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KIRKOUK : BLOCAGE SUR LES FUTURES ÉLECTIONS

Le président du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, recevant le 6 septembre le nouvel représentant des Nations Unies en Irak, Ad Melkert, accompagné d'une délégation du bureau des Nations Unies de Bagdad, a réitéré son refus de toute alternative à l'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne pour résoudre le problème de Kirkouk : « Nous apprécions le rôle des Nations Unies dans cette question et espérons que ses efforts avec toutes les parties aboutiront à une solution. Nous insistons sur le fait que cette résolution doit se faire en accord avec l'article 140 de la Constitution car nous ne voulons pas que notre

peuple passe à nouveau par des épreuves et des tragédies. Nous sommes prêts à coopérer avec les Nations Unies, mais ce problème concerne une nation toute entière et quoiqu'il arrive nous ne ferons aucune concession là-dessus... »

Le président a ajouté que les Kurdes avaient déjà fait preuve d'une « grande flexibilité » au sujet de l'article 58 de la Loi d'Administration provisoire et de l'article 140 lui-même.

L'article 58 de la Loi d'Administration provisoire avait été en effet adopté par toutes les parties après de longues négociations entre Arabes et Kurdes, et l'administration Bremer, au sujet de Kirkouk

et des districts kurdes détachés par l'ancien régime des autres gouvernorats du Kurdistan. Il énonçait que : « Le gouvernement intérimaire, et tout spécialement la Commission des Réclamations sur la Propriété et les autres corps de l'État concerné, doivent prendre des mesures pour remédier à l'injustice causée par les pratiques du régime précédent, celles qui visaient à altérer le caractère ethnique de certaines régions, y compris Kirkouk, par la déportation et l'expulsion des individus de leurs lieux de résidence, pratiques qui avaient pour but de produire des migrations forcées, dans et à l'extérieur de la zone, d'y installer des étrangers à la région, en privant les habitants

d'y travailler et les obligeant à modifier leur nationalité. »

Les mesures proposées par l'article 58 étaient de faciliter le retour chez eux des colons installés dans Kirkouk après compensation financière et faciliter leur recherche d'emploi, tout en réintégrant dans leurs anciens postes les fonctionnaires kurdes qui avaient été mutés dans le sud irakien. Il prévoyait aussi de permettre à chaque habitant de Kirkouk de choisir librement son appartenance ethnique, puisque l'ancien régime avait contraint les habitants de Kirkouk à se déclarer arabes pour ne pas être déportés.

La question des limites géographiques du Kurdistan devait être résolue soit par un « comité d'arbitrage neutre » nommé par le Conseil de présidence, soit par le Secrétaire général de l'ONU.

Mais ces dispositions n'ont jamais été appliquées, tant en raison du chaos sécuritaire et politique dans lequel a plongé l'Irak sous l'administration Bremer que d'une certaine inertie politique de la part du gouvernement central. Aussi la constitution irakienne de 2005 avait tenté une autre solution en proposant un référendum dans les zones à majorité kurde hors Région kurde, après un recensement de la population revenue depuis 2003 dans leurs villes d'origine. Là encore, le recensement n'a pas été mis en place et la solution du référendum, toujours

fermement soutenue par les Kurdes, rencontre à la fois l'opposition du gouvernement irakien, de la Turquie, ainsi que des États-Unis et de l'ONU qui ne cesse de présenter des plans alternatifs, tout aussi peu applicables.

En attendant, la question de Kirkouk bloque l'Irak dans toutes ses institutions électorales, et même économiques, puisque le recensement de la population irakienne, qui n'a pas été fait depuis les années 60 et devait avoir lieu en octobre prochain, a été reporté en octobre 2010, par décision du cabinet du Premier Ministre irakien. En effet, un tel recensement à Kirkouk, entérinerait la supériorité démographique des Kurdes et mettrait définitivement à mal les chiffres avancés par le Front turkmène (soutenu par Ankara) sur les « millions de Turkmènes » qui, selon lui, composent la population de Kirkouk. Cela donnerait aussi une première base de données pour déterminer l'historique de la population actuelle de Kirkouk (qui a été déporté, qui vient d'une installation de colons, etc.). Ce recensement cependant ne peut être reporté indéfiniment, d'autant qu'il déterminera aussi la répartition du budget alloué par Bagdad à chaque province. En effet, l'accord sur la gestion des revenus pétroliers et des ressources naturelles dans chaque province prévoit que la totalité du budget aille au gouvernement central qui a à charge de le redistribuer équitablement dans les régions irakiennes,

selon leur démographie et leurs besoins économiques. Il est à noter que la décision de ce report provient essentiellement de Maliki et de son cabinet, à l'exception du ministre de la Planification qui y était opposé, ainsi que le Parlement irakien et même l'ONU.

Le 18 septembre, c'était au tour du Vice-président des États-Unis, Joe Biden, de rencontrer Massoud Barzani pour discuter des relations entre Erbil et Bagdad, et tout particulièrement de l'article 140, en plus de la conflictuelle loi sur les hydrocarbures et d'éventuels amendements de la Constitution irakienne. Mais pour une fois, Américains et Kurdes étaient d'accord sur le maintien indispensable des élections irakiennes pour janvier 2010.

Recevant un peu plus tard Christopher Hill, l'ambassadeur des États-Unis en Irak, la question des futures élections législatives en Irak, prévues pour janvier 2010 a de nouveau été abordée, d'autant plus que là encore Kirkouk risque de bloquer toute nouvelle loi électorale. Mais en vue du prochain retrait américain d'Irak prévu pour 2011, la question d'une force de sécurité tripartite, kurde, irakienne et américaine a de nouveau été abordée. Cela pourrait s'appliquer tout aussi bien à Kirkouk qu'à Mossoul, voire les zones de la Diyala où Peshmergas et armée irakienne avaient frôlé l'affrontement en 2008.

IRAN :

MYSTÉRIEUX ASSASSINATS POLITIQUES À SANANDADJ

Plusieurs assassinats visant des personnalités religieuses et politiques ont semé un certain trouble à Sanandadj, capitale de la province du Koudestan en Iran.

Le 17 septembre, Mamosta

Sheikholeslam, qui représentait la province du Kurdistan à l'Assemblée des Experts, a été tué de deux coups de revolver, par un tireur non identifié, dans une mosquée de Sanandadj. Quelques jours auparavant, un autre imam de la ville, Ali Borhan Mamoste, partisan du président iranien,

avait été tué de la même façon, cette fois par trois tireurs, toujours inconnus. Enfin, deux juges locaux ont échappé à des tentatives d'assassinats similaires.

L'agence gouvernementale ISNA a accusé immédiatement le PJAK, la branche iranienne du PKK, qui

n'a pourtant pas revendiqué l'action, pas plus qu'aucune autre organisation kurde, et qui n'est pas coutumier de ce genre d'action sur des fonctionnaires ou des religieux, ses attaques visant surtout les militaires et les forces de sécurité. Par ailleurs, les victimes n'étaient pas des personnalités politiques de premier plan, ni très dangereuses pour les activistes kurdes. Aussi, la plupart des mouvements politiques kurdes ont condamné ces assassinats.

Enfin, tout en accusant les partis clandestins kurdes ainsi que des « agents étrangers », le gouvernement a relié également ces actions à des groupes sunnites proches d'al-Qaeda, et a mené une série de coups de filet contre des milieux sunnites « extrémistes », à l'issue desquels 4 personnes ont été tuées et 14 arrêtées.

Mais des partis kurdes, comme le

Parti démocratique du Kurdistan, dénonce une série d'arrestations arbitraires au Kurdistan et alerte sur la volonté du régime d'exécuter des prisonniers politiques kurdes en instance de jugement.

Pour Loghman H. Ahmedi, le représentant du PDK-Iran pour le Royaume-Uni, al-Qaeda est peut-être derrière ces assassinats, mais certainement pas les mouvements kurdes qui les ont largement condamnés. Quant aux réseaux d'al-Qaeda qui opéreraient en Iran, Loqman H. Amedi affirme qu'un bon nombre de ces groupes sont en fait soutenus, financés et parfois même mis en place par l'Iran lui-même, afin d'être utilisés contre les mouvements kurdes au Kurdistan, en Irak comme en Iran.

Il est vrai qu'entre les années 1990 et jusqu'en 2003, ces groupes sunnites extrémistes contrôlaient de larges territoires dans les districts

de Halabja et Penjwin, au Kurdistan d'Irak, jusqu'à ce qu'une opération conjointe des forces américaines spéciales et des Peshmergas « nettoient » ces bastions islamistes et les refoulent en Iran.

Selon le représentant du PDK-Iran à Londres, après leur repli en Iran, ces groupes auraient été réorganisés avec le soutien de l'Iran et réinstallés dans des villes kurdes comme Mariwan, Sanandadj et Paveh, et leur cible a jusque là toujours été les militants kurdes laïques et non le régime chiite. Ces récents assassinats, tous dirigés contre des figures kurdes travaillant officiellement pour le gouvernement, mais sans grande envergure politique, pourraient servir de prétexte à des exécutions massives de détenus kurdes et un alourdissement de la répression contre les mouvements kurdes ou les associations de défense des droits de l'homme.

TURQUIE : APPELS À LA PAIX ET POURSUITE DES COMBATS



lors que durant l'été, les annonces de « plans de paix » s'étaient succédés, tant de la part du gouvernement turc que du PKK, pour finalement n'aboutir qu'à de vagues propositions ou ébauches de règlement de la question kurde, le mois de septembre a été plutôt fluctuant, à l'image de ces perspectives politiques incertaines, les gestes de détentes alternant avec la poursuite des violences armées dans les régions kurdes, malgré la « trêve du Ramadan » décidée jusqu'au 22 septembre par le PKK.

C'est également sous le signe de la paix qu'a fait campagne le DTP, dès le 1^{er} septembre, pour sa « Journée de la Paix », s'inspirant initialement de la Journée internationale de la Paix instaurée par les Nations Unies le 21 septembre.

Plusieurs milliers de Kurdes ont ainsi manifesté à Diyarbakir en scandant « oui à une paix honorable ».

Mais le 25 septembre, c'est un autre slogan qui était lancé, à l'occasion d'une autre manifestation, organisée dans la même ville, survenant après plusieurs accrochages sanglants entre l'armée et le PKK : « Les martyrs ne meurent jamais ».

Malgré les annonces de « plan de paix » des uns et des autres et la « trêve du Ramadan », ce mois-ci a été de fait assez meurtrier, avec 9 soldats turcs tués, de source militaire, et treize autres blessés. Le 8 septembre, des affrontements dans la ville d'Eruh, province de Siirt, ont en effet opposé le PKK à des soldats, tuant cinq Turcs et en blessant quatre autres, selon une

source anonyme s'adressant à l'AFP. Le même jour, à Cukurca, province de Hakkari, deux autres soldats étaient tués et un blessé.

Le lendemain, 9 septembre, une mine posée par le PKK, selon l'armée, faisait deux victimes parmi les soldats turcs et huit blessés près de Baskale, province de Van.

Le 13 septembre, toujours à Cukurca, l'armée annonçait la mort de trois combattants du PKK alors que la veille un civil avait été tué et un autre blessé par l'explosion d'une mine à Kulp, près de Diyarbakir.

Enfin, le 18 septembre, l'armée turque a demandé officiellement au Parlement d'Ankara de renouveler son autorisation d'effectuer des opérations au Kurdistan d'Irak pour y pourchasser le

PKK, autorisation qui doit expirer le 17 octobre prochain. Cette autorisation, votée en 2007, avait été renouvelée en 2008. Après les annonces de réformes visant à résoudre le conflit kurde, certaines voix dans la presse turque avaient émis l'hypothèse que, cette fois-ci, le feu vert du parlement, en majorité AKP, n'était pas forcément acquis, d'autant plus qu'une détente incontestable a contribué à assouplir la position de la Turquie sur le statut du Kurdistan d'Irak. Mais le Premier Ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a déclaré finalement, le 27 septembre, de New York, alors qu'il participait à l'assemblée générale

de l'ONU, qu'il y était favorable : « Nous en parlerons lors d'un conseil des ministres et enverrons (la demande) immédiatement au parlement. »

3 jours plus tard, le général Ilker Basbug, chef de l'état-major, alors en déplacement dans la province de Mardin, a fait, depuis le poste militaire de Sinirtepe, une déclaration ambiguë, dans laquelle il appelait à la fois le PKK à se rendre, avec des accents relativement pacifistes, « il n'y a aucune autre solution. On ne peut parvenir à rien avec les armes et le sang », tout en indiquant aussitôt avoir l'intention de lutter « jusqu'au bout pour mettre fin au

terrorisme ». Sur la question de la reddition et de l'amnistie, Ilker Basbug a cité des chiffres émanant du ministère de la Justice, affirmant que sur 870 membres du PKK qui s'étaient rendus, en vertu de dispositions déjà existantes, 638 avaient été libérés entre 2005 et 2008, car n'ayant pas pris les armes contre les forces de sécurité. Reprenant la version officielle de l'AKP selon laquelle le problème kurde en Turquie est essentiellement économique, le général a pointé le chômage dans les régions kurdes et l'analphabétisme (20% au Kurdistan de Turquie contre 7% dans les régions de l'Ouest).

IRAK : UN FOSSÉ LINGUISTIQUE SE CREUSE ENTRE KURDES ET ARABES

Un rapport de l'Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) se penche sur les questions linguistiques au Kurdistan et en Irak comme source ou facteur ou facteur aggravant de tension et d'instabilité. Cette étude interrogeant des journalistes ou des hommes politiques, ou bien des gens de la rue, tant arabes que kurdes, à la fois en Irak et dans la Région du Kurdistan, montre que les deux populations tendent à ignorer de plus en plus la langue de l'autre et que les cours d'arabe ou de kurde sont délaissés de part et d'autre, au profit d'autres langues étrangères. Le rapport conclut à un nombre infime de jeunes Arabes sachant le kurde et, dans la population kurde, un nombre de plus en plus grandissant au fur et à mesure que les générations rajeunissent, de Kurdes ne parlant pas l'arabe, contrairement aux générations plus âgées qui, sous l'ancien régime avaient été scolarisés avec l'arabe comme langue principale, même si le kurde était aussi enseigné. Depuis 1991, dans la Région du Kurdistan, l'apprentissage de l'arabe n'a cessé de décliner, au

profit de l'anglais. Le rapport mentionne ainsi qu'au-delà de 35 ans, beaucoup de Kurdes ne maîtrisent plus l'arabe.

Abdullah Qirgaiy, un écrivain kurde âgé de soixante ans, marié à une Arabe, explique que le service militaire et les mariages mixtes favorisaient le bilinguisme, plus encore qu'une scolarisation pas toujours suivie en temps de conflit. Lui-même indique avoir appris l'arabe durant son service militaire. Selon lui, le désintérêt des Kurdes pour la langue arabe s'est manifesté dès 1991, quand 3 provinces kurdes sont devenues zones autonomes et n'ont plus eu de relations avec Bagdad : «Après le Soulèvement de 1991, les Kurdes se sont considérés comme indépendants. Ils ne se sont plus sentis obligés d'apprendre l'arabe et n'ont fait aucun effort pour le maîtriser. »

Naznaz Mohammed, qui dirige la commission de l'enseignement supérieur au parlement d'Erbil, décrit la période d'autonomie du Kurdistan irakien après 1991, comme une expérience pour renforcer le poids de la langue kurde. Elle reconnaît aussi la baisse du

niveau d'études dans les universités, qui affecte aussi le département d'arabe, si bien que les diplômés de langue arabe ne sont pas toujours à même de le parler couramment. Selon elle, cette baisse de niveau s'explique par la démocratisation de l'enseignement supérieur au Kurdistan, qui n'est plus réservé de facto aux couches sociales supérieures. Avant le soulèvement la plupart des Kurdes qui accédaient à l'enseignement supérieur venaient ainsi de familles aisées, pour la plupart. «Après le soulèvement, les portes ont été largement ouvertes et il y a eu un afflux dans les écoles. La qualité de l'enseignement a chuté.» Naznaz Mohammed précise que le gouvernement a l'intention de mettre à jour les programmes scolaires, ainsi que de construire plus d'écoles et d'améliorer la formation des enseignants.

