DTP's second general congress was held under the shadow of a closure case brought against it on charges of becoming a "focal point" of separatist politics. At the gathering the party discussed the establishment of an "umbrella party" under which the representatives of pro-Kurdish politics and the socialist left can come together.

The congress was held at the Ankara Atatürk Sport Center. The congress was very colorful, with many participants from different parts of Turkey wearing local Kurdish clothes meeting and picnicking with their children. During the congress the slogans praising Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), were chanted. Instead of starting the event with the Turkish national anthem, they began with a song praising the Dağlica ambush, in which 12 Turkish soldiers were killed by the PKK and eight were abducted in October of last year.

There was only one candidate running for the chairmanship of the party, Türk. There were also no options in the voting for the party council and the executive board. Before the congress, there had been discussions between the group's two divisions, the "hawks" and the "doves," regarding the leadership of the party. Türk is considered a representative of the doves, and the acting chairwoman of the party, Emine Ayna, is known as a hawk. But the two sides reached an agreement before the congress. One of the banners in the congress hall read "Hawks in peace, doves in war."



DTP deputy Selahattin Demirtaş, who presided over the congress, said in his speech that the congress would be the best answer to those who were claiming that the DTP will be divided.

Ayna also spoke at the event, claiming that the government is not fighting against Turkey's gangs and the deep state wholeheartedly, but only to the extent that these gangs are dangerous to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party). "Ergenekon is gaining its power from the stalemate over the Kurdish problem, but the AK Party government is not disturbed by Ergenekon's actions against Kurds. Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan has only one hesitation, he thinks that Ergenekon is the only obstacle for him to seize state power in its entirety."

Ayna said the Kurds want peace but that if the road of democracy is closed, people will seek other solutions.

"Kurds are not just saying 'peace,' but 'honorable peace.' The others, when they are talking about peace, they mean giving up basic rights. When Kurds are talking about peace, they mean equal rights," Ayna said, adding that after the congress the main target will be the establishment of an "umbrella party" under which everyone who defends freedom can meet in the name of democratization.

In his speech to the congress Türk also discussed the Ergenekon case, explaining that the investigation is a historical opportunity for Turkey to confront its past. "The enlargement of the Ergenekon investigation will improve the standards of our democracy. Not only the Ergenekon on the western side of the Euphrates River, but also the one on the eastern side should be investigated, and a real 'clean hands' operation should be started."

Türk added that for the solution of the Kurdish problem there must be the political will to silence the guns. "It will be an important step to make the legal regulations that will open the way returning to society and political life. Then cultural, social and political steps have to be taken," Türk said.

He also stressed the importance of the "umbrella party" and said that the country needs a new spirit and a new political movement.

"For a democratic republic, all the excluded, rejected and exploited segments should come together and become a major political power," Türk said.

REUTERS

July 21, 2008 By Zerin Elci

ANKARA - Three German tourists kidnapped by Kurdish separatist guerrillas in eastern Turkey earlier this month have been found abandoned by their captors on a hillside, a Turkish official said on Sunday.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the three, part of a 13-member climbing team seized on Mount Ararat near the Iranian border, were now in the care of staff at the German Embassy in Ankara.

The Agri provincial governor said Turkish gendarme forces had found them while combing through the region for the rebels.

"Because of our heavy operations in the region, the PKK was forced to leave them on a hilltop and flee ... The aim of our operations has been to prevent the terrorists from taking the hostages across the border," said Mehmet Cetin, governor of Agri Province.

The PKK, which has been fighting since 1984 for an independent Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey, said it had seized them in protest against what it called Berlin's recent hostile actions against Kurdish separatists.

Last month Germany banned Kurdish television station Roj TV, which Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble described as a mouthpiece for the PKK, and last year Berlin extradited two PKK militants to Turkey.

German tourist hostages free in Turkey



QUITE WELL

Foreign Minister Steinmeier was informed of their release by telephone by his Turkish counterpart, Ali Babacan.

"Given the circumstances, they are quite well," Steinmeier told reporters in Berlin, thanking Turkish authorities for their help. "The main thing is that we, together with the released men and their families, are very relieved."

Asked in a television interview if Germany had paid a price for the hostages, either in the form of a ransom or a political concession, Chancellor Angela Merkel declined to give details.

"You know that we do everything to get hostages released and in this case it succeeded. I don't think there is anything more to say," Merkel told German ARD television, also thanking German and Turkish authorities.

Kidnapping tourists is an unusual tactic for the outlawed PKK, which has laid bombs at holiday resorts but focuses attacks largely on military targets in southeast Turkey. Ankara considers the PKK a terrorist organisation, as do the European Union and the United States.

SPIEGEL 21 July 2008.

PKK RELEASES GERMANS

Split Remains among Kurds in Germany

The Kurdistan Workers Party took German government officials by surprise on Sunday and released three German climbers who were kidnapped two weeks ago. The kidnapping has divided Germany's Kurdish population.

The three German mountain climbers who were kidnapped on the slopes of Mt. Ararat in Turkey almost two weeks ago have been set free. According to Turkish officials, members of the rebel group Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) set the three men free on a hilltop and fled. The climbers are healthy and will soon be heading back to their homes in Bavaria.

The release took the German foreign ministry by surprise. A foreign ministry official told SPIEGEL ONLINE that they were not aware that the PKK was planning on letting them go and assumed that the Kurdish rebel group would hang on to them a while longer for the international attention (more...) the kidnappings focused on the Kurds. The PKK is interested in establishing an autonomous Kurdish region in eastern Turkey, but the group is considered a terrorist group by Turkey, the European Union and the US.

A PKK spokesman called SPIEGEL ONLINE soon after the hostages were freed to confirm their release. "We decided to allow the hostages to go," said Ahmed Danas. "The negotiations on their release were led by two Kurdish organizations in Turkey," he said. His comments fit with the analysis made by the

German foreign ministry, which assumed that the PKK was not interested in harming the hostages for the negative publicity that would have generated for the group.

The three climbers were part of a group of mountaineers from Bavaria taking part in an organized expedition to climb the 5,165 meter high

maintain an "illegal body of officials actively engaging in conspiracy" in Germany. Earlier this summer, German officials raided and then shut down the Kurdish television channel Roj TV, a move which Kurdish rebels mentioned in a warning to Germany issued not long later.



The three German climbers were kidnapped from the slopes of Mt. Ararat on July 8.

(16,945 feet) Mt. Ararat. On July 8, PKK guerrillas walked into their camp (more...) at 3,200 meters, chose three climbers from the group, and disappeared. The rebels told those who remained not to break camp until the next morning. Many saw the kidnappings as a response to German moves to dampen PKK activity in Germany (more...). The group was banned in Germany in 1993, but the country's intelligence said as recently as last year that the PKK continues to

perpetrators. This strange event in the heart of the government quarter in Berlin mirrored the problems that a rebel commando operation in eastern Turkey created for the huge exile community of over 500,000 people of Kurdish origin in Germany. Many have open sympathies for the guerrillas -- and they welcomed the renewed interest in the struggle of the Kurdish people for more autonomy, a conflict that has raged for decades. However, many are also afraid that their situation will further deteriorate as a result. One man is particularly familiar with the mood among Kurds living in Germany and their attitude toward the guerrilla fighters. Mahmut Seven, 44, works in an austere, low white building in the industrial park of Neu-Isenburg and speaks openly of how many Kurds feel torn these days, and have reacted with concealed joy mingled with the fear of not knowing what the consequences might be. "The abduction should never have happened," he says, "but nobody can deny that the entire affair has attracted an enormous amount of attention." Seven runs the only Kurdish daily, *Yeni Özgür Politika*. It has a circulation of 15,000, but has many more readers in the tea salons across Germany. There are 20 journalists on the payroll and not even Seven

knows exactly how many volunteers work at the newspaper. The political affiliation of the paper is clear: It reflects the line of the banned PKK and its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Texts written by Öcalan from the heavily-guarded island prison of İmralı are printed verbatim in the newspaper. Seven makes no secret of this: "The Kurds have an incredible debt toward this organization. They gave us back our pride and our identity."

But he says that there is almost no hint of gloating in the dozen letters that he has received concerning the kidnapping. Most of them, on the contrary, are full of bile for the German government.

Many Kurds in Germany who sympathize with the PKK are becoming increasingly infuriated with their treatment here -- the

treatment here -- the broadcasting ban issued last June on the sole Kurdish television station Roj TV, and on the production company Viko in Wuppertal, is just one indication of a more forceful approach by German security agencies -- a development that has been observed by Yek-Kom deputy chairman Demir for a long time.

This includes raids on Kurdish associations in Hanover, Kassel, Bremen, Koblenz and Berlin -- and it includes an increasing number of arrests of top PKK officials ordered by federal German prosecutors. There is also an ongoing wave of asylum revocations, justified by the German government by pointing to political reforms in Turkey -- an argument that provokes even moderate Kurds.

Almost every Kurdish family in Germany has relatives or acquaintances in Anatolia who have been arrested, wounded or abused in the struggle for the cause or against the Turkish military. The letters "Q", "W" and "X" -- which are used in the Kurdish language -- are still banned in Turkey. Time and again, Kurdish politicians are tried and convicted for using these letters in official letters. Even the title "Mr." is forbidden in connection with Öcalan.

Last week, a report that the Turks had shaved Öcalan's head in prison made headlines in the Kurdish media. "That was torture!" said guests at the Hamburg "Vereinschauses Kurdistan" -- an association with close ties to the PKK. Some of them also shaved their heads in protest. "I would give my

life for Öcalan," said Seyithan Ormangören. He is 22 years old. "As a German, you can't understand how terrible it is to have no right to your own identity," explains Salih Kocero, who runs a Kurdish tea salon near the main railway station in Hamburg. Four Kurds are sitting at a table there and playing Batak, a Turkish card game. When asked whether they sympathize with the PKK, they all laugh. "We all like the PKK, even if we aren't active members," says Kocero, who -- like many others -- came to Germany as a refugee. "There is a guerrilla fighter in almost every family." Kocero pulls a creased photo from his wallet. "This is my cousin. He's still alive. He's with the PKK troops in northern Iraq."

REUTERS 

July 21, 2008

Two Iranian Revolutionary Guards were killed in fighting with rebels in a northwestern region (Iranian Kurdistan-Eastern KURDISTAN), official media said on Sunday, a part of Iran where security forces and Iranian Kurdish PJAK guerrillas have often clashed in the past.

IRNA said one of those killed in Saturday's incident was a colonel of the Revolutionary Guards, an elite force that is separate from Iran's regular armed forces.

The Guards had inflicted "heavy blows" on rebels in recent days and killed several of them, it said.

Earlier this month, Iranian media said Iranian forces had killed a suspected member of the Kurdish PJAK group operating in border areas near Iraqi Kurd-

istan region and Turkey and captured another.

Iranian forces often clash with guerrillas from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the Turkey's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which took up arms in 1984 to fight for a Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey.

Like neighbouring Iraq and Turkey, Iran has a large Kurdish minority, mainly living in the country's northwest.

Iran sees PJAK, as a "terrorist" group.

Since 2004 the PJAK took up arms for self-rule in the country's mainly Kurdistan province northwestern of Iran (Iranian Kurdistan, Eastern Kurdistan). Half the members of PJAK are women.

Kurdish PJAK rebels kill two elite Iran Revolutionary Guards

San Francisco Chronicle July 21, 2008

IRAQI PANEL PROPOSES DELAY IN KEY ELECTION

Preparations for provincial balloting remain at impasse

Brian Murphy, Associated Press

BAGHDAD, — Iraq's election authority proposed Sunday to delay important provincial balloting in an apparent sign of frustration over a political impasse that has stalled preparations for voting planned for this fall.

The provincial election plan strongly backed by Washington would shift more political powers to regions and is viewed by Sunni Arabs as path to gain more influence over decisions by the Shiite-led government.

U.S. officials see the voting as another key step in national reconciliation.

But any prolonged setbacks could slow momentum for giving Sunnis a greater voice in political and security affairs considered essential to stabilize the country and maintain pressure on al-Qaida in Iraq and other militant factions.

Iraq's efforts to heal sectarian rifts are likely to be discussed during the visit to Baghdad by presidential candidate Barack Obama, who wrapped up a stop in Afghanistan on Sunday.

But the election plans remain snared in one of Iraq's thorniest political dilemmas: the future of the oil-rich northern region of Kirkuk.

Iraq's Kurds, who control a semi-autonomous region in the north, have held up parliament passage of a law to allocate funds and set guidelines for the provincial elections, at the moment scheduled for Oct. 1.

They oppose a proposed equal distribution of provincial council seats in the Kirkuk region, which is outside the Kurdish territory but considered by many Kurds to be part of their historical land.

The Kurds also are pressing the government to hold a long-delayed referendum in Kirkuk on whether to join the Kurdish area.

Kirkuk city is historically a Kurdish city and it lies just south border of the Kurdistan autonomous region, the population is a mix of majority Kurds and minority of Arabs, Christians and Turkmen. lies 250 km northeast of Baghdad. Kurds have a strong cultural and emotional attachment to Kirkuk, which they call "the Kurdish Jerusalem."

Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution is related to the normalization of the situation in Kirkuk city and other disputed areas.

The article also calls for conducting a census to be followed by a referendum to let the inhabitants decide whether they would like Kirkuk to be annexed to the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region or

having it as an independent province.

These stages were supposed to end on December 31, 2007, a deadline that was later extended to six months to end in July 2008.

The former regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had forced over 250,000 Kurdish residents to give up their homes to Arabs in the 1970s, to "Arabize" the city and the region's oil industry.

The Election Commission, in a statement distributed to lawmakers and others, said there is no longer time to organize the elections on schedule "according to international standards." It offered a possible new date of Dec. 22 for the voting in most areas of the country.

The Iraqi government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, told The AP that the Cabinet plans to meet Monday to discuss election dates.

A delay would offer some breathing room to lawmakers trying to overcome Kurdish objections.

But any indefinite postponements would certainly bring outcry from the Sunnis, whose uprising against al-Qaida last year was considered critical in uprooting insurgent strongholds and helping in the sharp drop in violence around Iraq.

Briefing Turkey's future

Flags, veils and sharia

ANKARA, KARS AND TOKAT

Behind the court case against Turkey's ruling party lies an existential question: how Islamist has the country become?



A MARBLE fountain held up by bare-breasted maidens in the eastern city of Kars is a source of pride for the city's mayor, Naif Alibeyoglu. Yet last November the sculpture vanished a few days before a planned visit to Kars by Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Fearful of incurring the wrath of Mr Erdogan and his mildly Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), the mayor (himself an AKP man) reportedly arranged for its removal.

In the event, the prime minister never arrived—and the fountain came back. The incident may be testimony to the prudery of Mr Erdogan, and of the AKP more broadly. But could it also be evidence of their desire to steer Turkey towards *sharia* law? The country's chief prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, might say so. In March he petitioned the constitutional court to ban the AKP and to bar Mr Erdogan and 70 other named AKP officials, including the president, Abdullah Gul, from politics, on the ground that they are covertly seeking to establish an Islamist theocracy.

Turkey has been in upheaval ever since. After hearings earlier this month, a verdict is expected soon, maybe in early August.

Most observers expect it to go against the AKP. Turkey has banned no fewer than 24 parties in the past 50 years, including the AKP's two forerunners. In 23 of these cases, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the bans violated its charter.

Yet Mr Yalçinkaya's indictment lacks hard evidence to show that the AKP is working to reverse secular rule. Much of his case rests on the words, not the actions, of Mr Erdogan and his lieutenants. Among Mr Erdogan's listed "crimes" is his opinion that "Turkey as a modern Muslim nation can serve as an example for the harmony of civilisations." That is hardly a call for *ji-had*. The AKP has promoted Islamic values, but it has never attempted to pass laws inspired by the Koran.

None of this seems to impress Turkey's meddling generals, who are widely believed to be the driving force behind the "judicial coup" against the AKP. This follows the "e-coup" they threatened last year by issuing a warning on the internet against making Mr Gul president. Some renegade generals are also involved in the so-called Ergenekon group; 86 members were charged this week with plotting a

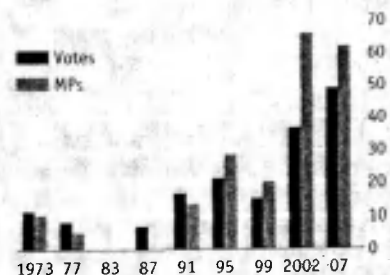
coup (see box on next page).

The generals and their allies believe that nothing less than the future of Ataturk's secular republic is at stake. Similar rumblings were heard when the now defunct pro-Islamic Welfare party first came to power in 1996. It was ejected a year later in a bloodless "velvet coup" and banned on similar charges to those now levelled at the AKP. But with each intervention the Islamists come back stronger.

Unlike their pro-secular rivals, Islamists have been able to reinvent themselves to appeal to a growing base of voters. Nobody has done this more successfully than Mr Erdogan with the AKP. An Islamic cleric by training, Mr Erdogan became Istanbul's mayor when Welfare won a municipal election in 1994. He was booted out in 1997, and jailed briefly a year later for reciting a ▶▶

Strength in numbers

Islamist parties
Votes and members of parliament at elections, % of total



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

► nationalist poem in public that was deemed to incite "religious hatred".

It was a turning-point. Mr Erdogan defected from Welfare with fellow moderates to found the AKP in 2001. He and his friends said that they no longer believed in mixing religion with politics and that Turkish membership of the European Union was the AKP's chief goal. And when the AKP won the general election of November 2002, it formed a single-party government that did something unusual for Turkey: it kept its word.

The death penalty was abolished; the army's powers were trimmed; women were given more rights than at any time since Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the secular Turkish state, made both sexes equal before the law. Despite Mr Erdogan's calls for women to have "at least three children", abortion remains legal and easy. This silent revolution eventually shamed the EU into opening formal membership talks with Turkey in 2005, an achievement that had eluded all the AKP's predecessors in government.

The government's economic record was impressive, too. The economy

bounced back from its nadir in 2001, growing by a steady average annual rate of 6% or more. Inflation was tamed (though it has crept back up recently). Above all, foreign direct investment, previously paltry, hit record levels. For a while, Turkey seemed to have become a stable and prosperous sort of place. That is surely why 47% of voters backed the AKP in July 2007, a big jump from only 34% in 2002.

Many see the campaign to topple the AKP as part of a long battle pitting an old guard, used to monopolising wealth and power, against a rising class of pious Anatolians symbolised by the AKP. Others say it is mostly about an army that believes soldiers, not elected politicians, should have the final say over how the country is run.

Yet the real struggle "is between Islam and modernity", says Ismail Kara, a respected Islamic theologian. Adapting to the modern world without compromising their religious values is a dilemma that has long vexed Muslims. For Turkey the challenge is also to craft an identity that can embrace all its citizens, whether devout Muslims, hard-core secularists, Alevis or Kurds. If the generals had their way, every-



one would be happy to call himself a Turk, all would refrain from public displays of piety and nobody would ever challenge their authority. But the Kemalist straitjacket no longer fits the modern country. Opinion polls suggest that most Turks now identify themselves primarily as Muslims, not as Turks. The AKP did not create this mindset: rather, it was born from it.

The caliph of Istanbul

Islam has been intertwined with Turkishness ever since the Ottoman Sultan adopted the title of "Caliph", or spiritual leader, of the world's Muslims almost six centuries ago. When Ataturk abolished the caliphate in 1924 and launched his secular revolution, he did not efface piety; he drove it underground. Turkey's brand of secularism is not about separating religion from the state, as in France. It is about subordinating religion to the state. This is done through the *diyanet*, the state-run body that appoints imams to Turkey's 77,000 mosques and tells them what to preach, even sometimes writing their sermons.

In the early days of Ataturk's republic, the façade of modernity was propped up by zealous Kemalists, who fanned out on civilising missions across Anatolia. They would drink wine and dance the Charleston at officers' clubs in places like Kars. "My grandmother, she told me about the balls, the beautiful dresses. Kars was such a modern place then," sighs Arzu Orhankazi, a feminist activist. In truth, life outside the cities continued much as before: deeply traditional and desperately poor.

A big reason why Anatolia seemed less Islamist in the old days is because it was home to a large and vibrant community of Christians. But this demographic balance was brutally overturned by the mass killings and expulsions of Armenians and Greeks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Take Tokat, a leafy northern Anatolian town where Armenians made up nearly a third of the population before 1915. The only trace that remains of a once thriving Armenian community is a derelict cemetery overgrown with weeds and desecrated by treasure-hunting locals.

Much of this history is overlooked by the secular elite. Pressed for evidence of ►►

Plots and counterplots

Coup de grâce

ISTANBUL

A case is also brought against those planning a coup against the government

WHAT do a retired general, a business tycoon, a convicted murderer and a rabbi have in common? They may all be part of an ultra-nationalist gang called Ergenekon that is bent on overthrowing Turkey's AKP government. Its modus operandi is allegedly to spread disinformation, plant bombs, kill prominent citizens and foment such mayhem that the army will intervene.

On July 14th prosecutors charged 86 people with being involved in plotting against the AKP. Aykut Cengiz Engin, Istanbul's chief prosecutor, said the group's alleged crimes included the murder of a secular judge in Ankara in 2006 by a gunman who said he was avenging a court ruling against the Islamic headscarf. Mr Engin said a long indictment would be brought before an Istanbul court, which has a fortnight to decide whether to take the case.

Ergenekon (the name of a mythical homeland from which Turkic tribes were led by a she-wolf) has riveted the public ever since a cache of weapons was found in a retired officer's basement in Istanbul. Some of them bore army serial numbers. Yet many believed the affair would be hushed up, like earlier scandals that exposed the links between security officials and organised crime.

Then in June came the mass arrests of around 50 people said to be involved in Ergenekon, among them a shady retired general, Veli Kucuk. Mr Kucuk is alleged to have had a hand in the extra-judicial killings of Kurdish nationalists in the 1990s. More recently his name was linked to the murder of Hrant Dink, an outspoken ethnic Armenian editor, in Istanbul last year. The stakes were raised on July 1st with the arrest of two more retired generals for allegedly plotting two abortive coups against the AKP in 2004. Details of the plans were found in the leaked diaries of a former navy commander. Prosecutors are preparing a separate indictment against the men, and the army is co-operating.

This confounds the popular theory that Ergenekon is part of the struggle between the AKP and the top brass. Indeed, exhilarated liberals say the case proves that the army is no longer untouchable. But some doubt it. A columnist for *Milliyet*, a daily, reminded readers about a coup-maker "who darkened millions of lives". She was referring to Kenan Evren, the army chief who led the 1980 coup. He now lives in a seaside village painting nudes. Sacit Kayasu, a lawyer who tried to bring the ex-general to justice in 2000, has been struck off.

► creeping Islamisation under the AKP, they point to the growing number of women who wear the headscarf, which is proscribed as a symbol of Islamic militancy in state-run institutions and schools. Mr Erdogan's attempt to lift the ban for universities, which was later overturned by the constitutional court, is a big part of Mr Yalcinkaya's case against him and the AKP.

Yet surveys suggest that, except for a small group of militant pro-secularists, most Turks do not oppose Islamic headgear, least of all in universities. Its proliferation probably has little to do with Islamist fervour, but is linked to the influx of rural Anatolians into towns and cities. The exodus from the countryside accelerated under Turgut Ozal, a former prime minister who liberalised the economy in the early 1980s. For conservative families, covering their daughters' heads became a way of protecting them in a new and alien world.

Once urbanisation is complete the headscarf will begin to fade, says Faruk Birtek, a sociologist at Istanbul's Bogazici University. Bogazici was always refreshingly unbothered by students with headscarves. But the rules were tightened in the 1990s. And around the time the constitutional court in June overturned the new AKP law to let women with headscarves attend university, Bogazici's liberal female director was squeezed out.

Like many, Summeve Kavuncu, a sociology student at Bogazici, has been caught in the net. She complains that her stomach "gets all knotty each time I go to university. I no longer know whether to keep my scarf on or to take it off. The secularists look upon us as cockroaches, backward creatures who blot their landscape." Few would guess that Ms Kavuncu belongs to a band of pious activists who dare to speak up for gays and transvestites.

Social and class snobbery may partly drive the secularists' contempt for their pious peers. But it is ignorance that drives their fear. Bridging these worlds can be tricky, "because Islam is not like other religions, it's a 24-hour lifestyle," comments Yilmaz Ensaroglu, an Islamic intellectual. "Devout Muslims pray five times a day."

Wine, women and schools

The biggest fault-lines in Turkey's sharpening secular/religious divide concern alcohol, women and education. When Welfare rose to power in the 1990s, one of its first acts was to ban booze in restaurants run by municipalities under its control. Party officials argued that pious citizens had the right to affordable leisure space that did not offend their values. Some AKP mayors have pushed this line further. They want to exile drinkers to "red zones" outside their cities. A newly prosperous class of devout Muslims is creating its own gated communities, and a growing number of hotels boast segregated beaches and no liquor. A

survey shows that the number of such retreats has quadrupled under the AKP. Taha Erdem, a respected pollster, says the number of women wearing the turban, the least revealing headscarf of all, has quadrupled too.

All this is feeding secularist paranoia about creeping Islam. Are these fears justified? In the big cities conservative Anatolians are expanding their living space. But this is not at the secularists' expense. Life for urban middle-class Turks, and certainly for the rich, continues much as before. It is in rural backwaters that freewheeling Turks fall prey to what Serif Mardin, a respected sociologist, calls "neighbourhood pressure". For instance, Tarsus, a sleepy eastern Mediterranean town (and birthplace of St Paul), made headlines recently when two teenage girls were attacked by syringe-wielding assailants who sprayed their legs with an acid-like substance because their skirts were "too short".

Habits in the workplace are changing too. Female school teachers have been reprimanded for wearing short-sleeved blouses. During the Ramadan fast last year the governor's office in Kars stopped serving tea for a while. Secular Turks contend that Islam will inevitably wrest more space from their lives and must be reined in now. With no credible opposition in sight, many look to the army as secularism's last defender.

So do many of Turkey's estimated 15m Alevis, who practise an idiosyncratic form of Islam: they do not pray in mosques, they are not teetotal and their women do not cover their heads. The government has not kept its promise formally to recognise Alevi houses of worship, called *cemevler*. Nor has it heeded Alevi demands for their children to be exempted from compulsory religious-education classes that are domi-

nated by Sunni Islam. "There is a systematic campaign to brainwash us, to make us Sunnis," complains Muharrem Erkan, an Alevi activist in Tokat.

The battle for Turkey's soul is being waged most fiercely in the country's schools. Egitim-Sen, a leftist teachers' union, charges that Islam has been permeating textbooks under the AKP. Darwin's theory of evolution is being whittled away and creationism is seeping in. Islamist fraternities, or *tarikats*, continue to ensnare students by offering free accommodation. The quid pro quo is that they fast and pray, and girls cover their heads.

Yet the biggest boost to religious education came from the army itself, after it seized power for the third time in 1980. Communism was the enemy at the time, so the generals encouraged Islam as an antidote. Religious teaching became mandatory. Islamic clerical-training schools, known as *imam hatip*, mushroomed.

Another example of how army meddling goes awry is Hizbullah, Turkey's deadliest home-grown Islamic terrorist outfit. Hizbullah (no relation to its Lebanese namesake) is alleged to have been encouraged by rogue security forces in the late 1980s to fight separatist PKK rebels in the Kurdish south-east. The group spiralled out of control until police raids in 2001 knocked it out of action. But not entirely. Former Hizbullah militants are said to have regrouped in cells linked to al-Qaeda, and took part in the 2003 bombings of Jewish and British targets in Istanbul.

Banning the AKP could strengthen the hand of such extremists, who share the fierce secularists' belief that Islam and democracy cannot co-exist. If instead the AKP stayed in power, that would bring Islamists closer to the mainstream. "Six years in government has tempered even the most radical AKP members," comments Mr Ensaroglu. True enough. AKP members of parliament wear Zegna suits and happily shake women's hands; their wives get nose jobs and watch football matches; their children are more likely to study English than the Koran.

Had Mr Erdogan made an effort to reach out to secular Turks, "we might not be where we are today," concedes a senior AKP official. He missed several chances. The first came last autumn when the AKP was trying to patch together a new constitution to replace the one written by the generals in the 1980s. Mr Erdogan never bothered to consult his secular opponents. He ignored them again when passing his law to let girls wear headscarves at universities. Critics say that his big election win turned his head. "Erdogan accepts no advice and no criticism," whispers an AKP deputy. "He's become a tyrant."

Maybe he has. But that does not mean he deserves to be barred from politics, and his party banned. ■



Erdogan: too tyrannical, not too Islamist

Iraqis back Obama, not his withdrawal plan

By Sabrina Tavernise
and Richard A. Oppel Jr.

BAGHDAD: A tough Iraqi general, a former special operations officer with a baritone voice and a barrel chest, melted into smiles when asked about Barack Obama.

"Everyone in Iraq likes him," said the general, Nassir al-Hiti. "I like him. He's young. Very active. We would be very happy if he was elected president."

But mention Obama's plan for withdrawing U.S. soldiers, and the general stiffens.

"Very difficult," he said, shaking his head. "Any army would love to work without any help, but let me be honest: For now, we don't have that ability."

Thus in a few brisk sentences, the general summed up the conflicting emotions about Obama in Iraq, the place outside the United States with perhaps the most riding on its relationship with him.

There was, as Obama prepared to visit here, excitement over a man who is the anti-Bush in almost every way: a Democrat who opposed a war that many Iraqis feel devastated their nation. And many in the political elite recognize that Obama shares their hope for a more rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

But his support for troop withdrawal cuts both ways, reflecting a deep internal quandary in Iraq: For many middle-class Iraqis, affection for Obama is tempered by worry that his proposal could lead to chaos in a nation already devastated by war. Many Iraqis also acknowledge that security gains in recent months were achieved partly by the buildup of U.S. troops, which Obama opposed and his likely Republican opponent, John McCain, supported.

"In no way do I favor the occupation of my country," said Abu Ibrahim, a Western-educated businessman in Baghdad, "but there is a moral obligation on the Americans at this point."

Like many Iraqis, Ibrahim sees Obama favorably, describing him as "much more humane than Bush or McCain."

"He seems like a nice guy," Ibrahim said. But he hoped that Obama's statements about a relatively fast pullout were mere campaign talk.

"It's a very big assumption that just because he wants to pull troops out, he'll be able to do it," he said. "The American strategy in the region requires troops to remain in Iraq for a long time."



Nassir al-Hiti, an Iraqi general, likes Barack Obama, even if Obama's proposed withdrawal of U.S. troops would be "very difficult."

It is not certain exactly when Obama will arrive in Baghdad or whom he will meet. Such official trips are shrouded in secrecy for security reasons.

But as word spread of the impending visit — Obama's first as the presumed Democratic nominee for president — there were fresh reminders of the country's vulnerability. In the past two days alone, around 70 Iraqis were killed in suicide bomb attacks, despite the recent improvements in safety that Obama uses as one argument for withdrawal.

And despite those improvements, street interviews remain risky in Iraq. For this article, 18 people were interviewed about their opinions of Obama, in Baghdad, in the northern city of Mosul, in the holy Shiite city of Najaf and in the Sunni suburb of Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad.

Even as some Iraqis disagreed about Obama's stance on withdrawal, they expressed broad approval for him personally as an improvement over Bush, who remains unpopular among broad portions of Iraqi society five years after the war began. No one interviewed expressed a strong dislike for Obama.

Saad Sultan, an official in an Iraqi government ministry, contended that Obama could give a fresh start to relations between the Arab world and the United States. Obama has never practiced Islam; his father, whom he barely knew, was born a Muslim but became a nonbeliever. Sultan, however, like many Iraqis, feels instinctively close to the senator because he heard that he had Muslim roots.

"Every time I see Obama, I say: 'He's close to us. Maybe he'll see us in a different way,'" Sultan said. "I find Obama very close to my heart."

Race is also a consideration. Muhammad Ahmed Kareem, 49, an engineer from Mosul, said he had high expectations of Obama because his experience as a black man in the United States might give him more empathy for others who feel oppressed by a powerful West. "Blacks suffered a lot of discrimination, much like Arabs," Kareem said. "That's why we expect that his tenure will be much better."

But Obama also frames the sometimes contradictory feelings Iraqis have about the United States as the withdrawal of troops has moved closer to the political mainstream in both countries. Already, the units brought in for the "surge" last year have left, and the Bush administration has in recent days acknowledged the need both to transfer troops from Iraq to an ever-more-volatile Afghanistan and to recognize that a broader withdrawal is an "aspirational goal" for Iraqis.

Obama favors a withdrawal that would remove most combat troops from Iraq within 16 months of taking office. Despite some fears about such a departure, that stance is not unpopular here.

IRAN

Six moyens pour se venger d'une attaque israélienne

Si Israël bombarde les sites nucléaires iraniens, Téhéran s'en prendra aux installations pétrolières du Golfe, aux bases américaines dans la région et lancera des missiles capables de toucher l'Etat hébreu.

YEDIOT AHARONOT

Tel-Aviv

Face au feu roulant de déclarations et d'avertissements émis ces derniers jours par Téhéran, on peut se demander à quoi ressemblerait une riposte iranienne à une attaque sur ses sites nucléaires. Apparemment, les Iraniens, loin de chercher à éviter une telle frappe, préfèrent mettre le monde en garde contre ses implications éventuelles. Voici quelques-unes des mesures que pourrait prendre l'Iran :

1) Mener des attaques ponctuelles dans le Golfe. Pendant la guerre Iran-Irak, dans les années 1980, les deux Etats se sont efforcés de frapper les exportations pétrolières de leur adversaire. A cette fin, l'armée iranienne avait eu recours à des attaques ponctuelles contre des pétroliers et d'autres navires commerciaux dans le Golfe. Les spécialistes considèrent que les gardiens de la révolution, branche essentielle des forces armées iraniennes, aux motivations idéologiques islamiques radicales, étaient la force qui se cachait derrière cette méthode.