Le Dr Othman Amin Salih, un professeur assistant du département d'arabe de l'université de Salahaddin à Erbil, confirme que beaucoup de diplômés d'arabe ne le parlent pas couramment. À côté des tensions politiques, il pointe

aussi des programmes d'apprentissages dépassés, qui ne permettent pas aux étudiants de connaître bien l'arabe dialectal.

Mais pour Aso Hardi, rédacteur du journal kurde *Hawlati*, pourtant peu suspect d'indulgence envers le gouvernement kurde, il est injuste de reporter toute la faute sur le système éducatif. Selon lui, la cause en est surtout l'indifférence ou le rejet des Kurdes envers la langue arabe, en rappelant que les générations plus âgées avaient eu affaire à ces mêmes manuels et méthodes et parlaient couramment l'arabe. *"La nouvelle génération ne ressent pas le besoin d'apprendre l'arabe, cela n'a rien à voir avec les programmes."*

Dilshad Abdulrahman, le ministre de l'Éducation au Kurdistan assure que de nouveaux programmes sont à l'étude, même si aucune date n'est donnée pour leur instauration dans les écoles : *"Le plan sera appliqué dans les années à venir."* Mais pour lui aussi, l'insuffisance des programmes n'est pas non plus fondamentalement en cause : *"Apprendre une langue ne dépend pas uniquement de l'enseignement. Avant le Soulèvement, les émissions de télévision et de radio étaient principalement en arabe, aussi le public devait l'apprendre pour les comprendre."*

Cependant, au Kurdistan, l'afflux des réfugiés venus d'Irak, avec une majorité de chrétiens ou d'autres minorités religieuses comme les Mandéens, ou bien de Kurdes immigrés de longue date, et ne parlant plus leur langue, mais uniquement l'arabe, a redopé légèrement l'ouverture de cours en arabe. Actuellement, sur un total de 21 635 écoles dans la Région du Kurdistan, 44 d'entre elles fournissent un enseignement en langue arabe.

Mais en-dehors des réfugiés, la plupart des Kurdes choisissent

une langue occidentale comme seconde langue. Les cours privés prolifèrent et l'anglais est évidemment la langue la plus populaire. Un libraire d'Erbil indique ainsi que les ventes de livres en arabe baissent, la clientèle étant invariablement au-dessus de 40 ans : *"Je vends maintenant plus de dictionnaires d'anglais que d'arabe."*

L'institut OSA, une école de langues fondée à Erbil en 1992, a 240 étudiants dans ses classes d'anglais contre 40 pour l'arabe. Le succès de l'anglais est lié à l'espoir d'accéder à des emplois lucratifs, par exemple dans les domaines de l'informatique ou des télécommunications. *"La technologie européenne de pointe propage son vocabulaire"*, confirme Hakim Kaka Wais, un écrivain et linguiste que le déclin de l'arabe au Kurdistan ne semble guère affecter : *"Il est normal que les jeunes Kurdes ne parlent plus l'arabe. Ils vivent dans un pays différent. Il n'est pas obligatoire d'apprendre une autre langue si vous n'en avez pas envie."*

Mais selon Aso Hardi, la prochaine génération de politiciens kurdes pourra être défavorisée si elle ignore l'arabe : *"Politiquement, il est dangereux pour un officiel de ne pouvoir parler ou argumenter en arabe s'il est au milieu d'Arabes. Un officiel kurde connaissant bien l'arabe est dix fois plus avantagé qu'un autre ne connaissant pas cette langue."*

Pour Fareed Asasard, qui dirige le Kurdistan Centre for Strategic Studies, les futures leaders politiques de la Région du Kurdistan ont intérêt à bien maîtriser l'arabe s'ils veulent défendre les intérêts des Kurdes à Bagdad. Actuellement, le président irakien, le ministre des Affaires étrangères d'Irak, et l'ancien Vice-Premier Ministre sont des Kurdes parlant couramment arabe. Quant au bloc parlementaire kurde à Bagdad, il s'est fait une réputation de "faiseur de roi" dominant par

son unité les coalitions arabes très divisées.

À l'inverse, l'indifférence des Arabes pour la langue kurde est aussi notable, comme le reconnaît Dhia Al-Shakarchi, un politicien chiite indépendant, pour qui les Arabes devraient prendre eux-mêmes l'initiative de *"rassurer les Kurdes sur leur statut de partenaires réels et égaux dans le nouvel Irak"*, en tant que groupe ethnique majoritaire. *"Il est dommage que si peu d'Arabes irakiens ont envie d'apprendre le kurde, et cela résulte de deux politiques erronées, à la fois celle du gouvernement fédéral et celle des autorités kurdes."*

Dans tout le pays, sur les routes et les bâtiments officiels, les panneaux et la signalisation sont soit en arabe soit en kurde, rarement dans les deux langues, alors que l'anglais est plus souvent adopté sur les annonces bilingues. Narmin Othman, ministre de l'Environnement irakien, elle-même kurde, se dit attristée de voir que les panneaux de signalisation en kurde ne se voient pas ailleurs que dans la Région du Kurdistan. Utiliser le kurde dans la signalisation à Bagdad l'aiderait, selon la ministre, à ne pas se sentir une *"citoyenne de seconde classe"*. De même, les touristes venant d'Irak pour visiter la Région du Kurdistan se plaignent que peu de gens, sur place, hormis les réfugiés, peuvent dialoguer en arabe.

La majorité des Kurdes vivant à Bagdad parlent couramment l'arabe et s'expriment uniquement en cette langue avec leurs amis arabes. Nazdar Muhammad, une Kurde de Kirkouk qui a épousé un Arabe ne parle plus sa langue qu'avec sa mère et n'a pas jugé utile de l'apprendre à ses enfants : *"Je ne vois pas de raisons d'apprendre à mes enfants une langue qu'aucun de leurs camarades n'utilisera à l'école ou nulle part ailleurs."*

L'histoire du Kurdistan est également ignorée dans les manuels scolaires d'Irak et les cours de kurde dans les écoles arabes sont quasi-absents, car facultatifs, alors que le gouvernement central insiste sur l'importance d'apprendre l'arabe aux étudiants kurdes. Il est à noter que l'arabe est tout aussi facultatif dans les programmes scolaires de la Région du Kurdistan.

Mais Hussein Jaff, le directeur général du département de kurde au ministère de l'éducation irakien, nie tout ostracisme de la langue kurde dans l'enseignement irakien et indique que de plus en plus de professeurs de kurde sont nommés dans les écoles supérieures de Bagdad et des autres provinces.

Traditionnellement, jusqu'ici, les seuls Arabes à apprendre le kurde étaient ceux qui vivaient au contact des Kurdes, dans des régions mixtes, comme Kirkouk, par exemple, où la connaissance du kurde était essentielle pour commercer, ou bien à Sadriyah, un district de Bagdad où vivent beaucoup de Kurdes, même si, selon Najah Salman, un résident de Sadriyah, ses voisins arabes se limitaient à apprendre quelques mots de kurde, "pour montrer leur

amitié envers leurs voisins et qu'ils se sentent bienvenus à Bagdad."

Ali Abd al-Sada, un journaliste de Bagdad a appris le kurde lors d'un séjour de deux années au Kurdistan. Selon lui, la méconnaissance de la langue kurde par les Arabes va de pair avec une ignorance de la culture kurde : "Apprendre le kurde, c'est faire de la diversité culturelle de l'Irak quelque chose de plus qu'un slogan, mais une expérience vivante."

Pour Saad Sallum, un analyste politique, le fossé entre Arabes et Kurdes ne pourra être comblé que si les deux peuples apprennent mutuellement leurs langues. Selon lui, les solutions politiques adoptées par le gouvernement central au sujet du bilinguisme ne sont, pour le moment, que des mesures culturelles décoratives.

Certains s'inquiètent ainsi des sources de conflits croissants entre Kurdes et Arabes, renforcés par une incompréhension mutuelles. Ainsi, Mufid Al-Jezairy, un député arabe souligne qu'"une ignorance linguistique mutuelle peut sérieusement saper tout effort de bâtir des relations solides entre les deux groupes ethniques, alors qu'en apprenant la langue des uns et des autres, les Arabes et les Kurdes peu-

vent améliorer leurs relations."

La question des langues s'est d'ailleurs envenimée avec le conflit qui oppose Kurdes et Arabes au sujet des districts kurdes hors de la Région du Kurdistan, qui doivent faire l'objet d'un référendum selon l'article 140 de la constitution irakienne. Ainsi, visitant récemment la ville de Bashiqaq, dans la province de Ninive, une ville de 5 000 habitants peuplée de chaldéens de langue syriaque et de Kurdes, yézidis et musulmans, Khasro Goran, un officiel kurde, ancien vice-gouverneur de Ninive, a insisté sur la nécessité d'enseigner le kurde dans ces districts où Saddam en avait interdit l'enseignement, tout comme celui du syriaque : "Les Kurdes, ou toute autre nation, ne doivent pas oublier leur langue maternelle. La plupart des Kurdes [de Bashiqaq] ne parlent pas kurde." Critiqué aussitôt par des leaders sunnites arabes de Mossoul, qui l'ont accusé de vouloir "imposer le kurde à des minorités non kurdes", Khasri Goran a nié toute arrière-pensée politique en souhaitant instaurer des cours de kurde dans les écoles, et a indiqué souhaiter aussi que les Kurdes apprennent l'arabe. "Les tensions entre les deux nations n'ont rien à voir avec l'éducation."

Un plan pour les Kurdes

Par Joséphine Dedet
Jeune Afrique

Est-ce la fin d'un conflit vieux de vingt-cinq ans? Le gouvernement s'y emploie, l'armée renâcle et les ultranationalistes crient à la trahison.

Le 9 août à Simak et près de Hakkari (Sud-Est anatolien), une centaine de mères s'étreignent en pleurant, unies dans la douleur pour réclamer la paix. Elles ont perdu un fils dans cette sale guerre qui, entre 1984 et 1999, a fait plus de 36000 morts: 5000 militaires turcs et au moins 30000 Kurdes, combattants du PKK ou victimes collatérales de la haine. Malgré l'arrestation du leader séparatiste Abdullah Öcalan, en 1999, attentats et

embuscades se sont poursuivis sans qu'aucune solution n'ait été apportée pour garantir de véritables droits politiques à cette minorité de 12 à 15 millions de personnes.

L'annonce, le 29 juillet, d'un plan gouvernemental pour régler la « question kurde » – jusqu'ici qualifiée de « terroriste » – a fait naître l'espoir. Le 1er août, une table ronde a réuni des intellectuels et des responsables politiques kurdes. Le 5, le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan a rencontré Ahmet Türk, le président du DTP – une première depuis l'entrée de ce parti kurde au Parlement, en 2007. L'objectif est d'exclure Öcalan du processus. Considéré comme un « tueur d'enfants » par une majorité de Turcs, ce dernier a en

effet promis depuis sa prison, où il purge une peine de réclusion à perpétuité, de divulguer son propre plan le 15 août, à l'occasion du 25e anniversaire du déclenchement de la lutte armée.

Fort de son rapprochement spectaculaire avec les Kurdes d'Irak, le gouvernement tente de gagner à sa cause ceux de Turquie, séduits par son islamisme conservatisme, et entend poursuivre les réformes démocratiques prônées par l'Union européenne. Il en va de sa survie.

La partie est serrée. Déjà, les partis d'opposition ultranationalistes, mais aussi socialistes, crient à la trahison. Et l'armée, qui instrumentalise le conflit pour asseoir sa domination politique et dont certaines unités sont impliquées dans la

disparition non élucidée de plusieurs centaines de personnes dans le Sud-Est, pose ses conditions. Avec son aval, le gouvernement pourrait amnistier les repentis qui acceptent de coopérer avec les forces de sécurité et rendre aux milliers de Kurdes réfugiés en Europe la nationalité dont ils ont été déchus en raison de leurs liens avec le PKK, à condition qu'ils n'aient pas de sang sur les mains.

Il pourrait aussi libéraliser l'usage et l'apprentissage de la langue kurde, restituer leurs noms d'origine à des lieux qui avaient été « turquisés » et investir 12 milliards de dollars sur cinq ans dans la région pour y faire reculer la pauvreté et le chômage (60 % à Diyarbakir, la grande ville du Sud-Est), qui font le lit du séparatisme.

Turquie : pourquoi veulent-ils la guerre ?



Ahmet Altan
Taraflar

J'ai devant mes yeux des photos de cercueils enveloppés de drapeaux avec des femmes en pleurs et des hommes abattus. Les morts sont de jeunes hommes qui étaient dans la force de l'âge. Pourquoi tout ce malheur ? Fallait-il vraiment que ces enfants meurent ?

Le gouvernement semble déterminé à trouver une issue à la question kurde. Mais au-delà de cette détermination, nous devinons autre chose, des craintes. Ils ont sûrement peur des réactions mais aussi de perdre des voix. Le ministre de l'intérieur dit « qu'il faut nous libérer du syndrome de la partition (du pays) ». Le MHP, toujours plus violemment affirme que la « paix » divisera le pays. Très difficile à comprendre, ce raisonnement. Selon eux, la guerre ne divise pas le pays, mais la paix oui !! Pourquoi voulez-vous qu'un pays qui ne s'est pas divisé en temps de guerre le soit en temps de paix ? La paix serait-elle plus provocatrice que la guerre. Je n'arrive pas à comprendre le MHP. Au fond, si le CHP soutenait la « paix », on comprendrait beaucoup mieux ce non-sens. Mais lorsqu'on voit que le CHP soutient la «



guerre », la marge de manœuvre du gouvernement se rétrécit considérablement.

Même avec les peurs, nous aurons la paix. D'ailleurs, le gouvernement dit qu'il ne veut pas faire marche arrière et même s'il le faisait, il le paierait très cher politiquement. La Turquie avance vers la paix, ni le MHP et ni le CHP ne l'empêcheront. Mais malheureusement, ils peuvent être encore responsables de la mort d'autres enfants. Ils le sont d'ailleurs, à cause de leur « obstination ». Demandons-leur alors : « Si vous ne voulez pas la paix, que voulez-vous ? ». Selon moi, ces deux partis, souhaitent que « le PKK se rende », c'est leur seule solution à eux. Posons-leur alors la seconde question : « Pourquoi voulez-vous que le PKK se rende maintenant alors qu'il ne l'a pas fait jusqu'à maintenant ? ».

Il n'y aura pas de vainqueur dans cette guerre, on l'a vu au cours de ces 25 années : vous ne pouvez pas éliminer le PKK par les armes et le PKK ne pourra pas dicter ses conditions par les armes. Pensez-vous que c'est dans l'intérêt des citoyens de ce pays

de perpétuer cette guerre que personne ne gagnera ? Les vraies questions à poser au MHP et au CHP sont les suivantes : « Que proposez-vous pour résoudre la question kurde ? ». Le PKK n'est pas la question kurde. La question kurde existait bien avant l'apparition du PKK. Ce n'est pas le PKK qui a créé la question kurde, c'est la question kurde qui a créé le PKK. Même si vous éliminez complètement le PKK, la question kurde sera toujours là.

Vous avez actuellement des millions de gens qui sont mécontents et vous êtes dans l'obligation de les écouter et de les aider. C'est le rôle des politiques. Que proposent le MHP et le CHP ? Allez-vous tuer ces millions de Kurdes qui souhaitent apprendre leur langue maternelle et qui réclament l'égalité comme le dit la Constitution. N'y a-t-il vraiment pas d'autres solutions que les armes ? La Turquie doit résoudre cette question avec équité et justice. Elle doit donner des droits égaux à tous ses citoyens. Si vous repoussez cela, chaque jour des enfants turcs et kurdes mourront encore. Le MHP et le CHP en seront les principaux responsables. Devons-nous encore nous entre-tuer longtemps à cause de ces deux vieux leaders égoïstes. Si les partisans du MHP et du CHP se souciaient un peu de ces pauvres enfants morts et s'ils pensaient aux autres qui vont mourir à cause de l'entêtement de leurs leaders, je ne pense pas qu'ils continueraient à les soutenir.

Ce sont des êtres humains qui sont dans ces cercueils, tous ceux qui font obstacles à la paix devront les porter toute leur vie sur leur dos. Le voulez-vous ?

A la frontière turque, l'Iran traque les contrebandiers

Des caravanes font entrer illégalement en territoire iranien alcool et biens de consommation ; dans l'autre sens, le trafic de gasoil prospère

Reportage

Yüksekova
(Turquie)
Envoyé spécial

Il n'y a qu'une seule station-service à Yüksekova et pourtant les clients y sont rares. A chaque carrefour de cette bourgade poussiéreuse – la dernière étape turque sur la route de l'Iran – des enfants surgissent devant les voitures, le pouce levé, un jerricane à la main. L'essence de contrebande remplit les réservoirs des poids lourds, des bus, et même des « véhicules militaires », dit en souriant l'un de ces vendeurs à la sauvette.

Le trafic de carburant entre l'Iran et la Turquie se fait à dos d'âne et de mule. La nuit tombée, dans les villages frontaliers, des caravanes lourdement chargées s'ébranlent et se glissent d'un pas silencieux à travers les montagnes de cette région kurde. Un même convoi peut transporter jusqu'à 20 tonnes d'essence. Ce commerce rapporte à lui seul près de 5 milliards de dollars (3,4 milliards d'euros) par an, selon İrfan Sari, le président de la chambre de commerce d'Yüksekova. « Dans chaque famille, il y a des contrebandiers », explique-t-il.

Mais les animaux ne transportent pas que du gasoil. Yüksekova est surtout connue pour être une plaque tournante de l'héroïne en provenance d'Afghanistan et à destination de l'Europe. La « poudre » emprunte les sentiers de contrebande traditionnels. Dans l'autre sens, les caravanes font entrer illégalement en Iran des milliers de bouteilles d'alcool, de films pornographiques et de tubes de rouge à lèvres. « Nous acheminons aussi du thé, des moutons et, en ce moment, des jeans et des lunettes de soleil, précise un contrebandier de Yüksekova. C'est une tradition mais surtout un besoin économique. Il n'y a pas



d'autre travail dans cette région. » Selon le gouvernorat de Van, la grande ville voisine, 1,5 tonne d'héroïne, 500 kg de thé, 750 000 paquets de cigarettes et 1 million de tonnes d'essence ont été saisis en un an, dans les environs de la frontière.

Le hameau isolé de Kandalak, perdu au bout d'un sentier rocailleux, est aux avant-postes de ce trafic. Des cadavres de mules mitraillées par les soldats iraniens sont dispersés le long du

A Kandalak, des cadavres de mules mitraillées par les soldats iraniens sont dispersés le long de la frontière

ruisseau qui sert de frontière. Sur l'autre rive, c'est l'Iran. « Il ne faut pas rester, ils peuvent tirer de là-haut », prévient un apiculteur. Les maisons sont à 200 mètres à peine d'un petit bastion tenu par les gardiens de la révolution iraniens.

Depuis quelques mois, les convois passent au compte-gouttes. L'Iran fait la chasse aux contrebandiers kurdes dans ces montagnes escarpées. Une vingtaine de personnes auraient été abattues cet été. Les autorités iraniennes

ont même interdit les chevaux dans les villages frontaliers. A Kandalak, du côté turc, « on n'ose plus aller à la rivière », se plaint Yosevi Firat, un chef de clan.

A plusieurs reprises, les soldats iraniens ont pris les villageois pour cible, faisant trois morts. « En juillet, nous travaillions dans le champ quand ils nous ont tirés dessus », raconte Siyament Atilla. Le jeune homme a reçu une balle dans le dos et, depuis, il reste cloué sur le canapé du salon familial. « Les Iraniens nous ont accusés de soutenir la guérilla kurde », ajoute-t-il.

Pour le village, ce coup de force est le signe d'une pression accrue de Téhéran sur les rebelles kurdes du Pejak (Parti pour une vie libre au Kurdistan), le semblable iranien du PKK. Les rebelles kurdes qui se déplacent dans ces montagnes prélèvent généralement une taxe sur les convois de mules pour financer leurs activités. A l'occasion ils savent trouver refuge dans ces villages reculés. Dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, de violents combats opposent régulièrement les forces iraniennes aux combattants du Pejak – vingt-six membres de la guérilla auraient été tués lors d'une attaque par l'armée, le 23 août.

La Turquie, elle aussi, a multiplié les opérations, parfois menées conjointement avec l'Iran, racontent les habitants de la région. Ankara cherche également à démanteler certains groupes mafieux locaux qui prospèrent depuis des années grâce au commerce illégal avec la bienveillance des forces de sécurité.

Début août, les militaires turcs ont détruit 50 tonnes de cannabis cultivés à flanc de montagne, à la frontière iranienne, dans la région de Baskale. En mai, 74 chevaux ont été saisis avec leur cargaison : 15 tonnes de diesel. Et, en juillet, le colonel de la garnison de Cukurca, suspecté de tremper dans le trafic, a été arrêté. ■

Guillaume Perrier



Kurdistan Region Presidency

President Barzani meets UN Iraq Envoy, rejects alternatives to Article-140

september 2, 2009

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) –

Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani received Mr. Ad Melkert, the new UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to Iraq and an accompanying delegation from the UN Baghdad office.

Mr. Melkert said that he is here in the Kurdistan Region to see first-hand the political challenges facing the Kurdistan Region and Iraq in general, and to explore ways for economic and humanitarian cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

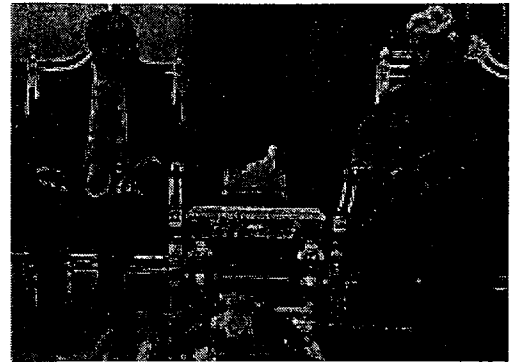
Regarding UN cooperation with both the Governments of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, he stated, "We want to advance cooperation with both the Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Governments. We would like to listen to your [President Barzani's] suggestions and guidance."

The UN official also congratulated President Barzani for his re-election as President of the Kurdistan Region, adding that he closely followed July's successful presidential and parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region.

President Barzani expressed some remarks about UN operations in the country and called for more UN involvement in the Kurdistan Region.

A main item of the meeting was the issue of the so-called disputed areas and the Iraqi Constitution Article-140 which sets out a road map for the resolution of the status of these areas.

President Barzani was adamant that only the implementation of Article-140 will lead to the resolution of the status of these areas. He said, "We



appreciate the role of the UN on this issue and hope that the UN works with all sides to find a resolution. We insist on the resolution of this issue in accordance with the implementation of Article-140 of the Constitution because we do not want to see our people go through hardships and tragedies again. We are prepared to cooperate with the UN, but this issue concerns a whole nation and we will not make any concessions on this issue in anyway whatsoever."

The President added: "I believe in this issue. I once defended this issue in battle and now I will defend it in peacetime. We showed great flexibility on Article 58 of the Transitional Law of Administration (TAL) of the State of Iraq and on Article-140 of the Constitution. Evading the implementation of this article will only complicate the issue further. If the UN is for an alternative to Article-140, then there will be no progress on this issue."

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune SEPTEMBER 1, 2009

Powerful Shiite group in Iraq moves quickly to replace leader

BAGHDAD

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

One of Iraq's leading Shiite political parties moved quickly Monday to fill the vacuum left by the death of its influential leader last week, nominating his son to take over a party now poised to challenge Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki in national elections next year.

Ammar al-Hakim, the scion of a respected political and religious family that fought Saddam Hussein's regime from exile and emerged as a political force after its fall, was widely expected to take over the party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq.

His father, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who died in Tehran last week, even made it a condition of his will, heading off any potential leadership challenges. The party's television network announced his nomination, and a spokesman said it would be ratified by the party's leadership Tuesday. Mr. Hakim's ascension came as Iraq and Syria intensified their clash over claims that the catastrophic attack on two government ministries in Baghdad on Aug. 19 were organized by



KARIM KADIM/AP

Ammar al-Hakim, above, will take over from his father, who died last week.

Iraqis living in Syria.

Iraqi officials have demanded that Syria turn over two men that it says masterminded the attacks, which killed at least 132 people and raised doubts about the ability of Mr. Maliki's government to provide basic security, a liability in his campaign for reelection.

The Syrian leader, President Bashar al-Assad, responded angrily to Iraq's assertions Monday, saying that Iraq had provided no evidences for its claims.

"The least that can be said about this accusation is that it's immoral," Mr. Assad said, noting that Syria was host to 1.2 million refugees from Iraq, The Associated Press reported from Damascus.

Mr. Maliki, for his part, claimed that 90 percent of foreign fighters involved in attacks inside Iraq passed through Syria. Officials have long accused Syria of failing to stanch the flow, though American military officials have recently said the number of fighters had dwindled.

"Since 2004 Iraq has given to Syria the names, addresses, information, documents and evidence on the activities of terrorists and some known extremists groups, their locations and methods of infiltration across Syrian territory," Mr. Maliki said after meeting Turkey's foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, who arrived in Baghdad on Monday in an effort to mediate.

Riyadh Mohammed contributed reporting.

Melee at Iranian exiles camp suggests dangers as US eases out, Iraq takes control

AP Associated Press

September 2, 2009 / By KIM GAMEL, Associated Press

BAGHDAD - The women formed a human chain while the men chanted, confronting Iraqi troops moving into their compound. Gunfire rang out, and the soldiers waded in with batons, wooden bats and automatic weapons.

By the end, officials said, 11 Iranian exiles were dead — shot, beaten or run over by military vehicles.

Throughout the confrontation, American soldiers who once protected the Iranian opposition group stood by. According to U.S. officials, they had no legal authority to intervene. One video taken by the exiles even shows soldiers get into a white SUV and roll up their windows as the bloodied men plead for help.

The deadly melee at Camp Ashraf, the base of the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran, provides a glaring example of what can go wrong as the U.S. military scales back and the Shiite-led Iraqi government flexes its muscles.

The U.S. military guarded the camp since the fall of Saddam

Hussein in 2003 under an agreement that made its 3,400 residents "protected persons" under the Geneva Conventions. The military stopped observing the agreement after a new security accord with the Baghdad government took effect in January, U.S. Embassy spokesman Philip Frayne said.

Responsibility for the camp then passed to the Iraqi government, which promised not to use force against the group. A small contingent of U.S. military police still monitors the camp, but the military said they were under orders not to intervene in the July 28 confrontation.

"We could not become decisively engaged with a situation that really is up to the sovereign Iraqi government to settle in a peaceful manner as they have assured us that they would do," a senior U.S. military official said Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

"Even in a situation that allowed engagement, we didn't have nearly the amount of forces present to jump in the middle of this fray," he said.

GULF NEWS

SEPTEMBER 4, 2009

Arabs feel they are like foreigners in Kurdistan

Reuters

Arbil, Iraq: Iraqi Arab Ra'ad Walli and his family were excited about going for a summer break in Kurdistan, with its mountains and waterfalls, but their enthusiasm was sapped by a two-hour wait at the border.

After queuing under the scorching sun with only a handkerchief to protect his head, Walli found he had to let Kurdish officials take his Iraqi identity card as a deposit to ensure his departure when he ended his holiday.

"It's like I am entering another country. It is worse than going to Syria," he said.

As Iraq's majority Arabs and ethnic Kurds face off in a potentially explosive dispute over land, power and oil, the border controls are stoking resentment

of what many Arabs see as the region's attempts to style itself as a separate state.

"Unfortunately the Kurdistan region is behaving like a state towards Iraq," said Baghdad lawmaker Wael Abdul Latif, a member of the Baghdad parliament's legal committee.

"This strictness of the government of Kurdistan with (Arabs) is unacceptable and they have to find other security methods... so Iraqis from the 15 other provinces will not feel like they are going to a new country," he added.

Kurdistan is recognised in Iraq's constitution as a federal entity and the semi-autonomous region has grown increasingly assertive in recent years. It has signed oil deals independently with foreign firms, angering offi-

cialists in Baghdad.

The Kurdish, not Iraqi, flag flutters from most buildings in the region, which is governed by the Kurdish Regional Government. Most youths there speak Kurdish, not Arabic.

Buying property in Kurdistan is also very difficult for outsiders, lawyers say, and the residency paperwork required is more in keeping with that involved in moving abroad.

Kurds say their strict border security is to prevent the violence that ravaged Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion from spilling over into their peaceful enclave.

Disputes over Kurdish claims to territory that currently borders Iraqi Kurdistan, such as the oil producing region of Kirkuk, have come close to violence, and

US officials describe the standoff as the greatest threat to Iraqi stability.

In Kurdistan there are few signs of the scars of conflict so obvious in the rest of the country. Billboards for ambitious malls and gleaming housing developments dot the landscape, and upscale coffee shops and supermarkets have mushroomed.

Walli waited over an hour to get his identity documents back on his way out. But the family enjoyed their visit to "the other Iraq", as some call it.

"The security measures were depressing, but when I saw the cities of Kurdistan without blast walls, barbed wire and checkpoints, I approved of them," said Walli's wife Najat Karim. "As long as it keeps their region safe."

Rudaw.Net
september 1, 2009

Kurds fear same fate for Urmiyeh as Kirkuk

By Sabir Qadri

Hawler - Kurds fear that the Urmiyeh province will suffer from the same fate as Kerkuk, by the immigration of Azeri. The city of Kirkuk in Iraq was slowly Arabized by the Saddam regime, although the majority of the city was Kurdish. Now also the Iranian government is trying to import Azeri's to the region of Urmiyeh.

Urmiyeh province is located in the northern west of Iran. Both Kurds and the Turkish Azeri

dominate the province. The Iranian government is using this as a tool to make a difference between the two population in the province.

The phenomenon of importing Azeri and housing them in the province and driven out of Kurds from the province was a policy of the Iranian empires in the past, and this continues now.