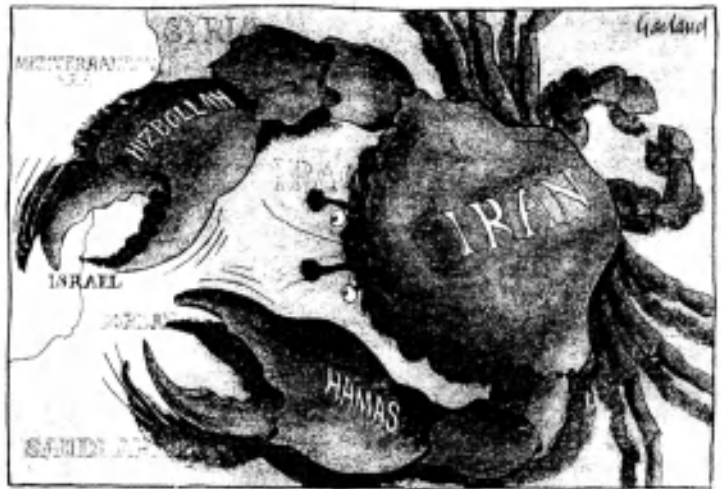
Cette tactique reposait avant tout sur des hors-bord équipés de missiles. Les gardiens de la révolution ont déjà averti par le passé qu'ils disposaient de volontaires prêts à lancer des attaques suicides et à semer le chaos dans le détroit d'Ormuz, accès stratégique au golfe Arabo-Persique.

FACE AUX AMÉRICAINS, L'IRAN S'ALLIERAIT À SON PIRE ENNEMI

2) S'attaquer aux intérêts américains et israéliens. Le guide suprême iranien, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a déclaré que l'Iran attaquerait les intérêts américains dans la région s'il était acculé. L'armée iranienne a annoncé qu'elle possédait des missiles capables de couler de "grands vaisseaux" et d'autres capables de frapper des objectifs au-delà du Golfe, par exemple des bases américaines au Qatar et à Bahreïn. Les analystes militaires estiment cependant que les systèmes d'armes américains sont en mesure d'intercepter les missiles iraniens.

Les Iraniens disposent par ailleurs de missiles Shihab 3, d'une portée de 2 000 kilomètres, susceptibles de toucher l'Etat hébreu. Mohammad Ali

▲ Dessin de Garland paru dans The Daily Telegraph, Londres.



Jafari, commandant en chef des gardiens de la révolution, a prévenu le 28 juin dernier qu'Israël était à portée

des missiles iraniens, ajoutant qu'Israël "sait qu'il subira un coup terrible s'il s'en prend à l'Iran". Evoquant l'éventualité d'une frappe américaine, il a répondu que, sans coopération israélienne, la menace américaine d'une action contre l'Iran ne se concrétiserait pas.

3) Encourager la violence en Irak. Washington a déjà accusé l'Iran de soutenir les groupes armés en Irak, ce que dément Téhéran. Des diplomates occidentaux soulignent que l'Iran pourrait faciliter un afflux d'armes en Irak, ce qui compliquerait la mission de l'armée américaine. L'Iran entretient

des liens historiques avec les chiites irakiens, certains de leurs dirigeants s'étant réfugiés dans ce pays pendant la dictature de Saddam Hussein. Mais les commentateurs rappellent que le niveau de contrôle qu'exercent les Iraniens sur la politique irakienne reste difficile à évaluer.

4) Déstabiliser l'Afghanistan. Des responsables occidentaux affirment que les talibans ont obtenu des armes iraniennes, peut-être pas directement, mais par le biais de trafiquants de drogue et d'armes. L'Iran chiite est fermement opposé au zèle sunnite des

talibans. Un conflit a failli éclater entre les deux pays quand l'Afghanistan était gouverné par les talibans. Mais les commentateurs considèrent qu'en cas d'affrontement avec les Etats-Unis

l'Iran pourrait soutenir son pire ennemi, du moment qu'il gêne les Américains.

5) Faire appel aux alliés régionaux. Le commandant en chef des gardiens de la révolution a averti le 28 juin dernier que, si l'Iran était bombardé, ses amis pourraient prendre Israël pour cible. Il n'a pas nommé cité le Hezbollah, mais a rappelé que les chiites du Liban-Sud ne resteraient pas passifs si l'Iran était attaqué. Il a avancé l'idée que les combattants du Hamas, soutenus financièrement par l'Iran, pourraient également intervenir, bien qu'il ne les ait pas directement nommés.

6) Recourir aux prises d'otages. L'Occident a accusé l'Iran d'avoir planifié et épaulé plusieurs enlèvements d'Américains et d'autres étrangers durant la guerre civile au Liban. Les négociations qui eurent lieu par la suite portèrent, entre autres, sur la vente d'armes à l'Iran dans son conflit avec l'Irak, en échange d'une aide iranienne à la libération des otages détenus par les groupes terroristes libanais. Le vide laissé par le retrait des forces syriennes du Liban a pour l'essentiel été comblé par l'Iran, qui soutient le Hezbollah. On peut aussi envisager que Téhéran encourage le mouvement chiite à enlever d'autres soldats de Tshahal sur la frontière nord d'Israël.

Dudi Cohen

Turquie : 86 mises en examen pour coup d'État

LE FIGARO mardi 15 juillet 2008

JUSTICE

Des généraux à la retraite, des avocats et des hommes d'affaires feraient partie d'Ergenekon, un réseau ultranationaliste.

Istanbul

IL FAUDRA encore patienter pour connaître le contenu des 2 455 pages de l'acte d'accusation. Le procureur en chef d'Istanbul s'est contenté hier d'en dévoiler les grandes lignes sans détailler les charges qui pèsent sur les suspects : 86 personnes inculpées, dont 48 en détention provisoire, sont accusées de « crimes tels que la formation de groupe terroriste armé » et de « tentative de renverser le gouvernement par la force ». L'affaire Ergenekon – du nom du berceau mythique du peuple turc en Asie centrale – a débuté en juin 2007 avec la découverte d'une cache d'armes

dans un faubourg d'Istanbul. Depuis, l'enquête sur cette cellule clandestine renforce les tensions politiques en Turquie, déjà plongée dans l'incertitude avec le procès en cours contre le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) au pouvoir.

Les dizaines de personnalités visées par l'acte d'accusation appartiennent toutes à la mouvance ultranationaliste : Dogu Perinçek, le dirigeant du Parti des travailleurs, un groupuscule d'extrême gauche, Kemal Kerincsiz, l'avocat d'extrême droite qui a mené la campagne contre les intellectuels turcs qui dénonçaient le génocide arménien, ou encore Veli Küçük, le fondateur du Jitem, commando clandestin de gendarmerie établi pendant la guerre civile dans le sud-est, sont sous les verrous depuis le mois de janvier.

Tous sont suspectés d'avoir fomenté des actions pour désta-

biliser le gouvernement islamo-conservateur et préparer le terrain à une intervention militaire. Selon les médias, Ergenekon pourrait ainsi être impliqué dans de nombreuses affaires qui ont ébranlé la Turquie depuis deux ans : l'assassinat du journaliste d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink, celui d'un juge du Conseil d'État et les meurtres de trois protestants, égorgés à Malatya.

Le dernier coup de filet, le 1^{er} juillet, a eu un immense retentissement : deux généraux

à la retraite, les plus hauts gradés jamais interpellés, ont été arrêtés. Ils sont soupçonnés d'être à la tête d'Ergenekon. L'un d'eux, Sener Eruygur, ancien chef de la gendarmerie, est le président de l'Association pour la pensée d'Atatürk, organisatrice des manifestations laïques contre le gouvernement en 2007. Ces dernières arrestations font l'objet d'un acte d'accusation séparé.

Dysfonctionnements de la justice

La presse libérale s'est félicitée de l'arrestation des « pachas putschistes ». Mais la concomitance de l'opération de police avec la plaidoirie devant la Cour constitutionnelle du procureur en chef de la Cour de cassation qui réclame la fermeture de l'AKP pour « activités antilaïques » a été critiquée. De nombreux observateurs reprochent également à l'AKP de profiter du démantèlement d'Ergenekon pour régler ses comptes avec ses adversaires. Début juillet, le décès dû à un cancer d'un homme d'affaires qui avait été incarcéré en juin 2007 a mis en lumière des dysfonctionnements de la justice dans cette enquête. L'éditorialiste Yusuf Kanli, du *Turkish Daily News*, ne doute pas que des « éléments » préfèrent « fomenter des coups » au lieu de respecter « le processus démocratique ». Mais il réclame « un acte d'accusation crédible ». Une cour devrait se prononcer dans un délai de deux semaines et décider de l'ouverture d'un procès.

LAURE MARCHAND



Le procureur en chef d'Istanbul, Aykut Cengiz Engin, a présenté à la presse, hier, l'acte d'accusation qui pèse sur les inculpés, soupçonnés d'avoir préparé le terrain à une intervention militaire. Ibrahim Usta/AP

Bagdad refuse le projet américain sur le futur statut des GI

Le Monde
Jeudi 17 juillet 2008

ENTRE John McCain qui entend que l'Amérique reste en Irak « jusqu'à la victoire » et Barack Obama, qui veut rappeler l'essentiel des troupes « de combat » présentement stationnées dans le pays (environ un tiers des 146 000 soldats sur place), Bagdad ne veut pas choisir. En tout cas, pas tout de suite, avant les élections capitales qui doivent avoir lieu en octobre pour choisir les maires, les gouverneurs et les « députés » des assemblées régionales dans les 18 provinces du pays.

En réclamant que l'accord qui devra codifier la présence de l'armée américaine en Irak au-delà du 31 décembre, date à laquelle les résolutions onusiennes qui la légalisent depuis 2003 prennent fin, comprend un « calendrier de retrait » des soldats étrangers, le premier ministre irakien, Nouri Al-Maliki, a virtuellement mis

fin aux négociations sur le sujet. Le président Bush l'a encore répété, mardi, il « rejette fortement » les « calendriers artificiels de retrait ». En conséquence, Ali Al-Dabbagh, porte-parole du premier ministre, a indiqué qu'il était désormais « fort possible » que l'accord à long terme (dix ans au moins) sur le futur statut des forces (Statute of Forces Agreement, SOFA) « soit retardé jusqu'à l'élection d'une nouvelle administration » à Washing-

ton. Après cinq mois de négociations sur le sujet, il n'est plus question, à Bagdad, que de signer un simple « accord intérimaire », valable une année. Cette approche satisfait les démocrates américains. Dans son « plan pour l'Irak » publié lundi 14 juillet dans la presse américaine et partiellement réitéré mardi, Barack Obama, qui veut « mettre fin à la guerre » dans ce

pays, afin de dégager des troupes pour les envoyer en Afghanistan, a estimé que l'appel de M. Maliki constituait une « énorme opportunité » pour son pays de revoir sa stratégie en Irak. Le candidat démocrate à l'élection présidentielle de novembre « affinera » sa position après la visite qu'il doit effectuer sur place.

Conséquence de la forte baisse des incidents armés quotidiens enregistrés sur le terrain depuis l'automne 2007, il n'est pas exclu que plusieurs milliers de soldats soient encore retirés d'Irak d'ici à la fin de l'année. Les discussions sur le SOFA achoppent sur plusieurs points : l'administration Bush veut conserver l'immunité dont jouissent ses soldats et ses milliers de contractuels civils. Elle veut continuer de contrôler l'espace aérien irakien, conserver les dizaines de bases qu'elle

occupe et garder le droit d'arrêter tout citoyen irakien « suspect ».

Dans un pays où 70 % des habitants demandent régulièrement le départ des « troupes d'occupation », aucun gouvernement ne peut évidemment accepter ces exigences. Encore moins en période pré-électorale, quand tous les partis en course affichent des postures nationalistes. Ce qui n'empêche pas les arrière-pensées. « Les Kurdes, avouait récemment, dans le quotidien saoudien *Asharq Al-Awsat*, le ministre de l'intérieur, Jawad Al-Bolani, sont pour le SOFA : en public et en privé. Les chiites sont pour publiquement, mais secrètement opposés. Quant aux sunnites, ils sont contre en public, mais pour en privé. » La négociation reprendra en 2009 avec le nouvel hôte de la Maison Blanche. ■

PATRICE CLAUDE

Etats-Unis Le candidat démocrate à la Maison Blanche promet de retirer les troupes d'Irak avant l'été 2010

Barack Obama précise les axes de sa diplomatie



NEW YORK
CORRESPONDANT

Convaincu que la « prédominance » de la question irakienne « distrait » les Etats-Unis de la véritable menace terroriste, le candidat démocrate à l'élection présidentielle de novembre, Barack Obama, a promis, s'il est élu président, de rapatrier la plupart des troupes américaines d'Irak avant l'été 2010, pour « recentrer » les ressources américaines sur le « combat contre Al-Qaida en Afghanistan et au Pakistan ». Son adversaire, le candidat républicain John McCain, n'a pas réalisé que « la ligne de front centrale de la guerre contre le terrorisme n'est pas l'Irak et ne l'a jamais été », a dénoncé le sénateur de l'Illinois, dans un discours de politique étrangère prononcé, mardi 15 juillet, à Washington.

« Dès mon premier jour en poste, je donnerai à notre armée pour nouvelle mission de

mettre un terme à cette guerre », a précisé M. Obama, affirmant que les Etats-Unis pouvaient « redéployer sans danger » leurs troupes de combat en moins de seize mois. Sept ans après le début de la guerre, son administration ne garderait alors en Irak qu'une « force résiduelle pour (...) s'attaquer aux vestiges d'Al-Qaida, protéger les diplomates et personnels militaires [américains] et entraîner les forces de sécurité irakiennes », sans chercher à conserver des bases permanentes dans le pays.

Le président George Bush a, pour sa part, rejeté « les calendriers artificiels de retrait », tandis que John McCain répliquait que l'Amérique pouvait « gagner à la fois en Irak et en Afghanistan ». Le sénateur de l'Arizona préconise d'envoyer en Afghanistan environ 15 000 hommes de plus, sur le modèle de la « vague » de renforts qui a, selon lui, permis de « renverser le cours de la guerre en Irak ». M. McCain a également raillé M. Obama pour avoir détaillé ses vues à quelques jours d'une tournée à l'étranger – notamment en Irak et en

Afghanistan – qui était censée l'aider à se forger une opinion.

Mais, selon le candidat démocrate, la guerre en Irak, dont M. McCain était, a-t-il rappelé, « l'un des plus chauds partisans », a « coûté des milliers de vies américaines, près d'un trillion de dollars [et] aliéné les alliés ». « Nous ne pouvons tolérer cette pression sur nos forces pour une guerre qui ne

nous a pas apporté d'avantage de sécurité », a martelé Barack Obama, opposant de la première heure à l'intervention en Irak. Les Etats-Unis devront quand même « être aussi prudents en [se] retirant d'Irak [qu'ils ont] été négligents en y entrant », a-t-il précisé.

Contraint d'admettre que la « vague » de renforts défendue par John McCain en Irak avait, ces dix-huit derniers mois, permis de « réduire le niveau de violence », M. Obama a noté que, pendant ce temps, en Afghanistan, « les talibans sont passés à l'offensive », et qu'au Pakistan, « Al-Qaida bénéficie de plus en plus d'un sanctuaire ». « Nous manquons de ressources pour terminer le travail à cause

« La ligne de front centrale de la guerre contre le terrorisme n'est pas l'Irak et ne l'a jamais été »

Barack Obama

Le Monde
Jeudi 17 juillet 2008

de notre engagement envers l'Irak », a-t-il dit, promettant de faire de ce combat la « priorité absolue », en envoyant notamment 10 000 soldats supplémentaires.

La plus grande menace se trouve « dans les régions tribales du Pakistan, où les terroristes s'entraînent et d'où les insurgés frappent en Afghanistan », estime Barack Obama, qui prévient que, si le Pakistan ne fait rien, les Etats-Unis « supprimeront des cibles terroristes de haut niveau comme [Oussama] Ben Laden si elles sont dans [leur] ligne de mire ». Et d'ajouter : « Nous devons offrir autre chose qu'un chèque en blanc à un général [Pervez Musharraf] qui a perdu la confiance de son peuple. »

« Le fait que le président nous ait entraînés sous des motifs trompeurs dans une guerre malencontreuse ne diminue en rien la menace que constituent des armes de destruction massive aux mains de terroristes », estime par ailleurs le candidat démocrate, qui veut mettre tous les matériels nucléaires « à l'abri des terroristes et des Etats-voyous ».

A propos de l'Iran, M. Obama affirme ne pas pouvoir « tolérer des armes nucléaires aux mains d'Etats qui soutiennent le ter-

rorisme », mais a réitéré sa proposition de « rencontrer les dirigeants iraniens compétents ».

M. Obama promet en outre de mettre un terme à la « tyrannie du pétrole » qui, selon lui, « finance les bombes des terroristes de Bagdad à Beyrouth ». Le changement climatique représente pour le sénateur démocrate une « crise de sécurité nationale », qui menace les côtes américaines et risque de mettre les peuples en compétition pour l'eau et la nourriture. Evoquant une « nouvelle ère de coopération internationale », M. Obama promet enfin de « reconstruire » les alliances des Etats-Unis. « Pendant huit ans, nous avons payé le prix d'une politique étrangère qui donne des leçons sans écouter », a-t-il déploré.

Selon un sondage ABC-Washington Post publié mardi, Barack Obama devance John McCain de 8 points, mais le candidat républicain reste considéré comme mieux à même de régler le problème irakien par une courte majorité d'électeurs. ■

PHILIPPE BOLOPION

CHIFFRES

146 000. C'est le nombre de militaires américains déployés en Irak au sein de la Force multinationale. Le président George Bush avait annoncé, en septembre 2007, qu'il entendait réduire progressivement le contingent américain de 20 à 15 brigades. Au terme de ce retrait, le nombre de soldats américains devait donc s'établir à 146 000 hommes en juillet, auxquels s'ajoutent, au sein de cette Force multinationale, quelque 10 000 hommes originaires d'une dizaine de pays.

4 000. C'est le nombre de soldats américains morts en Irak depuis 2003.

32 000. C'est le nombre de soldats américains déployés en Afghanistan au sein de la Force internationale d'assistance à la sécurité (ISAF) et de l'opération « Liberté immuable », composée à 85 % d'Américains.

Le Monde

Mercredi 16 juillet 2008

SYRIE DROITS DE L'HOMME

Les rares dissidents syriens restent soumis à une répression impitoyable de la part des autorités

LA QUESTION des droits de l'homme en Syrie a bien été évoquée par le président Nicolas Sarkozy lors de son entretien à Paris, samedi 12 juillet, avec son homologue Bachar Al-Assad. Dans les entretiens qu'il a accordés aux médias français avant sa visite en France, la première depuis décembre 2002, le président syrien avait répondu par avance aux critiques en estimant notamment que les dernières condamnations prononcées à l'encontre des principales figures de la dissidence syrienne avaient sanctionné des comportements portant atteinte à l'Etat.

Lorsqu'il est interrogé sur la situation des libertés depuis qu'il a accédé à la présidence de la Syrie en juillet 2000, M. Al-Assad avance souvent l'argument du relativisme culturel et la lenteur des réformes engagées. Avec ses visiteurs occidentaux, il arrive aussi qu'il joue de l'épouvantail islamiste, comme d'autres sur le pourtour méditerranéen, ou qu'il mette en cause les relations entretenues, selon lui, par ses opposants à ses adversaires étrangers les plus déterminés, à commencer par Walid Joumblatt, le dirigeant du Parti socialiste progressiste libanais.

A la différence de son père, Hafez Al-Assad, confronté dans les années 1970 et 1980 à un véritable mouvement insurrectionnel armé alimenté par une frange radicale du mouvement des Frères musulmans, le président syrien est défié depuis son accession au pouvoir par un embryon de dissidence privilégiant le débat politique. Cette dissidence a été étouffée une première fois, en 2001, lorsqu'un coup d'arrêt a été porté aux « salons politiques » qui avaient vu le jour à la faveur d'un bref « printemps de Damas ».

Dissidence décimée

Une deuxième vague de répression a été déclenchée, en 2006, après la signature par des intellectuels, dont le journaliste et écrivain Michel Kilo, d'une pétition syro-libanaise faisant suite au retrait des troupes syriennes stationnées au Liban. Des arrestations ont enfin suivi la réunion à Damas, en décembre 2007, de membres de cette opposition. Selon l'organisation de défense des droits de l'homme Human Rights Watch, treize responsables sont actuellement poursuivis pour « affaiblissement du sentiment national » (une accusation por-

tée contre un blogueur arrêté en 2007) mais aussi pour « diffusion de nouvelles fausses ou exagérées qui pourraient affecter le moral du pays » et « appartenance à une organisation formée dans le but de changer la structure de l'Etat ». A ce harcèlement s'ajoute la répression de la contestation kurde, localisée dans le nord-est du pays, et qui s'est manifestée à plusieurs reprises depuis les émeutes de Qamichli, en 2004.

La dissidence syrienne a été littéralement décimée par ces arrestations. Ancien homme d'affaires et ancien député, Riyad Seif a été arrêté, en décembre 2007, après avoir déjà purgé des peines de prison. Son état de santé alimente l'inquiétude de ses proches. Autres responsables déjà passés par la prison, pour des peines allant de deux à dix-sept ans, les journalistes Fayez Sara, Ali Abdallah et Akram Bounni sont à nouveau derrière les barreaux.

A près de 80 ans, le plus célèbre opposant syrien, Riyad Turk, ancien secrétaire général du Parti communiste-bureau politique qui a déjà passé plus de dix-sept ans en prison serait, selon certaines sources, entré en clandestinité. ■

GILLES PARIS

Iraqi Kurdish Alliance says most blocs agree to Kirkuk poll delay

Most of the political blocs agreed to postpone the elections in Kirkuk.

Sharqiyah TV | BBC

Dubai Al-Sharqiyah television highlighted between on 18 July highlighted the National Dialogue Council Chairman Khalaf al-Ulwayyan's accusations to the Iraqi Islamic Party of nominating people for senior ministerial positions without consultation with the other components of the Iraqi Al-Tawafuq or Accord Front. It also cited a Kurdish official as saying that Talabani might use his veto power if the Provincial Council Elections Law is endorsed without taking into consideration the Kurdish demands.

"The Kurdistan Alliance List asserted that there is consensus among most of the blocs on postponing the elections in Kirkuk for six months, warning that Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, the head of the list, might use his veto power if the Provincial Council Elections Law is endorsed without taking into consideration the Kurdish demands. Dr Mahmud Othman, representative of the list in the Council of Representatives, said: Efforts are still ongoing and it is expected to reach a compromise formula since most of the political blocs agreed to postpone the elections in Kirkuk, but the current problem is what is going to take place during the postponement period. Earlier reports said that the PUK, the Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council, and the Islamic Da'wah Party-Al-Maliki wing, struck a deal on sharing the benefits among themselves in return for accepting the PUK's proposal of disapproving the equal distribution of the Kirkuk Provincial Council seats among the three main components, the Arabs, the Kurds, and the Turkomans. Othman warned that if the Provincial Council Elections Law is endorsed without the approval of the Kurdistan Alliance, it will be returned to the Council of Representatives since the Presidential Council will reject it through

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who will use For his part, Umar Abd-al-Sattar, member



his veto power."

"Khalaf al-Ulwayyan, member of the Iraqi Al-Tawafuq Front, threatened that the National Dialogue Council, of which he is the chairman, will take a position, which he did not specify, if the post of deputy prime minister is given to the Iraqi Islamic Party [IIP]. He objected to giving the post of deputy prime minister to the IIP since the latter already has the posts of vice president and director of the Presidency Office, pointing out that the National Dialogue Council will take a position against the list of names in the Council of Representatives' session on Saturday. Al-Ulwayyan accused the IIP of appropriating decision-making power and nominating people for senior positions without consultation with the front. He added: Although Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki asked the IIP to ensure that the list of nominated ministers is signed by the components of the front, it only included the signature of Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi."

of the Iraqi Al-Tawafuq Front, accused Khalaf al-Ulwayyan, chairman of the National Dialogue Council, of trying to hinder the return of the front to the Iraqi Government. He added that the IIP has no intention to take the ministerial posts given to the front, pointing out the Al-Ulwayyan - led National Dialogue Council was given the top post in the government; namely, the post of speaker of the Council of Representatives."

For His part, Salim al-Juburi, spokesman for the Iraqi Al-Tawafuq Front, said that Al-Ulwayyan's objection comes within the framework of the attempts to create a rift within the front, adding that a withdrawal from the parliament's session might take place when the list of names is put to vote."

- "The Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] discussed the political developments in Iraq and the relationship between the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the central government, particularly with regard to the current dispute

over oil control in the region. Kurdish sources said that the meeting, which was chaired by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in his capacity as the PUK leader, thoroughly discussed the developments related to the problem of oil control between Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, and exchanged views and made decisions on this issue in order to define the PUK's policy towards it in the coming stage.

The sources added that the meeting set a work programme on the general situations in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the PUK's duties in the region, and the relations between the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the government in Baghdad."

- "The Iranian artillery renewed its shelling of the border villages in Bashdar District in Sulaimaniyah Governorate and Suran District in the Erbil Governorate at a late hour last night. News agencies cited local residents as saying that the heavy Iranian artillery shelling of Qindil Mountain in Bashdar District started late last night and caused fire on agricultural lands in six villages. More than 20 border villages in Bashdar District came under sporadic Iranian artillery shelling in the past few weeks on the pretext that members of the PEJAK [Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan] Party, which is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party, are present there. The shelling led most of the families to move to secure areas.

The Iranian artillery heavily shelled villages in Sidikan Subdistrict in northeastern Arbil last night, forcing the residents to leave their villages. The Iraqi Government did not issue any clarification with regard to the repeated Iranian shelling."



Kurdistan Regional Government

21 July 2008

Prime Minister Barzani thanks outgoing Danish Ambassador

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) - Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani thanked the outgoing Danish Ambassador Bo Eric Weber, who was on a farewell visit to Erbil, for his outstanding contribution to the friendship between the Kurdistan Region and Denmark.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Barzani met Mr Weber and his wife, who were accompanied by the Danish Consul General, last week during their farewell visit to Kurdistan's capital. The Prime Minister thanked the ambassador for his dedication and service, and wished him the greatest success in his next posting.

After their meeting Prime Minister Barzani said, "Denmark is playing a supportive role throughout Iraq and has been a strong friend to the people of the Kurdistan Region in our relations with a greater Europe." He added, "I hope that Denmark will continue to assist the Kurdistan Region with training courses which remain important for the political development of the KRG. Cooperation is mutually beneficial and there is much potential in furthering business and cultural ties between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Denmark."



On Ambassador Weber's initiative, the Danish government has included the Kurdistan Region's civil servants in its capacity building training courses. Denmark also has implemented successful voluntary returns programmes for returning citizens of the Kurdistan Region.

Mr Weber said, "I would like to commend the KRG for the positive political progress that has been made. During my time in Iraq, Denmark has developed strong relations with the KRG, through the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Foreign Relations. I believe this friendship will continue to grow into the future."

He added, "I'm very happy to see great economic growth occurring throughout the Region. Such development is a positive sign of the changing environment of Iraq. I wish the region continued success and I hope to return someday in the future."

Mr Weber also met Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani; Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations; Mr Karim Sinjari, the Minister of State for the Interior; and foreign diplomatic representatives based in Erbil. He attended the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the Rotana hotel which is under construction in Erbil.

DEUTSCHE WELLE 21 July 2008

Germany to Open Consulate-General in Kurdish Part of Iraq

Germany is to open a consulate-general with a senior diplomat in charge in Arbil, part of the Kurdish region of Iraq.

Officials in Berlin made the announcement on Monday, July 22, a day before Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki begins talks in the German capital.

Germany already has a small office in Arbil. A consulate-general is a full-scale mission outside a nation's capital. The mission would open at the start of 2009 once security issues had been settled, the foreign ministry said.

Boosting trade

Al-Maliki was set to meet on Tuesday in Berlin with Chancellor Angela Merkel to press for more German investment in and trade with Iraq. German businesses are already operating in the relatively calm north.

Aides said Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier set out the plans in a phone call Monday to his Iraqi counterpart, Hoshiar Sibari.

Arbil is capital of a predominantly Kurdish province also called Arbil.

Germany's embassy in the capital Baghdad has been hampered by its location outside the most secure, US-guarded part of the city.



United Press International

Lebanon to invest in Iraqi Kurdistan

ERBIL, Iraq, July 21, 2008 (UPI) -- Lebanon sees Iraqi Kurdistan as a potential partner for business and investment opportunities, the Kurdistan Regional Government said Monday.

Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani welcomed Lebanese Tourism Minister Joseph Sarkis, who visited the region with a delegation of officials from Beirut.

"The Lebanese government hopes that relations with the KRG continue to grow and that business and investment ties assist in expanding our friendship," Sarkis said.

Sarkis told Barzani the economic and security situation in the Kurdish region gave regional partners incentive to invest in several sectors in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Barzani responded in kind to the statements during a ceremony to lay the cornerstone of the Rotana Hotel in Erbil, an investment project backed by Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates.

"I firmly believe that much potential exists for strengthening relations between the Kurdistan Region and Lebanon," the Kurdish premier said.

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AP Associated Press

July 22, 2008 BAGHDAD

Gunmen killed a Kurdish journalist near the northern city of Kirkuk, a police official said on Tuesday.

Soran Mama Hama, a reporter for the Kurdish-language magazine Leven, was shot late Monday in the Rasheed Awa village, where many Kurds were forced to relocate when Saddam Hussein sent thousands of Arabs into the oil-rich Kirkuk area to dilute the presence of Kurds and others.

Kirkuk police Brig. Sarhat Qadir said the motive for the slaying of the 23-year-old journalist was not immediately known.

Kurdish Journalist Killed Kirkuk

The head of the Kurdish Journalists Union in Kirkuk, Latif Satih Faraj, blamed the killing on gangs seeking to silence reporters who want to expose corruption.

"This criminal act is to halt the free speech of independent journalists in Kirkuk," he said. "If the government can't protect Kurdish journalists in Kirkuk, we might advise them to withdraw from this city."

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 129 journalists and 50 media support workers have been killed since the U.S. invasion in 2003, not including the most recent death.



Kurdistan Region Presidency, KRP.org

- 23 Jul. 2008

Press release: KRP rejects Iraqi Parliament plan

The Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives has committed an unconstitutional act by violating the manifesto of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, when today he organized a secret vote in the Council. This is a blatant violation of the Council's internal regulations and is a coup against the Iraqi constitution and the consensus political system prevalent in Iraq since the overthrow of the former regime in 2003.

The Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives disregarded the Council and the existing agreements between the political factions by arranging a secret vote on an article specific to the Kirkuk governorate in the draft law of the provincial council elections. This is at a time when the political factions in the Council had agreed to a much more suitable arrangement for the draft law.

We reject this unexpected action by the Speaker of the Council and others behind it. We also declare that the Kurdistan Region will not abide by this unconstitutional process.

We are utterly concerned about this action; if others are in favour of this plan, we will reconsider our position and even our alliances. Our people will not tolerate these unconstitutional actions which are incompatible with political consensus.

We call on the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Iraqi President and the Iraqi Presidency Council to oppose this suspect scheme which is against the interests of Iraq. We believe the goal of this scheme is to hinder the new democratic process in Iraq, to hamper the provincial council elections, and to obstruct the whole political process in Iraq.

We are confident that loyal and patriotic people from all political factions are paying close attention to this irresponsible action.

TODAYS ZAMAN 22 July 2008.

DTP reaches temporary internal consensus

AYSE KARABAT ANKARA

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) reached a temporary compromise between its hawks and doves during its general congress on Sunday.

The congress was held under the shadow of a closure case pending against the party and concluded with the election of Ahmet Türk to the chairmanship. Türk was the sole candidate and is considered a moderate.

Emine Ayna, viewed as a hawk, will serve as the co-chairperson of the party even though the Turkish Political Parties Law does not recognize such a position. The congress also served to elect the party council, the candidates of which only included hawks. The results of the congress

are seen by some as a compromise between the party's doves and hawks, though any such compromise is temporary because of the closure case. Once the Constitutional Court, which is hearing the closure case, issues its verdict, the power struggle within the DTP is expected to restart, and either a new party will be established or, if the DTP remains open, its leadership will be fought for.

The DTP congress has not escaped scrutiny by the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office, which has launched an investigation into claims that speeches and slogans used by participants had praised crime and criminals.

Discussions at the congress focused on the establishment of an umbrella party aiming to increase cooperation between pro-Kurdish political parties and the socialist left but also covered the Ergenekon investigation, an investigation into a crime network that had planned to overthrow the government.

A group within the DTP, according to Türk, thinks the Ergenekon investigation is a historical opportunity for democratization, but another group, as can be seen in Ayna's speech to the congress, considers it a clash of powers. Ayna's supporters defend the idea of "wait and see"



instead of taking an active role in the case.

Ayna claimed that the Ergenekon investigation is not a fight against the "deep state" but a power struggle. "Ergenekon's power is drawn from a stalemate in the Kurdish problem, but the AK Party government is not disturbed by Ergenekon's actions against Kurds. Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan is only unsure of one thing: He thinks Ergenekon is the only obstacle before him seizing the state's power in its entirety."

Outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan also advised Kurds to stay out of discussions on the Ergenekon investigation. "Kurds should not take part in this hegemonic clash. They should not take part either with neo-nationalists or the other side. Kurds should take the self-defense position. This is the only way to survive the chaos," he allegedly said to his lawyers.

In another conversation with his lawyers, Öcalan said some officials within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) with alleged links to Ergenekon had visited him after he was sent to İmralı prison. He did not provide details on the encounter.

Some newspapers suggested the Ergenekon

gang, like many other terrorist organizations, used the PKK for its aims.