Jalali Mahmoud Zada, the deputy of the Mahabad city in the Iran parliament, complained about the attempts to change the demography of this province. "Although the rate of Kurds is more than the half of the population of

the city, all the Azeri have the official posts."

The officials of Iran are using all ways to change the demography of this province, like changing the names of streets and the historic places and they refuse services for places where Kurds live. Agri who is a citizen of Urmiyeh criticizes Iran government "the difference the government makes between the populations is very obvious."

But the Azeri thinks that the presence of Kurds in the region is a danger for them. The change in the demography could result in the same ethnic tensions as in Kerkuk in Iraq

Op-Eds & Articles

National Implications of the Kurdish Elections

By Michael Knights

Arab Reform Bulletin, September 1, 2009

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) parliament elected in July convened for the first time on August 20, ushering in a new political era in Iraqi Kurdistan. While the bloc including the long-dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) currently controls a majority of 59 out of 111 seats, the new Gorran ("Change") Party has 26, and the Services and Reform bloc (including Islamists and socialists) has 13, in addition to a few seats won by smaller parties and 11 set aside for Turkoman and Christian minorities. Moreover, because Gorran is led by PUK founder Nawshirwan Mustafa and drew its votes mainly from PUK areas, the new situation is likely to spur calls for reform and leadership change within the PUK. That would make it a less reliable partner for the KDP, and will increase the likelihood of heated debate and multi-party bargaining in the parliament.

This political change in the KRG coincides with an important period in relations with the federal government in Baghdad, as Iraq prepares for national elections on January 16, 2010. It is not yet clear how large a role Kurds will play in the campaign. It is possible that Iraqi political campaigns will stress Arab nationalist themes at the expense of the Kurds, or alternatively that various factions will court Kurds, knowing they will need their votes in the new parliament.

At present, the scenario of other factions courting Kurds seems more likely. The KDP and PUK will contest the national elections as one list and Gorran will compete as another, but the two Kurdish blocs have agreed to pool their votes in the national parliament. This means that Kurds are likely to win some 50 out of 275 seats, which will likely be the largest single bloc in parliament. If electoral legislation is passed as it currently stands, the Kurds will also probably receive a seat on the three-member presidency council alongside a Shi'i Arab and a Sunni Arab representative, allowing them to veto legislation and prevent its passage unless parliament achieves the difficult task of mustering a two-thirds majority. These factors could make the Kurds an indispensable ally in forming the next Iraqi government, particularly if Arab factions remain divided along factional and sectarian lines.

While there is now less risk of an anti-Kurdish theme emerging in the coming elections, as well as strong potential for a post-electoral compromise on federal-KRG revenue sharing, agreeing on the joint administration of disputed territories will be more complex. The first problem to resolve is provincial elections in Kirkuk, the only governorate outside the KRG not included in the January 31, 2009 provincial elections. Kurdish groups were unable to obtain the holding a national census on October 24, 2009--the scheduled census has been cancelled due to the political sensitivity of the issue. The KDP and PUK now want to hold provincial elections in

Kirkuk to coincide with the January 16, 2010 national elections. Turkoman and Arab groups in Kirkuk want a special elections law to be passed that allocates more seats on the provincial council to each ethnic group. Both sides appear to recognize that Kurds now significantly outnumber other ethnic groups in Kirkuk, though polling or voting in Kirkuk would be undermined by disagreements over who is eligible to register as a resident of the province.

International Role

Although the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq has convened a task force of senior federal and Kurdish leaders, the key external influence on federal-KRG issues remains the United States. The U.S. military presence in Iraq is due to decline during 2010 and largely disappear either at the beginning of 2011 (if the January 16, 2010 referendum rejects the U.S.-Iraq security agreement) or by the end of 2011 at the latest. This puts the United States under pressure to move the political process forward, and to prevent local clashes between Arabs and Kurds in the meantime.

When Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki came to Washington DC in July 2009, every U.S. official he met advised him to boost his political efforts to reach an accommodation with the Kurds. When a string of senior U.S. military leaders visited the KRG in late summer, they also strongly urged the Kurdish leadership to take steps to reduce tensions. These twin pressures -- the political importance of the Kurds within Iraq as well as U.S. lobbying -- induced Maliki to make his first visit to the KRG on August 2, where he publicly congratulated President Masoud Barzani on his re-election and made a well-received symbolic speech at Halabja, the site of 1988 chemical weapons attacks that killed more than 5,000 Kurdish civilians.

On August 18, Multinational Forces commander General Ray Odierno proposed a temporary increase in the presence of U.S. forces along the federal-KRG disputed internal border. This force would form tripartite U.S.-federal-Kurdish security headquarters along the disputed areas to coordinate security and reduce the risk of clashes between Arab and Kurdish security forces. Though smaller in scale, the idea resembles the U.S. surge of forces deployed to reduce sectarian violence in central Iraq in 2008.

Looking Ahead

The next year will be a critical moment in Iraqi federal-Kurdish relations. Some hard line advocates of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq believe that the KRG will eventually be better off without Iraq and will instead form military and economic ties with Turkey, providing Ankara with a stable southern border and an interlocutor in its struggle with Kurdish nationalism. Other Kurdish leaders such as KRG Prime Minister Barham Saleh have consistently looked to Baghdad as the KRG's long-term partner. The new parliamentary balance in the KRG has potentially given more strength to Kurdish advocates of a compromise with Baghdad. Strong U.S. pressure is pushing towards a federal-KRG deal. The major Arab factions will probably need a Kurdish political ally to form a national government. These factors, combined, suggest that there may be hope for the beginning of an Arab-Kurdish compromise in 2010.

Michael Knights is the Lafer International Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.



september 7, 2009

Ninawah's Arabs, Kurds Start US-Sponsored

By Hewa Aziz

Arbil, Asharq Al-Awsat- The US Embassy sponsored yesterday the first session of direct negotiations between Al-Hadba bloc that has an Arab majority and the Ninawah Fraternity bloc that has a Kurdish majority which boycotted the Mosul-based Ninawah Governorate Council's tasks since April.

The negotiations are aimed at achieving rapprochement between the two sides and forming a joint administration for the governorate which has been suffering from a real administrative crisis since the elections of the governorates' councils in January in which Al-Hadba List won 19 out of 37 seats and got most of the sovereign posts in the local government after excluding the Ninawah List.

Khisru Kuran, leader of the Ninawah List which won 12 seats in the council, said: "We welcome any meeting with Al-Hadba even if it was just a matter of courtesy, such as a joint fast breaking dinner, so as to break the ice in the two sides' relations." He added in an exclusive statement to Asharq Al-Awsat at the end of the meeting between the two sides' representatives: "We held a meeting which was attended by two members from Al-Hadba and Ninawah Lists, a member of the Iraqi

Islamic Party, and several American friends. The session was dedicated to an exchange of views about the reasons of the estrangement between us and a discussion of the current situations in the governorate in general."

Kuran, who is also in charge of the Ninawah branch of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's organizations which is led by Kurdistan Region President Masud Barzani, added: "We were never opposed to dialogue and negotiations for solving problems. Our doors were and remain open and our hands extended for peace because we want what is good for this governorate. But we believe that the problems in the new Iraq cannot be solved except through rational dialogue, common understanding, and political accord."

Regarding his bloc's threats to split Ninawah Governorate into two, one following Baghdad and the other the Kurdistan Region, if the situations remained as they are now, Kuran said: "The governorate is already actually split. There are 16 administrative units like districts and sub districts which have been boycotting for months the orders, instructions, and sessions of the new administration in Ninawah. This is in itself a split in the governorate's administrative structure but we are seriously seeking to solve the existing problems so as to avoid perpetuating this split." He added: "There is no doubt that if the efforts and negotiations sessions bring positive results then the causes for the split or division taking place will disappear and the opposite is true also."

Ak news

SEPTEMBER 5, 2009

Bangladeshis control Erbil working hands

ERBIL, 5 September 2009 (AKnews) - The small wage that the Bangladeshi workers take has decreased the opportunities of local workers being hired which has raised concerns among Kurdish workers, while head of the Erbil branch of the Kurdistan workers union (KWU) said the Bangladeshi workers will return to their country soon.

The economic growth Kurdistan region has seen during the latest years has created many job opportunities in the region, in particular, the Bangladeshi workers have flown into the Kurdistan through manpower supply companies to work in the region for low wages.

A Kurdish worker, Azad Salih, 23, who was busy unloading goods from a truck told AKnews that "we take unloads the truck for ID100 thousand but the Bangladeshi porters do that for only half the price, which makes businessmen give their works to the Bangladeshi workers, because they do not care to whom the money goes, they only care about who does it for less."

However, Azad admitted that the hard work the Bangladeshi workers do the Kurdish counterparts won't, blaming the cause on the hard work and the small wage they are offered. "the Bangladeshis are increasing every day, while in return every day the wage decreases, and the Kurdish workers face issues finding work"

"we work for less money than the Kurds" a Bangladeshi worker said.

Ali is the Bangladeshi worker who, as he says, has been working in Erbil for one year and has acquired the language.



All works with his friends daily in Erbil marketplaces, while for the night, they stay in a flat in Erbil city's Setaqan quarter.

"Actually, we do not work for small wages, it is a lot for us back in our country, but it is less as compared to the Kurdish workers" Ali said.

while many of the male Bangladeshis work in the marketplaces and institutions, the women do a different type of work; they work at homes for a fixed salary with the condition of providing accommodation for them.

Hemn Gharib, owner of a shop where dozens of Bangladeshi workers visit daily, said he hired the Bangladeshi workers for building his house, because "they take less and complain less."

Gharib criticized the Kurdish workers that they do not do all types of work, and they ask for a lot of money.

Regarding the Bangladeshi workers, Gharib said "it is true that the money they take here is less, but it is quite a fortune back in their country."

A Bangladeshi worker can buy the best house in his country with the savings of

three months of work in Erbil, while a Kurdish worker can not buy a house in Erbil even if he works all his life.

Head of the Erbil branch of the KWU, Sabir Osman, said many of the Bangladeshi workers will be returned to their country except for those who the Kurdistan region needs their skills, as some of them are technicians who are needed by some institutions.

Currently, Bangladeshi manpower import into Kurdistan region is barred, and those who are remaining here, will be sent back, Osman said.

However, he criticized the Kurdish workers that they do not do all kinds of work and assert conditions which makes the work owners to give their work to the Bangladeshis for less money and have the least conditions.

Unfortunately, some of the Kurdish workers complain that the KWU has done nothing for them, but if you ask them where the KWU office is they do not know. "if they really belong to the KWU, we can protect them and help them, we are always attempting to protect their rights." the workers union chairman said.

Workers should visit the KWU when they face problems, added said.

Part of the Bangladeshis do other works like selling food stuff on the streets, and who have taken up the fashion of begging, according to Osman.

In many cases, when people see the Bangladeshis selling stuff on the streets give them money without taking any stuff which is one of the factors the Bangladeshi workers beg, Osman noted.

ISMAIL BESİKÇİ: LA FÉDÉRATION COMME SOLUTION

- INTERVIEW LE 5 SEPTEMBRE 2009

Bersiv.com vous traduit deux interviews accordée par le sociologue turc Ismail Besikçi au site d'information kurde Aknews, publiée le 5 septembre 2009.

INTERVIEW PARTIE 1

Au sujet du problème kurde, le gouvernement était dans une approche qui n'était pas très constructive. Par exemple, Erdogan avait déclaré lors de son déplacement à Hakkari avant les élections municipales « sois tu aimes, sois tu quittes » [NDLR: le premier ministre turc invitait ceux qui ne se satisfaisaient pas du système politique turque et qui le critiquaient à quitter la Turquie]. Aujourd'hui pourtant, il a commencé une « ouverture kurde ». Que s'est-il passé pour que le gouvernement soit à l'initiative d'une telle démarche?

Il y a des contradictions dans les discours du Premier Ministre. En août 2005, il avait eu une réunion avec les intellectuels turcs à Ankara. Il avait alors déclaré « le problème kurde est notre problème, il y a eu à ce sujet des erreurs commises par l'Etat. Pour résoudre le problème, nous devons développer la Démocratie ». Deux- trois jours après ces déclarations, lors d'une allocution devant le peuple à Diyarbakir [Amed], il avait réaffirmé ces positions. Mais en 2006 par exemple, lors des événements qui ont eu lieu à Diyarbakir, il avait dit « Les forces de sécurité feront ce qu'elles ont à faire, quelles que soient les personnes servant d'instrument au terrorisme, fussent-elles des enfants ou des femmes ».

Bien évidemment, c'est une erreur que d'entendre le Premier Ministre donner, en 2006, des directives aux forces de l'ordre précisant qu'il n'y aurait pas de différence entre femmes et enfants, lui qui parlait autrement du problème kurde en 2005. Il y a aussi, autre exemple, le fameux « sois tu aimes, sois tu quittes » tenu en 2008 à Hakkari. Plus tard, le DTP a créé un groupe parlementaire au sein de la Grande Assemblée Nationale de Turquie à la suite des élections législatives de 2007 et le Premier Ministre refusait de parler avec les députés membres du DTP, de répondre à leurs demandes de rendez-vous, et même refusait la poignée de main. Ce sont là les contradictions du Premier Ministre. Mais il parle aujourd'hui d'ouverture kurde. Son contenu, le plan du gouvernement est assez explicite.

Que prévoit le Gouvernement?

Le plan se reflète dans la presse. Il prévoit des ouvertures limitées qui consistent en la réhabilitation des noms kurdes pour ce qui concerne les lieux etc..., la possibilité de fonder des chaînes de TV et de radios privées; la possibilité d'attribuer des prénoms kurdes aux enfants.

Le Gouvernement a commencé en parlant d' « ouverture kurde », puis « d'ouverture démocratique » et ces derniers temps de « projet d'union nationale ». Dernièrement, le Ministre Atalay n'a pas prononcé le mot « kurde » lors de sa conférence de presse. Cette approche peut elle rendre plus difficile la résolution du problème?

C'est important que le sujet puisse être discuté, débattu, que les personnes qui le souhaitent puissent s'exprimer. Mais la chose que le Gouvernement appelle « solution » n'en est pas une. Je pense que le Ministre de l'Intérieur, en tant que personne, est sur une ligne plus correcte.

Qu'est-ce qui vous fait penser cela?

Et bien par exemple le 29 juillet, au sujet de l' « ouverture kurde » - ils parlaient d' « ouverture kurde » à l'époque- il avait fait une déclaration relative à la méthode à appliquer. Le 1er août, à l'Académie de Police, il avait écouté près de 15 personnes, toutes journalistes ou membres universitaires. Je trouve constructive la mise en place de travaux de ce type dans l'Académie de Police. En appelant alors le problème par son nom, on parlait de problème kurde. De même le 04 avril, lors du massacre qui a eu lieu dans le village de Zangirt (Mardin), il avait été sur les lieux du drame et avait déclaré que ça ne ressemblait pas à une attaque terroriste. Je pense que c'est là une position importante. Parce que je pense, personnellement, que le massacre a été planifié pour pou-



voir être attribué au PKK. Mais la déclaration du Ministre de l'Intérieur a coupé court, je pense, à ce type de scénario. Dans ses déclarations du 29 juillet, il faisait usage de la définition de « problème kurde », par contre j'ai écouté sa dernière intervention, il n'a guère mentionné le mot « kurde ». Il n'est pas possible de faire l' « ouverture kurde » si on ne fait pas référence au mot « kurde ». Cette dernière déclaration du Ministre m'a beaucoup déçu.

A quoi liez-vous ce changement dans la position du gouvernement?