Those who share Ayna's views accept that Kurds have suffered the most at the hands of the deep state and gangs, but that taking sides on the Ergenekon case will lead down two roads.

"Turkish public opinion is against Ergenekon. Although not strong yet, Turkish public opinion has begun to realize the gangs' heinous crimes. But if Kurds take sides, this atmosphere can change because there is an understanding among the Turkish public that calls for doing the opposite of whatever the Kurds defend. Kurds should wait and see," says a source from the DTP. The same source points out that taking a side with the Ergenekon case

will serve the interest of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), which is not disturbed by the deep state's actions against Kurds and which is not engaged in a struggle for democratization but instead seeks to strengthen its power, according to some Kurds.

There are other views on the Ergenekon investigation. Although suspicious about the results of the investigation and where the AK Party stands, some still think it is an opportunity to confront the past, Türk said.

"Turkey has a tendency to enter the process of becoming more transparent, the case in contemporary democracies. Although late, it is still promising. Enlarging the investigation will improve our standard of democracy. In other words, including in the investigation probes into people who disappeared while in custody and the thousands that have been murdered by unknown assailants will only accelerate this process," Türk said, adding that the struggle against gangs is a golden opportunity to solve the Kurdish problem by democratic means and that this is why he and his supporters assign importance to the Ergenekon investigation.

The Washington Post July 23, 2008

IRAQIS TAKE FLAWED STEP ON ELECTORAL LEGISLATION Kurds Boycott Vote, Putting Measure's Future in Doubt

By Sudarsan Raghavan and Ernesto Londoño
Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD, July 22 -- Iraq's parliament passed legislation Tuesday setting new rules for provincial elections, a step widely viewed here as critical to the country's process of political reconciliation.

But Kurdish lawmakers boycotted the vote over the status of Kirkuk, an oil-rich, ethnically mixed city that Kurdish leaders believe should come under the control of their autonomous regional government in northern Iraq. The move could undermine the legislation and delay the provincial elections, which had been expected this fall.

The controversy underscored the tensions across the political spectrum in Iraq, as well as potential

flash points for violence, as Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama left the country for Jordan. At a news conference in Amman, Jordan's capital, the senator said that Iraq's political progress was lagging, despite improvements in security.

"So far, I think we have not seen the kind of political reconciliation that's going to bring about long-term stability in Iraq. But there's no doubt that security has improved," Obama said.

The provincial elections law would bring more power to regions and empower Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last provincial elections in 2005, and strengthen the Sunnis' position in a government dominated by Shiites and Kurds. The Bush admini-

stration has been pushing for the elections, viewing them as vital to bridging Iraq's political divide and cementing security gains. But political disputes between ethnic and sectarian groups have delayed passage of the bill for months.

After the Kurdish walkout Tuesday, Khalid al-Attiyah, the deputy parliamentary speaker, said it was unlikely that Iraq's three-member presidency council, headed by President Jalal Talabani, an ethnic Kurd, would ratify the bill. If so, it could be sent back to parliament.

"We did not want for this law to be a reason for tension or poisoning the political atmosphere, but unfortunately this took place," Attiyah said. "The

vote is a useless act, other than to delay and paralyze."

Even if the law is enacted, it is unlikely that provincial elections will take place Oct. 1, as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has sought. Faraj al-Haidari, the head of the Iraqi electoral commission, said there wasn't time to prepare for elections by that date. If the legislation is ratified by the end of this month, the earliest elections could be held would be late December, he said.

"We have lost the chance to conduct the elections this year," Attiyah said.

Lawmakers have been bogged down over the details of a power-sharing arrangement in Kirkuk among the city's three main ethnic groups -- Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen. The Kurds want the city to become part of the mostly autonomous Kurdish region, but Arabs and Turkmen want it to be under the central government.

Kurds currently hold 21 of the 41 seats on the provincial council of Tamim, of which Kirkuk is the capital. Turkmen have 11 seats and Arabs eight. A Christian holds the remaining one. The U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk, a diplomatic mission, estimates that at least 60 percent of

Tamim's population is Kurdish, while Arabs account for nearly 30 percent.

Saddam Hussein oppressed Kurds in northern Iraq for years. After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, they became politically dominant in the province in part because many Sunnis boycotted elections.

Arabs and Turkmen accuse the Kurds of funneling thousands of Kurds into the city and nearby areas to manipulate the voting population in their favor. So the central parliament decided to allocate the three groups 10 seats apiece on the provincial governing council. Candidates from the same group would compete for each seat.

The Kurds opposed such a distribution, as well as an item in the new bill that called for a secret ballot to decide the power-sharing arrangement. On Tuesday, after the Kurdish lawmakers walked out, the parliament went ahead and passed the bill.

"This is the first time to use a secret vote in an important law like this. We believe its illegal," said Mahmoud Othman, an independent Kurdish legislator.

But Arab and Turkmen politicians welcomed the vote. "Iraqi representatives were united today against the Kurdish demand," said Saad Aldeen

Mahmoud Ameen, a lawmaker from the Iraqi Turkmen Front party.

If Talabani does not veto the bill, Kirkuk's political landscape is likely to change dramatically after the provincial elections. The provincial council elects the governor and the chairman of the council and will have even broader powers under the new election law.

Splitting the council's seats into thirds would have significant repercussions, said Howard L. Keegan, the provincial reconstruction team's leader in Kirkuk.

"It's going to have a huge impact," he said. "The Kurds, understandably, are not excited about being a minority. The history here runs very, very deep. The last time they were a minority, they suffered a great deal at the hands of some of the same people that would be taking office."

Losing political power in Kirkuk is likely to hinder the Kurds' long-standing goal of annexing the city into the Kurdistan Regional Government. Keegan said it's too early to tell how Kurds in Kirkuk will react to parliament's vote.

"The likelihood of a violent uprising is unlikely," he said. "A U.S. combat brigade sits up here."

TODAYS ZAMAN

July 23, 2008

DTP slams the CHP for Ergenekon investigation

Newly elected Democratic Society Party (DTP) Chairman Ahmet Türk criticized the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) for its stance over the Ergenekon investigation, at a meeting of the DTP parliamentary group yesterday.

TODAYS ZAMAN

Türk said the Ergenekon gang worked against democracy and national sovereignty. "Didn't we take an oath here in Parliament to defend the principle that sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation?" he said. Türk said he knew CHP leader Deniz Baykal very well and that Baykal tended to avoid discussion of delicate matters yet defended Ergenekon. Türk also pointed out that when one retired general was taken into custody in connection with the Ergenekon case, he placed a phone call to a CHP deputy.

"This attitude brings the question to people's minds of whether they [the CHP] are linked with it [Ergenekon]," Türk said.

He also said the DTP's issue was not necessarily related to punishing the members of the Ergenekon gang, but to finding out the truth behind its activities.

"Turks can realize the suffering of Kurds and rethink [the situation]. This is what we want," he said, saying that downplaying the Ergenekon investigation's importance was the biggest threat to democracy.

"If the Ergenekon investigation is diluted, if it is abandoned without [obtaining a] result, it will become very dangerous, like a snake whose tail is stepped on," he said.

The DTP leader said efforts by politicians and other figures to "dilute" the Ergenekon



kon investigation harmed democracy, saying that those who criticized the investigation by citing a lack of sufficient evidence were simply incorrect.

"The public prosecutors [on the Ergenekon case] know, of course, what happened to the prosecutor of the Şemdinli case. If they did not have strong evidence, would they enter such a dead-end?" Türk questioned.

On Nov. 9, 2005, a bookstore in the southeastern township of Şemdinli was bombed. Two noncommissioned officers and an ex-PKK informant were caught trying to escape. The prosecutor on the case, Ferhat Sarıkaya, asserted in his final indictment that the soldiers were part of a network with links that could be traced back to Land Forces Commander Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt, who has since been promoted to chief of general staff. Sarıkaya was taken off the case and then

disbarred by the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors. The three suspects were first tried at a civil court and sentenced to nearly 40 years each -- a punishment annulled by the Supreme Court of Appeals, which ruled a mistrial. The three suspects are now being tried by a military court in a completely new trial.

Türk also mentioned the closure case pending against his own party, saying that it would not be a solution to any of the nation's problems.

"In the past when they closed our party, we had only one woman deputy, Leyla Zana, but we have eight now," he said. Türk said that Parliament was the place for coming up with solutions and that this is why the DTP was there and trying to introduce new parties. But the party was excluded from the start by the other parties in Parliament, he said, adding: "Yet it is not too late. We have to produce projects that will serve the normalization of Turkey," he said.

Türk said in regard to the case against the DTP that the party's administration was waiting respectfully for the conclusion of the legal process at the Constitutional Court.

"The Constitutional Court is neither a criminal court nor a court of arbitration. It has to rule in accordance with the requirements of the day and in the interest of society," he said..

Sunni-Shiite relations ■ Reza Zia-Ebrahimi

Mending a Muslim divide

The “Shiite crescent” — an alliance of Shiite Iran with Arab Shiite movements in Iraq and Lebanon allegedly committed to dominating the Middle East — has become a popular intellectual shortcut to explaining Muslim affairs in the West.

Yet the theory is a flawed one. It ignores the complexity of religious, national, local and tribal allegiances that include, exclude or overlap one another throughout the region. Moreover, it does not account for a number of other factors, for example, the reasons behind the occasional inter-Shiite fighting in Iraq.

In an interesting twist, the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — two Shiites — happen to be considered the most popular foreign leaders in overwhelmingly Sunni Egypt (and probably most of the Middle East) according to a poll conducted by the Ibn Khaldun Center in Cairo.

Since the death of the Prophet of Islam, Muslims have split into two groups with distinct theological, cultural and even political outlooks: Sunnis (85 percent) and Shiites (15 percent). For most of the past 14 centuries, the two have got along, but often Shiites have been ruthlessly repressed by the Sunni majority. Today, non-Arab Iran is the largest Shiite country (more than 90 percent of its 70 million inhabitants) and the two other important Shiite communities are Iraq (65 percent) and Lebanon (40 percent).

Though inadequate and overinflated, the Shiite crescent theory nevertheless refers to a real problem, which is that of rising tension between Sunnis — the main branch of Islam — and Shiites in various parts of the Middle East.

One crucial but under-discussed arena of Sunni-Shiite relations is Saudi Arabia. Approximately 10 percent of the kingdom's population is estimated to be Shiite. Since the country was established in 1932, Shiite rituals have been subjected to significant constraints and Shiites have been marginalized and intermittently repressed. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group have all pointed out the systematic social, political, religious and economic discrimination of Shiites by the Saudi state institutions and ulema, or clergy. Since 1993, Saudi rulers have attempted some rapprochement, by engaging Shiite leaders, although significant advances have yet to materialize.

Sunni-Shiite relations in Saudi Arabia are important for the rest of the Muslim world. Indeed, the



Miguel Gallardo

kingdom's religious establishment holds sway over many radical Muslim circles, thanks to its worldwide network of mosques, and usually adheres to a puritan and intolerant version of Sunni Islam. As a result, the Saudi ulema bear much responsibility in the propagation of anti-Shiite feelings, but they are also in a strategic position to soothe the occasional tensions between the two communities.

A radical break with well-established anti-Shiism is unlikely; observers of the kingdom know that an inhibited political culture there that puts excessive emphasis on consensus makes Switzerland look like a fast-changing country.

However there are two reasons to believe that time is ripe for some sort of bold action by the rulers. First, despite the slight détente in the kingdom in the 1990s, tensions are mounting since civil war in Iraq and the reassertion of Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon increased alarm about regional Shiite domination. Many young Saudis who engage in jihad in Iraq are motivated, among other things, by fervent anti-Shiite sentiments. This heated situation has also engendered an increased number of despicable acts of vandalism, like cemetery profanation or the burning down of Shiite mosques, threatening the inter-com-

munal status quo.

Secondly, King Abdullah is investing much hope in his calls for interfaith dialogue. Earlier this month, he concluded an interfaith conference in Madrid, which he hopes to be the first step in a sustained dialogue process. Christian and Jewish religious authorities worldwide have been involved and many declared their support for the king's overture. It is quite an undertaking for the leader of a country that constrains or bans any non-Islamic religious act, sign or place

of worship. The legitimacy and credibility of the king's move will, to a large extent, depend on the state of Sunni-Shiite relations within Saudi Arabia.

Recent moves indicate that the king is aware of this situation, and wants to make advances, even at the price of infuriating some members of the ulema.

This month, 22 radical Saudi clerics issued a fatwa, or religious edict, saying that Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah movement's fight against Israel is a disguise to conceal its anti-Sunni agenda. They proclaimed Shiites followed "infidel precepts."

Reaction was swift: Mohammed al-Nujaimi, a prominent cleric from the religious establishment was dispatched recently to mend fences with Shiites. He met with Hassan al-Saffar, the leader of the Shiite community in Saudi Arabia, and other representatives to condemn the edict.

There is good reason to believe that the king was behind this effort.

By Saudi standards, this is a bold move, as the rulers of the kingdom are always wary not to antagonize the ulema, who provide them with legitimacy. Anti-Shiite sentiment is one of the main tenets of the ulema's ideology, usually referred to as Wahabism, a very puritan and intolerant version of Islam. The king's overture is unlikely to be appreciated by them.

There are reasons to be skeptical about the outcome of the king reaching out to the Shiite community, but mounting tensions and the king's interfaith projects have created a state of affairs in which the Saudi Shiite situation cannot be shunned any longer. If a decent *modus vivendi* is worked out there, then it can have some impact on Sunni-Shiite relations worldwide thanks to the kingdom's special position within the Islamic world as the guardian of the religion's two most holy sites, and reassert the House of Saud over an obscurantist and anachronistic ulema. Inshallah.

Reza Zia-Ebrahimi is a Middle East consultant and commentator based in Oxford, England.

Thomas L. Friedman

All hail 'McBama'

John McCain needs to wake up and smell the Arabic coffee.

I know this is not an easy time for him. When you have been beaten up for four years because of your support for the Iraq war, and then you get something big right — your support for the surge — you want to be able to savor that for a while. You want to make your rightness on that issue *the* issue of the presidential election.

McCain was right about the surge. It has helped to stabilize Iraq and create a better chance there for political reconciliation. But Iraq has always been a story full of surprises. And one of the most important political surprises is how quickly the surge has made Iraq safe for Barack Obama's foreign policy — and for the election policy of the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

Do not believe for a second that there was any mistranslation when Maliki blurted out to the German magazine *Der Spiegel* recently that Obama's withdrawal timetable for U.S. combat troops from Iraq — 16 months after the next U.S. president is sworn in — "could be suitable." Maliki was quite specific: "Who wants to exit in a quicker way has a better assessment of the situation in Iraq."

He was speaking a deep truth: The modicum of stability produced by the surge has changed the political dynamics of the Iraq story — not irreversibly yet, not as much as necessary yet, but enough to have important ramifications. U.S. officials in Iraq tell me that the success of the Sunni tribes in beating back Al Qaeda in their regions and the success of the mainstream Shiites in beating back Moktada al-Sadr's militia

and other pro-Iranian elements in Baghdad and Basra has Iraqis looking at themselves differently and therefore at America's presence in Iraq differently.

More and more mainstream Iraqi politicians believe they are able to run their own affairs, and fewer and fewer mainstream Americans believe the United States is able to devote another presidency to Iraq.

"Americans are looking forward to the post-Iraq phase of U.S. politics, and Iraqis are now looking forward to the

post-American phase of Iraqi politics," said Michael Mandelbaum, a foreign policy expert at Johns Hopkins University. That is the reality of post-surge Iraq and post-subprime America — and any leader in either country who ignores that reality does so at his or her peril.

Forget about our narrative on this war — how we "liberated Iraq." Think about the Iraqi narrative. No one likes to

be liberated or occupied by someone else. It is humiliating. France still hasn't gotten over the fact that it had to be liberated by the Allies. What is important is how, with the help of the surge, Iraqis have finally started to liberate themselves — the Sunnis from their extremists and the Shiites from their extremists. The question in Iraq is: Can these parallel liberation movements actually merge into a single national liberation/unity movement? I don't know.

But I do know this: While we Americans would like an Iraqi national movement — binding Shiites, Kurds and Sunnis — to coalesce, we don't want it coalescing in opposition to us. Running against the continued U.S. presence in Iraq will be a very tempting campaign

theme for Iraqi politicians — in both the upcoming Iraqi provincial and parliamentary elections — if Iraq continues to stabilize.

So Maliki was actually sending America two important messages via *Der Spiegel*: He was telling us to the extent that the Iraqi Army and state continue to get on their feet, the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq is going to become an issue in Iraqi politics and no politician — particularly Maliki — is going to let himself be outdone by rivals in calling for the Americans to go. And he was also telling us to remember

something: Iraq is an Arab country. It is the heart of the Arab world. It is not Germany. It is not Japan. To the extent that it comes together as a country, it will not tolerate a prolonged, highly visible U.S. military presence.

So McCain, who called the surge right, may get little credit, because the story now is about post-surge Iraq. McCain's post-surge view — which also may be right — is that Iraqis still do not have the military force capable of protecting their homeland and need more U.S. help in nation-building. Meanwhile, Obama, who was not a surge supporter and simply stuck to his 16-month withdrawal timetable, finds himself — by luck or smarts — in perfect harmony with the post-surge mood in Iraq. His timetable may be too short, but Obama can worry about that later.

All of which suggests that the right position on Iraq today is probably "McBama" — stick to a clear withdrawal timetable because post-surge Iraqi and American politics will tolerate nothing else — but leave yourself some wiggle room if things keep getting better, but not exactly on schedule. Always remember: The more Iraq is seen as succeeding on its own, without U.S. scaffolding, the more positive impact it will have on the neighborhood.

Just what happened? Candidates disagree

Debate on Iraq focuses on troop surge

By Michael Cooper

Senator John McCain was chiding Senator Barack Obama for "a false depiction of what actually happened" in Iraq in a television interview this week. But in giving his chronology of events in Iraq, McCain gave what critics said was his own false depiction.

McCain has been using Obama's trip overseas this week to argue that the improved security situation in Iraq shows the success of the troop escalation that just ended, of which he was an early, fervent supporter, but which Obama opposed.

McCain bristled in an interview with the "CBS Evening News" on Tuesday when asked about Obama's contention that while the added troops had helped reduce violence in Iraq, other factors had helped, including the Sunni Awakening movement, in which thousands of Sunnis

were enlisted to patrol neighborhoods and fight the insurgency, and the Iraqi government's crackdown on Shiite militias.

"I don't know how you respond to something that is such a false depiction of what actually happened," McCain told the CBS anchor, Katie Couric, noting that the Awakening movement began in Anbar Province when a Sunni sheik teamed up with Sean MacFarland, a colonel who commanded an army brigade there.

"Because of the surge we were able to go out and protect that sheik and others," McCain said. "And it began the Anbar Awakening. I mean, that's just a matter of history."

The Obama campaign was quick to note that the Awakening began in the autumn of 2006, several months before President George W. Bush even announced the troop escalation strategy, which became known as the surge. (No less an authority than General David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, testified before Congress this spring that the Awakening "started before the surge, but then was very much enabled by the surge.")

And Democrats noted that the sheik who helped form the Awakening, Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi, was assassinated in September 2007, after the troop escalation began.

The National Security Network, a liberal foreign policy group, called McCain's explanation of the surge's history "completely wrong."

But several foreign policy analysts said that if McCain had gotten the chrono-

nology wrong, his broader point — that the troop escalation had been crucial for the Awakening movement to succeed and spread — was right.

"I would say McCain is three-quarters right in this debate," said Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

The troop escalation's role in pacifying Iraq has emerged as a critical debate between the two, as the McCain campaign has accused Obama of failing to acknowledge the success of a strategy that McCain fervently supported.

The McCain campaign said the troop escalation had been a vital component that assured the success of the Awakening movement. And McCain said Wednesday that when he was referring to the "surge," he meant the entire counterinsurgency strategy, and not just to the troop escalation that Bush ordered.

"First of all, a surge is really a counterinsurgency strategy," McCain said in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. "And it's made up of a number of components. And this counterinsurgency was initiated to some degree by Colonel MacFarland in Anbar Province, relatively on his own. And I visited with him in December of 2006. He had already initiated that strategy in Ramadi by going in, and clearing and holding in certain places. That is a counterinsurgency. And he told me at that time that he believed that that strategy, which is quote 'the surge,' part of the surge, would be, would be, successful.

"So then, of course, it was very clear that we needed additional troops in order to carry out this insurgency," he said. "Prior to that they had been going

into places, killing people or not killing people, and then withdrawing. And the new counterinsurgency, the surge, entailed going in and clearing and holding, which Colonel MacFarland had already started doing. And then of course, later on, there were additional troops, and General Petraeus said that the surge would not have worked, and the Anbar Awakening would not have taken place, successfully, if they hadn't had an increase in the number of troops."

Conducting a presidential campaign in the middle of a war is somewhat unusual, and several foreign policy experts lament that a great deal of nuance and thoughtful discussion is lost in the political back-and-forth.

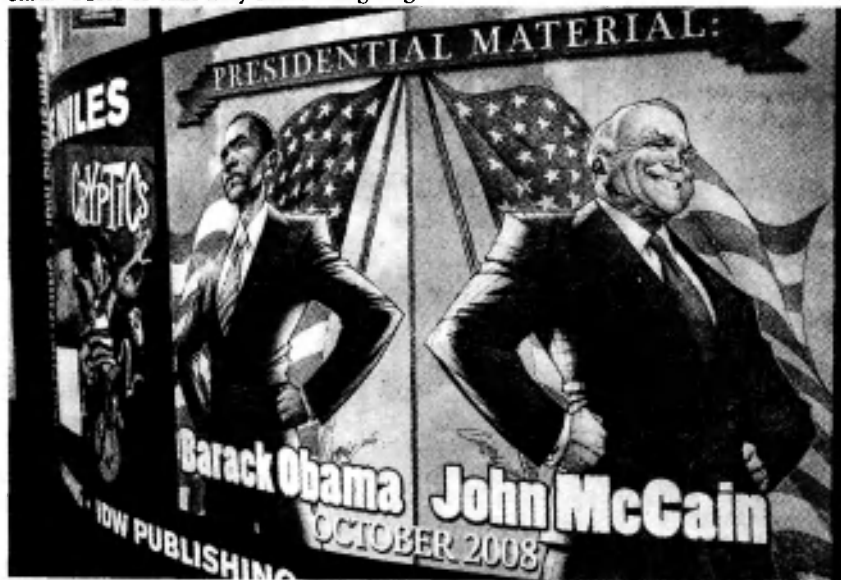
If McCain found himself criticized for seeming to confuse the chronology of events in Iraq, some analysts said Obama seemed to be giving too little credit to the surge for improving conditions in Iraq. Obama, who opposed the Iraq war, said in an interview with "Nightline" on ABC this week that if he had to do it all over again, knowing what he knew now, he would still not support the surge.

O'Hanlon, of the Brookings Institution, said he did not understand why Obama seemed to want to debate the success of the surge. "Any human being is reluctant to admit a mistake," he said, noting that it takes on added risk in a political campaign.

And Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the political debate did not always illuminate the issues very well. "There are times, I think, where maybe we really ought to step back from this semantic horror show, and remember that this is a political campaign, it is posturing," Cordesman said. "Would anyone want either presidential candidate to keep any promise they made today if reality was different in January, or in any point afterwards?"

Elisabeth Bumiller contributed reporting from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Sarah Wheaton from New York.

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Herald Tribune



The presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama are not just comic book material: they are at odds over what might be causing a drop in violence in Iraq.

IRAQ PRESIDENCY COUNCIL VETOES PROVINCIAL ELECTION BILL

President Talabani objects to a provision delaying voting in Kirkuk, the northern city that Kurds seek to incorporate into their semiautonomous Kurdish region.

By Ned Parker and Saif Hameed
Los Angeles Times Staff Writers

BAGHDAD — Iraq's Presidency Council vetoed a newly approved provincial election bill, casting doubt on the possibility that local elections will be held this year. U.S. officials have identified the vote as pivotal for stabilizing Iraq. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani had denounced the measure, siding with fellow Kurds who walked out of parliament Tuesday over a controversial provision that would delay elections in Tamim province and its capital, the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and place them under joint control of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens, via a quota system. Talabani and Shiite Vice President Adel Abdel Mahdi signed the veto letter. Sunni Vice President Tariq Hashimi was out of the country, parliament members said. Lawmakers said the bill would come to another vote within the next week, as the sides struggled to meet a deadline for starting preparations to hold the local elections by late December. But the chances for a compromise looked slim as the factions clung to their positions on Kirkuk. The quarrel goes to the heart of tensions between Kurds and Arabs in northern Iraq. Saddam Hussein displaced thousands of Kurds from Kirkuk and parts of Nineveh and Diyala provinces as part of an "Arabization" plan. Whether the contested lands will join Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region or remain with the rest of Iraq is one of the most explosive issues of the new era. Kurds insist that Kirkuk should be part of Kurdistan. "The law in its passed form . . . chooses national and sectarian isolation and increases the [religious] fundamentalism," Talabani said in a statement explaining his reasoning for rejecting the legislation.



He warned that the measure "hurt in a major way the national unity." Now the bill will be handed back to parliament for another vote. If the Presidency Council rejects the legislation a second time, it will need a three-fifths majority to pass. Shiite lawmaker Qassim Dawood, who is sympathetic to the Kurds, said the sides must reach a compromise, or risk jeopardizing security gains made in the last year. "It is a fragile status we have now. A delay could affect it negatively," Dawood said. Reacting to the veto, the White House urged the Iraqi government to hold the local elections by the end of the year, wires services reported. The Kurdish parliamentary bloc, with more than 50 members, walked out of Tuesday's session after parliament Speaker Mahmoud Mashadani, a Sunni Arab, endorsed holding a secret ballot on the Kirkuk

provision. The Kurds and their Shiite Arab supporters charged that the measure was unconstitutional. The bill, backed by most Arabs, would delay elections but install a quota system for the provincial council, apportioning seats for Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens. The province's administrative positions would be similarly distributed. The Kurds dominate the province's government, largely because of the decision by Sunni Arabs, favored under Hussein, to boycott elections in January 2005 -- a move they now view as a blunder. There also have been accusations that thousands of displaced Kurds have been sent to Kirkuk in an effort to guarantee favorable results in any vote on the province's future. Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said the Kurds were willing to delay Kirkuk's election and to divide administrative positions more equitably, but are opposed to a quota system for the provincial council. He said Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's Islamic Dawa Party had worked against them on Kirkuk. Hassan Suneid, a senior Dawa member, said the Kurds would have to accept the next round of voting in parliament, as long as the procedures were considered legal. Suneid added that he walked out of the session because he disagreed with the secret voting. U.S. officials have pushed for provincial elections in Iraq on the theory they would increase the loyalty of a greater portion of the population by giving Sunni Arabs a say in local government. Critics have charged that the Sunni boycott of the 2005 elections helped escalate the sectarian warfare that has dominated Iraq since.

KURDISHGLIBE
The first and only English paper in Iraq

24 July 2008

Kurds reject provincial elections law

Kurdish lawmakers vow to force the measure to be rewritten.

The Globe - Erbil

Despite a Kurdish walkout to protest the secret ballot of a section of the controversial provincial council elections law, it passes in Iraqi Parliament, possibly jeopardizing national unity.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Region presidency issued a statement on Tuesday describing Iraqi Parliament's endorsement of the provincial council elections law as a political process equivalent to a "coup against the Iraqi Constitution."

Kurdistan Parliament held an extra session on Wednesday and rejected the provincial council elections law passed by Iraqi Parliament. Kurdistan Parliament speaker Adnan Mufti spoke during a press conference after Wednesday's session: "We refuse the law and the way in which it was voted on for it is a clear violation of the constitution." Passing the law by a secret vote, he added, endangered the country's political process and created problems among the political blocs.

Mufti said that the Iraqi presidency is responsible for protecting the constitution "that has now

been violated."

The Kurdistan presidency released a statement, reading in part: "The Iraqi Parliament speaker committed a constitutional violation that was against the internal system of the Parliament when he arranged to hold a secret vote" on the draft of the provincial council elections law

and on the article related to Kirkuk province.

"We reject this unexpected action by the Speaker of the Council and others behind it. We also declare that Kurdistan Region will not abide by this unconstitutional process," read the statement."



Kurdistan Parliament Speaker Adnan Mufti speaks to reporters at a press conference on Wednesday after Kurdistan Parliament's special session concerning Iraqi Parliament's approval of the provincial council elections law. Press Photo

Earlier on Tuesday, Iraqi Parliament speaker Mahmud Al-Mashhadani decided to vote in secret even though the Kurdistan Coalition list withdrew its 55 members and Kurdistan Islamic Union bloc's 5 members from the Parliament's session in protest. The two Parliament deputy speakers, Khalid Atiya from the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance and Arif Tayfur from the Kurdistan list, strongly rejected with the speaker's decision. They also expected the law not to be approved by the Iraqi presidency.

The Parliament secretly passed the law and controversial Article 24 with 127 votes out of 140. Article 24 pertains to provincial elections in Kirkuk.

There are eight items attached to Article 24 of the provincial council elections law. The three most important are as follows: Item [1] delays the election in Kirkuk until problems in the province are settled; it also divides authority among ethnic components with 32% each for Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmens, and 4% for Christians. Item [2] demands the deployment of military units from south and central Iraq in place of the current

Peshmerga forces. Item [3] specifies that Article 24 must be executed in its entirety and not exclude any of the eight items. The Kurdistan presidency statement continued:

"We are utterly concerned about this action; if others are in favor of this plan, we will reconsider our position and even our alliances. Our people will not tolerate these unconstitutional actions, which are incompatible with political consensus.

"We call on the Iraqi Council of

Representatives, the Iraqi President, and the Iraqi Presidency Council to oppose this suspect scheme, which is against the interests of Iraq. We believe the goal of this scheme is to hinder the new democratic process in Iraq, to hamper the provincial council elections, and to obstruct the whole political process in Iraq." The controversial provincial council elections law defines the type and shape of governing system in Iraq.

Applying it according to election

results may result in the establishment of new regions in the country, paving the way for the application of federalism, which is advocated by some political blocs and opposed by others. The issue of federalism will be discussed early next year.

As it is scheduled, provincial council elections are supposed to be held next October if the Iraqi Presidential Council endorses the law, which excludes Kirkuk. However, a statement released on Wednesday by the office of Iraqi President Jalal

Talabani, who is a Kurd, read: "The president does not accept a law like this, a law that 127 deputies voted on and which does not represent even half of Parliament." The Presidency Council, according to the statement, will veto the law according to the Constitution and the political process.

With Talabani's veto, the elections may be pushed back as far as January 2009.



24 July 2008

Iraq's Christians leaving the country

Christians continue to leave Iraq at a time when there is growing optimism of a bright future and an attempt at unity in the upcoming provincial councils.

By Khidhir Domle
The Kurdish Globe

Dhiaa Petros, head of the Chaldean National Council, said that Christians have limited goals in their national aim, which is mainly autonomy.

"There are serious attempts to ask for Christians' rights in Iraq, and there are serious steps being taken to arrange unified lists for participation in the provincial council elections in those districts where the Chaldeans and Assyrians live. The list might be called the National Ishtar List, and it will consist of six allies.

"We will work in order to add Christian autonomy in the constitution, and to make it acceptable to the many sides in Kurdistan Region and to officials in Baghdad," said Petros, who stressed the necessity of including Christian autonomy in the Iraqi Constitution.

The process needs people's support, Petros told the Globe. "In order to achieve this goal, we will work on the people's requests and especially on forming an alliance with those blocs that accept our goals; most certainly, we won't ignore the aims of Yezidis, Shabak, Kurds, and Arabs who have lived in our districts for many centuries."

The Chaldean National Council was founded in America in 2002 and was operative in Baghdad from 2003-06. It ceased operations because of sectarian violence, said Petros, and then resumed activities in Kurdistan Region in 2007. "We hoped that the constitution would contain our rights; unfortunately it did not, and we are now working to add autonomy and make the consti-

tution more secular. If such a process fails to be carried out, democracy won't be achieved," stated Petros.

He spoke about Christian suffering in the country. "Dozens of Christians are leaving Iraq; this phenomenon has been especially prominent since 2006. There is no encouragement for them to stay and the country is full of problems such as sectarian violence. "One or two families now leave Iraq every day [especially in the district of Ninewa] because of sectarian violence, and they have also lost hope for achieving autonomy after the report of Staffan De Mistura, the UN special representative in Iraq," said Ghazwan Alyas, director of the Chaldean Cultural Assembly, adding that the government has offered no solution. Al-Qush (40 kilometers north of Mosul) is the district belonging to Telkif town, and is considered the center of the Chaldean Assembly in the area. The district is also considered a Christian historical site because of Deer Al Raban Hirmuzad, Deer Sida, and other places.

"We think achieving Christian autonomy in the district is the only solution, especially after the efforts that the blocs and other sides have put forth," said Ghazwan. He explained that they must still work to implement the process in a practical way even with the support of the Kurdish leadership and the attempts of Sarques Aghajan, a Christian and the KRG Minister of Finance.

"Most of the Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Syrians agree with the project to establish Christian autonomy



The Sayda al Qush shrine in al Qush, pictured here, is north of Mosul. PRESS PHOTO

inside Kurdistan Region, and agree that they constitute 4% of the Iraqi population; they have an opinion on the constitution," indicated Ghazwan, who manages the Cultural Assembly and also releases a monthly cultural magazine.

"A while ago, we carried out a survey in the district of Sahil Ninewa and especially the districts of Telkif and Al Hamdania; we concluded that 76% of Al-Hamdania agree with the project, 81% of Telkif and Al-Qush agree, if autonomy is within Kurdistan Region," explained Ghazwan, who added that they presented the project to the American Embassy, Kurdistan Parliament, Iraqi Parliament, and Minister Aghajan.