En Turquie, l'armée joue un très grand rôle sur la politique. C'est l'armée qui détermine la politique, qui la dirige. Par exemple, la Grande Assemblée Nationale de Turquie ou le Gouvernement n'ont pas de poids face à l'Armée. En parlant d' « ouverture kurde », ils prennent une initiative. Mais suite aux réactions de l'armée, ils abandonnent cette appellation et lui préfèrent une notion nuageuse comme « ouverture démocratique ».

Si l'on regarde les années antérieures... en 1991 le Premier Ministre Süleyman Demirel avait aussi parlé de « reconnaissance de la réalité kurde » dans une de ces déclarations. Mais il ne l'avait dit qu'une seule fois. Je pense qu'il a dû recevoir, lui aussi, une critique de l'armée puisqu'il n'a plus, dès lors, affirmé ce point de vue. Et même, il avait comme l'air d'avoir regretté ce qu'il avait dit.

Aux milieux des années 1990, pendant son séjour en Espagne, Ciller avait tenu des propos semblables mais suite aux réactions de l'armée, elle a déclaré que ses propos avaient été mal compris et ne s'est plus attardée sur le sujet. Par la suite, le Premier Ministre Mesut Yilmaz avait déclaré que la voie vers l'Europe passait par Diyarbakir mais il n'a plus réitéré ces propos. Alors que le Gouvernement actuel, nonobstant les contradictions du Premier Ministre, l'a plusieurs fois répété. Le Président de la République parle de « problème important », le Premier Ministre l'exprime de temps en temps, le Ministre de l'Intérieur a une position à ce sujet.

Cela signifie-t-il que le Gouvernement ait obtenu l'autorisation de l'armée en ce qui concerne les ouvertures limitées dont vous avez parlé?

L'armée est d'accord pour des droits personnels mais rejette les droits collectifs. Selon notre pensée, le problème kurde ne peut se résoudre sans l'obtention de droits collectifs. C'est à dire qu'il faut une reconnaissance de droits qui naissent de ce que les Kurdes sont un peuple.

On débat beaucoup de "l'interlocuteur". D'après vous, qui doit être l'interlocuteur de l'Etat? [NDLR: sujet qui s'impose au sein du monde politique et médiatique turc puisque le gouvernement turc ne veut pas mener de discussions avec le

PKK et refusait jusqu'alors de parler avec le DTP]

L'Etat a une politique négationniste qui date des années 1920. L'Etat peut, à lui seul, décider l'abandon de cette politique, il n'a pas besoin de parler à tout prix à un groupe. Mais il y a aussi le problème du PKK, comment vont-ils le résoudre? Pour résoudre le problème du PKK, l'Etat doit s'entretenir personnellement avec le DTP ou le PKK. Jusque là, en raison de son arrogance, l'Etat refusait de rencontrer le DTP et ne faisait aucunement mention du PKK. Résoudre le problème du PKK suppose l'obligation de rencontrer le DTP ou le PKK.

Pour la résolution du problème, le DTP préconise « un projet d'autonomie démocratique », le HAK-PAR [NDLR: Parti de la justice et des libertés - Hak ve Özgürlükler partisi] et le HADEP [NDLR: Parti de la démocratie du peuple - Halkin Demokrasi Partisi- fondé le 11 mai 1994 et dissous le 12 mars 2003] veulent une fédération. Que pensez-vous de ces propositions?

Il faut au moins une fédération. Le DTP préconise un découpage territorial en 25 régions, leur proposition c'est-à-dire leur projet d'autonomie n'est pas, pour moi, un projet très clair. Il faut une fédération comme celle du Sud [Kurdistan-Sud, en Irak].

Le DTP pense que la fédération est un modèle adéquat pour le Sud [du Kurdistan, soit le Nord de l'Irak] dans la mesure où les Kurdes vivent dans une géographie différente, de manière isolée aux Arabes mais qu'elle ne serait pas très réaliste dans le cadre de la Turquie en raison de l'émigration des Kurdes à l'Ouest....

La principale politique de l'Etat est l'assimilation. Pour assurer l'assimilation, l'Etat n'a pas investi dans la région kurde, n'a pas ouvert d'entreprise, n'a pas fait de routes, n'a pas fait de barrages pour pouvoir irriguer. La population croissante, pour assurer sa subsistance, émigre vers l'Ouest et 3-5 ans plus tard il est question d'assimilation. De ce point de vue, il n'est pas très correct de dire que la moitié de la population kurde se trouve à l'Ouest. Parce que c'est là la conséquence d'une politique assimilationniste adoptée par l'Etat dans les années 20.

Le Gouvernement a créé parmi la population une attente au sujet de la résolution du problème. Quelles seraient les conséquences si cette attente n'était pas satisfaite?

A titre personnel, je pense qu'il ne peut y avoir de retour en arrière. Le Gouvernement aura l'envie de conduire sa politique de quelque façon que se soit et avec ses carences. Il se peut que cette ouverture ne se fasse pas comme nous le souhaitons et l'envisageons mais il ne peut y avoir de retour en arrière.

Percevez-vous le danger d'un conflit entre Turcs et Kurdes en Turquie?

Non, personnellement, je ne pense pas qu'il y aura un conflit entre Turcs et Kurdes.

Que pensez-vous des positions du CHP [NDLR: Parti Républicain populaire- Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi- qui se réclame être de la gauche turque] et du MHP [Parti d'action nationaliste - Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi- parti extrêmement raciste] à propos de l'ouverture kurde?

Le CHP déclare qu'il s'agit là d'un projet des Etats-Unis. Depuis les années 20, il est question de la négation, la répression et l'assimilation des Kurdes. Le problème kurde est une conséquence de ces politiques. Dès que l'Etat abandonnera cette politique de négation en 2009 ou 2010, le problème kurde sera résolu. Pour cela, il n'y a pas besoin des E-U. Pensons aux années 1920, ce sont les EU qui ont proposé la négation des Kurdes? Pour un parti qui se déclare de la social-démocratie, la position du CHP n'est pas une position saine. Le MHP s'oppose à la reconnaissance des droits des Kurdes. Ce n'est pas du nationalisme mais du racisme. Parce qu'ils se reconnaissent le droit de vivre dans la culture turque, d'avoir un enseignement en langue turque mais ne reconnaissent pas le même droit aux autres [aux Kurdes de vivre dans la culture kurde, d'avoir un enseignement en langue kurde]. Et le racisme naît de là.

Donc selon vous les EU n'ont pas joué un rôle dans ce processus?

Selon moi, l'Etat a très bien compris qu'il ne pouvait plus perdurer dans cette politique de négation et de répression. Parce que les Kurdes mènent un combat constant. Les Kurdes développent leur diplomatie en Europe et ailleurs dans le monde. Il n'est pas possible de continuer l'application des politiques de négation, de répression et d'assimilation dans ce processus de politisation que connaissent les Kurdes. Si la Turquie continue cette politique, elle connaîtra un pourrissement de ses propres institutions, par exemple ses universités ou ses tribunaux.

Il y a tout juste un mois par exemple il y a eu une discorde entre le Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature (Hakimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu – HSYK) et

le Ministre de la Justice à propos de la nomination des procureurs de la République. Ce qui signifie qu'il y a quelque part un pourrissement du droit. En effet, le procès Ergenekon est très important; grâce à lui, on déchiffre les événements qui ont eu lieu dans le passé, le JITEM [un des organismes de l'Etat turc à l'origine de nombreux crimes dans la sale guerre menée contre les Kurdes] et le Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature s'incommodent de ce déchiffrage. Il y a par exemple, à Diyarbakır, des procès ouverts contre les soldats qui ont commis des crimes, qui ont été les instigateurs de crimes et le Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature veut enterrer ces procès. Le droit est donc en décomposition. Si l'on demande à ce que, à propos du problème kurde, l'oppression, la négation et l'assimilation continuent, on sera témoin du pourrissement des principales institutions étatiques. Et arrivé à ce point, le Gouvernement ne peut décider autre chose que de faire quelques pas pour résoudre le problème et d'abandonner ces politiques habituelles. Et il n'y a pas besoin, ici, d'une proposition des EU.

Selon vous, quelles sont les approches des partis de gauche – socialistes, en dehors du CHP?

Les organisations civiles populaires, les associations des droits de l'Homme, les syndicats sont, de ce que j'ai pu constater, à un point plus constructif. En dehors du CHP, la gauche marxiste est à mon sens dans une approche plus positive.

☆☆☆

ISMAIL BESIKÇI: LES KURDES ONT IMPOSÉ LE FÉDÉRALISME IRAKIEN AUX ETATS-UNIS

INTERVIEW PARTIE 2

Comment percevez vous l'avenir de la Région autonome du Kurdistan?

Je le vois très positif. Saddam Hussein retirait du pétrole du Sud du Kurdistan [partie du Kurdistan se trouvant en Irak] et avec une partie de l'argent gagné, achetait des hélicoptères, des avions de chasse, des gaz toxiques et les envoyaient au Kurdistan. Il y a eu Halabja, il y a eu des génocides.

Après l'intervention des Etats-Unis, la voie des Kurdes s'est ouverte. Le Parti Baas a été dissout, l'armée irakienne également. Ce qui a permis d'ouvrir la voie aux Kurdes et le Gouvernement Régional du Kurdistan a pu voir le jour. Les amis qui s'y sont rendus me parlent des activités de construction, disent que des routes, des hôpitaux, des maisons sont en construction, que la prospérité gagne du terrain. Je pense qu'il y aura, dans les années à venir, des développements encore plus positifs et meilleurs.

Lors des élections législatives, le parti Goran (la liste du changement) a créé la surprise en obtenant 25 sièges au sein du Parlement. Comment évaluez-vous cela?

C'est une très bonne chose. Le Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan et l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan étaient soupçonnés de corruption et de clientélisme. L'entrée d'un groupe puissant comme celui-là au sein de l'Assemblée peut permettre la dénonciation de ces pratiques au sein de l'Assemblée et peut, dans la mesure du possible, les réduire. De ce point de vue, je pense que l'entrée du groupe Goran au sein de l'Assemblée est un événement positif.

Le processus de retrait des Etats-Unis a commencé. Il y a des thèses selon lesquelles les Kurdes et les Arabes risquent d'entrer en conflit après que les EU se soient retirés du territoire. Existe-t-il, selon vous, une telle probabilité?

Non, non. A l'époque de Saddam Hussein, il y avait une angoisse. Saddam Hussein avait entre ses mains des armes de destruction massive. Les Kurdes ne pouvaient pas se protéger contre ces armes. Aujourd'hui, il n'y a pas ce genre de risques. Je ne suis pas certain que les Arabes seront à l'origine de grandes



menaces. Les Arabes pourront penser à des attaques mais les Kurdes pourront leur répondre.

Parmi les problèmes qui attendent une solution, il y a Kirkouk. Comment résoudre le problème de Kirkouk?

Ce problème ne peut se résoudre qu'avec l'application de l'article 140 [de la Constitution irakienne], ce que demandent les Kurdes. C'est pourquoi il faut procéder au recensement de toute la population irakienne, en particulier à Kirkouk, et organiser une élection. Participeront à cette élection les partis arabes, kurdes, turkmènes et tous seront représentés au sein de l'Assemblée de Kirkouk, au regard du pourcentage de vote qu'ils auront obtenu. Par exemple vous avez eu 25 voix et bien vous aurez le nombre de sièges équivalent, de même pour celui qui en aura 32; c'est à dire que tous devront obtenir le nombre de sièges équivalent au pourcentage de voix obtenu. C'est la solution.

Mais par exemple Djalal Talabani avait déclaré, un moment, qu'ils devaient tous avoir 33%. C'est à dire que les Kurdes, les Arabes, les Turkmènes allaient être représentés de manière égale. C'est une grande erreur puisque la population turkmène est beaucoup moins nombreuse que ce l'on croit, la population kurde est très nombreuse, elle peut être à plus de 50% par exemple. Dans les années 2003-2004, on pensait en Turquie que la population turkmène était très importante. Les Turkmènes disaient qu'ils étaient 3 millions, 5 millions. L'Etat faisait alors une politique qui mettait en avant les Turkmènes. Mais lors des élections de 2005, les Turkmènes n'ont pas su montrer leur existence.

Sur quoi les Turkmènes se basaient-ils pour exagérer leur nombre?

Je pense qu'il résulte du fait qu'en 1990, la Turquie apportait une aide alimentaire aux Turkmènes. Les Kurdes, pour pouvoir bénéficier de cette aide à cette époque, s'enregistraient comme Turkmènes. Après l'intervention des EU, les Kurdes acquérant leurs libertés ont voté pour les partis kurdes, ce qui a augmenté le taux des Kurdes, tandis que le taux des Turkmènes diminuait.

Vous avez dit qu'après l'intervention des Etats-Unis, les Kurdes se sont libérés. Certains critiquent cette idée. Que voulez-vous dire exactement par ce propos?

Le fédéralisme en Irak n'était pas le projet des Américains. Les Kurdes, par leurs propres efforts, l'ont fait accepter des Arabes et des Américains. C'est de cette façon que les Kurdes se sont libérés. Bien sûr que l'intervention des EU a été déterminante. Mais les EU sont intervenus, non pas pour libérer les Kurdes, mais pour leurs propres intérêts. Et les Kurdes ont su tirer avantage de leur intervention.

Les Turkmènes, dans la région du Kurdistan nouvellement créée, peuvent faire de la politique avec leur propre identité, ont des partis créés au nom des Turkmènes, peuvent bénéficier d'un enseignement en leur langue maternelle, possèdent des chaînes de TV et des radios. Quant à la Turquie, vieille de 85 ans, elle vient tout juste de reconnaître l'existence des Kurdes. Comment interprétez-vous cette contradiction?

Il y a un lien, un rapport avec la conscience des Kurdes, avec leurs luttes. Les Kurdes doivent pouvoir l'exprimer de temps en temps; ils doivent pouvoir, de temps à autre, présenter une politique critique à ce sujet à l'égard de la Turquie. Les Kurdes doivent aussi pointer la contradiction de la Turquie qui exige, pour les 180 000 Turcs de Chypre Nord, un Etat distinct mais qui ne reconnaît pas ce droit aux près de 20 millions de Kurdes de l'Est [de la Turquie]. C'est une contradiction, les Kurdes doivent pouvoir critiquer l'Etat en dénonçant ces faits.

Il y a un changement positif dans la politique turque à l'égard de la Région du Kurdistan....

Il y a ici un rapport avec les politiques américaines. Au Moyen Orient, les Etats-Unis veulent un Irak stable, une Turquie stable. Cette stabilité va permettre l'écoulement permanent du pétrole et du gaz et la protection des intérêts américains dans la région. Dans ce cadre-là, la Turquie veut d'une certaine façon intervenir dans le développement de l'Irak. De ce fait, la Turquie pense qu'elle doit, qu'elle le veuille ou non, poursuivre une politique constructive vis-à-vis des Kurdes du Sud.

Quelles sont vos prévisions en ce qui concerne les relations futures entre la Turquie et la Région Autonome du Kurdistan?

Le pétrole est un problème important. On dit qu'il n'y a pas assez de pétrole dans les régions caucasiennes pour remplir les oléoducs de Nabucco par exemple mais il y a des sources pétrolières très importantes dans la région du Kurdistan et la région arabe. Ils peuvent alimenter Nabucco. Selon les dernières estima-

tions, 8% des réserves pétrolières mondiales se trouvent en Irak et près de 2% au Sud du Kurdistan. Cette situation devient un élément très important pour ce qui concerne la réalité politique des Kurdes. Ce qui oblige la Turquie à créer des relations saines aussi bien avec les Kurdes que le gouvernement de Bagdad.