"After the murder of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Raho last spring, thousands of Christians left the country at a time when they lived in secure places like Al-Qush, Telkif,

Telseqif, and Qarqush," said Ghazwan. Nisan Bighazi, a member of the Assyrian Cultural Center in Duhok, said that sectarian violence against Christians remains the number one reason Christians are fleeing Iraq.

"Whether there is autonomy or not, which is our right, there is still existing sectarian violence targeting Christians, and different agendas account for that violence," said Bighazi. "Churches and other Christian symbols are subjected to violence, but not Christian political offices or cultural centers." Bighazi added: "We hope we will be able to live in a brotherly way and have religious forgiveness among all the Iraqi people

Hollywood goes on location to work with Iraq's Kurds

Away from the war zone, an ethnic minority seeks guidance on creating a film industry.

By Alexandra Zavis *Los Angeles Times*

IRBIL, IRAQ — Oliver Stone couldn't have staged a more surreal scene: Balancing wine glasses in their hands, a group of Hollywood executives boogied to the Beach Boys in the foothills of northern Iraq as bursts of fireworks lit up the night sky. ¶ The Fourth of July garden party, at a slick new hotel on the outskirts of the northern city of Irbil, was just one stop on an elaborate government-hosted tour aimed at luring Hollywood money and talent to this largely autonomous and relatively peaceful Kurdish enclave. Among the revelers were potential investors, diplomats, Kurdish officials and representatives of the U.S.-led forces in Iraq, in addition to the coterie of Hollywood types. ¶ As the rest of Iraq plunged into violence, returning Kurdish exiles and foreign investors poured billions of dollars into the country's three northern provinces, transforming the two main cities into giant construction sites, bristling with scaffolding and cranes. Housing developments and shopping centers are rising from the dirt. Deals to tap the region's massive oil reserves are underway.

Now the Kurds, an ethnic minority who were persecuted by Saddam Hussein's Arab regime, say they are ready for their close-up.

The Kurdistan regional government is rolling out the red carpet for the motion picture business, hoping that Hollywood can help showcase their land, culture and tortured history for the world.

"It is through the movies of Hollywood that we know what is happening in the United States," Nawjad Mawlood, governor of Irbil province, told the Hollywood entourage that had traveled thousands of miles to hear his pitch. "And it is very important to see our place in your movies."

Indeed, the Kurds don't have to look far to see what the globalization of Hollywood means, both culturally and economically. Abu Dhabi and Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, are investing millions in theme parks and theater complexes. New Zealand and Australia are vying to attract film production with their state-of-the-art digital studios and breathtaking vistas for location shooting. India's Reliance ADA Group is negotiating to invest \$1.2 billion in DreamWorks SKG, the first major link between Bollywood and Hollywood.

Kurdish filmmakers hope they too can join forces with Hollywood -- even though insurance will be hard to get, there's not much in the way of production facilities or skilled crews, and coddled stars won't have the luxurious amenities to which they're accustomed.

Not surprisingly in a region where many leaders were until a few years ago in the mountains fighting Hussein's army, Kurdistan's own film industry is far

from off the ground. The few movies made locally are shot digitally because there are no labs to process film. Nor are there theaters to show movies (though several are planned). Virtually all the DVDs for sale are pirated.

But, said George Braunstein, a lawyer and producer who was part of the group, it's clear what Hollywood can bring to Kurdistan: an injection of cash into the local economy.

"If I am General Motors and I want to come in, you are going to have to put in roads, lay down power lines and spend millions of dollars on infrastructure for me," Braunstein said. "When film crews come in . . . they work with what is there, and they spend a huge amount of money on food, hotels, gas, not to mention the jobs that come in."

The Kurds' flirtation with Hollywood began when they hired the Michael Russell Group, a Los Angeles movie marketing firm, to help sell a Kurdish-language film in the U.S.

"Jani Gal" ("Agony of a Nation") was produced by Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, the wife of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and a former guerrilla fighter. Adapted from a novel written by her late father, it tells the story of a man who endures years of prison after he inadvertently gets caught up in a demonstration while searching for a midwife for his pregnant wife.

After working with MRG on the film, Najat Abdullah, the Kurdish government's cultural attache in Washington, told the firm that what he really wanted was advice on developing the Kurdish film industry.

MRG's Stephen Locascio approached 10 Hollywood types about visiting the region to see what it had to offer. Three agreed to go, including Kristin Jones, senior vice president at Walt Disney Co.'s Miramax Films unit, and Jorge Camara, president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Assn., which organizes the Golden Globe Awards.

Jones was at the Cannes Film Festival in May when she received word about the trip from her assistant in Los Angeles.

"It was about 2 in the morning. I was finally in my room, my head was spinning from the 85 meetings I had had that day and I literally got an e-mail that said, 'Feel like going to Kurdistan?' " she said, laughing. "I thought: Is this a joke?"

But Jones is serious about where she thinks the future of Hollywood rests: "The growth in the film industry isn't in the United States, it's abroad," she said.

Everyone in the group admitted to qualms about flying to Iraq. Braunstein, however, eventually decided to bring his business partner and wife,

Laura, and even their 22-year old son, Clark, along for the experience.

It came as a surprise to the Hollywood contingent that most Kurds welcome Americans, whom they credit with shielding them from Hussein's brutality since the imposition of a no-fly zone over their area in the 1990s.

Still, the Kurdish authorities left nothing to chance. The delegation was whisked around at high speed in armored Land Cruisers, accompanied by a large retinue of Kalashnikov-wielding bodyguards in suits and dark shades.

Their itinerary was only divulged at the last minute, which caused some anxiety among the type-A personalities that were used to being in charge. Cold showers and patchy Internet access were other unpleasant surprises.

But those were overwhelmed by the region's majestic peaks, ancient citadel and bazaars, and the people's anguished tales of massacres and revolt.

"Every place you put a camera would be a unique background for a great story," Braunstein said. "It's a very exotic location."

Good locations are not enough, however. Braunstein got down to business at a meeting in Irbil with the region's acting culture minister, Medhi Mendelawi.

As long as the State Department has an advisory posted on its website warning Americans not to travel to Iraq, no insurer that works with the major studios would provide coverage to film in the country, Braunstein explained to Mendelawi.

Kurdish officials have hired lobbyists in Washington to try to have the warning amended to exclude their region. Negotiations are also underway with foreign-based companies to provide insurance locally. That way, Mendelawi said, investors could purchase \$10 million of coverage right here in Kurdistan.

"We're going to need more than that," Braunstein cut in.

That was an example, Mendelawi assured him. It could also be \$100 million.

"Now you're talking," Braunstein said.

He advised the government to set up a film commission to vet prospective projects and provide filmmakers with information about locations, crews and equipment in the region. He also suggested they invest in a professional film school and begin enforcing copyright laws.

When Braunstein finished, Mendelawi took a deep breath.

"Thank you for your ideas," he said. "We'll work on it. Hopefully we will achieve something."



Kurd killed in attack on Turkish police station

DIYARBAKIR, July 28, 2008 (AFP)

Kurdish Southeastern region of Turkey, —

A Kurdish PKK militant hurled a hand grenade overnight at a police station in southeastern Turkey before being shot dead by the security forces, officials said Monday.

Two other militants from the Turkey's Kurdistan workers' party (PKK) who took part in the attack in the Kurdish city of Bingol were captured injured and the police were looking for a fourth suspected accomplice, www.ekurd.net security sources said.

The incident took place around 10:00 pm (1900 GMT) Sunday, just as two bombs exploded in a residential neighborhood in Istanbul, killing at least 16 people and leaving more than 150 wounded.

Bingol Governor Irfan Balkanlıoğlu said the attack on the police station appeared to be a retaliatory act after an intensified army crackdown against the Turkey's separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, both inside Turkey and neighboring Kurdistan region "northern Iraq", where the rebels take refuge.

"They have reached the end. They are trying to cover up their heavy losses in northern Iraq by attacking innocent people," Anatolia quoted the governor as saying.

Turkish fighter jets bombed PKK camps in the Qandil mountains in Kurdistan region "northern Iraq", www.ekurd.net a major rebel stronghold, Sunday.

The Turkish media blamed the PKK for the twin blasts in Istanbul, even though officials haven't yet said who was behind the attacks.

Over 39,000 Turkish soldiers and Kurdish PKK guerrillas have been killed since 1984 when the Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) took up arms for self-rule in the country's mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey. A large Turkey's Kurdish community openly sympathise with the Kurdish PKK rebels.

The PKK demanded Turkey's recognition of the Kurds' identity in its constitution and of their language as a native language along with Turkish in the country's Kurdish areas, the party also demanded an end to ethnic discrimination in Turkish laws and constitution against Kurds, ranting them full political freedoms.

The PKK is considered a 'terrorist' organization by Ankara, U.S., the PKK continues to be on the blacklist list in EU despite court ruling which overturned a decision to place the Kurdish rebel group PKK and its political wing on the European Union's terror list.

Turkey refuses to recognize its Kurdish population as a distinct minority. It has allowed some cultural rights such as limited broadcasts in the Kurdish language and private Kurdish language courses with the prodding of the European Union, but Kurdish politicians say the measures fall short of their expectations.



Voices of Iraq
July 26, 2008

Talabani, Barzani discuss local elections law

BAGHDAD, July 26, 2008 —

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani met in Baghdad with Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani to discuss the provincial councils elections law, approved by parliament on Tuesday and objected by the Iraqi president and his two deputies on Wednesday.

"Talabani received Barzani, who arrived in the Iraqi capital on Friday, at his office in Baghdad and had consultations over the unconstitutional and illegal passing of the local councils elections law at parliament as well as security and political developments in the country," according to a statement by Talabani's office on Saturday.

The two Kurdish leaders agreed to intensify discussions and consultations with all Iraqi political actors regarding the law.

The Iraqi parliament had passed on Tuesday a law on provincial councils elections, which includes an article delaying the local elections in Kirkuk indefinitely, with the approval of 127 out of 140 members of parliament that attended the session.

Lawmakers from the Kurdistan Coalition (KC), the second largest bloc with 53 out of a total 275 seats, had withdrawn from the session in protest against Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani's decision to have a secret balloting over article 24 of the law, pertaining to the Kirkuk status. Balloting over all the other paragraphs of the law, however, was open.

The presidential board, with the unanimity of President Jalal Talabani and his two deputies Adel Abdelmahdi and Tareq al-Hashimi, had rejected on Wednesday the law on provincial councils elections law in a rapid reaction one day after the Iraqi parliament passed it during a session that raised hue and cry over its constitutionality.

The law drew angry reactions on the part of the Kurds who considered the way the law was passed as a "twisting of the constitution," threatening to use the right of veto, granted by the Iraqi constitution for the presidential board, headed by President Talabani, a Kurd, to reject the law and send it back to the parliament for debate.

The local elections should be held by the end of this year. All political blocs agreed on a new law on elections, hoped by the Iraqi government and other political parties to help end violence in the country through containing a number of armed groups into the current political process.

The elections are of paramount importance. The results could help establish new provinces in Iraq within preparations to apply the federal system urged by

some political blocs.

The system is facing objection by other blocs on the grounds that it would lead to dividing the nation into three regions: one in the north for Kurds, the second in the southern and central provinces for the majority Shiite population and the third for provinces inhabited by Sunni Arab population like al-Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diala and some areas in Ninewa.

Earlier in the day, A Sunni bloc leader urged the Iraqi parliament to sack President Jalal Talabani for tackling the elections law on a "racist not national basis," while a Kurdish bloc spokesman said "Talabani is a legitimate elected



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (L) and Iraq's Kurdistan region President Massoud Barzani, in Baghdad 26 July

president".

"Talabani has dealt with the elections law from a racist partisan background, not from a national one. Accordingly, he's not qualified to lead Iraq and we demand the parliament to immediately sack him," MP Khalaf al-Alyan, the leader of the National Dialogue Council (NDC), told VOI.

REUTERS

Istanbul bombs kill 15 on eve of political case

July 27, 2008 By Thomas Grove

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - Bombs killed 15 people and wounded around 140 in Istanbul late on Sunday, just hours ahead of a court case over banning the governing party that has plunged Turkey into political turmoil.

Officials said one loud blast brought people into the streets of a busy shopping and eating area, then a larger bomb hidden in a rubbish bin exploded 10 minutes and 50 meters away, tearing through the crowds.

"This is a terror attack," city governor Muammer Guler told reporters at the scene, in a pedestrianized street where families gather in the evenings to dine, sip tea and stroll, well away from the city's tourist sites.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blasts, the deadliest attack in Turkey since 2003.

Television showed ambulances taking away the wounded in the middle-class Gungoren district of Turkey's biggest city, near the main airport. Among the rubble and glass of broken shop windows, men carried away the wounded and children cried.

"First a percussion bomb exploded and then a bomb in a garbage container," Deputy Prime Minister Hayati Yazici told reporters. One witness said: "Tens of people were scattered around. People's heads,



Forensic officers investigate the scene of two bomb explosions in a busy shopping district in Istanbul July 27, 2008. (REUTERS/Osman Orsal)

arms, were flying in the air."

"I condemn those who carried out this bombing, which shows us terrorism's inhumane desire for cruelty and violence without discriminating between men and women, young, old and children," President Abdullah Gul said in a statement.

An official at the Istanbul governor's crisis centre told Reuters the death toll had now reached 15 and 137 people were injured, some seriously. Television stations put the injuries as high as 150.

Interior Minister Besir Atalay told CNN Turk television 15 people died and 15 were in critical condition.

DETENTIONS REPORTED

Turkish newspaper Zaman reported on its website that three people had been detained in connection with the blasts.

Forensic teams were examining the scene of the blasts and police were now investigating the security cameras in the area.

"I heard the blast and I came running, people were running the other way to get away. As I approached I saw a huge black cloud coming out of the street. I saw about 10 bodies lying down on the ground," Ercan Usta, who owns a cafe nearby, told Reuters.

Kurdish separatists, far-left groups and Islamists have all carried out bombings in Istanbul in the past.

Turkey, which is seeking European Union membership, has been plunged into political and economic uncertainty by a court case over banning the ruling party that begins on Monday. The Constitutional Court, Turkey's highest judicial body, will deliberate on whether the AK Party has engaged in Islamist activities and should be closed. The party denies the charges. A ruling is expected in early August. Tensions have also been rising over a widening police investigation into a suspected ultra-nationalist group accused of seeking to overthrow the AK Party government. So far 86 people have been arrested, including well-known critics of the government. Governor Guler said the "heinous attack" in Istanbul, which straddles

Europe and Asia, was not a suicide bombing. In Gungoren, on the European side, residents hung the red and white Turkish flag out of their homes after the bombs. Earlier this month three Turkish police and three gunmen were killed in an attack on the U.S. consulate in Istanbul. The most serious attacks in recent years were in 2003, when 62 people were killed by Islamist militants targeting two synagogues, a bank and the British consulate in Istanbul. State news agency Anatolian reported a failed suicide attack on a police station in Bingol province in southeast Turkey. One of the attackers was killed, one wounded and one escaped.

Chicago Tribune July 28, 2008

Suicide bombers kill 28 at Shiite pilgrimage in Baghdad, 15 in Kurdish rally in Kirkuk

By SELCAN HACA OGLU Associated Press Writer

Explosions tore through a Shiite pilgrimage in Baghdad and a Kurdish rally in northern Iraq on Monday, killing at least 43 people and wounding scores more, police said.

The attacks were a devastating blow to the Iraqi public's growing confidence of recent security gains that have seen violence in Iraq drop to its lowest levels in more than four years.

The violence began in Baghdad, when a roadside bomb and three suicide attackers exploded in quick succession among crowds of Shiite pilgrims, killing at least 28 people and wounding 92, police and hospital officials said.

The attacks occurred as tens of thousands of worshippers streamed toward a shrine for an annual pilgrimage marking the death of an eighth-century saint.

A senior U.S. military official blamed al-Qaida in Iraq for the attacks in Baghdad and said two of the bombers were believed to have been women.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was releasing the information ahead of a formal statement, gave a slightly lower casualty toll of 20 killed and 70 wounded.

In a separate attack, a bomb killed at least 15 people and wounded 170 others at a Kurdish rally in the northern city of Kirkuk, Iraqi authorities said.

The demonstrators were protesting a draft provincial elections law blocked in parliament because of disagreement over a power-sharing formula in the disputed city of Kirkuk, an oil-rich area.

Authorities were investigating whether the blast was caused by a female bomber or explosives at the site, Maj. Gen. Jamal Tahir, a Kirkuk police spokesman, said.

Police also found a car bomb nearby and destroyed it without causing casualties after evacuating the area, Tahir said.

After the explosion, dozens of angry Kurds opened fire on the offices of a Turkomen political party, which opposes Kurdish claims on Kirkuk.

A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said no one was hurt in the attack and that the party offices were placed under police protection.

The attacks in Baghdad took place in the mainly Shiite Karradah district, which is several miles



away from the goal of the pilgrimage in Kazimiyah in northern Baghdad. The majority of the dead were women and children, police and health officials said.

Mustapha Abdullah, a 32-year-old man who was injured in the stomach and legs, said the blasts went off when pilgrims from Baghdad's predominantly Shiite southeastern neighborhood of Zafaraniyah reached Kahramanah Square in the district.

"I heard women and children crying and shouting and I saw burned women as dead bodies lied in pools of blood on the street," said Abdullah, speaking at a hospital where he was being treated.

It was the bloodiest attack in Baghdad since June 17, when a truck bombing killed 63 people in Hurriyah, a Baghdad neighborhood that saw some of the worst Shiite-Sunni slaughter in 2006.

Insurgents have increasingly been using women this year to stage suicide bombings in a bid to avoid security measures. Women are more easily able to hide explosives under their all-encompassing black Islamic robes, or abayas, and they often are not searched at checkpoints. But security forces have deployed about 200 women security personnel this week to search female pilgrims near the Baghdad district of Kazimiyah, where the Shiite saint is buried in a golden domed shrine.

On Sunday, at least seven pilgrims were killed south of Baghdad in an ambush by gunmen near a Sunni town, Madain, south of the capital, according to Iraqi police and hospital officials. The marchers were commemorating the death in 799 A.D. of Imam Moussa al-Kadhim.

Since the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein, who was a Sunni, Shiite political parties have encouraged huge turnouts at religious festivals to display the majority sect's power in Iraq. Sunni religious extremists have often targeted the gatherings to foment sectarian war, but that has not stopped the Shiites.

In 2005, at least 1,000 people also were killed in a bridge stampede caused by rumors of a suicide bomber in Baghdad during the Kazimiyah pilgrimage.

But recent pilgrimages have been relatively peaceful as a U.S. troop buildup, a Sunni revolt against al-Qaida in Iraq and a Shiite militia cease-fire helped drive violence down to its lowest level in more than four years.

Sunday's ambush occurred in a former al-Qaida in Iraq stronghold that has been touted by the U.S. military as a success story with its streets now patrolled by U.S.-allied Sunni groups known as Awakening Councils.

The main Iraqi military spokesman in Baghdad, Brig. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi, on Sunday said 100,000 Iraqi security forces will be deployed along with U.S. reinforcements and air support to protect the ceremonies in Kazimiyah.

Vehicles have been banned from the area and most Baghdad bridges would be closed to traffic, al-Moussawi said, adding that pilgrims were banned from carrying weapons or cell phones - rules that have been widely flouted in the past.

The Kazimiyah ceremonies have in the past attracted around 1 million pilgrims. They have often been chaotic, with the task of protecting the pilgrims stretching police resources

Turkey's broadening crisis

Turkey is facing a domestic political crisis that not only threatens the country's internal stability but could weaken its ties to the West and exacerbate instability in the Middle East.

In February, the Turkish public prosecutor forwarded a 161-page indictment to the Constitutional Court that calls for the governing Justice and Development Party, or AKP, to be closed down and for 71 of its leading politicians, including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gul, to be banned from politics for five years. The indictment charges that the party violated secularism, a fundamental principle enshrined in the Turkish Constitution. The Constitutional Court starts final hearings in the case on Monday.

While the evidence is flimsy, most Turks, including leading members of the AKP, expect that the Constitutional Court, a bastion of secularism, will vote to close the party. Indeed, the AKP has already begun to make preparations for its dissolution.

Closing the AKP will not eliminate the party as an important force in Turkish political life. The party will simply re-emerge under a new name, as its predecessors Refah and the Virtue Party did when they were banned. However, closure would likely have a number of damaging side effects.

One would be in Turkey's relations with the Middle East. Under the AKP, Turkey has emerged as an important diplomatic actor in the region — as its successful effort to act as a broker in peace talks between Israel and Syria recently underscored. Without the AKP, Turkey's active diplomatic engagement in the Middle East is likely to diminish and the United States would lose an important partner in trying to stabilize this volatile region.

Another unwanted side effect would be in Turkey's relations with its Kurdish minority. The AKP enjoys strong support among the Turkish Kurds. In elections last summer the party doubled its support in the Kurdish areas of the Southeast. If the AKP is closed, the main beneficiary is likely to be the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has been conducting terrorist attacks against Turkey from sanctuaries in Northern Iraq. Moreover, the main Kurdish party, the Democratic Society Party, is also likely to be closed. Thus the Kurds would have no political vehicle to express their interests except through the PKK.

In addition, Turkey's rapprochement with Iraq could lose valuable momentum, while the hand of those forces in Turkey pushing for stronger military action against the PKK in Northern Iraq is likely to be strengthened. This could lead to an escalation of tensions between Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq, undercutting Ameri-

can efforts to promote better ties between the two entities.

Finally, closure of the AKP is likely to increase strains in Turkey's relations with the European Union. Opponents of Ankara's EU membership will use the closure as



By Kichka in Telad (Jerusalem), CWS/ Cartoonarts International

a pretext to intensify their opposition, while supporters will find it harder to make the case for Turkish membership.

At the same time, banning the party could undercut efforts to promote reform and democracy in the Middle East. Many moderate Islamists in the Middle East are likely to see the party's closure as proof that it is impossible to achieve their political goals by democratic means and could turn to more radical solutions.

So far the United States has avoided taking sides, expressing support for both secularism and democratic processes. However, given the negative strategic consequences likely to flow from the closure of the AKP, the Bush administration should encourage the Turks to find a compromise before the crisis does untold damage to Turkey's democratic credibility and international reputation and further complicates Ankara's prospects for EU membership.

If, after all that, the AKP is still closed, the United States should avoid taking punitive measures. That would only strengthen the hand of the hard-line nationalists and further weaken Turkey's ties to the West. Instead, American officials should continue to nudge Turkey toward bolder reforms that will strengthen internal democracy and bolster the qualifications for EU membership. In the long run, this is the best way to ensure the emergence of a stable, democratic Turkey closely anchored to the West.

F. Stephen Larrabee, co-author of "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey," holds the corporate chair in European Security at the RAND Corporation.

AFP

UNE FIGURE MODÉRÉE ÉLU À LA TÊTE DU PRINCIPAL PARTI PRO-KURDE DE TURQUIE

ANKARA, 20 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PRINCIPAL parti pro-kurde de Turquie, menacé d'interdiction pour collusion avec la rébellion kurde armée, a élu dimanche une personnalité politique kurde modérée à sa tête lors d'un congrès à Ankara, a rapporté l'agence Anadolu.

Seul candidat à la présidence du parti, son ex-coprésident Ahmet Türk, un homme politique kurde chevronné plusieurs fois député, a été élu sans problème nouveau président du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP) à l'unanimité des 574 suffrages exprimés par les délégués.

Ce congrès a été convoqué après l'incarcération pendant plus d'un mois en mars du prédécesseur de M. Türk, Nurettin Demirtas. Ce dernier était poursuivi pour s'être soustrait à ses obligations militaires en utilisant un faux rapport médical.

M. Demirtas, enrôlé ensuite sous les drapeaux, est considéré comme un "faux" au sein du militantisme kurde et a été emprisonné dans sa jeunesse pour appartenance au PKK.

Le DTP qui dispose de 21 sièges au Parlement turc (sur 550) a été créé par d'anciens députés kurdes dont la plus connue, Mme Leyla Zana, a été emprisonnée pendant dix ans pour complicité avec le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis.

La Cour constitutionnelle turque doit se prononcer dans les prochains mois sur une action de la justice réclamant la dissolution du parti pour soutien supposé au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit)

Plusieurs maires DTP du Sud-Est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde, sont sous les verrous ou sous le coup de poursuites judiciaires, notamment pour apologie du terrorisme ou du chef emprisonné du PKK Abdullah Öcalan.

AFP

LE PKK LIBÈRE LES 3 ALPINISTES ALLEMANDS ENLEVÉS DANS L'EST DE LA TURQUIE

ANKARA, 20 juil 2008 (AFP)

TROIS ALPINISTES allemands enlevés il y a 12 jours dans l'est de la Turquie par des rebelles kurdes, ont été libérés dimanche, ont annoncé les autorités turques.

"Le ministre (turc) des Affaires étrangères Ali Babacan vient d'appeler au téléphone son homologue allemand Frank-Walter Steinmeier pour lui dire que les trois ressortissants allemands se trouvent aux mains des forces turques et qu'ils sont en bonne santé", a indiqué à l'AFP le porte-parole du ministère turc des Affaires étrangères Burak Özügergin.

M. Steinmeier a fait part de son "grand soulagement" après la libération des trois Allemands qui ont été "confiés aux autorités turques et allemandes".

La chancelière allemande, Angela Merkel, s'est elle aussi déclarée "soulagée" lors d'une interview à la chaîne de télévision ARD.

Elle a remercié les autorités allemandes et turques pour leurs efforts, mais s'est refusée à tout commentaire sur les circonstances de cette libération.

Les trois Allemands, Helmut Johann, Martin Georpe et Lars Holper Reime faisaient partie d'un groupe de 13 alpinistes. Ils avaient été enlevés du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) dans la nuit du 8 au 9 juillet à 3.000 mètres d'altitude alors qu'ils réalisaient l'ascension du mont Ararat (Agri en turc).

Le gouverneur d'Agri Mehmet Cetin a déclaré à la presse que les rebelles qui avaient kidnappé les ressortissants allemands "a été forcé à relâcher les otages en raison des opérations de l'armée visant à les libérer, l'état s'étant resserré autour d'eux".

Les gendarmes ont retrouvé les otages une trentaine de minutes après leur libération, a-t-il souligné lors d'une conférence de presse.

Les otages ont subi un examen médical avant d'être remis à des responsables allemands arrivés à Agri.

Le PKK avait indiqué après l'enlèvement qu'il garderait les trois Allemands jusqu'à ce que Berlin mette fin à la répression contre ses militants et ses sympathisants en Allemagne où vivent quelque 2,4 millions d'immigrés turcs, dont environ 600.000 Kurdes.

Un porte-parole du PKK avait également posé comme condition à la libération des alpinistes l'arrêt des opérations militaires d'Ankara dans la région d'Agri.

Les autorités allemandes avaient rejeté ces demandes qualifiées de chantage,



réclamant la libération immédiate des otages.

Le Mont Agri, situé à proximité des frontières avec l'Iran et l'Arménie, est la plus haute montagne de Turquie avec une altitude de 5.137 mètres et a accueilli, selon la tradition biblique, l'arche de Noé.

Le PKK, qui figure sur la liste des organisations classées comme terroristes par l'Union européenne, la Turquie et les Etats-Unis, a lancé en 1984 une lutte séparatiste armée dans le sud-est et l'est anatolien, dont la population est en majorité kurde.

Ce conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts selon les chiffres officiels.

Des combats quasi-quotidiens se produisent dans la zone entre rebelles et l'armée. Tôt dimanche, deux membres du PKK ont été abattus près de Yüksekova, située aux confins du sud-est anatolien, a annoncé l'état-major sur son site internet.

L'organisation a enlevé dans le passé des soldats, des policiers et des journalistes turcs

AFP

SYRIE: ARRESTATION DU CHEF D'UN PARTI KURDE INTERDIT

DAMAS, 21 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE CHEF d'un parti kurde interdit, Mohammad Moussa, a été arrêté à Damas par les services de sécurité, a annoncé lundi l'Organisation nationale des droits de l'Homme en Syrie (ONDHS), qui a protesté contre cette mesure "anticonstitutionnelle".

"Les services de sécurité militaire à Damas ont arrêté samedi Mohammad Moussa, secrétaire général du Parti de la Gauche Kurde (PGK- non autorisé)", a indiqué l'ONDHS dans un communiqué.

Le dirigeant kurde, 56 ans, avait déjà été convoqué à plusieurs reprises par les services de sécurité à Hassaké, dans le nord-est de la Syrie, et interrogé "sur les activités de son parti ainsi que sur des déclarations qu'il avait faites à des médias arabes", a précisé l'ONDHS.

L'ONDHS juge "anticonstitutionnelle" l'interpellation de Moussa dont "le mandat d'arrêt n'a pas été émis par les autorités judiciaires mais par les services

de sécurité en vertu de la loi d'urgence en vigueur en Syrie depuis 45 ans".

Elle demande aux autorités syriennes de "renoncer à leur droit absolu qu'elles se sont octroyé d'une manière illégale au nom de la loi d'urgence pour mener des arrestations" et de "libérer immédiatement Mohammad Moussa".

Dans un communiqué reçu par l'AFP, le Parti de la Gauche kurde a appelé aussi à la libération immédiate de son secrétaire général.

"Mohammad Moussa est un nationaliste qui défend les intérêts et les droits légitimes du peuple kurde ainsi que ceux de tout le peuple syrien", indique le communiqué.

La majorité des 1,5 million de Kurdes syriens sont installés dans le nord du pays. Il existe en Syrie onze partis kurdes "non autorisés", selon les ONG. Les responsables kurdes de Syrie se défendent de toutes visées sécessionnistes et assurent qu'ils veulent uniquement la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ainsi que de leurs droits politiques.

AFP

LE PARLEMENT IRAKIEN OUVRE LA VOIE AUX ÉLECTIONS PROVINCIALES

BAGDAD, 22 juil 2008 (AFP)

LE PARLEMENT irakien a approuvé mardi une loi électorale qui ouvre la voie à un scrutin provincial crucial, selon des sources parlementaires.

Cette loi a été votée en dépit du boycottage de députés kurdes et des deux vice-présidents du Parlement, le chiite cheikh Khalid al-Attiya et le Kurde Aref Tayfour.

Le scrutin doit avoir lieu dans les 18 provinces irakiennes dès le mois d'octobre et a été placé sous la supervision de l'ONU.

Toutefois la loi prévoit qu'une commission doit régler au préalable la répartition ethnique de la ville et de la province de Kirkouk (nord), où la population se partage entre Kurdes, Arabes et Turkomans.

La répartition du pouvoir, disputé entre les différentes communautés de cette région riche en pétrole, a notamment motivé l'opposition des Kurdes à la loi.

L'organisation des instances de décision prévues par le scrutin dépend de la

composition ethnico-religieuse de la populations des provinces.

"L'absence d'un groupe important de députés va nuire à la loi et empoisonner l'atmosphère politique", a déclaré M. Attiya à la presse.

Dans le cadre d'un Irak fédéral envisagé par la Constitution, les provinces auront des prérogatives importantes, notamment dans le domaine des dépenses publiques.

En juin, le mouvement du chiite Moqtada Sadr, une des principales forces politiques en Irak, avait annoncé qu'il boycotterait ces élections provinciales dont le principe est soutenu par Washington.

"Nous estimons que les occupants (les Américains, ndlr) interfèrent dans le travail des conseils (provinciaux, ndlr) quand il s'agit des projets économiques et de leurs financements", avait alors justifié Liwa Sumaysim, le chef du bureau politique du mouvement sadriste.

rfi

24 juillet 2008

Le président irakien rejette la loi sur les élections provinciales

Le Conseil présidentiel irakien a finalement rejeté mercredi la loi votée la veille par le Parlement sur la tenue d'élections provinciales cet automne. C'est le président de ce conseil, le Kurde Talabani, qui a mis son veto. Un revers pour la paix, ce scrutin étant jugé essentiel pour la stabilisation du pays.

C'est une question technique : il faut 3 mois pour préparer l'échéance électorale, et les élections provinciales devraient donc être repoussées à l'année prochaine...

Le scrutin devait initialement se tenir en octobre dans les 18 provinces irakiennes, sous la supervision des Nations unies. Mais la loi électorale est en discussion au Parlement depuis des mois, et bloque sur 3 points : la question des quotas réservés aux candidates, la question du vote des déplacés, puisque les violences ont bouleversé la carte

démographique, et enfin dernière pomme de discorde : Kirkouk et son pétrole.

Il est envisagé pour cette riche province un partage du pouvoir sur des bases ethniques, mais les Kurdes rejettent ce scénario. Finalement, la loi électorale a été adoptée mardi par le Parlement, mais seuls 127 députés étaient présents sur 275 habituellement, les autres ayant montré leur opposition au texte en s'absentant.

Dans ces conditions, le président irakien a refusé mercredi de ratifier le texte. Les élections provinciales devraient donc être repoussées, un retard qui constitue un revers pour Washington : les Etats-Unis estiment en effet que le scrutin est crucial pour la réconciliation nationale. Ces élections devraient entériner la tendance au fédéralisme dans le pays et changer radicalement à terme le paysage politique irakien.



24 juillet 2008

Le Point

Malaise chez les Kurdes d'Allemagne

Le malaise de la communauté kurde allemande vis-à-vis des pouvoirs publics s'accroît. La prise en otage puis la libération dimanche dernier de trois Allemands par les forces rebelles kurdes en Turquie ont exacerbé des tensions qui remontent à plusieurs décennies. Selon le magazine allemand « Der Spiegel », le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) aurait enlevé les trois randoisseurs en réaction à la décision du gouvernement allemand de réduire au silence la chaîne de télévision Roj TV en juin, considérée comme le porte-parole du PKK. Le parti est interdit de toute activité par Berlin depuis 1993, mais il perdure en Allemagne dans l'illégalité. Ses manifestations européennes sont désormais pacifiques, ses activités de guérilla se concentrant sur l'est de la Turquie.

La communauté kurde d'Allemagne, forte de 500.000 personnes (pour 2,5 millions de Turcs), oscille, comme le souligne « Der Spiegel », entre admiration et condamnation du PKK. Le nombre d'adhérents est estimé à 11.500 et nombreux sont ceux qui éprouvent un sentiment sinon de soutien, du moins de sympathie pour la guérilla. « Les Kurdes ont une véritable dette envers cette organisation », insiste le directeur de l'unique journal kurde en Allemagne, « Yeni Özgür Politika », « parce qu'elle nous a rendu notre fierté et notre identité ». Cependant, beaucoup d'entre eux craignent d'affirmer leurs idées, la situation de leur communauté pouvant se détériorer davantage.

Car, dernièrement, le gouvernement allemand s'est montré plus ferme envers le parti. Il a

renforcé sa coopération avec Ankara dans la lutte contre le PKK, extradant notamment deux militants kurdes en Turquie. Un certain nombre d'associations politiques kurdes ont également fait les frais d'une approche plus énergique de la part des agences de sécurité allemandes. Certains de leurs dirigeants ont été arrêtés à Hanovre, à Brême et à Berlin. Pour le magazine allemand, ces mesures expliquent la « colère » croissante de la communauté. Même les plus pacifistes, qui condamnent la prise d'otages, sont en faveur de l'autonomie kurde, qui selon eux devrait être acquise par la négociation. « On aime tous plus ou moins le PKK, conclut une Kurde hambourgeoise, même si nous ne sommes pas tous des membres actifs. »

AFP

L'AVIATION TURQUE FRAPPE DE NOUVEAU LE PKK DANS LE NORD DE L'IRAK (ARMÉE)

ANKARA, 24 juil 2008 (AFP)

L'AVIATION turque a bombardé dans la nuit de mercredi à jeudi des positions de rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie) dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé l'armée turque.

Treize cibles situées dans la région de Zap, dans le Kurdistan irakien où le

PKK dispose de plusieurs installations, ont été "détruites à la suite d'un pilonnage intensif (...) épargnant toute installation civile", indique l'état-major sur son site internet.

"Les pertes des terroristes sont en cours d'évaluation", déclare l'armée.

"Les opérations anti-terroristes seront poursuivies avec détermination dans le

pays et à l'étranger en fonction des nécessités militaires", ajoute le document.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes. Le conflit a fait plus de 37.000 morts.

Depuis décembre 2007, l'armée turque a bombardé près d'une vingtaine de fois les positions du PKK dans le nord de l'Irak. Elle a effectué des raids aériens ainsi qu'une opération terrestre d'une semaine en février dans cette région où sont retranchés, selon Ankara, plus de 2.000 rebelles kurdes.

Sur le terrain, un porte-parole du PKK, Ahmet Danis, a confirmé les bombardements turcs qui se sont produits à 20H30 GMT et affirmé, comme c'est le cas dans tous les autres pilonnages, qu'ils n'avaient pas fait de victime dans ses rangs.

Le gouvernement turc dispose d'une autorisation d'un an du Parlement, qui expire en octobre, pour mener des opérations militaires transfrontalières contre le PKK.

Depuis le début des actions d'Ankara contre le PKK en Irak, les Etats-Unis, allié de la Turquie au sein de l'Otan, l'assistent en lui fournissant en temps réel des informations sur les mouvements des rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien.

Par ailleurs, l'explosion d'une mine dans un petit village situé non loin de la ville turque de Lice (sud-est) a tué deux enfants âgés d'une dizaine d'années, ont indiqué des sources locales.

Un autre enfant et un adulte ont été blessés dans l'incident provoqué par la manipulation de l'engin découvert dans un terrain vague près du village, ont précisé les mêmes sources

17 morts dans un attentat à Istanbul dans une Turquie sous tension

AFP

ISTANBUL 28 juillet 2008 (AFP) —

LA TURQUIE semblait privilégier la piste des rebelles kurdes lundi après le double attentat qui a fait 17 morts à Istanbul, dans un pays sous tension, où la justice commençait à délibérer sur une possible interdiction du parti islam-conservateur au pouvoir.

Le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui dirige le pays depuis 2002, risque d'être dissous pour activités antilaïques. Ce scénario replongerait le pays dans la crise politique, avec en ligne de mire la perspective d'élections anticipées.

Dimanche soir, deux bombes ont explosé à Istanbul, sur une avenue commerçante de la rive européenne de la ville, où déambulaient des centaines de personnes dans la fraîcheur de la nuit.

17 personnes ont été tuées, selon un bilan de source médicale établi lundi, et 115 autres étaient toujours hospitalisées, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Le ministre de la Santé Recep Akdag avait auparavant souligné que le nombre de morts risquait de s'aggraver avec sept personnes très grièvement blessées, ajoutant que des enfants se trouvaient parmi les morts. Une fillette de 12 ans notamment a été tuée par des éclats qui l'ont touchée en plein cœur.

"Il n'y a aucun doute qu'il s'agit d'une attaque terroriste", a déclaré aux journalistes le gouverneur d'Istanbul Muammer Güler.

"Il y avait deux engins explosifs (...) Tous deux étaient disposés dans des poubelles. Ils ont explosé à 10 ou 12 minutes d'intervalle. Après la première explosion, les gens se sont bien sûr rassemblés et c'est alors qu'est survenue la deuxième explosion, qui a fait des morts", a expliqué M. Güler.

Selon des témoins, la seconde déflagration était beaucoup plus forte que la première, étayant la thèse d'un piège destiné à faire autant de victimes que possible.

Sur les images diffusées par la chaîne de télévision NTV, on pouvait assister à des scènes de panique.

NTV, ainsi que plusieurs journaux, ont désigné les séparatistes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

Interrogé par les journalistes sur cette hypothèse, M. Güler et le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay ont estimé qu'il était trop tôt pour se prononcer.

Pour les quotidiens Hürriyet et Vatan, il ne fait aucun doute que ces attaques sont l'affaire du PKK, affaibli par des offensives de l'armée turque dans le sud-est du pays et dans le nord de l'Irak, où des centaines de rebelles se sont réfugiés.

"Massacre de civils du PKK", titrait lundi le journal à grand tirage Hürriyet.



Le chef de l'opposition au Parlement, Deniz Baykal, a lui aussi pointé du doigt le PKK. "Les autorités pensent aussi que c'est l'affaire du PKK", a souligné à Istanbul le chef du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP).

Plusieurs attentats survenus à Istanbul ont été attribués dans le passé au PKK, qui se bat depuis 1984 pour l'indépendance du Sud-Est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Selon les journaux, le type d'explosif utilisé est le même que celui utilisé dans un attentat qui avait fait dix morts l'an dernier dans un centre commercial d'Ankara et avait été attribué par les autorités aux rebelles kurdes.

Des groupes armés islamistes et d'extrême gauche sont également actifs à Istanbul.

Une cellule turque d'Al-Qaïda avait été tenue pour responsable d'attentats à Istanbul en novembre 2003 contre deux synagogues, le consulat britannique et la banque britannique HSBC, qui avaient fait 63 morts et des centaines de blessés.

Le double attentat survient alors que la Turquie traverse une période de tension.

Vendredi, un tribunal d'Istanbul a décidé de juger des putschistes présumés soupçonnés de vouloir renverser le gouvernement issu de la mouvance islamiste.

L'attentat coïncide également, à quelques heures près, avec le début à Ankara, lundi matin, des délibérations de la Cour constitutionnelle concernant une possible interdiction de l'AKP.

AFP

IRAK: ATTENTAT ET ÉCHANGES DE TIRS FONT 27 MORTS À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 28 juil 2008 (AFP)

AU MOINS 27 personnes ont été tuées lundi matin dans un attentat suicide suivi d'échanges de coups de feu, liés à la panique, dans une manifestation de Kurdes dans la ville de Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, selon un nouveau bilan de source policière.

Onze personnes ont été tuées et 54 blessées lorsqu'un kamikaze a déclenché sa ceinture d'explosifs au milieu de manifestants kurdes au centre de Kirkouk, vers 10H00 locales (07H00 GMT), selon Salam Zankana, commandant de la police de la ville située à 250 km au nord de Bagdad.

Mais l'explosion a été suivie d'un mouvement de panique de la foule, au cours duquel des coups de feu ont été tirés, faisant 16 morts et 72 blessés supplé-

mentaires, selon Mohamed Al-Barazenci, de la police de Kirkouk.

Le bilan, toujours provisoire, atteint 27 morts et 126 blessés.

Un précédent bilan, de source médicale, faisait état de 22 morts et 120 blessés, dont 30 graves.

Najat Hassan, responsable du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) à Kirkouk, a déclaré que les coups de feu étaient survenus lorsque des manifestants fuyant les lieux de l'explosion s'étaient approchés des bureaux proches d'autres partis politiques locaux.

Les gardes de ces bureaux avaient alors tiré en l'air, pour tenir les manifestants à distance, et certaines personnes au milieu de la foule ont alors ouvert le feu sur les gardes, a-t-il ajouté.

Les Kurdes manifestaient contre le projet très controversé de loi électorale, approuvé par le Parlement mais rejeté jeudi par le Conseil présidentiel, ce qui risque d'entraîner le report de scrutins provinciaux prévus en octobre.

Le parlement avait approuvé mardi soir le projet de loi dans un contexte tendu. Seuls 140 députés sur 275 étaient présents au moment du vote. De nombreux parlementaires avaient dénoncé des irrégularités dans la procédure du vote qui avait été boycotté par les 54 parlementaires kurdes et d'autres législateurs hostiles à la loi.

En réaction, le Conseil présidentiel, composé du président Jalal Talabani et de ses deux vice-présidents, a décidé d'opposer son veto au texte. Des députés

ont alors entamé la révision du projet de loi, espérant trouver un compromis.

Les Kurdes en particulier s'opposent à la loi en raison d'un différend sur la répartition du pouvoir entre les différentes communautés de la région riche en pétrole de Kirkouk.

Kirkouk avait été placée par l'ancien président Saddam Hussein hors du Kurdistan irakien, une région indépendante de facto depuis 1991.

Alors que les Kurdes ont aujourd'hui consolidé leur pouvoir au sein du nouvel Irak, ils exigent le rattachement de la ville à leur région autonome située à une cinquantaine de kilomètres plus au nord.

24heures

28 Juillet 2008

Kurdes, islamistes ou ultras? Enigme terroriste en Turquie

Deux engins explosifs ont tué 17 personnes dimanche à Istanbul. Le pouvoir met en cause les rebelles kurdes. Le PKK dément toute implication.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS VERDONNET

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a sans les nommer accusé hier les rebelles kurdes d'avoir perpétré le double attentat qui a fait dimanche 17 morts à Istanbul.

Pour la presse, les attaques seraient des ripostes aux opérations de l'armée contre les rebelles au nord de l'Irak et dans le sud-est de la Turquie à majorité kurde.

Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan le PKK a cependant démenti hier toute implication dans le double attentat de la veille: les explosions, a assuré l'un de ses responsables, sont l'oeuvre de «forces sinistres».

En tout état de cause, les accusations qui pèsent sur lui se heurtent à de nombreuses interrogations. Sur le lieu des attentats: un quartier populaire d'Istanbul, mégalopole où réside une forte communauté kurde. Sur les cibles choisies: les passants d'une rue commerçante, plutôt qu'un site touristique du littoral, ou un bâtiment officiel de l'administration et de l'armée. Sur le «mode opératoire»: un piège conçu pour attirer les curieux dans un premier temps et les tuer dans un second. Cette combinaison explosive n'est pas dans sa manière.

Victimes expiatoires

Plusieurs attentats ont été dans le passé attribués au PKK, rappelle Hamit Bozarslan, directeur d'études à l'EHESS (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris). Les



AP Photo / Murad Sezer | Les ministres et les membres des familles des victimes de l'explosion prient à côté des cercueils au cours d'une cérémonie funèbre à Istanbul.

rebelles kurdes, dit-il, deviennent des «victimes expiatoires» idéales, car ils présentent l'avantage de permettre à la

presse et aux dirigeants politiques «de mobiliser l'opinion autour de sentiments nationalistes».

Faut-il alors envisager la provocation de terroristes islamistes? Pour M. Bozarslan, l'hypothèse ne paraît guère plus probante.

La date des attaques peut-elle signaler une autre piste? Les explosions surviennent en effet dans une période de fortes tensions politiques, à la veille d'une réunion capitale de la Cour constitutionnelle. A l'ordre du jour: le sort de l'AKP, le Parti de la justice et du développement, formation musulmane conservatrice au pouvoir, dont le procureur de la Cour de cassation demande l'interdiction pour des «activités allant à l'encontre de la laïcité».

Parti populaire, l'AKP est combattu par une fraction de l'armée et de la haute administration. Entre le sommet de l'Etat, certaines officines, certains services de renseignement, et les groupes radicaux d'extrême gauche ou d'extrême droite, des connivences existent. Le procureur en chef d'Istanbul vient de les confirmer en inculquant 86 militants du réseau ultranationaliste Ergenekon, généraux à la retraite, journalistes, avocats, hommes d'affaires, tous soupçonnés de menées terroristes ou de «tentative de renverser le gouvernement par la force». Dans cette mouvance-là, affirme Hamit Bozarslan, la conquête du pouvoir, peut passer par la stratégie de «la terre brûlée».

Courier
INTERNATIONAL.COM

31 juil. 2008

TURQUIE - On pense tous au PKK mais...

L'organisation séparatiste kurde a souvent perpétré des attentats contre des civils. Mais, dans l'imbroglio politique turc, d'autres groupes peuvent avoir voulu nuire au pays.

A peine deux semaines se sont écoulées depuis l'attaque armée contre le consulat américain à Istanbul attribuée à Al-Qaïda [14 juillet 2008] et on doit déjà faire face à un nouvel attentat. Mais l'attaque du 27 juillet à Güngören [cité dortoir du sud d'Istanbul] ne ressemble pas du tout aux méthodes d'Al-Qaïda. Ce «terrorisme aveugle» ressemble plus à un acte de revanche. Mais qui veut prendre sa revanche, et sur qui? Bien évidemment, on pense tous au PKK. Dans le nord de l'Irak, des opérations militaires [turques] prennent sans arrêt pour cible des éléments de cette organisation et, pour cette raison, on sait que le PKK voulait transférer ses opérations terroristes dans les grandes villes. D'ailleurs, le PKK compte déjà à son actif un grand nombre d'attentats à la bombe visant des citoyens innocents. Les derniers exemples en date sont les attentats à la bombe sur le marché d'Anafartalar à Ankara [le 22 mai 2008], et un autre contre un véhicule militaire à Diyarbakir [le 6 janvier 2008, dans le sud-est

de la -Turquie]. Il convient néanmoins d'être prudent. Examinons d'abord la méthode: c'est la première fois qu'on assiste à un événement d'une telle ampleur [les explosions successives de deux bombes]. L'attentat a clairement été planifié dans le but de provoquer un maximum de morts. En outre, vu le travail des services de renseignements, il est difficile pour le PKK d'orchestrer un tel attentat à -Istanbul. Si c'est vraiment le PKK qui se trouve derrière cette attaque, on peut être sûr que les responsables seront arrêtés en un temps record. Cependant, le moment où survient cet attentat est pour le moins curieux. Il s'est produit en effet juste après que des opérations aériennes ont eu lieu [dans le nord de l'Irak]. Le DTP [Parti de la société démocratique - de tendance prokurde, représenté au Parlement turc] vient de clore son congrès. Et Abdullah Öcalan [fondateur du PKK, emprisonné depuis 1999] n'arrête pas de faire des commentaires depuis Imrali [son île-prison] sur l'affaire Ergenekon [réseau clandestin

turc accusé d'avoir préparé une série de coups d'Etat et d'assassinats politiques dans le but de renverser l'actuel gouvernement]. Il est étrange que le PKK prépare dans ce contexte un tel acte de terrorisme sauvage dans le seul but de faire parler de lui. Sans innocenter cette organisation, soulignons que la Turquie est empiétrée par ailleurs dans deux affaires sulfureuses [le procès d'Ergenekon et le procès pour interdire l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir]. Et les deux procès ont officiellement commencé. Cet acte de terrorisme sauvage peut soit être le fait du PKK, soit celui d'une organisation secrète dont on n'aurait jusqu'à ce jour jamais entendu parler. Quel qu'il soit, l'auteur cherche à plonger la Turquie dans le chaos. Et, dans le malaise réel que nous traversons, il pourrait bien atteindre son but.

Rusen Çakır
Vatan



MANIFESTATION DE KURDES À ERBIL CONTRE LA LOI SUR LES ÉLECTIONS

ERBIL (Irak), 29 juil 2008 (AFP) -

PLUSIEURS milliers de Kurdes ont manifesté mardi à Erbil (350 km au nord de Bagdad), capitale du Kurdistan irakien, devant le siège du Parlement local pour protester contre un projet très controversé de loi électorale, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

Des manifestants brandissaient des drapeaux du Kurdistan, d'autres portant des pancartes comparant Mahmoud Mashadani, président du Parlement irakien, à l'ancien dictateur irakien Saddam Hussein.

"Ceux qui ont fait passer la loi sont pareils que Saddam Hussein. Nous voulons vivre dans notre pays librement, indépendamment, loin des sectes, car nous sommes tous Irakiens. Nous voulons vivre sous notre drapeau", a lancé Ahmed Salim, un retraité de 59 ans.

Pour Abdelhamid al-Barazandji, professeur d'université, "l'approbation de la loi (électorale) par le Parlement pose une pierre sur la route de l'article 140 de la Constitution", qui prévoit notamment la tenue d'un référendum à Kirkouk par lequel les habitants doivent dire s'ils veulent être rattachés au Kurdistan irakien ou non.

Les Kurdes s'opposent à la loi électorale en raison d'un différend sur la réparti-

tion du pouvoir entre les différentes communautés de la région de Kirkouk, riche en pétrole.

Kirkouk avait été placée par l'ancien président Saddam Hussein hors du Kurdistan irakien, une région indépendante de facto depuis 1991.

Alors que les Kurdes ont aujourd'hui consolidé leur pouvoir au sein du nouvel Irak, ils exigent le rattachement de la ville à leur région autonome située à une cinquantaine de kilomètres plus au nord.

Le projet de loi électorale, approuvé par le Parlement le 22 juillet, avait été rejeté deux jours plus tard par le Conseil présidentiel, ce qui risque d'entraîner le report de scrutins provinciaux prévus en octobre.

Le Parlement avait approuvé le projet de loi dans un contexte tendu. Seuls 140 députés sur 275 étaient présents au moment du vote et de nombreux parlementaires ont dénoncé des irrégularités dans la procédure du vote, boycottée par les 54 députés kurdes et d'autres législateurs hostiles à la loi.

En réaction, le Conseil présidentiel, composé du président kurde Jalal Talabani et de ses deux vice-présidents, avait opposé son veto au texte. Des députés ont depuis entamé la révision du projet de loi, espérant trouver un compromis.



DES FIRMES DES EMIRATS LANCENT UN PROJET GAZIER AU KURDISTAN D'IRAK

DUBAI, 29 juil 2008 (AFP)-

GAS CITIES LLC, coentreprise émiratie regroupant Dana Gas et Crescent Petroleum, a annoncé mardi avoir été désignée par les autorités kurdes du nord de l'Irak pour construire un important complexe gazier, a rapporté l'agence officielle Wam.

La "Kurdistan Gas City" sera édifiée sur un site de 42,8 millions de m² et doit attirer des investissements de 40 milliards de dollars, selon la Wam.

L'investissement dans l'infrastructure se montera à 3 milliards de dollars.

Le site comprendra des zones industrielle, commerciale et résidentielles. Pas moins de 20 industries pétrochimiques et lourdes y seront implantées.

Hamid Jafar, le patron de Dana Gas, une société privée, a indiqué s'attendre à

la création de 200.000 emplois sur ce site.

Selon les deux firmes, 80% d'un réseau de 180 km de gazoducs a déjà été construit au Kurdistan irakien, ainsi que deux usines de liquéfaction destinées à alimenter des unités de production d'électricité.

La production des deux usines doit démarrer dans les prochaines semaines à raison de 4,24 millions de m³ par jour, et doit doubler début 2009.

La région kurde semi-autonome du nord de l'Irak, riche en pétrole, est l'une des plus sûres du pays. Le gouvernement régional a déjà signé des contrats d'exploration et d'exportation de brut avec des compagnies internationales après avoir adopté son propre arsenal législatif en août 2007, déclenchant la colère du gouvernement central de Bagdad, qui nie la validité de ces contrats.



- Voices of Iraq
July 31, 2008

Turkish PM Voices concerns on Kurdish claims to annex Kirkuk into Kurdistan-statement

BAGHDAD, July31 (VOI) - Turkey expressed concerns on Kurdish claims of annexing Kirkuk to the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan.

"Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced his concerns to President Jalal Talabani about Kirkuk's local council request to annex Kirkuk to Kurdistan region", said a president office statement received by Aswat al-Iraq-Voices of Iraq (VOI). Fighting Kurdish fighters in its south-eastern region, Turkey opposes Kurdish claims to annex Kirkuk, where Kurds, Arab and Turkmen-one of the Turkish languages-struggle over the identity of the oil-rich city.

The announcement pointed out "the Turkish PM expressed his support to give 32% share to the city's main denominations and 4% to its Chado-Assyrians (Christian) minority". On Thursday, 24 Kurdish members of Kirkuk's local council requested annexing Kirkuk to Kurdistan's region amid staunch opposition from Arab and Turkmen members.

"The step did not mean joining Kurdistan's region but underscored the threat in case parliamentary blocs and the Kurdish Coalition could not reach an agreement on the provincial polls law," the statement cited Talabani as saying.

The Iraqi president emphasized the importance of "reaching accordance among Kirkuk's ethnicities in tandem with his quest to strike a deal among Iraq's denominations". Iraq's Parliament passed the provincial election bill one week ago, but a walkout by Kurdish lawmakers over how to deal with the

disputed oil city of Kirkuk unleashed heated debate about it.

The Presidential Board appealed it, citing violation of the national reconciliation and upsetting the quota for women as reasons. The law is meant to pave the way for polls seen as vital to reconciling Iraq's factions, who boycotted the last provincial elections in 2005, with its other communities.

The provincial elections law had been held up by a dispute over what to do about voting in multi-ethnic Kirkuk, where a dispute is simmering between Kurds who say the city should belong to the largely autonomous Kurdistan region and Arabs who want it to stay under central government authority.

Arabs and Turkmen believe Kurds have stacked the city with Kurds since the downfall of Saddam in 2003 to try to tip the demographic balance in their favor in any vote. Arabs encouraged to move there under Saddam Hussein's rule fear the vote will consolidate Kurdish power and they sought to postpone it, a proposal Kurdish politicians have rejected.

Parliament decided to postpone the vote and add another article that the Kurds found unacceptable: that each ethnic or sectarian group gets a set allocation of seats and voting is between individual candidates from those groups. Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen get 10 seats each. Minority Christians get two. Washington has been urging a speedy provincial election, which it sees as a pillar of national reconciliation, but the poll is also proving a potential flashpoint for tensions.

Bombers hit crowds in Baghdad and Kirkuk

By Richard A. Opiel Jr.
and Sabrina Tavernise

BAGHDAD: Female bombers struck Kurdish political protesters in Kirkuk and Shiite pilgrims in Baghdad on Monday, leaving at least 48 people dead and 249 wounded in one of the bloodiest sequences of attacks in Iraq this year.

In the northern city of Kirkuk, at least 24 people were killed and 187 wounded, after a female suicide bomber blew herself up amid thousands of Kurdish demonstrators who had gathered near the provincial headquarters building, said Brigadier General Burhan Tayyib Taha, of the Iraqi police in Kirkuk. The bombing immediately set the city on edge. Many Kurds believed the city's ethnic Turkmen were behind the blast and retaliated by attacking the headquarters of Turkmen political parties.

In the attacks in Baghdad, three women used suicide vests and a bomb in a bag to make strikes just minutes apart, killing 24 people, all apparently Shiite pilgrims marching in a festival, according to an official at the Interior Ministry. The dead included at least four children, one an infant, and there were at least 62 other people wounded, according to police officials and witnesses.

Late Monday, the government announced a 36-hour curfew in Baghdad, banning all vehicle movement as of 5 a.m. Tuesday. The sudden move, which came on a day of some of the worst violence in Iraq for months, was reminiscent of Baghdad's earlier, more violent days, when the government, struggling to control bombings, would regularly close down the city.

In Kirkuk, considered a tinderbox because of its volatile ethnic mix of Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs, rival parties traded accusations about the violence that followed the initial blast.

A Kurdish member of the provincial council, Mohammed Kamal, accused Turkmen extremists of carrying out the attack and said that after the blast, shots had been fired at panicked Kurds from a nearby building owned by Turkmen. "Many protesters were killed and injured by the shooting," he said.

Taha denied that Turkmen — or anyone else — had subsequently attacked the Kurdish demonstrators, though he said security forces who arrived to secure the



Emad Matti/The Assoc

After the Kirkuk bombings, a woman sat in a hospital near a young man wounded by the blasts. Rival ethnic parties traded accusations about the violence that followed.

scene and take the wounded to the hospital had shot into the air to clear the route for ambulances and police cars.

He said the demonstrators had "burned Turkmen buildings and they burned many cars."

Farouk Abdullah, a senior Turkmen politician, said offices belonging to every Turkmen political party there had been attacked after the bombing. Abdullah said the rioters had destroyed Turkmen buildings and that Turkmen political officials inside had been injured.

"We don't know why they attacked us," he said. "We did not have anything to do with the explosion."

Security forces instituted a curfew.

The three bombers in Baghdad struck in the central Karrada neighborhood, apparently using their flowing black robes, or abayas, to carry explosives past checkpoints and the Iraqi police officers who were guarding marchers heading toward the Kadhimiya Shrine in northern Baghdad for a religious festival that culminates Tuesday.

The attacks — each about five minutes apart — started shortly before 8 a.m., when a woman, walking amid the crowd close to the National Theater, blew herself up. That blast alone killed 10 and wounded 15 others, said an Iraqi Army officer who said he had lifted a baby into an ambulance. Flip-flops and slippers of the dead were gathered into a pile. The air was bitter from the bomb.

"It was here," said Atheer Allawi, a police officer, planting his feet firmly on the asphalt, boxes scattered from the blast behind him. "We can't search women. They are wearing abayas, and God knows what they can hide under them."

Police officers interviewed at the scene said that the authorities had heard that six women would blow themselves up in the area, and that the leader, Um Ahmed, was wearing sunglasses. All were suspected to come from an area south of Baghdad called Salman Pak, said a police lieutenant at one blast site.

The second attack occurred inside a tent that provided shade and rest for female marchers. The female bomber walked into the tent, sat down and, according to a police official, Abu Ali, read the Koran with the women sitting inside. When she exited the tent, she left a bag behind, and moments later it exploded, killing one and wounding four, he said.

The third Karrada bomb exploded between two traffic police checkpoints, killing at least 13 and wounding at least 15. Nails that had been embedded in the attacker's suicide vest were strewn about the asphalt.

"This was part of her belt," said the police lieutenant, nudging a bent nail with the toe of his shoe. He said the woman had turned off the main street where the pilgrims were marching, after other blasts caused soldiers and police officers to conduct more frequent searches. He said she was thought to be the leader of the group.

The violence did not deter the marchers, who continued while waving green flags, and with Shiite religious songs blaring from loudspeakers. The procession headed toward a shrine of an eighth-century Shiite figure, Imam Kadhim, whose death was being commemorated. "This is what is called the Iraqi faith and belief," Allawi said.

Court rules against ban on Turkey's top party

Judges cut financing with strong warning

By Sebnem Arsu

ISTANBUL: The highest court in Turkey ruled Wednesday against banning the governing party but cut its state funding by half in response to charges that it had threatened the secular regime during its six years in power.

The decision avoided a ruling that would have in effect toppled the government and precipitated new elections, plunging the country into political turmoil and instability.

The decision to cut the party's funding was nevertheless a strong political warning by the court to the governing party against steering the country away from constitutionally mandated secularism.

The case had paralyzed Turkish politics since the charges were filed in March and had moved Turkey to a final confrontation between religious and secular Turks about who would govern.

The indictment before the court accused the governing party, Justice and Development, known as the AKP for the initials of its Turkish name, of trying to turn Turkey, a secular democracy, into an Islamic state. Six of the 11 judges voted for the closing of the party; Turkish law requires that seven judges vote in favor for such as ban to be instituted.

The judges had begun to deliberate on the charges Monday. The 162-page indictment, brought by the country's chief prosecutor, sought to close the party down and ban 71 senior members, including President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, from politics for five years.

Speaking at a news conference broadcast from the court in Ankara, the court spokesman said that after more than 30 hours of deliberations, the court had ruled against the charges but that it was still issuing a warning to the governing party.

"There is no verdict on closure because the seven votes required by the Constitution for closure were not reached," said the constitutional court's spokesman and president, Hasim Kilic. "However, in this ruling, a



Umit Bektas/Reuters

Supporters of the Justice and Development Party, accused of undermining Turkey's secular regime, celebrated the constitutional court's ruling, which hung on one vote.

serious warning has been issued to the party, and I hope this conclusion will be evaluated and actions will be taken accordingly."

With its control of the presidency, the Parliament and the government, the governing party — led by Erdogan — have gone further than any other in

modern Turkey, whose citizens are mostly Muslim, in breaking the grip of the secular establishment on power.

The case was part of a broader struggle between the party, whose members are observant Muslims, and the secular elite, which includes the military and judicial systems.

Its supporters say the party has largely defended Turkey's secular system of government, but the indictment accused it of trying to impose Islam.

"This ruling doesn't mean that the party has been cleared of charges," said Mithat Sancar, a law professor of Ankara University. "Cutting the party's treasury funds means that the evidence for their anti-secular activity was there but not substantial enough to impose a ban. Therefore they warned the party to be careful in their actions to avoid closure in the future."

The indictment charged that because of Erdogan, Turkey was now seen as a "moderate Islamic republic," an image that it said had become the official view in the United States.

It cited former Secretary of State Colin Powell as "having defined our country" that way, "disregarding the fact that Turkey is a secular democratic state." Erdogan, the indictment said, had bragged that he was co-chairman of

the "Middle East Initiative," which it called "a U.S. project aimed at installing moderate Islamic regimes in countries."

■ EU hails court's decision

The European Union welcomed a decision by Turkey's highest court on Wednesday not to ban the governing AKP party as "good news," saying the ruling should help political stability in the EU's biggest candidate country, Reuters reported from Brussels.

"Of course we have to read it now in more detail, but it is positive," said Cristina Gallach, spokeswoman for the EU foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. "Turkey is living a tense situation and we very much hope that the decision by the court will contribute to restore political stability."

Joost Lagendijk, an EU lawmaker with close ties to Turkey, said he felt very relieved.

"Closing down AKP on the basis of this indictment clearly goes against European rules on closing down political parties and would have been an antidemocratic decision," Lagendijk said. "Hopefully, the AKP will draw the right conclusions from the court ruling and will take action now."



July 30, 2008

Iraqi city looks to neighboring Kurdistan for funds, identity

By James Warden, Stars and Stripes

HANIQIN, Iraq — This is an Iraqi city, but in name only.

Kurdish flags fly over public buildings and adorn store walls and taxi cabs, while Iraqi flags are all but invisible. Pictures of Kurdish leaders are in every government office. Naturally, Kurdish is the lingua franca.

Such trappings aren't unusual in the Kurdistan Regional Government, as Iraq's autonomous Kurdish provinces are called. But Khaniqin isn't in Kurdistan. It's ostensibly part of the Arab-dominated Diyala province. Residents here make no secret of their desire to join Kurdistan, prompting Diyala authorities to cut off its support until they know for sure whether the outlying city will stay in the province.

"I've been hired for four years, and Baqouba never supported me for one penny," said Khaniqin Mayor Mohammad Mullah Hussein. "The Iraqi government is rich. They have the money, [but] nobody supports us."

Khaniqin is one of about a dozen "disputed internal boundaries" that are up for grabs while Arabs and Kurds try to nail down the so-called green line that divides their parts of Iraq. Kirkuk is the most well known of these areas. But that oil-rich city has its own provincial authorities to ensure money continues to flow into its coffers while the issue is negotiated. Khaniqin is at the mercy of Diyala officials, many of whom see no need to invest in a place that is on its way out.

Deciding that boundary could take years, though. A State Department official previously estimated that Iraq could be three years from formalizing it.

The issue figured prominently in last week's discussion of an Iraqi elections law. President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, vetoed the election law because the Kurdish

parties didn't like the way it addressed the boundary issue.

Experts now think elections will be pushed into 2009, and no one knows when the boundary referendum will go to voters.

Meanwhile, Khaniqin leaders continue to skirmish with Diyala province officials over money, even though the province has already figured the city into its budget.

"If they're not going to Kurdistan now, we need to get Diyala to support Khaniqin," said Staff Sgt. Dave Schlicher, a soldier with 407th Civil Affairs Battalion and the head of the team responsible for Khaniqin.

The situation isn't helped by the refusal of Khaniqin officials to talk with Diyala. American civil affairs soldiers are pushing city leaders to travel down to Baqouba to discuss the problems with the provincial council.

"Without at least playing a little bit with Diyala, we can't make that happen," Schlicher said. But Hussein, the mayor, has so far been unmoved: "You have to go to Baqouba for the meetings, and I'm not going."

Residents from the mayor on down complain constantly about Diyala's neglect, but the city is actually better off than most of its southern neighbors thanks to Kurdish money. The Kurdish provinces and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Talabani's political party, pay many of Khaniqin's bills. The PUK even has a large office building in the city.