Le président de la Région Autonome du Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, dit "Même si de nos jours il ne s'agit pas d'une revendication réaliste, un Etat kurde indépendant est le droit naturel des Kurdes". Etes-vous d'accord?

Oui, il faut que les Kurdes le pensent. Parce qu'ils constituent une très grande population au Moyen Orient. On dit qu'il y a 40 millions de Kurdes mais ils n'ont pas de nom dans les Nations Unies, ils n'ont pas de nom dans l'Union Européenne, ils n'ont pas de nom dans le Conseil de l'Europe, ils n'ont pas de nom dans la Conférence Islamique. Où ont-ils un nom si ce n'est qu'on les nomme seulement lorsque l'on parle de "terrorisme". Alors qu'il y a dans le monde 250 Etats parmi lesquels 40 à 50 Etats se constituent d'une population inférieure au million. Parmi les pays membres de l'Union Européenne, Chypre, le Luxembourg et Malte sont des Etats qui connaissent une population au nombre de 400-500 000. Leur population est certes des plus faibles mais ils peuvent être membres des Nations Unies, de l'Union Européenne, du Conseil de l'Europe parce qu'ils constituent des Etats. Mais les Kurdes, bien qu'ils constituent une population beaucoup plus grande, n'ont pas de nom en politique internationale. Les Kurdes doivent penser à constituer un Etat indépendant. Mais il est difficile de traduire cette pensée dans la réalité.

En quoi est-ce difficile?

C'était facile dans les années 1920. A cette époque, l'Irak était une colonie anglaise, la Syrie et la Libye étaient des colonies françaises. Si à cette époque s'était créé une colonie, nommée Kurdistan, liée à l'Angleterre ou à la France, le problème aurait pu être décidé. Mais 80 années ont passé, le problème s'est davantage compliqué, s'est alourdi, il y a plus de monde qui veut intervenir dans le problème. Ce qui, bien évidemment, rend plus difficile la résolution du problème.

Mais il faut que les Kurdes pensent à cela, faut-il au moins qu'ils se le figurent dans leurs têtes. Par exemple, c'est une erreur que d'entendre Djalal Talabani dire qu'un Etat kurde serait uniquement un rêve [de poètes]. De même que c'est une erreur que d'entendre Ya'ar Kemal dire que les Kurdes ne veulent pas d'un Etat kurde. Les dynamiques extérieures sont plus importantes. La division, la séparation ont détruit les dynamiques intérieures des Kurdes. Chez les Kurdes, les dynamiques extérieures sont plus déterminantes. Pensons, par exemple, il y a 10 ans, qui aurait pensé que le Président de l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan, Djalal Talabani, allait devenir Président de l'Irak?

Par quelles dynamiques expliquez-vous cet événement?

C'est en raison de l'intervention de l'Amérique en 2003 que cet événement a pu avoir lieu. Ce qui montre que les dynamiques extérieures sont plus déterminantes.

Pourquoi les dynamiques extérieures sont-elles plus déterminantes?

Parce que les dynamiques intérieures sont lacérées, affaiblies, détruites. Pensez à la frontière Turquie-Irak, une partie des villages se trouve ici, une autre partie au Sud, les tribus se sont divisées, les familles se sont déchirées, il y a entre eux des fils barbelés, des champs minés, des avions-espions. C'est un élément qui affaiblit les dynamiques intérieures. Les dynamiques extérieures sont plus déterminantes. Les Kurdes doivent au moins critiquer l'Angleterre et la France au sujet des politiques extérieures adoptées dans les années 20 et leur dire qu'ils sont responsables des catastrophes imposées aux Kurdes.

Pour finir, j'ai là une dernière question. Vous n'êtes jamais allé au Sud du Kurdistan. Pensez-vous y aller?

Non je ne pense pas.

Pourquoi?

Je n'y vais pas.

Y a-t-il une raison particulière?

(Il rit et ne veut pas en dire la raison)

☆☆☆

Traduit par Berçem Adar pour Bersiv.

Les Kurdes sceptiques face à l'ouverture du gouvernement turc

Les membres du DTP, principal parti kurde, «veulent la paix, mais pas au rabais»

DIYARBAKIR

De notre envoyée spéciale

C'est avec un foulard aux couleurs du Kurdistan – vert, jaune et rouge, que Yasmin, 20 ans, est venue au meeting de Diyarbakir (la principale ville kurde du sud-est de la Turquie). Le DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique, principal parti kurde) a réuni le 1^{er} septembre une centaine de milliers de personnes pour ce qui était l'une des plus importantes réunions politiques de l'année, sous le slogan «Oui à une paix honorable». «Nous les Kurdes, nous voulons que le monde nous accepte comme nous sommes. Nous voulons la fin de la guerre et la fin des pleurs. Nous voulons la paix, mais pas au rabais», souligne cette habitante de Diyarbakir.

«L'ouverture» faite ces derniers mois par le gouvernement turc pour tenter de résoudre une question qui a causé la mort de 45 000 personnes en trente ans la laisse sceptique. Au printemps, le président Abdullah Gül a évoqué une «occasion historique» de régler cette question avant que le premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan annonce «vouloir aller jusqu'au bout de ce processus, même si cela signifie perdre les élections».

Pour Yasmin, ces propos ne sont pas «crédibles». «Le gouvernement n'est pas honnête, il ne prend pas de mesures courageuses», estime-t-elle. A l'image de cette jeune étudiante, les ardeurs d'une partie des 12 mil-

«Le ministre de l'intérieur n'a pas prononcé une seule fois le mot "kurde" dans son allocution.»

lions de Kurdes de Turquie ont été gelées par les récents propos du ministre de l'intérieur. Besir Atalay a rejeté l'idée d'une nouvelle Constitution, pourtant discutée depuis des mois, et d'une amnis-

tie pour les membres du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), qui a pris les armes contre Ankara il y a vingt-cinq ans, et qui a annoncé le 1^{er} septembre la prolongation jusqu'à la fin du Ramadan de la trêve de ses opérations armées entamée depuis avril.

«Certes, il y a eu un bon départ mais cela a déjà tourné court», estime un autre manifestant, Metin. «Le ministre de l'intérieur n'a pas prononcé une seule fois le mot "kurde" dans son allocution. Est-ce un processus de paix crédible?» demande ce père de famille venu participer au rallye politique du DTP avec ses trois enfants, qui avaient enfilé pour l'occasion un pantalon large, en toile de jute vert foncé, tenu par une épaisse ceinture. «L'uniforme des guérilleros», précise fièrement Metin, qui appelle Ankara à dialoguer avec «notre leader Abdullah Öcalan».

Dans cette foule bigarrée, le chef du PKK, surnommé Apo, est omniprésent. Posters, drapeaux, T-shirts: impossible d'éviter le père de la résistance kurde, emprisonné depuis dix ans. Le sort du «leader» inquiète d'ailleurs les intervenants qui se suivent sur scène, à l'image de Hatip Dicle qui dénonce le blocage par la justice turque de la publication de la feuille de route qu'Apo a remise à l'administration pénitentiaire il y a deux semaines. Ce document d'une centaine de pages, dans lequel Abdullah Öcalan détaille ses

pistes de résolution de la question kurde, ne contient a priori rien de neuf mais reste explosif aux yeux d'un gouvernement qui refuse de légitimer le PKK.

Au sein du DTP, et de ses 21 députés, le soufflé est également retombé. Au mois d'août, le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan a, certes, pour la première fois rencontré leurs représentants, mais il n'a pas convaincu sur le fond. «Le gouvernement va certainement faire quelques avancées d'ici à la fin de l'année comme donner la possibilité

de suivre des cours de kurde à l'école, faciliter la création de chaînes de télévision publiques et privées en kurde ou permettre aux villages dont les noms ont été turquifiés de retrouver leurs noms kurdes, mais cela ne nous satisfera pas», reconnaît le député de Diyarbakir Selahattin Demirtas. Alors que le plan gouvernemental sera remis au premier ministre le 1^{er} octobre, il estime qu'Ankara recule face à la violence des attaques portées par l'opposition nationaliste et kémaliste, et face aux réticences d'une armée encore très présente dans le paysage politique.

«Les attentes sont tellement grandes que la déception est inévitable», constate Fidel Balta, vice-président d'une association culturelle à Diyarbakir. «On ne pourra pas sortir aussi rapidement d'un système autoritaire comme le nôtre. La question kurde ne pourra être résolue qu'à petits pas.»

DELPHINE NERBOLLIER



REPÈRES

Les Kurdes en Turquie

- **1920**: le traité de Sèvres prévoit un État kurde.
- **1923**: le traité de Lausanne anéantit les espoirs du peuple kurde. Le Moyen-Orient est divisé en plusieurs pays – notamment la République turque – qui ne prennent pas en compte les droits des Kurdes.
- **1978**: création du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), par Abdullah Öcalan. Organisation armée, le PKK est surtout actif en Turquie (où les Kurdes sont entre 13 et 20 millions), tandis que d'autres guérillas se développent en Iran (7 millions) et en Irak (6 millions). S'y ajoutent 2 millions de Kurdes en Syrie.
- **Février 1999**: capture d'Abdullah Öcalan. Condamné à la réclusion à perpétuité, il est depuis retenu sur une île-prison du nord-ouest de la Turquie.
- **27 juillet 2009**: le président turc, Abdullah Gül, membre de l'AKP, le parti islamiste modéré, admet que la situation de la minorité kurde n'est pas satisfaisante.

Turquie/Projet de libéralisation des émissions en langue kurde

REUTERS

ISTANBUL, 6 septembre 2009

Les autorités turques ont l'intention de continuer à assouplir les restrictions sur l'usage du kurde à la radio et à la télévision, pour développer les droits des minorités et se conformer aux demandes de l'Union européenne, écrit dimanche le grand journal turc Milliyet.

Cette décision s'inscrit dans la politique d'ouverture kurde du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qu'il mène pour répondre aux doléances de la minorité kurde du sud-est de la Turquie, rapporte le quotidien.

Selon un projet de texte de loi, les stations de radio ou chaînes de

télévision privées pourront émettre 24 heures sur 24 au plan national dans une "langue traditionnelle", notamment le kurde, écrit Milliyet, qui cite Mehmet Dadak, l'un des membres de l'instance gouvernementale de l'audiovisuel.

La radio-télévision publique TRT a lancé cette année une chaîne de télévision en kurde.

L'UE, qui a ouvert des négociations sur une adhésion de la Turquie, estime qu'Ankara se doit d'améliorer les droits culturels et politiques des Kurdes, lesquels représentent 17% de la population turque.

Le kurde, langue proche du perse, a été interdite en Turquie jusqu'en 1991.

AFP

TURQUIE: AUTORISATION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT DU KURDE DANS UNE UNIVERSITÉ

ANKARA, 10 sept 2009 (AFP) —

LE CONSEIL turc de l'enseignement supérieur a autorisé jeudi, pour la première fois, l'enseignement de la langue kurde dans une université publique, une mesure s'inscrivant dans le cadre des réformes destinées à mettre fin au conflit kurde, a annoncé un responsable.

L'université Mardin Artuklu, située dans le sud-est à majorité kurde, mettra en place un institut qui proposera un enseignement de deuxième cycle de la langue kurde et aussi du farsi, de l'arabe et du syriaque, a indiqué à la presse Yusuf Ziya Ozcan, directeur du Conseil de l'enseignement supérieur.

"Cette solution englobe le kurde et aussi d'autres langues. C'est ce modèle qui sera utilisé si d'autres universités veulent servir les citoyens qui parlent différentes langues", a déclaré M. Ozcan cité par l'agence Anatolie.

L'objectif de l'institut sera de former des enseignants pour les études de premier cycle, a précisé M. Ozcan.

Après des décennies d'interdiction de la langue kurde, le gouvernement a autorisé ces dernières années, dans le cadre des réformes entreprises en vue d'une adhésion à l'Union européenne, la diffusion d'émissions de radio et de télévision dans cette langue ainsi que son enseignement dans des établissements privés.

Le gouvernement a décidé de prendre des mesures pour tenter de venir à bout de 25 ans d'insurrection séparatiste kurde dans le sud-est du pays, mais ce plan de réformes n'a jusqu'à présent pas été rendu public.

Mais Ankara a toutefois d'ores et déjà exclu une amnistie générale des rebelles du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui ont pris part à la lutte séparatiste.

AFP

IRAK: ATTENTAT CONTRE UN VILLAGE KURDE DANS LE NORD DU PAYS, 23 MORTS

WARDAK (Irak), 10 sept 2009 (AFP)

Au moins 23 personnes ont été tuées et 35 blessées dans l'explosion d'un camion suicide dans la nuit de mercredi à jeudi dans un village kurde au sud-est de Mossoul (nord), selon un nouveau bilan fourni par un responsable du ministère de la Défense.

L'attentat s'est produit dans le village de Wardak, au sud-est de Mossoul (350 km au nord de Bagdad) peu après minuit (21H00 GMT).

Selon le responsable du ministère, la puissance de l'explosion a provoqué l'effondrement d'anciennes maisons du village construites en briques de terre, tuant plusieurs habitants.

Selon un responsable de la police locale, le capitaine Mohammed Jalal, un second kamikaze a été tué par les forces de sécurité avant qu'il ne parvienne à déclencher les explosifs placés dans un second camion.

Un précédent bilan de cet attentat faisait état de 17 morts et de 25 blessés.

L'armée et la police irakiennes ainsi que les Peshmergas kurdes, les forces armées de la région autonome du Kurdistan, ont bouclé la zone après l'attentat.

La région de Mossoul reste l'une des plus violentes en Irak. Les attentats et les assassinats sont quasi-quotidiens dans cette zone, marquée également par de fortes tensions entre les communautés arabes et kurdes.

Par ailleurs, à Mahmoudiya, 30 km au sud de Bagdad, quatre personnes ont été tuées et 29 blessées dans l'explosion d'une bombe sur un marché de la ville, située à 30 km au sud de Bagdad, selon des sources au sein du ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Défense.

A Karrada, un quartier du centre de Bagdad, une bombe a explosé faisant huit blessés, selon la police.

L'Irak connaît depuis août une forte recrudescence des attaques. Mardi, trois



Sur les lieux d'un attentat suicide au camion piégé jeudi à Wardak, à 30 km à l'est de Mossoul dans le nord de l'Irak. le 10 août 2009. L'attentat avait fait 23 morts.

soldats ont été tués à Baiji (100 km au nord de Bagdad), faisant de cette journée la plus meurtrière pour les forces américaines depuis le 10 avril, lorsque cinq soldats avaient été tués à Mossoul dans une attaque suicide. Lundi, 22 personnes ont été tuées dans des attaques dans le pays.

Les soldats américains se sont retirés des villes le 30 juin et ont transféré leur sécurité aux mains des forces de sécurité irakiennes, ce qui a réduit le nombre de leur perte.

L'armée américaine n'effectue désormais plus que des patrouilles en dehors des centres urbains et ne peut y entrer qu'avec l'accord des autorités irakiennes.

Le mois d'août a été le plus sanglant en Irak depuis plus d'un an, marquant une nette dégradation de la sécurité et un défi pour le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki qui aimait à se présenter comme le champion d'un retour au calme.

Au cours de ce mois, 393 civils, 48 policiers et 15 soldats ont été tués, selon des chiffres fournis par les ministères de la Défense, de l'Intérieur et de la Santé.

Le Monde

9 septembre 2009

La Turquie décrite comme un atout stratégique pour l'Europe

Des personnalités européennes lancent un appel pour sauver la perspective de l'adhésion

L'Europe, qui aspire à jouer un rôle de puissance, doit se ressaisir si elle ne veut pas gâcher les opportunités que lui offre la candidature de la Turquie. Celles-ci sont multiples : un relais d'influence auprès du monde musulman, une capacité renforcée de projection en politique étrangère vers des régions diverses comme le Moyen-Orient, le Caucase, l'Asie centrale, autant de zones où se jouent des enjeux stratégiques, notamment pour les approvisionnements en énergie.

L'Europe doit se ressaisir, car à force de laisser le dossier des négociations turques s'enliser, elle est en passe de perdre un partenaire précieux. C'est en substance l'appel lancé, lundi 7 septembre, par un groupe de personnalités politiques européennes, dont le prix Nobel de la paix 2008 et ancien président finlandais Martti Ahtisaari, l'ancien premier ministre français Michel Rocard, et l'ancienne commissaire européenne Emma Bonino. (Bronislaw Geremek, l'ancien ministre polonais, mort en 2008, avait aussi

participé à ce groupe de travail).

L'Europe a décidé, en décembre 2004, de lancer des négociations d'adhésion avec la Turquie. Un pays dont le rang de « candidat » à l'intégration avait été formellement reconnu en 1999 et qui postule au club depuis... 1963. Comment sauver le processus ? Dans son rapport publié lundi 7 septembre, la Commission indépendante sur la Turquie rappelle à quel point les choses semblent aujourd'hui encaimées, avec le blocage de la moitié des chapitres de négociation.

Le texte appelle à sortir du « cercle vicieux » apparu ces dernières années. En effet, à force de recevoir, des messages de rejet ou de réticence vis-à-vis de sa candidature, la Turquie a fini par avoir le sentiment qu'elle ne serait jamais la bienvenue

dans l'Union européenne, même si elle devait remplir un jour tous les critères d'adhésion. Cela a contribué au ralentissement des réformes dans ce pays, mettant fin à une période plus propice (2000-2005) où la perspective d'adhésion agissait comme un puissant moteur de transformation interne. La lenteur des réformes a alimenté en retour l'opposition de certains Européens à l'intégration turque... La boucle est ainsi bouclée.

Pour en sortir, affirme ce rapport, il est de la responsabilité de l'Europe

de revenir... à ses propres engagements et à ses propres textes. C'est-à-dire rétablir sa crédibilité en réaffirmant ce qui avait été approuvé par tous les gouvernements en 2005 : « L'objectif commun des négociations est l'adhésion ». Ce qui d'ailleurs, note le rapport, ne préjuge en rien de leur aboutissement. Du moins le cap serait-il préservé.

« Une excuse populiste »

La Commission indépendante dresse un réquisitoire sévère contre les politiques qui tiennent des discours hostiles à la Turquie à des fins électorales. Elle critique (sans les nommer) Nicolas Sarkozy et la chancelière allemande, Angela Merkel, qui ont prôné un « partenariat privilégié » comme substitut à l'adhésion. C'est là « une excuse populiste », une formule vague dont personne n'a « réussi à expliquer » le contenu exact.

La Turquie s'est alignée en 2008 sur 109 des 124 déclarations communes de l'UE. Allié important, elle participe aux grandes missions européennes en Bosnie, au Kosovo et ses troupes sont présentes en Afghanistan. Sa politique régionale est décrite dans le rapport comme un atout de taille pour l'Europe si celle-ci veut réaliser ses ambitions extérieures. ■

Natalie Nougayrède

la Croix

10 SEPTEMBRE 2009

La Turquie piétine aux portes de l'Union européenne

Une commission indépendante présidée par Martti Ahtisaari, ancien président finlandais et prix Nobel de la paix 2008, et composée de personnalités européennes, dont Michel Rocard et l'ancien commissaire européen Emma Bonino, a rendu hier un rapport sur la question de l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne. Il appelle à « briser le cercle vicieux » dans lequel se trouve le processus d'adhésion.

Où en est le processus de négociation ?

Membre du Conseil de l'Europe depuis 1949, la Turquie frappe aux portes de l'Union européenne depuis cinquante ans. En 1999, le Conseil européen déclare que cet État voisin a vocation à être candidat à l'entrée dans l'UE. En décembre 2004 les chefs d'État et de gouvernement des pays membres décident, à l'unanimité, d'ouvrir le processus de négociations qui démarre effectivement l'année suivante. Pour la Turquie, le chemin à parcourir vers une éventuelle adhésion semble clair : elle doit d'abord remplir une série de critères en matière économique et de droits de l'homme. Quand ces conditions seront remplies, son adhésion sera soumise à l'approbation de l'ensemble des États

membres. Mais, quatre ans après le début de ce long parcours, le processus tourne au ralenti. « Plus de la moitié des 35 chapitres de négociation sont bloqués, soit formellement parce que la Turquie n'a pas mis en œuvre le protocole d'Ankara (NDLR : qui lui donne jusqu'à fin 2009 pour ouvrir ses ports aux bateaux chypriotes), soit informellement par un ou plusieurs États », constate la commission indépendante.

Qui s'oppose à l'adhésion de la Turquie ?

Depuis l'élection de Nicolas Sarkozy en 2007, la France fait partie, avec l'Allemagne, des pays les plus opposés à une éventuelle entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union. Pour Nicolas Sarkozy, non seulement la Turquie ne doit pas y entrer, mais il faudrait même stopper net le processus de négociation. En lieu et place d'une adhésion, Paris et Berlin proposent à Ankara un « partenariat privilégié ». Hors de question, a déjà répondu le chef du gouvernement turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan, qui regrette que « certains pays (aient) adopté une attitude politique dans le processus de négociation ». De toute façon, relève la commission de Martti Ahtisaari,

une telle solution n'apporterait « *que peu de valeur ajoutée au statut actuel (de la Turquie) de membre associé et partenaire d'une union douanière. Aucun pays ne prendrait sur lui d'engager autant de réformes complexes (...) si ce n'était dans le but d'une adhésion complète.* »

La candidature turque est-elle dans l'impasse ?

Même s'il reconnaît que le gouvernement turc doit encore intensifier ses efforts de réforme, le rapport rappelle les progrès accomplis en quatre ans, notamment en matière de renforcement de la démocratie. Or, « *les réactions négatives de certains dirigeants politiques européens* » donnent à la Turquie « *l'impression qu'elle ne serait jamais la bienvenue, même si elle devait remplir*

tous les critères d'adhésion », écrit la commission Ahtisaari. Ce sentiment d'exclusion décourage la dynamique engagée de réformes, dont l'insuffisance alimente en retour l'opposition des Européens à l'adhésion turque, « *bouclant ainsi la boucle d'un cercle vicieux* ». Pour le briser, la Commission invite à un « *changement d'attitude* » des dirigeants européens, mais aussi turcs. Ces derniers doivent par exemple donner des gages sur des sujets comme Chypre. Les premiers, surtout, ne doivent pas claquer la porte au voisin turc. « *Donner sa chance à la Turquie (...) est une question de crédibilité de l'UE, d'intérêt propre et d'équité due à tout pays candidat à l'adhésion* », conclut le rapport, qui rappelle que la négociation ne garantit pas l'adhésion.

THOMAS VAMPOUILLE

Le Monde Vendredi 11 septembre 2009

Menacé de nouvelles sanctions, l'Iran fait une « proposition » aux grandes puissances

Washington va examiner le texte, mais s'alarme de l'avancée des travaux nucléaires iraniens

A lors que la pression s'accroît sur l'Iran à l'approche de l'échéance (fin septembre) que lui a fixée l'administration américaine pour engager un dialogue sur ses activités nucléaires, Téhéran a transmis, mercredi 9 septembre, un texte de « *propositions* » aux grandes puissances.

Les Etats-Unis se sont déclarés prêts à en « *étudier attentivement* » le contenu. Mais ils ont aussi pris soin de conférer un nouveau sentiment d'urgence au dossier nucléaire. Selon Washington, la République islamique serait en mesure de basculer, si elle le décidait, vers la production de matière fissile pour une arme atomique.

Cette mise en garde semblait destinée à rallier des soutiens en vue d'éventuelles nouvelles sanctions internationales contre l'Iran – un scénario auquel la Russie et la Chine s'opposent, pour l'heure, de

la manière la plus ferme. Selon nos informations, le contenu du texte iranien n'apporte rien de consistant ni de nouveau concernant le sujet de fond, à savoir le programme nucléaire et les demandes faites à l'Iran par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU depuis 2006. Il y est question de « *diverses questions mondiales* », a seulement précisé Téhéran.

L'Iran a ainsi semblé vouloir formellement rompre un certain silence, mais sans rien concéder de ses positions antérieures. En avril, après les premières ouvertures faites par Barack Obama à l'Iran, le groupe des six pays (Etats-Unis, Russie, Chine, Royaume-Uni, France et Allemagne) traitant la question nucléaire avait réitéré son offre de coopération faite à la République islamique depuis près de trois ans – une offre en principe conditionnée à la suspension des

activités iraniennes d'enrichissement d'uranium.

La réponse est donc arrivée mercredi, à Téhéran. Le ministre iranien des affaires étrangères, Manouchehr Mottaki, a remis le texte officiel aux ambassadeurs des Six (les Etats-Unis étant représentés par l'ambassadeur suisse, en l'absence de relations diplomatiques bilatérales).

« Carterisé »

Trois jours plus tôt, lors de sa première conférence de presse depuis sa réélection controversée en juin, le président iranien, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, avait réitéré une position exprimée depuis longtemps par l'Iran : le dossier nucléaire est « *clos* » et le pays ne renoncera pas à la technologie dont il s'est doté selon son « *droit inaliénable* ». Ce qui semblait exclure, une fois de plus, un scénario de rapprochement, même si M. Ahmadinejad se disait par ailleurs prêt à un « *débat public* » avec M. Obama.

L'Iran apparaît soucieux de gagner du temps et de désamorcer certaines critiques. La grande incertitude réside dans l'évaluation que fera l'administration Obama des chances d'obtenir une percée diplomatique avec les Iraniens, en sachant que l'avancée des travaux nucléaires crée une situation de fait accompli jugée lourde de dangers, en particulier par les Israéliens.

Le problème est qu'à Téhéran, le durcissement politique et les lour-

des tensions apparues au sein du régime depuis l'été rendent éminemment difficile un quelconque infléchissement. Selon une source proche de l'ONU suivant de près le dossier nucléaire, « *à Téhéran, ils se surveillent tous entre eux et personne n'ose faire un vrai geste vers les Américains* ».

Parallèlement, à Washington, M. Obama sait qu'il doit éviter d'apparaître « *carterisé* », comme le disent certains diplomates, en référence à l'ancien président Jimmy Carter qui, en 1979-1980, avait gagné la réputation d'être trop faible face aux Iraniens.

Mercredi, à Vienne, le représentant américain auprès de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA), Glyn Davies, a déclaré que son pays était « *sérieusement préoccupé devant les efforts délibérés [de l'Iran] pour se réserver, au minimum, l'option de l'arme nucléaire* ».

Pendant ce temps, les signaux envoyés par la Russie et la Chine vont nettement à l'encontre des desiderata américains et européens. Le 2 septembre, à Francfort, lors d'une réunion des Six, les émissaires russe et chinois ont catégoriquement refusé que des sanctions soient discutées fin septembre au niveau des ministres, en marge de l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU. Ils ont même suggéré que les « *gestes* » de l'Iran soient salués dans un texte commun. Une initiative que les Occidentaux ont aussitôt rejetée. ■

Natalie Nougayrède

En Iran, M. Moussavi prône le calme après les arrestations

Mir Hossein Moussavi, chef du mouvement qui conteste en Iran la réélection, le 12 juin, du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a recommandé, mercredi 9 septembre, à ses partisans de rester calmes après l'arrestation, mardi, de plusieurs collaborateurs et alliés réformateurs. Dans un communiqué sur Internet, M. Moussavi estime que l'arrestation d'Alireza Hosseini Behechti et de Morteza Alviri est le « *signe avant-coureur d'autres*

événements terribles (...) Gardez votre calme et restez vigilants, dit-il. Prenez soin de ne pas céder aux provocations. » Pour éviter qu'elle serve de forum à l'opposition, les autorités ont annulé une cérémonie religieuse annuelle prévue cette semaine, à laquelle devait participer l'ex-président réformateur Mohammad Khatami. Mercredi, M. Ahmadinejad a qualifié sa victoire électorale de « *gifle historique* » pour l'Occident.

REUTERS

Kurds in Iraq province threaten to split it in two

MAKHMOUR, Iraq, Sept 5 (Reuters) -

- * *Kurds threaten to walk out of Nineveh council*
- * *Kurd-Arab tensions have allowed al Qaeda to thrive*

IRAQI KURDISH mayor Barzan Said Kaka says he has no choice but to declare independence from the largely Arab-run council of violent Nineveh province -- it's infiltrated with insurgents and killers, he says.

"We hoped to see a new Iraq, with all Iraqis living together but it's not happening," said Kaka, mayor of the run down, mostly Kurdish market town of Makhmour.

"The governing council only cares about Arabs, not Kurds ... And they support those groups that kill our people."

Such accusations are becoming common in the testy stand off between Kurdish and Arab politicians in ethnically-mixed north Iraq, where a row over oil and land has alarmed officials and raised fears it could become the faultline of Iraq's next war.

In one such dispute, Atheel al-Nujaifi, the Arab governor of Nineveh whose inflammatory rhetoric against Kurds won his party a comfortable victory in local polls in January, has so upset mayors in 16 Kurdish areas that they're threatening to secede.

The tensions have been worsened by a determined insurgency that is still killing dozens of Iraqis in gun and bomb attacks as al Qaeda and other groups seek to foment ethnic conflict in their last remaining stronghold in the provincial capital Mosul.

A series of huge bombings last month triggered accusations of blame between Arabs and Kurds, escalating a dispute that has played into the hands of al Qaeda and some former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath party who joined the insurgency.

Atheel, a Sunni, is himself a former Baathist, although members of his al-Hadba party have been targeted by insurgents.

"He's never even acknowledged (insurgents) as terrorists. He calls them resistance fighters and refuses to condemn them," said Kaka. "We're quitting the council ... We have no voice."

Kurds also claim to have been excluded from positions of power in the province and kept out of its decision-making.

Atheel has warned that he will dissolve any local council that tries to break off from the province. He denies accusations of favouritism towards Arabs or links to insurgent groups. He accuses the Kurds of

excluding themselves from the governorate.

"Nothing like what they accuse us of is actually happening," he told Reuters in Mosul, the provincial capital. "There are Turkmen and other non-Arabs in the governing council. But the (Kurdish) ...list are not interacting with us."

"VERY AFRAID"

When Iraqis voted in the Sunni Arab al-Hadba party to Nineveh in January's provincial polls, diplomats predicted it would help soothe the violence by giving Sunni Arabs a voice -- and because many of the attacks were being carried out by former Baathists to whom al-Hadba was expected to appeal.

The previous council had been Kurd dominated because Sunni Arabs boycotted the last polls in 2005, leaving them disenfranchised.

But the violence hasn't stopped and if anything tensions between Kurds and Arabs are worse throughout northern Iraq.