Kurdish money paid for dozens of new two-story homes for Kurds returning to the area after they were evicted during the previous regime's "Arabization" campaign. Streets are clean and wide. And workers are building a shopping center the length of a city block.

"Pretty much, they get all their support from Kurdistan," Schlicher said. "That's how the mayor's been able to do so much with so little."

By contrast, Balad Ruz, southwest of Khaniqin, is happy just to have its market going. That city has also been the victim of Baqouba's neglect even though it is predominantly Arab. Government money in Iraq is funneled through the larger cities, and it is common across the country for large cities to ignore their outlying villages.

"Everyone's in the same boat," Schlicher said. "Everything stops at Diyala and nothing comes out." Khaniqin's estrangement from Diyala doesn't end with funding issues.

Civil affairs officers visited the city's jail Wednesday to check on a deputy oil minister whom the Kurds had arrested, perhaps illegally. The man insisted that the local judge was acting improperly and asked for the case to be reviewed by the head judge in the neighboring Kurdish province of Sulaymaniyah. The U.S. officers patiently explained that the case would actually be heard by Diyala's judge because Khaniqin is in that province.

One of the officers visited Khaniqin's judge, though, and the jurist said he, too, thought the Sulaymaniyah court should hear the case — and then added almost innocently that Khaniqin's court doesn't actually recognize Iraqi law. The officers concluded that this was a discussion better suited for the State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Residents say it's natural to look to Kurdistan for governance, mostly because the population has historically been Kurdish. Achmet Mohammad Hussein, a cigarette salesman, noted that Kurdish forces already provide security for the area. Diyala's neglect is pushing them even further in that direction.

"The people in Khaniqin, 99.9 percent want to go to Kurdistan because they've gotten a lot of support from the Kurdistan government, not Diyala," said

Jassim Mohammad Rahman, a general store owner in one of Khaniqin's markets. "We don't hate



A photo of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani hangs next to advertisements and posters of famous soccer teams Wednesday at a vegetable store in Khaniqin, Iraq. Photos of the two Kurdish leaders are plastered across the area's shops and government buildings, while the faces of Arab leaders like Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki are entirely absent.

the Iraqi flag; we like it. But we like the Kurdish government better than the Iraqi government."

The city is about 85 percent Kurdish, according to a 2008 census. But the city council has a mix of Shiite and Sunni Arabs, Turkmen, Islamists, women and even a communist. Meetings are lively but peaceful, and the council members have no problem sitting down to eat together afterward



Iran must end abuse of Kurdish minority

LONDON (Reuters) July 30, 2008 — Iran's government is not doing enough to combat widespread discrimination against its Kurdish minority population, according to Amnesty International.

The London-based human rights group said abuses against Kurds had intensified in recent months with courts sentencing members of the ethnic group to death or lengthy imprisonment following flawed trials.

"Iran's government is failing in its duty to prevent discrimination and human rights abuses against its Kurdish citizens, particularly women," Amnesty said in a report released on Wednesday.

"We urge the Iranian authorities to take concrete measures to end any discrimination and associated human rights violations that Kurds, indeed all minorities in Iran, face."

Kurds make up about 15 percent of Iran's population, numbering around 12 million. They are mostly based in the west and northwest of Iran, along the borders with Iraq and

Turkey. There are also large Kurdish populations in northeast Iraq, in eastern Syrian and southeastern Turkey.

Amnesty cited several cases of discrimination, including the sentencing to death in February of three people convicted of "moharebeh" or enmity against God. It described the trial as "grossly flawed" and short of international standards.

It also cited abuses against Kurdish women and girls, and cultural and religious discrimination against the group in areas such as housing, education and employment.

"Kurds and all other members of minority communities in Iran -- men, women and children -- are entitled to enjoy their full range of human rights," the organisation said.

"The Iranian authorities should ... abide by their obligation

 THE AUSTRALIAN

July 30, 2008

Turkish jets destroy Kurdish rebel base

From correspondents in Ankara

TURKISH warplanes bombed a Kurdish rebel hideout in northern Iraq today, destroying the base and killing an unspecified number of militants, the military said.

The air strike followed a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul at the weekend, which some observers have attributed to the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The "intensive" bombing targeted a large cave in the Qandil mountains, along the Iraqi-Iranian border, and up to 40 PKK militants taking refuge there, the army said.

"The cave was completely destroyed and most of the militants who were inside and outside the cave were rendered ineffective," it said.

A second PKK target, in the Zap region along the Turkish border, was bombed, the army said, without giving further details.

Zap and the Qandil mountains are both major PKK strongholds.

An official of the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq said that the Kali Birdan area of the Qandil mountains had been the target of Turkish air raids today and that villages had been hit.

"Turkish planes bombed the villages near Kali Birdan, where there are only families who earn their living raising sheep," said Sinksar Abdullah, director of the region.

"This is the first time that Turkish planes have attacked during the day," Mr Abdullah said. "We have not received any information about casualties."

The strike followed two bomb blasts in a crowded Istanbul street on Monday, which killed 17 people, among them five children, and left more than 150 wounded.

Officials have pointed an accusing finger at the PKK, while Turkish media reports have said that a PKK militant trained in the Qandil mountains is suspected of having carried out the attacks.

The PKK, listed as a terrorist group



by Ankara and much of the international community, has denied responsibility for the blasts.

Turkish fighter jets have been bombing PKK positions in the mountains of northern Iraq since December 16.

In February, the army also conducted a week-long ground offensive against rebel bases in the region, killing at least 240 militants and destroying dozens of hideouts, training camps and ammunition depots.

Ankara estimates that more than 2,000 militants have taken refuge in Kurdish-run northern Iraq, using camps there as a jumping board for attacks on Turkish targets across the border.

The Turkish government has a one-year parliamentary authorisation for cross-border military action against the PKK, which expires in October.

The United States has backed its NATO ally by providing real-time intelligence on PKK movements in Iraq.



- Voices of Iraq

July 30, 2008

Parliament's committee leaves Kirkuk's issue to political bloc leaders-MP

BAGHDAD, July 30 (VOI) - A lawmaker on Wednesday said a specialist parliamentary committee left Kirkuk's controversial issue to the political bloc chiefs and found a solution to all other pending items of the provincial councils' law.

"The specialist committee found a solution to an appeal filed by the Presidential Board over the use of religious symbols in elections and the quota for women," MP Hashin al-Taie from Parliament's committee of regions, told Aswat al-Iraq - Voices of Iraq - (VOI).

President Jalal Talabani and his deputy Adel Abdel Mahdi appealed the provincial elections law and sent it back to the Parliament, citing violations of national consensus and unsettling the required quota for women.

The MP pointed out "there are two views on the use of religious symbols; one allows displaying the religious symbols for a political entity provided that they stand for living figures, while the second calls to allow the entire pictures."

"The two views would be tabled in Parliament to select the one that could get the majority," he added.

Iraq's Parliament passed the provincial elections bill one week ago, but a walkout by Kurdish lawmakers over how to deal with the disputed oil city of Kirkuk unleashed heated debate about it.

The law is meant to pave the way for polls seen as vital to reconciling Iraq's factions, who boycotted the last provincial elections in 2005, with its other communities.

The MP conceded "the committee faced difficulties in setting a quota for women due to the open slate system," adding "an agreement was struck to give a women quota through the electoral commission."

When asked about the negotiations on Kirkuk, the MP said "a deal has been struck to discuss the paper proposed by the chief of the United Nations

Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Stephan De Mistura."

He highlighted "the paper called for postponing elections in Kirkuk and forming a committee to share the rule in the city," adding "the bloc leaders agreed to discuss it after making a number of amendments."

Al-Taie expected the report of "agreed item to be presented in the Parliament next Sunday."

The law had been held up by a dispute over what to do about voting in multi-ethnic Kirkuk, where a dispute is simmering between Kurds who say the city should belong to the largely autonomous Kurdistan region and Arabs who want it to remain under central government authority.

Arabs and Turkmen believe Kurds have stacked the city with Kurds since the downfall of Saddam in 2003 to try to tip the demographic balance in their favor in any vote.

Arabs encouraged to move there under Saddam Hussein's rule fear the vote will consolidate Kurdish power and they sought to postpone it, a proposal Kurdish politicians have rejected.

Parliament decided to postpone the vote and add another article that the Kurds found unacceptable: that each ethnic or sectarian group gets a set allocation of seats and voting is between individual candidates from those groups. Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen get 10 seats each. Minority Christians get two.

"We walked out because of the illegality of this article and because the speaker wanted a secret vote, which is not constitutional," said Fouad Massoum, head of the Kurdish bloc.

Washington has been urging a speedy provincial election, which it sees as a pillar of national reconciliation, but the poll is also proving a potential flashpoint for tensions.



- Voices of Iraq
July 30, 2008

Kurds reject power sharing in Kirkuk-MP

IRAQ, July 30 (VOI) - A Kurdish lawmaker on Wednesday said his bloc would not accept the principle of sharing powers in Kirkuk, stressing the importance of holding elections in the oil-rich northern Province.

Iraq's Parliament passed the provincial election bill one week ago, but a walkout by Kurdish lawmakers over how to deal with the disputed oil city of Kirkuk unleashed heated debate about it.

The Presidential Board appealed it, citing violation of the national reconciliation and upsetting the quota for women as reasons. The law is meant to pave the way for polls seen as vital to reconciling Iraq's factions, who boycotted the last provincial elections in 2005, with its other communities.

"The Kurdistan Coalition (KC) bloc would not accept any form of power sharing in Kirkuk, but we do not mind the province's administration being shared by all (ethnic) groups," MP Mahmoud Othman from the Kurdish bloc, told Aswat al-Iraq -Voices of Iraq - (VOI).

He noted "elections in Kirkuk must be held in a way that ensures the rights of all (groups)."

The Kurdish lawmaker highlighted "those who called for sharing powers in Kirkuk aimed at violating the constitution and we would not allow any form of

flouting the constitution voted on by the Iraqi people."

The provincial elections law had been held up by a dispute over what to do about voting in multi-ethnic Kirkuk, where a dispute is simmering between Kurds who say the city should belong to the largely autonomous Kurdistan region and Arabs who want it to stay under central government authority.

Arabs and Turkmen believe Kurds have stacked the city with Kurds since the downfall of Saddam in 2003 to try to tip the demographic balance in their favor in any vote.

Arabs encouraged to move there under Saddam Hussein's rule fear the vote will consolidate Kurdish power and they sought to postpone it, a proposal Kurdish politicians have rejected.

Parliament decided to postpone the vote and add another article that the Kurds found unacceptable: that each ethnic or sectarian group gets a set allocation of seats and voting is between individual candidates from those groups. Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen get 10 seats each. Minority Christians get two.

Washington has been urging a speedy provincial election, which it sees as a pillar of national reconciliation, but the poll is also proving a potential flashpoint for tensions.

July 30, 2008

Guardian

Iraqi lawmakers clash over Kirkuk

Deadlock could lead to bloodshed in disputed city

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA AND KIM GAMEL THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD - Iraqi lawmakers on Wednesday scheduled an emergency weekend meeting during summer recess to resolve disagreements that have blocked a provincial elections law and threaten a new wave of bloodshed in the disputed northern city of Kirkuk.

The proposed law has raised ethnic tensions in the oil-rich area, which is emerging as one of the biggest threats to U.S.-backed efforts to heal the country's sectarian rifts and prevent a resurgence of violence.

The standoff over control of Kirkuk, 180 miles north of Baghdad, is also the latest example of Iraqi political deadlock despite impressive military gains against Shiite militias and Sunni insurgents.

Parliamentary Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani scheduled a special meeting for Sunday after a deadline passed for the elections law to be ratified in time for the lawmakers' monthlong summer break, which began after Wednesday's session.

"The committee discussing Kirkuk could not find a solution and has asked for more time," al-Mashhadani said.

The law enabling elections in Iraq's 18 provinces would divide the ruling council in Tamim - of which Kirkuk is the largest city - equally among Kurds, Turkomen and Arabs. But Kurds and their allies now hold a majority on the Tamim provincial council and oppose any move that would diminish their power.

Kurds consider Kirkuk part of their historical homeland, and are seeking to incorporate it into their semiautonomous

region to the north. Arabs and most Turkomen want the Kirkuk area to remain under central government rule.

Tensions escalated Monday after a suicide bomber in Kirkuk struck during a Kurdish demonstration against the legislation, killing 25 people and wounding 187.

The U.S. military and local officials said al-Qaida in Iraq was behind the attack. But dozens of angry Kurds stormed the offices of a rival Turkomen political party believing that the ethnic minority was to blame.

Meanwhile, protests against the election bill have drawn thousands of people daily.

With negotiations at a standstill, U.N. officials put forward a compromise, suggesting provincial elections be delayed in the Kirkuk area while going ahead in the 17 other provinces, according to a copy obtained by The Associated Press from an Iraqi lawmaker.

It suggested a committee should offer new recommendations on the issue so Parliament can set a date for the vote by Dec. 31 at the latest.

Sunni lawmaker Mohammed al-Daini welcomed the proposal.

"The only option we have is to delay the provincial elections in Kirkuk, but meanwhile we should have guarantees for the equal distribution of power there," he said.

Failure to compromise on a new law establishing rules and funding for the U.S.-backed provincial vote will likely force the vote to be delayed until next year. Under previous legislation, the election had been

scheduled for Oct. 1, but will now probably be put off until December at the earliest.

Lawmakers pushed through a draft of the elections law earlier this month despite a walkout by the Kurdish bloc, but the measure was vetoed by the presidential council, which is led by a Kurd, Jalal Talabani.

U.S. officials have pushed hard for the elections, considered a necessary step toward national reconciliation. Many Sunni Arabs boycotted provincial balloting in January 2005, enabling Shiites and Kurds to win a disproportionate share of power at the local level.

The U.S. military has expressed hope that security gains from an American troop buildup would enable the Iraqi government to make political progress.

But the Iraqis have been unable to push through key laws needed to establish guidelines and funding for the provincial elections and to govern the equal distribution of oil. Both issues have bogged down because of Kurdish objections.

Parliament's summer recess began as the U.S.-backed Iraqi military pressed forward with a new operation aimed at routing al-Qaida in Iraq-led insurgents from Diyala province, one of their last major strongholds near the capital.

The house-to-house search operations, focused on the provincial capital of Baqouba, will be extended to rugged areas near the Iranian border, said Ibrahim Bajilan, the head of the regional council.

San Francisco Chronicle July 31, 2008

REJOICING IN DEMOCRACY, KURDS LOOK BEYOND OIL

Gail Bensinger, Chronicle Foreign Service

Even if Democrat Barack Obama appears to have the backing of Iraq's Arab political establishment, this part of Iraq hopes Republican John McCain's prospect of becoming America's next president will prevail.

Here in Kurdistan, the northernmost tier of Iraqi provinces that has avoided much of the chaos of the war, McCain's comment that some U.S. troops may have to stay in Iraq indefinitely is wildly popular. Praise is lavished on President Bush.

"The Kurds are very grateful to the United States for liberating Iraq from dictatorship," said Rawand Darwesh, protocol officer for the **Kurdish** Regional Government's Foreign Relations Ministry. He was referring, of course, to the ouster of Saddam Hussein, the reviled Iraqi leader who waged a genocidal campaign called the Anfal against the Kurds.

Along with their loyalty to the United States, the Kurds contend they offer a model for Iraqi development once the fighting dies down for good.

"We want to make an example to the world that there is a success story in Iraq," said Darwesh, a cheerful man wearing a San Francisco T-shirt, a souvenir of his year in America as a Fulbright scholar. "It's not just the war."

A building boom is evident all over Kurdistan, a three-province region of more than 5 million inhabitants. The regional government is actively looking beyond Iraq's borders for investment and expertise to rebuild its rural economy and to recruit modern industries so it can diversify beyond oil.

"Kurdistan is a good candidate for the future of freedom, and we need some help to promote democracy and development together," said Anwar Abdullah, an adviser to the regional government on sustainable long-term development. A specialist in plant biotechnology, he says that economic and environmental restoration should go hand in hand.

This once was the breadbasket of Iraq, he said, with fertile soil and plenty of water from the mountains that dominate Kurdistan's topography. The long isolation during the years of Anfal and international sanctions against Iraq had an unexpected benefit, Abdullah said - the croplands are suitable for organic agriculture because no pesticides or chemical fertilizers were available to **Kurdish** farmers.

With food scarcity and food security so much in the public eye, Abdullah said, Kurdistan could feed people beyond Iraq if it can adapt Western models of production and marketing. For now, though, it's still cheaper to import food, chiefly from Turkey, than for Kurds to grow their own.

Indeed, all across Kurdistan economic development is more concept than reality. By law, the regional budget is almost entirely dependent on oil revenues - 17 cents of every petrodollar is delivered, in cash, from Baghdad to the regional treasury. The national

government, which has yet to adopt a permanent law on distribution of oil revenues, controls much of Kurdistan's fate - Iraq's banks are not tied in to the international banking system, and the country as a whole still lacks adequate electricity and water, even mail service.

Iraq's known northern oilfields are productive, and geologists speculate that as-yet undiscovered oil and gas reserves will be extensive. But no refineries exist in the north, and reliable fuel for vehicles remains a problem - there are separate gas stations for passenger cars, taxis and trucks.

Nearly all of the widespread building projects in Irbil, the sprawling capital city of Kurdistan, and elsewhere are being carried out by foreign companies that bring not only their own managers and equipment, but also their own workers, either from their home countries or from such labor-exporting places as the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Locally educated engineers are not finding much work in these big projects, said Rund Hammoudi, a geologist who heads international relations at the University of Dohuk, which teaches all classes in English. University graduates have a hard time finding jobs except in the fields of computers and medicine, she said.

The university is near the Turkish border, and the newly paved highway that passes by Dohuk underscores the challenges. Southbound trucks crammed with building supplies, food, consumer goods and new cars stream along in a flowing river of commerce, while the ones heading north travel empty. Aside from oil, Kurdistan has nothing, yet, to offer the outside world.

Still, the Kurds feel like they have breathing space while the rest of Iraq figures out how to quell the violence and move ahead. The hardships of the Anfal years and the enforced isolation under anti-Hussein sanctions are behind them. The **Kurdish** militia known as the *peshmerga* has been transformed into a police force and regular Iraqi army units. Food is plentiful, and the bazaars teem with Chinese and Turkish clothes and household goods.

And unlike the **Kurdish** regions of neighboring Turkey and Iran, Iraqi Kurds are free to speak their own language, enjoy their own culture and govern their own land.

"From the beginning," said Asmat Khalid, the forward-looking president of the University of Dohuk, "we believed democracy was the answer."

Up to 200,000 killed to pacify Hussein

Saddam Hussein's two-year campaign of terror against Iraq's **Kurdish** population, called the Anfal, began in 1987, as the Iran-Iraq War was winding down. During that war, Hussein was enraged because some Kurds backed Iran over the Baathist government in Baghdad. Hussein's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid - known as "Chemical Ali" - was in charge of the Anfal program.

There is still no definitive accounting of how many Kurds died during that period. Human Rights Watch says about 100,000 died, though many Kurds put the number at roughly 200,000. The most notorious killings occurred in the town of Halabja, the first widespread use of chemical weapons on a noncombatant civilian population. About 4,000 villages were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of Kurds became refugees across the Iranian and Turkish borders. Tens of thousands went into exile in Europe and the United States, returning only after Hussein was removed from power by the American-led invasion in 2003.

After the Anfal years, the Baathist government began a new campaign of "Arabization," forcing Kurds to resettle in Arab regions and repopulating the north with poor Arabs from elsewhere. When U.S.-British "no-fly zone" protection began in 1991, following the first Gulf War, Hussein cut off the Kurds from the national electrical grid and stopped other resources from flowing north.

Hussein's trial on genocide charges was ongoing when he was executed in Baghdad in late 2006. "Chemical Ali" has been tried and sentenced to death, but has not yet been executed.

- Gail Bensinger



Construction cranes dot the skyline as a new shopping mall rises in Irbil.

By Gail Bensinger / Special to The Chronicle

Erbil backs Kirkuk in massive demonstration

Kurdish citizens make their voices heard loud and clear to the world.

By Ako Muhammed, *The Globe*

Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate peacefully to support their government and fellow citizens who oppose passage of the provincial council elections law.

More than 300,000 people took part on Wednesday in a massive demonstration in Erbil, which was arranged by Kurdish political parties to protest the provincial council elections law passed by Iraqi Parliament on July 22.

Waves of demonstrators coming from three streets gathered in front of the Kurdistan Parliament building to offer their support to Kurdish political leaders who reject the law. Kurdistan Parliament deputy speaker Kamal Kirkuki, Erbil governor Nawzad Hadi, and a number of high-ranking officials were there to receive the demonstrators.

We want to reject Article 24. [Kurdistan President] Massoud Barzani rejected it and we join our voices to his," said Qassim Yassin Pirdawud, 54, who came with a group of people from Makhmur town to participate in the peaceful demonstration.

Makhmur, south of Erbil, is one of the disputed areas Kurds demand be returned to Kurdistan Region; it is included within the normalization process of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. "We want our area returned to Kurdistan also? We won't give up an inch of our land to anybody. And we are not afraid of



Demonstrators marching towards parliament holding Kurdish flags, Erbil, 29 July 2008.

terrorists," stated Pirdawud, a car mechanic.

The Kurdish refusal directly relates to Article 24 of the provincial council elections law and Kirkuk province. Because of a decision by Iraqi Parliament speaker Mahmud Al-Mashhadni, 127 out of 140 Iraqi Parliament members voted secretly to approve Article 24. Kurdish members withdrew from that session, rejected the secret voting, and described it as illegal and unconstitutional.

Article 24 of the law delays the elections in Kirkuk, divides the administrative authority equally among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, and calls for evacuating the current security forces in Kirkuk, which contains Kurdish elements, and replacing them with military units from central and southern Iraq. One

day after the law's passage, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, and his vice presidents, Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Tariq Al-Hashimi, rejected it.

Arrangers of the Erbil demonstration submitted a memorandum to Kurdistan Parliament, which read in part: "We the people of Erbil firmly reject all of Article 24 and express our complete support for the Kurdistan Coalition and Kurdistan Union blocs in the Iraqi Parliament, who are the true representatives of Kurdistan people."

The memorandum states the people's support for Kirkuk and its original inhabitants, including Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and Chaldo-Assyrians. "We cooperate and support them in every way for the achievement of their rights." "The law of the provincial council elections revealed to our people the Baathists inside Iraqi Parliament,"

said Kirkuki to the demonstrators. "We will never let that conspiracy succeed." He was interrupted by the crowd chanting "Kurdistan people, what do you want? Nothing but Kirkuk." Kirkuki added, "Approving that article [24] is unconstitutional and it is an attempt to abort the spirit of cohabitation among the Iraq components. It is also a counter-revolution against Kurdish national rights and the development of the Iraqi political process."

Kurdistan Turkmen opinion Among the crowd was a group of Turkmen walking under a banner, which read: "We firmly reject the provincial council elections law and the voting style." Within this group was Yasar Mishko, chief of the Turkmen Union Party, which is a component of the Kurdistan front of the Turkmen Reform Movement.

"We participate because we are not satisfied with the law? it interests no side," said Mishko, calling on the Turkmen parties in Kirkuk who oppose the return of Kirkuk to Kurdistan Region to "review their positions."

"We, the Turkmen in Kurdistan, live brotherly with the Kurds. We live in welfare here. They [Kirkuk Turkmen] are our brothers and it is wise for them to join with Kurdistan like us. This is our land and we sell it to no one," he stated, explaining that with the return of Kirkuk, the unity of the Turkmen people will be protected; otherwise, he said, they will be split into two sections.

WHAT HAPPENED IN KIRKUK?

Hundreds wounded, dozens injured in what began as a peaceful demonstration.

By Qassim Khidhir
The Kurdish Globe

Barzani and Talabani urge Kirkuk residents to maintain stability and the spirit of brotherhood among all ethnicities in Kirkuk. About 200,000 people, mainly Kurds and a number of original Arabs, Turkmen, and Christians, demonstrated on Monday in Kirkuk city to protest the provincial council elections law.

When protesters neared the Turkmen Front main office in the city, a suicide attacker blew herself up amid them. After that, guards inside the Turkmen Front office

opened fire on the protestors. As a result of both events, 23 Kurdish civilians were killed and more than 150 were wounded.

Gen. Sarhad Qadir, the police chief of Kirkuk's outskirts and towns, stated that the female suicide attacker wore a bomb belt. Police forces had detained seven guards of the Turkmen Front office because of the shooting. The demonstration was peaceful until both incidents occurred, said Gen. Qadir. People then became angry, attacked the Turkmen Front office, burned an office, and wounded several guards inside. Some of the

wounded protestors were immediately taken to hospitals in Erbil and Suleimaniya, and people rushed to hospitals to donate blood for the victims.

After the attacks, security forces in Kirkuk imposed a curfew from 5:00 p.m. on Monday until 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday, and a cautious calm dominated Kirkuk after the curfew took effect. Meanwhile, a source in the Asayish (Security) Department in Kirkuk said their forces neutralized a BMW rigged with explosives at the North Terminal in downtown Kirkuk province.

Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani urged Kirkuk residents to maintain security and stability. Barzani, currently in Baghdad to discuss Iraq-U.S. security agreements and the provincial council elections law, condemned the security incidents in Kirkuk and demanded Kirkuk residents maintain the spirit of brotherhood among Kurd, Arab, and Turkmen, and not allow terrorists and the enemies of Kurdistan and Iraq to achieve their goals. Kurdistan Parliament and the Kurdistan Council of Ministers

condemned the security incidents in Kirkuk. Also, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the Multi-National Forces strongly condemned the suicide bombings that occurred in both Baghdad and Kirkuk.

"The targets of these vicious and cowardly attacks were innocent Iraqi men, women, and children who were freely practicing their democratic rights and religious faith," read a joint statement issued by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker and Gen. David H. Petraeus, a copy of which was received by the Globe.

Kurds blamed Iraqi Parliament for what happened in Kirkuk; Kurdish politicians stated that if Iraqi Parliament had not secretly voted for Article 24, the incidents would not have occurred in Kirkuk.

On July 22, Iraqi Parliament passed the provincial council elections law and secretly voted for Article 24, which delays elections in Kirkuk and divides authority there based

on percentages of ethnic Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Christians. This occurred after the Kurdistan Coalition (KC) withdrew from the

session and without any KC agreement on the vote. The law was illegally passed by Parliament since Article 24 was voted on



A demonstrator covers the body of a victim with a Kurdish flag at the scene of a bomb attack in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, July 28, 2008.

secretly. According to the Iraqi Constitution, no article can be voted on secretly except to elect a head of Parliament or an Iraqi president. "The Parliamentary blocs that inserted item 24 in the provincial election bill bear the responsibility for the security disturbance that took place in Kirkuk and the resulting casualties," said Saad Barznji, a member of Iraqi Parliament's Kurdistan Coalition list.

"The attack on the Turkmen Front's headquarters was conducted by angry demonstrators after they came under fire from sources within the headquarters," Barznji said.

Barznji accused those whom he described as "dark forces" of being responsible for the suicide bombing that targeted the demonstrators because "democratic expression did not suit them."

TODAYS ZAMAN

31 July 2008

Motive of attack's timing in Kirkuk tension raises questions

EMİNE KART ANKARA

Questions have been raised about the timing of a suicide bombing in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk that killed 23 people on Monday that came only hours after twin bombings in İstanbul's Güngören district on Sunday night, which claimed the lives of 17 and injured more than 150.

Politicians, columnists and Turkish and Iraqi officials have begun to ask whether the same group or similar groups were behind the attacks, as many analysts have concluded that they had a common aim inciting Turkish-Kurdish conflict.

According to these analysts, the timing of the bombings was also significant as it came when Turkey was already on edge, with the country's top court about to make its final ruling on a closure case filed against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and the trial process about to begin over Ergenekon, an ultra-nationalist criminal network suspected of plotting to overthrow the government. Some analysts also stress that the attacks came amidst a recent thaw in relations between Turkey and northern Iraq's Kurdish leadership after several years of thorny relations.

Thousands of Iraqi Kurds took to the streets in Iraq's northern Kurdish region on Tuesday to protest against a provincial elections law that has infuriated Iraq's Kurdish minority. On Monday a suicide bomber killed 23 people during a protest against the law in the city of Kirkuk. The bombing has added to tensions over the elections law, which sparked controversy when parliament passed it last week partly because it had postponed voting in Kirkuk, a city disputed between Kurds, Arabs and ethnic Turkmen. In the aftermath of the bombing, clashes broke out between Kurds and Turkmen.

As of Tuesday, shops had reopened in Kirkuk after a curfew imposed in the wake of the bombing was lifted, residents said.



After an explosion on Monday that killed 25 people at a Kurdish rally in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, dozens of angry Kurds opened fire on the offices of a Turkmen political party and set fire to its headquarters.

Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, in Tehran yesterday for the 15th meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, told reporters, "We are concerned about the developments in Kirkuk". He urged all parties to use common sense and noted that any solution must be based on political consensus. Saadetin Ergeç, the chairman of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITC), told the Anatolia news agency that demonstrators had attacked the ITC office after Monday's demonstration following the bombing in Kirkuk.

"They wounded some officials in the office, including the head of the security personnel, and they set vehicles on fire," Ergeç said, suggesting that police had failed to intervene.

A statement released by the ITC headquarters admitted that ITC guards had opened fire on the crowds. The statement also said that the demonstrators were actually from the Kurdish security forces. However, the Web site

PUKmedia.com, affiliated with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, said: "In a video recording aired by the Türkmeneli TV station on Monday afternoon ... no militants or Kurdish security forces are seen among the protestors. Also on the on the tape, escaping civilians are clearly seen running away as they hear gunfire from the ITC headquarters. The tape shows that conditions are under control by the Iraqi police forces."

Bahroz Galali, a PUK representative in Ankara, released a written statement on Tuesday calling on the Turkish government to send a delegation to Kirkuk to investigate Monday's incidents. "Demonstrators ran into nearby buildings after the suicide bombing in an attempt to save their lives. However, ITC security guards opened fire on those people who ran into the ITC building," Galali said in the statement.

"If the Turkish government finds it appropriate, it can send a delegation to the region and carry out an investigation. Any kind of conclusion coming out of that investigation will be accepted by us," he added, underlining the importance attached by Baghdad to recent rapprochement between Turkey and Iraq.

As of yesterday, speaking with Today's Zaman, Galali suggested that ITC's statements aimed at impeding good relations between Turkey and the federal government of Iraq as well as with Iraqi Kurds. "The gradually improving relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds is not in their interest. And in my opinion, they have been support by certain groups," Galali said, refusing to elaborate whether he meant groups within Turkey or Ergenekon-minded groups.

Last but not least concerning the question whether the same motive has been behind attacks in İstanbul and Kirkuk is from Taraf daily columnist Orhan Miroğlu.



July 31, 2008

'Gas City' launched by Kurdish government

ARBIL, Iraq (CNN) -- Two United Arab Emirates based companies announced on Tuesday that they will be investing in the Iraq's autonomous region of Kurdistan.

Four hundred and sixty one million square feet have been officially assigned to "Gas Cities LLC," a joint venture between Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum, both Sharjah-based companies, to establish a new venture: "Kurdistan Gas City."

Kurdistan Gas City will include industrial, residential and commercial buildings in an integrated city. The expected initial investment in basic infrastructure is estimated at \$3 billion, with further foreign direct investment exceeding \$40 billion during the operations phase.

Work will start on the project, which is designed to promote private sector investment in a variety of gas-related industries, on September 21.

Gas City is structured to hold over 20 varieties of world scale petrochemical and heavy manufacturing plants, and hundreds of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), served by state-of-the-art facilities.

Mr Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said: "Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum have made a significant contribution to the Iraqi economy through their work in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq thus far,



Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, called the project "a significant contribution to the Iraqi economy."

we are making significant progress in spurring on economic growth and creating opportunity for our people."

Hamid Jafar, Executive Chairman of Dana Gas, explained the importance of this achievement saying: "The Kurdistan Gas City is an enormous step forward in Dana Gas' strategy across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia."

The Kurdistan Gas City is projected to generate job opportunities for nearly 200,000 Iraqi citizens in infrastructure, industrial projects, support services and other business activities.

This is not the first project for Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, the two companies are committed to a service agreement signed in April 2007 with the Kurdistan Regional Government to build 180 kilometers of natural gas pipeline and two liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) plants, which

are 80 percent complete.

The project is on track and will start pumping 150 million cubic feet of gas per day in the coming weeks, rising to 300 million cubic feet by early 2009.

Other companies from the UAE showed similar interest in Kurdistan Region "Damac Properties" one of the major private developers in the regions revealed on June 3 plans for a \$16 billion residential, commercial and recreational project

Khaleej Times
ONLINE

31 July 2008

Kirkuk council members demand to annex Kirkuk to Kurdistan region

KIRKUK, Iraq -(Reuters)- Kurdish councillors called on Thursday for the disputed Iraqi city of Kirkuk to become part of the Kurdistan region, a move that could stoke tensions with the city's Arab and ethnic Turkmen communities.

The call was made at a provincial council session boycotted by Arab and Turkmen members. It followed several days of street protests by Kurds against a local election law that would delay voting in the oil-rich northern city in future local polls.

Kurds regard multi-ethnic Kirkuk, which lies just outside the largely autonomous region of Kurdistan, as their ancient capital. Arabs and ethnic Turkmen want Kirkuk to stay under central government authority.

"The Kurdish list put forward a request that Kirkuk be included in Kurdistan," said Mohammed Kamal, a Kurdish member of Kirkuk's provincial council.

The call was for both the city and surrounding province, which some also call Kirkuk, to join Kurdistan.

Arab and Turkmen councillors reacted angrily.

"We completely reject Kirkuk becoming a part of Kurdistan and consider this the beginning of a crisis and strife in the city. It could lead to civil war in Kirkuk," said Mohammed al-Jubouri, an Arab member of the provincial council.

Kurds hold more than half the seats of Kirkuk's provincial council. But the head of the council, a Kurd, acknowledged that the absence of the

other two main factions made the call to include Talabani

told Erdogan that the Kurdish councillors' request should not be considered a call to include Kirkuk in Kurdistan, but only a "threat (to do so) if no agreement is reached regarding the provincial election law", the statement said.

A provincial elections law that would allow for local polls in Iraq later this year or early 2009 has been stalled because of a dispute over what to do about voting in Kirkuk.

Kurdish lawmakers last week walked out of a parliamentary session in Baghdad that passed the provincial election law. Talabani, a Kurd, then rejected it as unconstitutional given a faction of parliament boycotted the vote.



Kirkuk in Kurdistan unconstitutional.

Kurds are among Iraq's largest minority groups.

Turkish PM worried

Instability in northern Iraq could impact neighbouring Turkey, and a statement from Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's office said Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan had spoken to him about the Kurdish councillors' request.

"Prime Minister Erdogan expressed his anxiety about this step," the statement said.

Despite blossoming trade between Turkey and northern Iraq, Ankara is also concerned that the emergence of a wealthy Kurdish independent state could fuel the separatist insurgency among Kurds in its own southeast.

The law would have delayed voting in Kirkuk, assigned fixed seat allocations to each ethnic group and replaced Kurdish Peshmerga security forces in the city with troops from other parts of Iraq, all measures Kurdish parliamentarians rejected.

Iraq's presidency council must ratify any new legislation.

The elections law has since been handed back to parliament. Lawmakers will hold a special session on Sunday to try to resolve their differences after parliament broke for its summer recess on Wednesday.

29 JUILLET 2008

LIBÉRATION

Crise ◀ Alors que le parti au pouvoir pourrait être interdit, les attentats de dimanche déstabilisent encore le pays.

Endeuillée, la Turquie se déchire

Des drapeaux turcs flottent partout aux fenêtres des appartements comme aux devantures des boutiques de Gungoren, lointaine périphérie européenne d'Istanbul, frappée dimanche soir par un double attentat à la bombe qui a fait au moins 17 morts et plus de 150 blessés. Arborer les couleurs nationales, c'est montrer son patriotisme en un moment difficile. «*Ces terroristes sont des lâches et ils voulaient tuer le plus de gens possibles*», s'indigne un marchand de téléphones portables.

La grande rue piétonne était pleine de monde en cette chaude soirée de dimanche. Un premier engin explosif, placé dans une cabine téléphonique, a fait grand bruit mais peu de dégâts. La foule s'est alors agglutinée. Une di-

Le procureur de la Cour de cassation accuse l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, d'être «un centre d'activités antilaïques qui cherche à utiliser la démocratie pour imposer la charia».

zaine de minutes plus tard explosait la seconde bombe, beaucoup plus puissante, placée dans une poubelle. Cet attentat, qui n'a toujours pas été revendiqué est le plus meurtrier en Turquie depuis ceux d'Al-Qaëda à l'automne 2003, notamment contre deux synagogues et le consulat britannique.

Théories du complot. Pour les autorités comme pour la plupart des partis politiques et des médias, ce «*massacre de civils*» est le fait des rebelles kurdes turcs du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, séparatistes) dont les bases arrières en Irak du Nord ont été bombardées ce week-end. Des groupes kurdes proches de cette organisation avaient revendiqué les années passées plusieurs attentats contre des sites touristiques. Jamais pourtant le bilan n'avait été aussi sanglant. Et pourquoi avoir frappé à l'aveugle une banlieue misérable?

Les théories du complot vont donc

bon train sur fond de tensions croissantes entre le gouvernement islamocconservateur au pouvoir et l'opposition laïque soutenue par l'armée qui se réfère à l'héritage de Mustapha Kemal, fondateur en 1923 d'une République laïque et jacobine.

Coup d'Etat. A la veille du week-end, le tribunal d'Istanbul avait formalisé les inculpations contre 86 personnalités ultranationalistes et «*kémalistes*», dont l'ancien patron de la gendarmerie. Selon les 2500 pages de l'acte d'accusation, ce réseau appelé Ergenekon – du nom de la patrie mythique des Turcs en Asie centrale – aurait organisé divers assassinats, dont celui du journaliste turc d'origine arménienne Hrant Dink, afin de créer le chaos et les conditions d'un coup d'Etat. Ce procès sans précédent doit commencer en octobre. Nombre d'analystes l'interprètent comme une réponse des islamocconservateurs à celui ouvert par la Cour constitutionnelle à la

mi-mars contre l'AKP (Parti de la Justice et du Développement) du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Les onze juges de la Cour constitutionnelle sont en effet réunis depuis hier matin à Ankara pour la phase finale de la procédure d'interdiction visant le parti au pouvoir depuis 2002, qui avait triomphé à nouveau en juillet 2007 avec 47,3% des voix. Le procureur de la Cour de cassation accuse l'AKP d'être «*un centre d'activités antilaïques qui cherche à utiliser la démocratie pour imposer la charia* [la loi islamique, ndlr] en Turquie». Il demande aussi l'interdiction d'activité politique pour cinq ans du Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, du président de la République, Abdullah Gül, et de 69 autres poids lourds de l'AKP.

Plus d'une vingtaine de partis ont déjà été interdits depuis 1960, dont celui de l'ancien Premier ministre islamiste Necmettin Erbakan, mentor d'Erdogan, qui fut poussé à la démission par



Lors de la cérémonie funèbre des victimes des attentats, hier, à Istanbul. PHOTO MURAD SEZER . AP

l'armée en février 1997. Une décision entérinée par la Cour européenne des Droits de l'homme de Strasbourg. Les «*laïcards*» durs disposent de la majorité qualifiée exigée de 7 voix même si le président de la Cour, Hasim Kilic, est considéré comme proche de l'AKP. «*C'est une tentative de coup d'Etat judiciaire*», dénonce l'AKP. L'interdiction semble très probable. «*L'élite kémaliste est convaincue que si elle n'arrive pas à arrêter l'AKP maintenant, ce sera impossible de le faire plus tard*», souligne le juriste Mithat Sancar. En juin, par neuf voix contre deux, la Cour consti-

tutionnelle avait annulé la libéralisation du port du foulard à l'université, votée par l'AKP. Mais une surprise n'est pas exclue. L'interdiction d'un parti au pouvoir serait un cas sans précédent dans un pays qui a débuté, en 2005, des négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne: Bruxelles fait des mises en garde discrètes...

«Pression de l'opinion». «*Le climat a changé depuis quelques semaines et les juges de la Cour constitutionnelle sont sensibles à la pression de l'opinion*», veut croire Baskin Oran, professeur de sciences politiques à Ankara et activiste des droits de l'homme. D'aucuns évoquent un compromis, avec une lourde amende et la suppression pour quelques années des fonds publics au parti.

«*Bien sûr, nous avons commis des erreurs*», déclarait dimanche le Premier ministre au quotidien *Hürriyet* pour arrondir les angles. Mais en cas d'interdiction, tout est prêt pour lancer un nouveau parti, déjà donné favori aux élections anticipées, qui ne manqueraient pas d'avoir lieu.

◀ **MARC SEMO** (envoyé spécial à Ankara), avec **RAGIP DURAN** (à Istanbul)

Le Monde
30 juillet 2008

Plus de 50 morts en Irak dans une vague d'attentats-suicides

Plusieurs attentats-suicides, dont trois commis par des femmes kamikazes, ont visé, lundi 28 juillet, des pèlerins chiites à Bagdad ainsi que des manifestants kurdes à Kirkouk, à 250 km au nord de Bagdad (photo). Au moins 56 personnes ont été tuées lors de ces attaques et plus de 200 autres blessées. A Kirkouk, une attaque kamikaze a eu lieu au milieu d'une manifestation de Kurdes, faisant au moins 11 morts. L'explosion a été suivie d'un mouvement de panique, accompagné d'échanges de coups de feu qui ont fait 16 autres morts et 72 blessés. A Bagdad, trois femmes kamikazes, dont une adolescente, se sont fait exploser, à quelques minutes d'intervalle et dans un rayon de quelques centaines de mètres, au cœur de la capitale, sur le parcours de pèlerins chiites, tuant au moins 25 personnes, dont des femmes et des enfants, et faisant plus de 70 blessés. Les explosions ont secoué le quartier central de Karrada, alors que des centaines de milliers de fidèles convergeaient vers le secteur de Kadhimiya (nord) pour commémorer la mort de l'imam Moussa al-Kadhim, à l'occasion de l'une des plus importantes fêtes chiites. Un porte-parole de l'armée américaine en Irak a accusé Al-Qaida d'être responsable des attaques à Bagdad. Les attentats kamikazes commis par des femmes sont en très nette augmentation en Irak : 27 en 2008 contre 8 en 2007, selon l'armée américaine. Par ailleurs, quatre personnes ont été tuées par l'explosion d'une bombe artisanale au passage de leur voiture près de Baqouba (60 km au nord-est de Bagdad). Réuni à Damas, le Comité des oulémas musulmans, principale association sunnite irakienne, a appelé, lundi, les Irakiens à « appuyer les forces hostiles à l'occupation » américaine. Le congrès a par ailleurs reconduit le cheikh Hareth Dhari au poste de secrétaire général de cette association. — (AP, AFP.)

IRAK UNE VAGUE D'ATTENTATS FAIT DES DIZAINES DE VICTIMES À KIRKOUK ET À BAGDAD



EXPLICATION

la Croix

JEUDI 31 JUILLET 2008

L'AKP, parti au pouvoir en Turquie, échappe à l'interdiction

La Cour constitutionnelle turque a rejeté hier une demande d'interdiction du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP), au pouvoir, accusé « d'activités anti-laïques », a annoncé le président de la Cour Hasim Kiliç, au terme d'un troisième jour de délibérations. Mais les juges ont toutefois décidé d'imposer des sanctions financières à ce parti.

Quelle est la sentence des juges ?

« Il a été décidé de ne pas dissoudre le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) », a déclaré hier soir le président de la Cour Hasim Kiliç devant la presse. Aux termes de l'arrêt rendu public, adopté par six voix contre cinq, la Cour a également refusé d'accéder à la demande du procureur général qui réclamait qu'il soit interdit à 71 membres de l'AKP d'appartenir à un parti politique. Le procureur général avait introduit ces demandes en mars dernier. Les juges ont cependant

décidé de priver l'AKP d'une partie de son financement public. Un accord de sept juges au moins était nécessaire pour interdire l'AKP. Des trois solutions qui s'offraient à la Cour (dissoudre l'AKP, ne pas le dissoudre ou prendre des mesures intermédiaires qui limiteraient notamment le soutien financier du trésor public) les juges ont donc choisi la voie médiane.

Pourquoi l'AKP risquait-il l'interdiction ?

Le Parti de la justice et du développement était accusé d'attenter aux fondements laïques de la République turque, dont les militaires sont les gardiens vigilants. Depuis 1960, plus de 20 partis ont ainsi été interdits en Turquie, essentiellement des partis pro-Kurdes ou pro-islamistes. Mais c'est la première fois qu'une telle question était posée à propos d'un parti au pouvoir. L'AKP a largement remporté les élections législatives l'an dernier, avec 47 %

des suffrages. Le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président Abdullah Gul sont issus de ses rangs. Une interdiction aurait déclenché une crise politique aux conséquences imprévisibles. La Cour constitutionnelle, qui compte 11 juges, était très partagée à propos de cette interdiction. Elle avait entamé lundi l'examen de cette procédure.

Que va impliquer la décision des juges ?

L'AKP dénonçait cette action devant la Cour comme antidémocratique, affirmant qu'une interdiction du parti au pouvoir serait un « coup d'État judiciaire ». Alors que la Turquie traverse une période politique difficile et vient d'être secouée par des attentats qui ont causé la mort de 17 personnes dimanche à Istanbul, la décision des juges devrait aider à un apaisement d'une partie des tensions dans le pays.

AL.G.

LE FIGARO

29 juillet 2008

Après les attentats d'Istanbul, la Turquie menacée de destabilisation

TURQUIE

Le PKK a démenti hier avoir posé les deux bombes qui ont provoqué la mort de 17 personnes et fait plus de 150 blessés dimanche soir. Sans convaincre les autorités turques et la population du quartier endeuillé par les explosions.

Istanbul

« LE PKK massacre des civils » titrait en une le quotidien *Hürriyet*, au lendemain de deux explosions qui ont fait 17 morts et plus de 150 blessés à Güngören, un quartier situé dans la périphérie d'Istanbul. Hier, une grande partie des médias et les autorités turques accusaient les rebelles kurdes d'être responsables du double attentat sanglant de dimanche soir.

Le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui s'est rendu sur les lieux, a désigné, sans la nommer, l'organisation kurde. En laissant entendre qu'il s'agissait de représailles en réponse aux opérations menées par l'armée turque ces derniers jours contre les rebelles dans le sud-est du pays et dans le nord de l'Irak : « Malheureusement, le coût en est très élevé, l'événement d'hier soir en fait partie. »

La condamnation n'est pas moins tranchée dans la bouche du général Yasar Büyükanit. Pour le chef de l'état-major, cette attaque dans une rue animée montre « une fois de plus la sauvagerie et la face sanglante du terrorisme ». Hier après-midi, des habitants de Güngören ont manifesté pour exprimer leur désir de vengeance, en hurlant « à bas le PKK ! ». Alors même que les enquêteurs n'ont pas rendu publics des indices permettant d'accréditer cette thèse.

De son côté, le PKK assure « n'avoir rien à voir avec cet événement ». « Nous pensons que cette attaque a été orchestrée par les forces obscures, a déclaré hier Zubeyir Aydar, un dirigeant du mouvement, dans un communiqué publié par Firat, une agence de presse kurde basée en Belgique. Nous présentons nos condoléances aux familles des victimes et au peuple turc. »

Les deux explosions ont eu lieu quelques heures avant que le procès engagé contre le Parti de la justi-

ce et du développement (AKP) n'entre dans sa phase finale : hier, les juges de la Cour constitutionnelle ont commencé leurs délibérations. La décision est attendue dans les prochains jours. Une interdiction de la formation islamo-conservatrice au pouvoir entraînerait une nouvelle crise politique. Depuis l'attentat commis dimanche soir, l'instabilité et l'incertitude sont encore montées d'un cran en Turquie. Le 9 juillet, au cours d'une attaque contre le consulat américain à Istanbul, trois policiers et trois assaillants avaient été tués. Cette opération kamikaze a été attribuée à al-Qaïda.

L'attaque terroriste la plus meurtrière depuis cinq ans

Aucune organisation n'a encore revendiqué l'attentat dans le quartier de Güngören, mais son objectif premier ne suscite aucun doute : faire un maximum de victimes. Il a eu lieu dans une avenue commerçante et piétonnière, sur la rive européenne d'Istanbul. Les boutiques étaient encore ouvertes, de très nombreuses familles se promenaient.

Selon les premiers témoignages, la première déflagration a été de faible puissance. « J'étais assis à une vingtaine de mètres quand la première explosion a eu lieu, a raconté un passant dans le journal *Radikal*. Je me suis ensuite approché de l'endroit, comme des centaines d'autres personnes, des jeunes et des vieux, et dix minutes après, la seconde explosion s'est produite, beaucoup plus forte. » Fauchant la foule qui tentait d'aider les premières victimes.

Dans le quotidien *Milliyet*, Özge Aydin, correspondante d'un journal local, a décrit une scène de carnage : « Notre maison se trouve tout près de l'avenue, nous sommes aussitôt sortis. Ce que nous avons vu était affreux. Des personnes étaient à terre, certaines n'avaient plus de bras ou de jambe, d'autres hurlaient. »

Cet attentat est le plus meurtrier qu'ait connu la Turquie depuis cinq ans. En novembre 2003, à Istanbul, quatre attaques suicides à la voiture piégée contre le consulat britannique, la banque HSBC et deux synagogues avaient fait 63 morts et des centaines de blessés.

LAURE MARCHAND

Jean Marcou : « Un contexte porteur de violence »

À Istanbul, Jean Marcou dirige l'Ovipot, l'Observatoire de la vie politique turque, rattaché à l'Institut français d'études anatoliennes.

LE FIGARO. - Certains médias attribuent l'attentat de dimanche soir aux Kurdes du PKK. Y a-t-il des éléments qui accréditent cette thèse ?

Jean MARCOU. - Oui, notamment la méthode employée et l'endroit où ont eu lieu les explosions. En Turquie, le PKK est l'auteur auquel on pense spontanément. On peut lui faire porter facilement le chapeau car c'est un coupable « neutre » en quelque sorte. L'attentat de ce week-end

rappelle d'ailleurs celui de mai 2007 à Ankara, qui avait fait six morts. (la candidature à la présidentielle d'Abdullah Gül avait déclenché une crise constitutionnelle, NDLR). On a accusé le PKK. En fait, on n'a jamais trop su d'où il venait.

L'attentat de dimanche a été particulièrement meurtrier...

S'il faut rester très prudent sur les auteurs possibles, ce que l'on peut dire en revanche c'est qu'il a été planifié pour impressionner les civils, pour leur faire peur. Dans tous les pays confrontés à des problèmes identitaires, les actions terroristes ou séparatistes peuvent être utilisées pour ressouder l'unité du peuple.

Les délibérations de la Cour constitutionnelle sur la demande de fermeture de l'AKP ont débuté quelques heures après les explosions. Que pensez-vous de cette concomitance ?

Le contexte est effectivement très particulier. Très porteur de violence. Y a-t-il eu une volonté de faire pression sur les juges ? Il faut rester prudent, mais c'est une hypothèse. On sait que les juges hésitent à fermer l'AKP. Car leur légitimité est en jeu. Depuis le mois de juin, ils n'ont toujours pas motivé leur décision d'annuler l'autorisation du port du foulard dans les universités. S'ils font de même pour la fermeture de l'AKP, ils rendront clairement une décision politique et perdront leur

crédibilité juridique - déjà entamée. La Cour est donc confrontée à la difficulté de motiver une interdiction de l'AKP de façon à la rendre acceptable aux yeux de l'opinion publique, ou alors elle devra opter pour une décision plus neutre.

Vendredi dernier, a été annoncée la tenue d'un procès en octobre pour juger les membres du réseau Ergenekon (accusés d'avoir fomenté des actions violentes pour faire tomber le gouvernement). Cette cellule clandestine pourrait-elle être liée à l'attentat ?

C'est également une possibilité, comme pour l'attentat d'Ankara l'an dernier. Il y a une tradition de manipulations et d'assassinats en

Turquie. Avec l'affaire Ergenekon, l'« État profond » (*l'expression désigne un État dans l'État, composé de militaires, de politiques et de mafieux, NDLR*) a refait surface.

Son action est évoquée depuis les années 1970, avec l'existence d'organisations luttant contre l'extrême gauche et plus ou moins liées aux autorités. Les assassinats

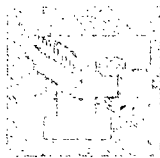
du journaliste Hrant Dink ou du juge du Conseil d'État, entre autres, sont attribués à Ergenekon. Mais certains voudraient sans doute profiter de la procédure contre

Ergenekon pour faire le procès de l'État profond de ces vingt dernières années et tout attribuer au camp laïque.

Propos recueillis à Istanbul par
LAURE MARCHAND

L'éditorial de **Pierre Rousselin**

La Turquie sous tension



Quels que soient leurs auteurs, les attentats d'Istanbul ne peuvent être dissociés de la menace de dissolution qui pèse sur le parti musulman conservateur au pouvoir

aujourd'hui en Turquie.

Après six ans de stabilité et de réformes démocratiques, le pays traverse une période de graves incertitudes. Le vieux débat sur la place de l'islam dans une république que son fondateur, Atatürk, voulait laïque est arrivé à un tel stade qu'une crise politique paraît imminente.

Les deux explosions qui ont fait dix-sept morts à Istanbul dimanche soir ont eu lieu alors que la Cour constitutionnelle allait se réunir pour examiner une demande d'interdiction de l'AKP, le Parti de la justice et du développement du premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, réélu triomphalement en juillet 2007, avec près de 47 % des suffrages. Si les juges ont jugé recevable la demande d'interdiction, c'est parce qu'ils incarnent l'élite kémaliste au pouvoir depuis 1923.

Ils reprochent au gouvernement de vouloir islamiser la société et redoutent, en fait, de perdre leurs prérogatives au profit de la nouvelle bourgeoisie que représente l'AKP, libérale en matière économique et conservatrice quant aux mœurs.

Entre ces deux Turquie, de plus en plus

incompatibles, le conflit atteint son paroxysme. Les attentats, en un moment aussi sensible, peuvent relever d'un complot visant à justifier une reprise en main par l'armée, comme cela est arrivé si souvent.

L'interdiction du parti de gouvernement, largement majoritaire dans l'opinion et au Parlement, plongerait le pays dans une crise majeure.

Une telle action aurait tout d'un coup d'État judiciaire, puisqu'elle reviendrait sur le choix démocratique des électeurs. Un coup fatal serait porté au processus de négociations engagé avec Bruxelles et déjà compromis par les réticences européennes comme par le ralentissement des réformes en Turquie. À la décharge des juges et du camp laïque, il faut rappeler que, depuis son triomphe électoral de 2007, l'AKP s'est cru investi d'un mandat illimité et a abandonné l'approche prudente qui était la sienne au cours de la législature précédente. En imposant l'an dernier l'élection à la tête de l'État d'Abdullah Gül, cofondateur de l'AKP, en essayant en vain, cette année, de changer la Constitution pour imposer la libéralisation du port du foulard à l'université, Erdogan a cherché l'affrontement. Il aurait mieux fait de relancer la modernisation du pays pour accélérer les pourparlers avec l'Union européenne. Menée par le truchement du pouvoir judiciaire, la contre-offensive des kémalistes n'a fait que radicaliser ceux qui, au sein de l'AKP, se sentent floués de leur légitimité démocratique. Si le parti est interdit, si ses dirigeants sont sanctionnés, les appels à la revanche ne vont pas manquer chez les plus islamistes. Il faut donc espérer qu'une solution de compromis sera trouvée pour éviter la crise, pour domestiquer l'AKP au lieu de pousser ses adeptes aux extrêmes.

L'ESPIONNAGE
29 juillet 2008

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
July 29, 2008

Mourners in Istanbul bury victims of bombings

By Sebnem Arsu

ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, eight government ministers and thousands of mourners stood for burial prayers at a local mosque on Monday for 10 of the 17 victims of a double bombing. The coffins, like many houses in the area, were draped with

Turkey's red-and-white flag.

Before the ceremony, Erdogan visited the bombing site, in the Gungoren neighborhood, calling for calm and urging nationwide solidarity. As he spoke, local residents chanted slogans against a Kurdish separatist group that is suspected in the bombing.

The group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has been the target of an intense Turkish military campaign, denied responsibility in a statement to the pro-Kurdish news agency Firat on Monday.

But the governor of Istanbul, Muammer Guler, told The Anatolian News Agency: "Of course, there are links with the separatist organization. We hope to catch the assailants as soon as possible. Right now, we are thoroughly filtering the footage from shops' security cameras and public surveillance camera network."

He refused to confirm news reports that three suspects were already in police custody.

The double bombing, which occurred Sunday as residents walked about in the cool of the evening in Gungoren, killed at least five children and injured more than 100 people, Turkish officials said Monday. A small explosive placed in a garbage bin went off first, drawing onlookers, and about 10 minutes later, a much more powerful device detonated.

The attack came on the eve of a major court case in Ankara against the governing Justice and Development Party, or AK Party. A prosecutor has accused it of bringing Islamic practices into politics in violation of the founding principles of the Turkish republic.

If the party is found guilty, it could be banned and 71 senior members, including Erdogan and President Abdullah

Gul, could be barred from politics for five years. The court is expected to reach its verdict in a couple of weeks.

"Our problem or issue right now is not the closure of AK Party, but the problem that Turkey struggles with," Erdogan said in a televised press brief-

ing. "Our problem is to maintain unity and togetherness so that our nation can attain a better position."

On Sunday, the Turkish military announced that fighter jets had hit 12 PKK targets inside northern Iraq, and there was speculation that the double bombing

was retaliatory. In the past year, the PKK has denied two fatal attacks that they later claimed, said Sedat Laciner, a terrorism expert at the International Strategic Research Organization in Ankara.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune July 29, 2008

Talking with Tehran ■ Selig S. Harrison

Iraq, Bush and the 'time horizon'

I ran is never mentioned when President George W. Bush explains what led to his surprising acceptance of a "time horizon" for the withdrawal of American combat forces from Iraq. But I found clear evidence on a recent visit to Tehran that Iranian diplomacy was a key factor behind his reversal.

The White House explanation is that the success of the administration's "surge" policy is enabling Iraq to stand on its own, releasing pent-up nationalist opposition to the presence of foreign soldiers.

This, in turn, it is said, has compelled the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, to demand inclusion of a withdrawal timetable in a projected Iraq-U.S. security agreement so that his opponents cannot use nationalism against him in the fall provincial elections.

What this explanation omits is the crucial role that Iran has played in Maliki's conversion. It was only after Iranian intervention, I learned in Tehran, that Maliki shifted to his newly tough stand in the deadlocked negotiations with Washington on the security agreement.

When a draft U.S.-Iraq accord without a time table was signed on March 17, it remained a well-kept secret until nationalist critics within Maliki's inner circle leaked it in early May to Iranian diplomats and to the Iraqi media. The reaction in Tehran was explosive. On May 11, Hossein Shariatmadari, editor of the hard-line daily Kayhan, attacked it in a vitriolic signed editorial entitled "Iraq on the Edge" that he handed to me during an hour-long interview.

"If you want to know what has been happening," he said, "I suggest you read this."

Shariatmadari is the "personal representative of the Supreme Leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and is widely regarded as his media spokesman.

"How is it," the editorial asked, "that the Maliki government took the first steps toward signing such a disgraceful pact in the first place?"

The United States, it said, is using the treaty to "sow the seeds of discord" between Maliki and his coalition partner, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, so that "the U.S. can put pro-American individuals in charge. It is amazing that al-Maliki failed to see such a conspiracy coming."

In a clear warning to Maliki, the editorial added that if the treaty is implemented, Iraqis will replace his government with "another Islamist government."

Maliki was summoned to Tehran for a three-day dressing down from June 7 to 9 that led to his announcement on June 13 in Jordan that the negotiations with the United States had reached "a dead-end and deadlock."

Informants in government-affiliated think tanks told me that he had "difficult" meetings, as one put it, with

Khamenei and with the Revolutionary Guard generals who oversee Iraq policy. Soon thereafter, his defense minister signed a secret mutual security accord with his Iranian counterpart.

Iran's first deputy foreign minister, Alireza Sheikhattar, repeatedly emphasized the importance of a firm withdrawal timetable. "We don't expect that U.S. forces can leave in a fortnight," he said, "but whether it's three months or eight months or longer, the important thing is a serious intent to withdraw gradually."

Asked if any American forces could remain, he replied, "yes, some could stay to help with training Iraq forces, if their goal is truly training," but Iraq "would not allow" the continued operation of U.S. air bases that could make Iraq "a platform for harming the security of Iran and other neighbors. Why should the United States operate air bases in Iraq?"

Maliki is increasingly upset, Sheikhattar added, that the United States "still exercises complete control over Iraqi air-

space. The Iraqis should have a real air force of their own. Why are they prohibited from having more than token aircraft and related facilities, even for civil aviation? They are not poor. They can purchase fighters and have their own aircraft for both internal and external security."

Wouldn't this pose a potential security threat to Iran? Not if Iraq has a sovereign, democratic government, he said, "because there is an absolute majority in favor of Iran" now that the Shiite government is in control.

As if in reply to Sheikhattar, Admiral William Fallon, the recently retired commander of the U.S. Central Command, emphasized in an article published in The New York Times last week that "control of Iraqi air space" would be an "important component of the security agreement that would require clear headed negotiations."

Whether or not Baghdad actually does ask the United States to shut down its air bases, as Sheikhattar demanded, the next administration in Washington should consider removing U.S. long range bombers from Iraq.

Cooperation between Washington and Tehran is necessary for an orderly departure of American forces and for the economic stabilization of Iraq.

More important, no government in Baghdad is likely to survive for long if it ignores the legitimate security concerns of a powerful neighbor with a 1,000 mile common border and intimate historical, economic and Shiite religious ties that go back for a millennium.

Selig S. Harrison, director of the Iran program at the Center for International Policy, covered Iran for the Washington Post. He revisited Tehran in June of 2007 and February and June of 2008.

Cooperation with Iran
is necessary for an
orderly departure of
U.S. forces from Iraq.

TODAYS ZAMAN July 28, 2008

Gang's links with PKK, DHKP/C, Hizbullah exposed

TODAYS ZAMAN ANKARA

Prosecutors in a landmark case over the investigation into Ergenekon, a criminal network suspected of plotting a coup against the government, have uncovered striking links between the gang and some key outlawed groups behind decades of bloody and provocative acts.

An İstanbul court on Friday agreed to hear the case over the investigation into Ergenekon, in a move that will kick off the trial process for dozens of

fighting for an ethnic homeland in southeastern Turkey, for the deaths of 40,000 people over the past 25 years.

The PKK has been behind many provocative attacks, some of which have been claimed by the organization itself, while others have been claimed by the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a PKK-affiliated group known largely for its terrorist attacks in big cities. A destructive explosion last year was set off by the PKK in Ankara. A powerful explosion in front of the Anafartalar shopping mall in the capital's busy Ulus district during rush hour killed 10

at destroying certain terrorist organizations, but at taking them under control and using them for its own purposes.

The indictment includes testimonies from two confidential witnesses who had previously been in PKK camps. According to their testimonies, the coup against the elected civilian government on Sept. 12, 1980, which installed a military-civilian cabinet while proclaiming martial law, was announced beforehand to the outlawed PKK. Upon receiving this information, the PKK warned its members through brochures it published and made them flee abroad in groups while and bury its weapons beneath its shelters.

One witness, codenamed "Deniz," provided information about meetings between Ergenekon and intelligence officers from other countries and explained that the now-jailed founder of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, left Turkey before the 1980 coup because he had been informed about it beforehand. Deniz said journalist Yalçın Küçük, also a suspected member of Ergenekon, went to Damascus to meet with Öcalan in 1993 and 1996. He explained that the Küçük guided Öcalan in his armed activities. Stressing that Küçük was like Öcalan's brain, the witness said in 1996 it was Küçük who saved Öcalan from an assassination in Damascus. Deniz added that Hizbullah members were trained at the Gendarmerie Command. A reporter who took photographs of this training was later killed, the witness said.

Perinçek is among the founders of the PKK

In the indictment, it is claimed that İP leader Perinçek, who is currently under arrest, often met with Öcalan in Bekaa Valley and that he was among the founders of the PKK. The report also highlights an exchange of views between Perinçek and Öcalan's attorneys.

In a classified document prepared by Capt. Ceyhan Karagöz on Oct. 25, 1994, it is said that the PKK was founded on Oct. 27, 1978 in the village of Ziyaret in the eastern province of Diyarbakır by 25 people, including Öcalan and Perinçek.

There are other documents indicating a relationship between Perinçek and the PKK. A letter addressed to Perinçek found at the house of journalist and Tuncay Güney, who now lives in Canada and works as a rabbi, a witness in the Ergenekon investigation, features a PKK seal and reads: "In our hard struggle, it is impossible to express your sacrifice and contributions in political, economic and arms-related terms with words. The Kurdish community, which has been exploited and exposed to the massacres of fascist Turkish armies, needs brave people like you who are respectful to human rights, struggle in the war for freedom and support our party without any reservations. ... In the periods ahead, our party will be honored to cooperate with people like you. Revolutionary greetings."

The indictment also reveals that Güney said shipments of weapons to northern Iraq were also related to Perinçek.



This undated photo shows İP leader Doğu Perinçek (R), a chief suspect in the Ergenekon case, shaking hands with PKK members during a visit to a PKK camp. The terrorist group's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, walks next to him.

suspected gang members, including retired army officers, academics, journalists and businessmen.

Prosecutors in the Ergenekon investigation have demanded that retired Brig. Gen. Veli Küçük, Cumhuriyet daily columnist İlhan Selçuk, Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate press spokeswoman Sevgi Erenerol, former İstanbul University Rector Kemal Alemdaroğlu and Workers' Party (İP) leader Doğu Perinçek -- believed to be leaders of the gang -- each be sentenced to two consecutive life sentences and an additional 164 years. These five suspects will face various charges, including, but not limited to, "establishing a terrorist organization," "attempting to overthrow the government of the Republic of Turkey by force or to block it from performing its duties," "inciting the people to rebel against the Republic of Turkey," "openly provoking hatred and hostility," "inciting others to stage the 2006 Council of State shooting," "attacking the Cumhuriyet daily's İstanbul office with a hand grenade" and other similar crimes.

The almost 2,500-page-long Ergenekon indictment has revealed serious connections between Ergenekon and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) and the Turkish Hizbullah (no relation to Lebanon-based Hizbullah). The PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by a large majority of the international community, including the European Union and the United States, uses northern Iraq as a base from which to make attacks on Turkish soil. Turkey blames the PKK, which is

and injured more than 100 on May 22, 2007.

In October police forces averted a disaster in Ankara at the last minute after finding a van packed with explosives near a multistory parking lot. The van was loaded with hundreds of kilograms of explosives. PKK involvement in that incident had also been confirmed.

The DHKP/C is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union and has claimed responsibility for a number of assassinations and bombings since the 1970s. The organization was originally formed in 1978 by Dursun Karataş.

"It is being understood -- from evidence in the investigation file, the interrogations and the documents that have been seized -- that Küçük, one of the leaders of the Ergenekon terrorist organization, had a close relationship with the DHKP/C terrorist organization, used it in line with the goals and targets of the Ergenekon terrorist organization and kept it under control," the indictment alleges.

Turkish Hizbullah is a Kurdish, Sunni fundamentalist organization that arose in the late 1980s in southeastern Turkey. In the early 1990s, when the Turkish government's conflict with the PKK was at its most fierce, Hizbullah began attacking suspected PKK sympathizers.

"Pseudo-terrorist organizations should be established," says a document allegedly belonging to Ergenekon and included in the indictment. The same document notes that Ergenekon doesn't aim

Parliament leaves Iraq election issue unresolved

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Parliament went into summer recess Wednesday without resolving major disputes holding up provincial elections this year, forcing the speaker to announce a special session to discuss a power-sharing formula for the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

The speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, a Sunni, adjourned the session as scheduled but ordered lawmakers to meet again Sunday in a final effort to resolve the issue. His Shiite deputy, Khalid al-Attayah, criticized the decision and said the legislative session should be extended until the matter was resolved.

Failure to compromise on a new law establishing rules and funding for the U.S.-backed provincial vote will probably force the vote to be delayed until next year. Under previous legislation, the election had been scheduled for Oct. 1, but it will now probably be put off until December at the earliest — a blow to efforts to heal Iraq's sectarian rifts.

Tensions grew Monday after a suicide bomb attack in Kirkuk during a Kurdish protest against the elections law killed 25 people and wounded more than 180. Kirkuk is home to Kurds, Turkomen, Arabs and other minority

group members.

After the explosion in Kirkuk, dozens of angry Kurds stormed the offices of a Turkoman political party that opposes Kurdish claims on Kirkuk, opening fire and burning cars amid accusations that their rivals were to blame. Nine Turkomen, or ethnic Turks, were reported wounded.

The house-to-house search operations now focused on the Diyala provincial capital of Baquba will be extended to rugged areas near the Iranian border, said Ibrahim Bajilan, the head of the regional council. He said the crackdown would last about two weeks.

Diyala has been one of the hardest provinces to control despite many military operations. Baquba has enjoyed improved security but continues to see attacks, like linked suicide bombings that killed at least 28 people July 15 and suicide attacks by female bombers.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
JULY 31, 2008

Offensive directed at Qaeda havens

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD: U.S. and Iraqi forces began an operation in Diyala Province on Tuesday aimed at clearing Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia from havens in an area considered the last major insurgent stronghold near the capital.

Checkpoints were erected across the province and the authorities ordered a ban on unofficial traffic as search operations began in the provincial capital of Baquba and surrounding areas, witnesses said.

The U.S.-backed Iraqi military is hoping to build on recent security gains from similar offensives against Sunni insurgents in the northern city of Mosul and against Shiite militiamen in Baghdad as well as in the southern cities of Basra and Amara.

The troops were focusing on Qaeda fighters and other insurgents, who have sought refuge in Diyala, said General Ali Ghaidan, commander of Iraqi ground forces in the province. The province, which sits to the north of the capital and borders Iran, has been one of the hardest areas to control since the U.S.-led war began in March 2003. Baquba, the provincial capital, was hit July 15 by two suicide bombings that killed at least 28 people. The area has also seen a number of suicide attacks by women.

"The goal of the operation is to seek out and destroy criminal elements and terrorist threats in Diyala and eliminate smuggling corridors in the surrounding area," the U.S. military said in a statement.

U.S. hopes to build on gains in Iraq

The military said it was an Iraqi-led operation, stressing the point as the Iraqi government is seeking to assert more control over military operations.

"We applaud the Iraqis' growing ability to lead, plan and execute complex combat, policy and humanitarian operations and we look forward to reducing our support footprint as security conditions on the ground permit," the statement said.

The religiously mixed area is strategic because it contains important supply routes to Baghdad and northern cities that need to be controlled to ensure security.

Similar offensives against Shiite militia fighters in Baghdad and southern cities have contributed to a sharp decline in attacks.

But violence has been slower to decline in Diyala and elsewhere in northern Iraq, despite several military operations in recent years.

Major General Mark Hertling, who commands U.S. forces in northern Iraq, expressed confidence that this latest effort would be more successful because Iraqi security forces were better prepared.

Ahmed Kadim, a 35-year-old businessman in Baquba, criticized the decision to announce the operation in advance. "I think this allowed armed groups to flee outside the province," Kadim said.

Large pilgrimage stays calm

A major pilgrimage of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Shiites to a Baghdad shrine passed peacefully Tuesday, a day after three female suicide bombers killed 35 people among crowds of pilgrims, Reuters reported from Baghdad.

The authorities lifted a vehicle curfew in the capital, imposed for the commemoration of the death of Imam al-Kadham, one of Shiite Islam's 12 imams.

Many pilgrims seemed undeterred by the attacks.

Black-clad Shiites from around Iraq packed Baghdad's streets as they made their way to the Kadhamiya shrine in the city's north. Shiite pilgrims usually travel to such events on foot. Tents were set up along the way to hand out food and water.

Violence in Iraq has fallen to four-year lows, but the bombings underscored the challenge for Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, especially as U.S. troops draw down while his forces take on greater responsibility.

The annual pilgrimage to the Kadhamiya shrine is one of the most important events in the Shiite religious calendar.

Security forces had put female guards around Kadhamiya to search women, but all of the blasts Monday happened in central Baghdad, which many pilgrims passed through to reach the shrine.

Iraqi men are reluctant to search women, prompting terrorists increasingly to use women who easily hide explosives under their flowing black robes.

L'EXPRESS

SEMAINE DU 31 JUILLET AU 6 AOÛT 2008

Turquie La raison des juges

Un parti au pouvoir peut-il être interdit ? Le pays est-il menacé par des réseaux paramilitaires ? L'affrontement politique entre laïcistes et musulmans a envahi les prétoires.



Le Premier ministre Erdoğan (troisième en partant de la gauche), le 28 juillet, lors de la cérémonie funéraire en hommage aux victimes des attentats d'Istanbul.

Qui veut déstabiliser l'Etat turc ? C'est la question que doivent trancher les magistrats dans la double bataille judiciaire qui se livre dans la république fondée par Kemal Atatürk. Le premier procès met en cause le gouvernement, musulman-conservateur (AKP), accusé par le président de la Cour de cassation de faire glisser la république laïque vers un Etat islamique. Le second, déclenché par un procureur, vise une organisation clandestine, avec des ramifications dans les milieux militaires, qui aurait eu pour but de répandre la terreur afin de renverser le gouvernement et l'ordre démocratique. Pas moins de 86 accusés, dont 47 sont en détention provisoire, comparaitront à partir du 20 octobre, sous l'inculpa-

tion d'avoir dirigé une organisation terroriste ou d'y avoir participé.

Les kémalistes accusent les autorités d'avoir fait de cette dernière affaire – appelée le cas Ergenekon – une riposte au procès intenté par le procureur général de la Cour de cassation, demandant la fermeture de l'AKP et l'interdiction d'activités politiques, cinq ans durant, pour 71 de ses membres, dont le président de la République, Abdullah Gül, et le Premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. La Cour suprême a ouvert, le 28 juillet, ce procès fondé sur un dossier d'accusation de 162 pages et devait rendre rapidement son verdict.

Jamais, depuis vingt ans, la tension n'a été si forte dans le pays, alors que plane la menace terroriste, comme l'a rappelé le sanglant double attentat

d'Istanbul (17 morts), le 27 juillet. Les partis politiques attisent l'actuelle polarisation. Chef de l'opposition parlementaire, le secrétaire général du CHP (la formation historique des kémalistes), Deniz Baykal, s'est ainsi déclaré en faveur de la fermeture de l'AKP et autoproclamé avocat des accusés du procès Ergenekon. Aussitôt, le Premier ministre a riposté en se déclarant quant à lui « procureur », au nom du peuple, dans ce dossier Ergenekon...

Le véritable procureur de cette affaire, Zekeriya Öz, se montre toutefois bien plus discret. Escorté par 15 gardes du corps, il a vu sa vie et sa carrière basculer, il y a un peu plus d'un an, lors de la découverte d'une caisse de grenades dans la petite maison d'un officier à la retraite, dans la banlieue d'Istanbul. En remontant la piste de

ces explosifs, il a fait saisir un deuxième arsenal clandestin aux mains d'un autre officier retraité. Outre les armes, le magistrat a découvert des documents révélant l'existence d'une organisation clandestine, « Ergenekon », regroupant universitaires, ex-militaires, journalistes et dirigeants de petits partis politiques et d'associations. Selon le procureur, Ergenekon se serait bâtie sur les vestiges d'une organisation paramilitaire clandestine mise en place par l'Otan dans les années 1950, pour lutter contre la menace communiste. A en croire le dossier du procureur, Ergenekon serait à l'origine d'une grande partie des actes de provocation violente et des assassinats non élucidés de ces vingt dernières années.

Parmi les inculpés figure le général Veli Küçük, ex-commandant de la gendarmerie, mis en détention provisoire en juin. Dans les années 1990, l'état-major avait refusé une demande d'enquête le concernant sur son éventuelle participation aux meurtres d'intellectuels et de nationalistes kurdes. Après avoir pris sa retraite, Küçük défilait souvent en première ligne des manifestations nationalistes et participait aux provocations lors de procès de libéraux inculpés pour atteinte à l'« identité turque ». Il était l'individu le plus redouté par le journaliste Hrant Dink, assassiné en janvier 2007.

Les méthodes spectaculaires du procureur Öz, tout comme les personnes visées – les dirigeants du quotidien kémaliste *Cumhuriyet*, İlhan Selçuk et Mustafa Balbay – ont parfois fait grincer les dents et renforcé les soupçons des sceptiques, qui voient dans cette affaire une tentative d'intimidation des opposants les plus virulents à l'AKP. Spécialiste de l'islam politique, le journaliste Rusen Çakir, tout en insistant sur l'importance de ce procès, répète ainsi que, pour être valide, l'instruction doit se faire dans le respect des principes universels du droit. Or, souligne-t-il, l'acte d'accusation compile

La cour et les partis

Quarante-sept ans après sa création, la Cour constitutionnelle turque s'apprêtait, en début de semaine, à prendre la décision la plus critique de son histoire en répondant à la demande d'interdiction de l'AKP. Ses 11 membres prennent leurs décisions à la majorité qualifiée. En droit, la cour peut interdire un parti ou se contenter de supprimer les aides publiques. Le rapporteur de la cour a toutefois noté dans son étude que les éléments présentés par le procureur entraient dans le cadre de la liberté d'expression et n'étaient pas des appels à la violence. Il a donc indiqué que la dissolution était injustifiée. Mais les membres de la cour ne suivent pas toujours ses recommandations. Depuis 1983, 34 partis, pour la plupart kurdes, socialistes ou islamistes, ont été fermés par la cour. Huit d'entre eux ont porté l'affaire devant la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme. Cette juridiction a condamné la Turquie pour toutes ces décisions, sauf celle concernant le parti islamiste Refah, dont le secrétaire général, Necmettin Erbakan, avait émis des menaces publiques. Récemment, la cour a refusé l'interdiction du parti kurde Hakpar. Elle doit également se prononcer sur celle du parti kurde DTP, dont 20 députés siègent à l'Assemblée. Quatre formations sont aujourd'hui représentées dans l'hémicycle. ●

des pièces importantes et de simples racontars. Le cas de Kuddusi Okkir, un prévenu atteint d'un cancer, privé des soins nécessaires en prison et rendu aux siens quelques jours avant sa mort, a aussi marqué les esprits.

Fondé il y a moins d'un an, le quotidien *Taraf*, dont le nom signifie « Parti

pris » ou « Partisan », a été l'un des principaux acteurs de cette période mouvementée. Le journal a publié systématiquement les fuites obtenues sur le déroulement de l'enquête. « Nous sommes partisans des libertés et de la démocratie, revendique l'une des dirigeantes du journal, Yasemin Çongar. Dans ce moment de tension, de nouvelles alliances voient le jour. Notamment entre les musulmans et les libéraux qui ne sont pas laïcistes. »

« Une politisation extrême de la justice »

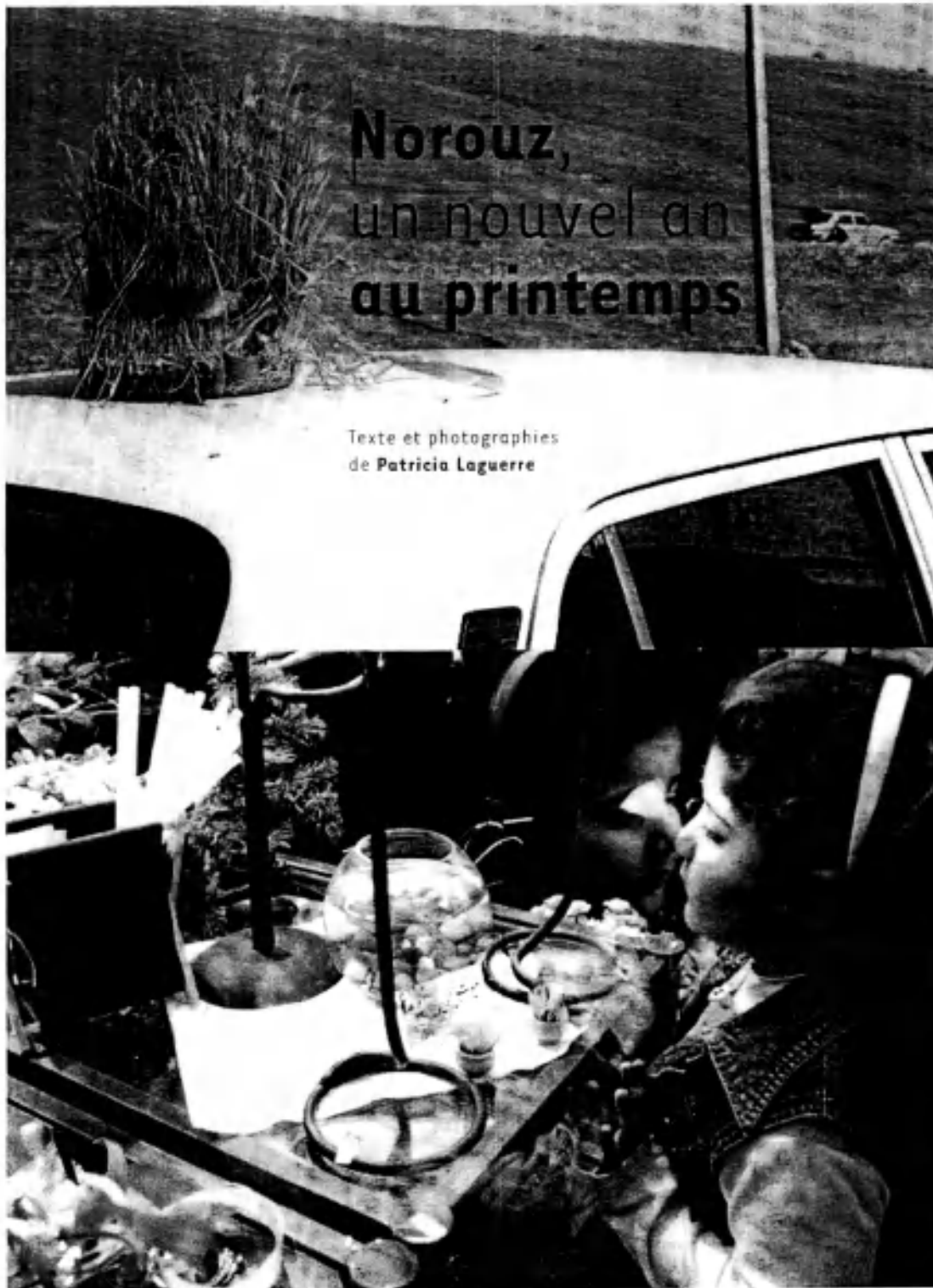
Dans un tel contexte, les magistrats peuvent-ils travailler sereinement ? Pour Fuat Keyman, professeur de relations internationales à l'université Koç d'Istanbul, « la politisation extrême de la justice turque est un fait avéré ». Selon lui, l'acte d'accusation rédigé par le procureur général de la Cour de cassation le prouve : l'AKP, au pouvoir depuis six ans, y est accusé d'être le foyer d'activités réactionnaires visant à l'instauration de la charia en Turquie, mais les documents censés prouver cette thèse sont inconsistants.

Quelle serait la réponse des autorités si l'AKP venait à être fermé et Erdogan interdit de politique pour une période donnée ? La plupart des analystes pronostiquent la tenue d'élections anticipées, qui devraient être largement remportées par la formation appelée à prendre la relève du parti banni. L'opinion continue, en effet, à soutenir le courant musulman-conservateur, crédité pour son réformisme et son pragmatisme. S'ils étaient remis en selle, les hommes de l'AKP rebaptisé et renouvelé devraient résister aux tentations revanchardes et se concentrer sur les efforts de démocratisation et de renforcement du pouvoir civil. Car la croissance exige la stabilité. Et, sans ces progrès, la route vers l'Union européenne – le rêve d'une génération – sera barrée. ●

Jean-Michel Demetz et Nükte V. Ortaç



Qantara n°68 • été 2008



Pendant deux semaines, tout l'Iran ou presque est en vacances : c'est Norouz, l'une des plus grandes fêtes du pays, célébrée depuis plus de trois mille ans. Elle marque le début de l'année nouvelle qui débute avec l'équinoxe de printemps, un renouveau saisonnier qui remonte à Zoroastre et dure douze jours. Je n'en sais guère plus lorsque j'arrive le 18 *esfand* 1386 (8 mars 2008) à l'aéroport de Kermanshah, à l'ouest de l'Iran, invitée par des amis rencontrés il y aura bientôt quatre ans dans un village du Kurdistan iranien...

Esfand est le dernier mois de l'hiver dans le calendrier solaire persan. C'est alors que commencent les préparatifs de Norouz – qui signifie littéralement « nouveau jour » : pour accueillir le printemps, les femmes font le ménage à fond. C'est *Khane tekani* (le grand nettoyage), un rituel associé à la renaissance de la nature qui se retrouve dans plusieurs cultures et religions.

La coutume veut également que les familles renouvellent leur garde-robe. Même les moins aisés achètent un habit neuf. Zhila s'empresse de me montrer un chemisier noir et or, un cadeau de sa maman. Les souks sont littéralement assiégés. La fièvre acheteuse a saisi Sanandaj, la capitale du Kurdistan iranien. Chacun se préoccupe de donner des étrennes aux enfants. Aux amis, on offre des billets de banque neufs sur lesquels on inscrit ses vœux. Ils seront précieusement conservés.

Sur les rebords des fenêtres, des pots, on dirait de l'herbe à chats. Ce sont les *sazbeh* : en signe de renouveau, dès le mardi qui précède le 21 mars, les familles préparent des germes de blé, orge ou lentilles qu'elles mettent à germer dans des assiettes.

Le feu du feu

Depuis trois jours, au moins, Nassim me parle de *Chahar-Shanbeh Souri*. « La veille du dernier mercredi de l'année, on allume des feux de joie. Il faut absolument que tu passes la soirée du 28 *esfand* (18 mars) avec nous. »

Nous quittons Sanandaj vers 17 heures et après quelques kilomètres,

la famille s'installe au bord de la route principale. En face de nous, sur le terre-plein étroit, une autre famille s'arrête. Puis une autre encore... À mes côtés, Nassim et sa tante, assises sur une couverture, cassent des noix. Les hommes, jeunes et moins jeunes, préparent un feu sur lequel ils déposent une petite théière. Le traditionnel *tchai*, sans lequel je me demande comment les Iraniens feraient pour vivre. Ils le boivent à longueur de journée, très fort et brûlant. On le sert dans de petits verres. Pour le refroidir, il est d'usage de verser le thé dans la soucoupe pour le boire. Le sucre cassé en morceaux irréguliers s'y dissout difficilement. Pas de petite cuillère. J'ai appris à maintenir l'éclat cristallisé entre les dents, tandis que je bois le thé à petites gorgées.

Assis sur des couvertures, de la grand-mère au petit dernier, tous gri-

gnotent des noix et autres fruits secs, un autre passe-temps très en vogue. La famille en face de nous s'active. Elle a trouvé une grosse branche en contrebas de la rivière. Le grand-père avec sa petite-fille la remonte pour la casser en petit bois, à présent entassé au bord de la route, prêt pour un feu de joie.

La lumière baisse, gommant une à une les couleurs. De chaque côté de la route, des voitures se sont arrêtées. Dans cette confusion de véhicules, les familles allument des feux, au bord de la route, ou plus haut, sur les talus ; ces feux rappellent la dimension zoroastrienne de la fête. Chacun est impatient d'allumer sa fusée, son volcan, son allumette de Bengale et autres feux d'artifice. Un nuage de fumée camoufle parfois les voitures. Les klaxons retentissent.

Page précédente :
Le sazbeh : symbole de renouveau, du blé, de l'orge ou des lentilles germés, dont on se débarrasse au dernier jour de la fête pour éloigner le mauvais sort.

Un poisson rouge, signe de vie, sera disposé sur la nappe lors du repas du jour de l'an.

Très ritualisée, la fête de Norouz débute par une visite aux grands-parents, à la famille et enfin aux amis. C'est aussi la période des mariages.



1. Symbole de la lumière et rappel du culte solaire originel, le miroir illumine ainsi le Livre Saint.

On chante, on danse le *halay*. Hommes, femmes, enfants forment une ligne, se tiennent par la main ou le bras, bien serrés les uns contre les autres. À la tête de la danse, une femme agite un foulard. L'ambiance monte autour du feu. Le rythme est entraînant. Un homme se détache du groupe et se met à danser, accroupi, debout, il fait d'amples gestes avec le foulard. Tous partent en une grande farandole.

La fête du feu est l'une des rares occasions pour les jeunes Iraniens de laisser déborder leur énergie dans la mixité. Et de conjurer le mauvais sort en sautant par-dessus les flammes, en criant : « Donne-moi la force de ta couleur rouge et prends en échange ma pâleur malade ! » Parfois ce sont

sons la tournée des familles, et comme j'ai une grande famille... Il ne faut pas traîner même si les visites doivent être de courte durée. » Départ prévu à 8 heures du matin. Il y aura le repas traditionnel de la nouvelle année, *sabzi polo mahi*, du poisson servi avec du riz aux fines herbes.

Sur le *sofreh*, la nappe disposée sur le tapis, la famille place les *haft sin*, sept objets spécifiques dont le nom commence par la lettre *s*, le *sin* de l'alphabet persan. Tout d'abord le *sabzeh*, germes de blé, d'orge ou de lentilles, qui symbolisent la renaissance. Puis *sir*, l'ail, chargé de chasser les mauvais esprits et représentant aussi la médecine; *sib*, la pomme, qui incarne beauté et santé; *somaq*, les baies de sumac,

lise la terre flottant dans l'espace, un flacon d'eau de rose, une coupe de bonbons. Des bougies allumées en guise de porte-bonheur. On dépose encore, devant un miroir, le Coran¹ ou un livre de poésie, souvent *Le Divan* de Hafez ou le *Shah Name* (Livre des rois), une épopée de l'écrivain persan (X^e siècle) Ferdowsi.

Jeudi 1387

Jeudi 1^{er} *farvardin* (20 mars 2008) : 9 heures, 18 minutes, 19 secondes (heure de Téhéran) a marqué le début de l'année 1387, mais je fête le 2 *farvardin* (21 mars) sans mes amis, retenus à la mosquée par un enterrement. En Iran, on reste rarement seule longtemps. Je n'ai pas fait 100 mètres dans



des imprécations qu'ils profèrent contre les vicissitudes de l'existence et la dureté du quotidien, sans se soucier des oreilles indiscretes. Ils se sentent libres, insouciantes et joyeux.

Une même soirée se déroule le lendemain, 29 *esfand* (19 mars). Nassim et Majid, son mari, formulent une nouvelle invitation pour le 2 *farvardin* 1387 (21 mars), LA journée importante si j'en crois Majid. « Tu dois être prête très tôt : le jour de l'an, nous fai-



souvent utilisées dans le *chelo kebab*, qui symbolisent la couleur du lever du soleil et la santé; *serkeh*, le vinaigre, représentant l'âge et la patience; *sombol*, l'odorante fleur de jacinthe, qui annonce l'arrivée du printemps; *sekkeh*, des pièces, évocatrices de la prospérité. Ou encore *samanu*, un gâteau très sucré à base de germe de blé, ressemblant au halva, expression de l'abondance, ou *senjed*, le fruit séché du jubier, qui symbolise l'amour.

La tête me tourne! Et ce n'est pas terminé. Viennent s'ajouter des pâtisseries, du riz, de la farine, des œufs peints, signe de fertilité, l'incontournable poisson rouge à la mine étonnée, signe de vie et dernier des signes du zodiaque, une orange qui symbo-

le quartier que je suis invitée aux préparatifs d'un mariage, prévu le lendemain. Les femmes cuisinent, préparent le henné et m'entraînent à danser. Elles ont revêtu leurs plus belles tenues kurdes colorées et étincelantes. Quelques heures de la nouvelle année passées avec une chaleureuse famille kurde. Thé et petits gâteaux. Et dire que je ne connaissais personne deux heures auparavant...

Depuis plusieurs jours, mes amis me répètent : « Te rends-tu compte que ce nouvel an coïncide avec l'anniversaire de la naissance du Prophète? Une fois par siècle. Tu as beaucoup de chance car un *mouloud* commémore sa naissance, il est organisé par les



Juste avant Norouz, une véritable fièvre acheteuse s'empare de tous.

La fête du feu, « Chahar-Shanbeh Souri », se déroule la veille du dernier mercredi de l'année.

Le halay. Tous dansent en ligne ou forment une ronde, se tenant par la main ou par le bras.

« **Sizdah Bedar** », un joyeux pique-nique printanier qui clôt deux semaines de festivités.



confréries soufies et derviches. Tu pourras y assister. J'y assisterai. Une soirée à laquelle sont conviés les chefs et maîtres spirituels des confréries. Nassim me parle du Prophète, le regard brillant : « Muhammad respectait les droits des femmes. Pour Lui, tous les êtres étaient égaux. » Des orateurs lisent le Coran en arabe ; certaines phrases sont traduites en kurde. Quatre derviches frappent, frottent et secouent les *daf*-s. Une émotion profonde m'envahit lorsque les résonances puissantes de ces grands tambourins retentissent dans le *tekke*, le centre spirituel.

Un pique-nique au monde

Nouvelle invitation de Nassim. Cette fois-ci, c'est à un pique-nique. Pas vraiment surprise car la pratique en est fortement ancrée en Iran. Nassim insiste : « Il ne s'agit pas d'un pique-nique ordinaire. À l'occasion de *Sizdah Bedar*, le 13^e jour de *farvardin* 1387 (1^{er} avril 2008), toutes les familles iraniennes au grand complet ont le devoir de sortir de leur demeure pour se rendre dans la nature et ainsi conjurer le mauvais sort associé au chiffre 13 et aussi célébrer le retour du printemps.

Rendez-vous est pris à 7 heures du matin. Le beau temps est au rendez-vous, mais il est plus de 10 heures

lorsque nous partons. Le mari d'une amie a fait trois allers-retours pour transporter les passagers dans sa camionnette : Nassim et sa famille (mari, fille, maman et sœurs) et des amis, et amis d'amis... une belle équipe. Les conducteurs ont déposé les *sabzeh* sur le toit ou le capot de leur véhicule.

Cette urgence de se retrouver dans la nature m'impressionne. *Sizdah bedar* (« treizième dehors »), porte vraiment bien son nom. Tous les véhicules sont réquisitionnés, pas uniquement la *Peykan*, voiture populaire, mais aussi les deux-roues, le camion, voire la dépanneuse. Le confort des passagers importe peu, il faut absolument caser tout le monde pour participer au plus grand pique-nique au monde ! Le gouvernement même s'associe à cet élan : si le carburant est habituellement rationné à 120 litres par personne et par mois, pour *Norouz*, l'heureux automobiliste reçoit un bonus de 100 litres. Le rapport très riche avec la nature repose sur une culture ancienne : notre mot paradis ne vient-il pas du persan, où il signifie jardin, ce fameux jardin représenté dans les miniatures persanes ?

Aujourd'hui, le cadre est idyllique : au pied d'une colline, un endroit

ombragé où coule une rivière. Assis sur les couvertures, on nous attendait pour prendre le petit déjeuner. Du pain, du fromage qui rappelle la fête, des noix, du miel, de la confiture de roses, du halva et l'indispensable thé. L'endroit est paisible. Mais de nouveaux amateurs de nature arrivent et s'installent à proximité de notre « campement ». Après la prière, femmes et hommes déplient sur les couvertures deux longs *sofreh*. Au menu du pique-nique géant : des spécialités telles que les dolmas chaudes (feuilles de vignes farcies de viande, riz, tomate, épices) et les *dolmeh bâdemjân* (aux aubergines) accompagnées de yaourt légèrement battu, nature ou aux concombres, et des brochettes cuites au feu de bois. Dans de petits bols, le *torshi* – des légumes frais coupés en fins morceaux, assaisonnés et conservés dans du vinaigre. À la base de tous les plats, le riz. On en sert des montagnes. Il existe quatre principales méthodes de cuisson ; aujourd'hui, on sert ma préférée, la raffinée *chelow*. Le riz, cuit à la vapeur, est délicieusement aéré, parfumé comme s'il venait d'être récolté dans une des rizières de la riche province de Mazandaran, sur la côte de la mer Caspienne. Au final, il reste une couche de riz croustillant, le *tah-digh*,

...



Boire du thé brûlant, un passe-temps national auquel on s'adonne toute la journée mais aussi avant et après les repas.

le fond du plat de cuisson. Chaque convive en rompt un morceau avec ses doigts. Délicieux. Le repas est arrosé de *dough*, une boisson très populaire à base de yaourt. On parle de tout, de

rien, du temps qui passe. On veut savoir comment se déroule un pique-nique en Europe. Le repas se termine comme il a commencé, par le passe-temps national, boire le thé brûlant. On fait la vaisselle dans la rivière.

Heure de la sieste oblige, le calme est revenu. C'est bien plus tard que nous dégustons des pâtisseries, des bonbons et un mélange de fruits secs (figue, mûre sauvage, pois chiche, noisette, raisin, amande, pistache...). Je ne résiste pas à la spécialité d'Ispahan, le *gaz*, une sorte de nougat aux pistaches parfumé à l'eau de rose. Ni à celle de Qom, le *sohân*, une galette de sucre et de safran. Sur la route et dans la rivière, j'aperçois des *sabzeh*. « Un geste pour exorciser les démons de la demeure », m'explique Nassim. « On se débarrasse des graines germées qui ont récolté tous les malheurs. »

Pour rejoindre Sanandaj, nous marchons le long de la route sans attendre le retour de la camionnette du mari de Nadia, parti avec le premier groupe. Embouteillages, pas d'impatience tapageuse. Certains chantent et parfois dansent dans les camions.

Sizdah Bedar: je me suis débarrassée du treizième. Certains font un vœu lorsqu'ils jettent le *sabzeh*. Le mien? Revoir bientôt tous mes amis kurdes dont l'hospitalité n'est pas une légende. Si j'avais droit à un deuxième souhait, ce serait que cette fête, symbole d'une culture qui a traversé des milliers d'années de bouleversements, dure encore longtemps. ●

Texte et photographies de Patricia Laguerre, photographe



Un peu d'histoire

Le Kurdistan historique couvre une zone d'approximativement 350 000 à 500 000 km². Démantelé à l'issue de la Première Guerre mondiale, il est réparti entre quatre États : Turquie, Iran, Irak et Syrie. En Iran, « Kurdistan » est désormais le nom d'une des provinces du pays (chef-lieu : Sanandaj, à 250 km de Téhéran), qui en compte trente, dont quatre provinces kurdes iraniennes. Ne pas confondre la province du Kurdistan avec le « Kurdistan

iranien », dénomination non officielle désignant les régions d'Iran habitées par des Kurdes. **Villes principales :** Baneh, Bijar, Diwandarreh, Kamyaran, Marivan, Qorveh, Saqqez **Économie** Les provinces kurdes d'Iran sont les moins développées du pays. Activités principales : agriculture (céréales, fruits), élevage. **Population :** 7 ou 8 millions de Kurdes iraniens (7% de la pop.), 11 ou 12 millions selon l'opposition. **La langue kurde**, d'origine indo-européenne, comprend plusieurs groupes de dialectes. **Religion :** les Kurdes sont majoritairement sunnites. **Climat** continental, très chaud en

infos Kurdistan iranien

été et très froid en hiver, tempère au printemps et à l'automne.

Monnaie Rial (IRR). 1 IRR = 0,0001€, 1€ = 14 543,5575 IRR (mai 2008) De nombreux Iraniens utilisent le terme *toman*. 1 *toman* = 10 rials.

Comment s'y rendre

Formalités d'entrées Passeport valide au moins six mois après la date de retour et visa. **Transports** On peut rejoindre le Kurdistan via la Turquie par train ou bus. Mais le plus commode est de prendre l'avion jusqu'à Téhéran (Iran Air assure la liaison Paris-Téhéran), puis un vol intérieur pour Sanandaj ou encore Kermanshah (vols plus fréquents).

À savoir Le Kurdistan iranien fait l'objet de restrictions de la part du ministère des Affaires étrangères. Voir les conseils aux voyageurs pour l'Iran sur www.diplomatie.gouv.fr (onglet Services et formulaires / Services aux voyageurs).

Adresses utiles

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Pour en savoir plus

« Journal de Patricia : fête préislamique de Pir Shaliar », reportage radiophonique au Kurdistan iranien <http://edap.free.fr>, cliquer sur « Les reportages Nous autres » puis sélectionner Reportage de l'année 2006 - 21 avril. **Kurdistan tourism** <http://tourism.ostan-kd.ir/en/default.aspx> (en langue anglaise) « La Fête du feu », film d'Asghar Farhadi (Iran, 2006)