Nineveh's Kurdish areas have been relatively peaceful, although a massive suicide truck bomb in Makhmour in May 2007 killed around 50 people and wounded 70. The town has been quiet since, but residents fear violence could easily return.

"I'm very afraid. If they don't find a solution, there will be ethnic conflict," said Khader Aulla, 66, wearing traditional Kurdish baggy pants and sitting in the shade of his ramshackle shop selling rice, unrefrigerated drinks and plastic goods.

The Kurds are keen to assert claims to disputed land along their border. Arabs in the disputed territories reject the claims.

Massive oil reserves lie at the heart of the broader dispute: the contested areas around the city of Kirkuk are reckoned to contain some 13 percent of Iraq's proven reserves and currently make up about a fifth of its output. Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government are arguing over oil contracts.

And yet, in the verbal tussle between politicians bitterly divided along ethnic lines, it is easy to forget that not all the Iraqis they claim to represent want to take sides.

"I don't know who's right but we don't want more problems," said Mahmoud Selman, 61, a retired Arab soldier.

"This town needs better services -- it looks like it's just suffered an earthquake. That's what I care about," he added, as a man nearby cooled his face on a leak spraying from a water pipe.

REUTERS

Iraq may not pay for Kurdish oil for years -exec

ABERDEEN, Sept 8 (Reuters) - By Tom Bergin

Western oil companies operating in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region may have to wait for years for the government to pay them for the oil they pump, the Chief Executive of one company exploring in the area said.

Talisman Energy (TLM.TO: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) CEO John Manzoni said on Tuesday that the impasse, whereby Norway's DNO International (DNO.OL: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), Turkey's Genel Energy and London-listed Addax Petroleum (AXC.L: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) were pumping tens of millions of dollars worth of oil each month and not being paid for it, was likely to persist.

"Nothing will happen between now and January," he said in reference to Iraqi parliamentary elections due for Jan. 16.

"We'll move gradually to some sort of constructive political agreement ... within the next few years, and it might take that long," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Offshore Europe oil conference.

The Baghdad government and the Kurdish authorities have been unable to agree how to share Iraq's oil revenues, blocking the payments.

DNO and Heritage Oil (HOIL.L: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), which is in the process of acquiring Genel, have told investors that a deal on payments is likely soon.

Last year, Talisman, Canada's third-largest independent oil and gas producer, bought stakes in two oil blocks in the Kurdish region, but since payments are seen to be years off, the company is in no hurry to start pumping yet.

"We will pace our investment with that in mind," Manzoni said.

"If we see movement in the politics then we might deepen investment," he said

Talisman is a major gas producer in the U.S., and Manzoni was not optimistic about the outlook for that business.

"The gas price is very low, and my view is it could stay low for another 12 or 18 months," he said.



SEPTEMBER 6, 2009

FACING CALLS TO DISARM, ANTI-IRANIAN KURDISH MILITIA STICKS TO ITS GUNS

BY ADAM ASHTON,

McClatchy Newspapers

QANDIL MOUNTAINS, Iraq - A noose is tightening around the group that calls itself the last armed resistance to Iran's Islamic republic, but the Kalashnikov-carrying guerrillas are refusing to lay down their weapons and leave their camouflaged outposts in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.

Washington has frozen the assets of the Kurdistan Free Life Party, or PJAK, an anti-Iranian militia that at one point had an informal intelligence-sharing relationship with the American military, and Iraq has shut down its political activities. Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government also is pushing the group to disarm.

Iran is cooperating with Iraq and Turkey in curbing the group, but continues to launch missile strikes at PJAK-controlled territory inside Iraq. One assault struck inside Iraq on Aug. 23, an Iraqi Kurdish military commander said.

PJAK is "killing people in Iran and hiding in our country," said Sami al-Aska'i, a close adviser to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. "The government wishes to disarm this group by peaceful efforts, but if we are obliged to use force, we will use it."

PJAK's isolation is beginning to resemble that of the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, another anti-Iranian group that shared intelligence with the U.S. and had a refuge in Iraq until this year, when the Iraqi government moved to take down its camps. Unlike the MEK, however, PJAK intends to stick to its guns.

Interviewed in their camps in the Qandil Mountains, a historic retreat for Kurdish independence movements since the 1960s, PJAK leaders are defiant.

"Sometimes we've been asked to disarm, but we don't take those requests into consideration," said Agir Shaho, 31, a PJAK commander and member of the organization's seven-person board of coordinators, flanked by armed guards. "If we do what they're asking, we won't have freedom."

The group says it's killed hundreds of Iranian police and soldiers since 2004 in raids on their outposts. Inside Iraq, Shaho and several hundred PJAK fighters find cover in stone houses topped with plastic tarps and disguised with dead tree branches. They move across the border on foot, and grow their own food in irrigated gardens.

PJAK is an offshoot of the larger and better-funded Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which has fought in Turkey - often finding sanctuary in northern Iraq - since the 1980s in clashes that have killed tens of thousands of

people. They share the objective of establishing Kurdish autonomy in a region that covers parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.

The PKK focuses on Turkey and PJAK on Iran. Short of independence, the militias want recognition, minority rights and more self-government for Kurds.

PJAK's redoubt is about 150 miles northwest of the northern Iraqi city of Irbil. To reach it, a visitor must drive past three Kurdish government checkpoints and one controlled by PJAK's sister party, the PKK. Young militia members inspect identification cards and report visitors by radio to officers deeper in the mountains. Well-paved roads maintained by the PKK give way to riveted dirt trails that lead to PJAK's bases, several hours by car from the last PKK checkpoint.

Snow blankets their terrain in winter months. In the summer, tall golden grass covers the peaks. Dirt roads skirt about 10 villages where satellite dishes poke out from ramshackle roofs.

A giant portrait of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned in Turkey, covers a hillside. PKK members, half of them women, till farmland along the way to the Iranian border.

The two militias wear similar uniforms - green jackets with matching loose-fitting pants, tied with a sash at the waist. They've also created a lush rose garden and cemetery in the mountains where they honor dozens of their "martyrs" - men and women who were killed in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

PJAK and the PKK have been largely quiet this summer, a change from the past few years when PJAK attacks in Iran and PKK assaults in Turkey led Ankara, Tehran and Baghdad to collaborate on border threats. PJAK members say their territory has been bombed by Turkish jets and shelled by Iranian artillery. The two countries have cooperated against the PKK and PJAK since late 2006.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will confront strongly any terrorist phenomena," said Hassan Kazimi Qummi, the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad, in a written response to questions from McClatchy Newspapers. "There is cooperation between (Iraq and Iran) and the region concerning efforts to secure the borders."

Tehran occasionally blames the U.S. for funding PJAK, as it did in state media reports about strikes against PJAK outposts in Iran in late August. Qummi wouldn't make that link, except in an indirect suggestion that the U.S. had supported PJAK in the past, when McClatchy asked him about the group.

Former PJAK and former U.S. officials said the U.S. had hoped to develop a rela-

tionship with the militia, but the guerrilla assaults by the PKK in Turkey provoked a crisis in U.S.-Turkish relations, and the Bush administration opted to back its ally Turkey.

The U.S. sent low-level military delegations to meet with PJAK early in the Iraq war, around 2004, to gather intelligence about Iran, said Osman Ocalan, a PJAK founder and brother of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan who defected from both groups.

A former top U.S. military official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the contacts remain classified, confirmed Ocalan's assertions.

Ocalan said the U.S. and PJAK discreetly exchanged information for a time, but he characterized the relationship as "weak." Another current senior leader in the PKK, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect his safety, said that Washington continues to have a liaison with PJAK. He refused to elaborate.

"America wanted to get involved with PJAK to annoy Iran, and use PJAK as a winning card in the conflict between Iran and America," said Osman Ocalan, who now lives in the Iraqi Kurdish city of Sulaimaniya. "PJAK has activities inside Iran, and also they have followers, and that was very seductive for the American side."

Shaho, the guerrilla commander, and Ocalan, the defector, each said that the Obama administration's February move to freeze PJAK's assets and condemn its attacks would have little direct impact on the group.

PJAK's leader, Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi, lives in Germany, and the organization's assets are thought to be in Europe or gathered from Kurds living in Iran.

PJAK "absolutely does not put its money in the American banks, and that decision and announcement is not real," Ocalan said.

Shaho denied that the American government ever assisted PJAK in any way.

"If we really had support from America, we could do much more. If we had help, we wouldn't stay here," said Shaho, sitting in a hardscrabble village a few miles from the Iranian border.

The PKK and PJAK could become more aggressive this month. PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan is expected to issue new orders for his organization within weeks, which could include lifting what has been a de facto cease-fire while peace talks progressed between the PKK, Ankara and Baghdad, said Roj Welat, a spokesman for an umbrella organization to which PJAK and the PKK belong.

Shaho said his organization had scaled back its offensive operations to give space for

Iran's June elections and July votes for Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government.

The lull, however, shows signs of snapping before the militias plan to resume their offensive. Iran on Aug. 23 announced that it had killed 26 PJAK members in northwest Iran. It fired a missile strike inside PJAK turf in Iraq in late July, as well.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders have constricted PJAK's political activity, but are unlikely to use military force to dislodge the group because many Kurds are at least sympathetic to PJAK's cause. Still, the Iraqi Kurdish govern-

ment blames PJAK for Iran's cross-border attacks, not Tehran.

"We do not want to be caught in the middle of these fires," said Falah Mustafa Bakir, the foreign minister for the Kurdish Regional Government, which has banned PJAK the PKK from opening political offices in its provinces. "So long as we have these armed groups, we won't have a peaceful and secure future."

Shaho, the guerrilla leader, views the coordination against his group as Baghdad's Arab-led government bowing to Iran. Al-Maliki and many leaders from his Dawa Party sought

exile in Iran for years before Saddam Hussein's fall.

"Everyone knows that the Iranian and Iraqi governments are connected," said Shaho. "Those who like Maliki should like Iran, because their governments are tied."

(Ashton reports for the Modesto (Calif.) Bee. McClatchy Newspapers special correspondent Yaseen Taha contributed to this report from Sulaimaniya, Iraq.)

ARAB NEWS

september 6, 2009

Arabs demonstrate against US plan for Kurdish

Bushra Juhi

Associated Press

BAGHDAD: Hundreds of Sunni Arabs opposed to the presence of Kurdish troops in disputed areas of northern Iraq demonstrated on Saturday against a plan to deploy a mixed force of American, Kurdish and Iraqi soldiers in the area.

More than 300 people in the Sunni-dominated town of Hawija, once an insurgent stronghold, gathered in a stadium to protest the inclusion of Kurdish troops in these patrols.

The split between Iraq's majority Arabs and the Kurdish minority, which controls a semiautonomous region in the north, is one of the most significant long-term threats to the country's stability, US and Iraqi officials say.

Sunni Arabs fear the Kurds are looking to add Arab lands to their semiautonomous region.

The top US military commander in the country believes Al-Qaeda in Iraq is taking advantage of tensions between the Iraqi army and the Kurdish militia, the peshmerga, to carry out attacks on villages not guarded by either side.

To try to fill the gap, Gen. Ray Odierno last month proposed the idea of a mixed force that would include US troops serving in an oversight role to help Kurdish and Iraqi soldiers work together to secure areas along that fault line.

The issue has come to the fore with a series of deadly bombings targeting villages outside the tense city of Mosul, where Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni insurgents remain active despite numerous US-Iraqi military operations.

Odierno said the deployment of the US-Iraqi-Kurdish protection forces would start in Ninevah province, which includes Mosul, then extend to Kirkuk and to Diyala province north of the capital.



Protesters gather in Hawija to protest a proposed joint military presence in disputed areas of northern Iraq, Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009.

The plan, which would represent a departure from a security pact that called for Americans to pull back from populated areas on June 30, has yet to be approved.

Odierno said a high-level meeting between Iraqi, Kurdish and US officials would be held in September, but the US military could not confirm if the meeting had occurred or provide other details about the progress of the proposal.

The demonstrators in Hawija, west of the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk, held banners that called the plan a

violation of the constitution and the security agreement, which took effect on Jan. 1 and replaced the UN mandate for foreign forces.

Resentment against the plan is building among Arabs in the town and other areas that are dominated by Arabs, said the head of Hawija's city council, Hussein Al-Jubouri.

"Arabs in this and other disputed areas reject this proposal because they say it will provoke sectarian divisions among residents, and it is a violation of the constitution," he said.

REUTERS

Six Turkish soldiers die in southeast attacks

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, Sept 8 (Reuters) -

* Six soldiers die in two attacks in southeast

* Attacks come as government moves to boost Kurdish rights

KURDISH REBELS killed six Turkish soldiers in two attacks on Tuesday in the mainly Kurdish southeast of the country, security sources said.

The attacks come as the government is preparing reforms to address decades-old Kurdish complaints of discrimination which it hopes will erode support for the separatist rebels, and combat violence and poverty in the southeast.

Opposition parties have criticised the measures, particularly in view of continued soldier deaths in the region.

"The bullets which threaten our security forces and our soldiers will never harm the unity of our country of 72 million and will not be allo-

wed to disrupt the peace process," Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said late on Tuesday according to Turkish media.

"The peace process, democratisation process will continue with the same determination," he said.

Nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the 25-year conflict between the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Turkish military.

In one of Tuesday's attacks, five soldiers were killed and five others wounded in a PKK ambush in the province of Siirt. Five rebels were also killed in the fighting.

Security sources said troop reinforcements and helicopters were being sent to the region where sporadic clashes were continuing.

The other attack, killing one soldier and seriously wounding another, occurred in Hakkari province, where four soldiers died in a blast at the end of last month

PKK Attacks Kill Soldiers and Damage the Kurdish Initiative

By: Emrullah Uslu

As the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has been working on a comprehensive plan to resolve the Kurdish issue, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has broken its self-declared unilateral ceasefire and resumed its terrorist attacks. In two days, PKK attacks claimed ten Turkish soldiers' lives, seven of them in Siirt, one in Hakkari and the other two in Van provinces.

Turkish public opinion is divided into two camps on whether to support the government's Kurdish initiative. According to the A&G polling company 45.6 percent support the peace process while 48.4 are opposed. While an overwhelming majority in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir support the government's plan, (86.7) only 33 percent of Turks living in cities where Turkish nationalism is overwhelmingly dominant i.e., Trabzon and Manisa, are supportive (Aksam, August 25).

The Turkish press linked the PKK's attacks with the Kurdish initiative. Similar headlines were used across the nationalist and liberal press. For instance, the nationalist daily HaberTurk preferred "bullets to the Kurdish initiative," while the liberal daily Taraf, which is one of the most prominent supporters of the Kurdish initiative, preferred to use "bloody intervention in the Kurdish initiative" (HaberTurk, Taraf, September 9).

Political observers are convinced that with its recent attacks the PKK will at least block the peace process (Vatan, September 10). "If the PKK does not want to lay down its arms and contribute to the peace process, the only option left is the Sri Lankan model, which suggests wiping out the whole organization and the leadership," Turkish intellectuals argue (Bugun, September 10).

The PKK issued a press statement claiming responsibility for the killings. In the statement, aimed at countering the growing criticism, the PKK stated that "despite the PKK's unilateral ceasefire, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) has intensified its operations. In many



Murat Karayilan, the acting leader of the PKK

occasions PKK militants have successfully avoided clashes, however, the recent clash in Siirt province took place because the TSK's operations to eliminate our units forced the PKK militants to clash that resulted 7 deaths" (ANF News Agency, September 9). In the last few years the PKK has issued numerous similar statements blaming the TSK for armed clashes. However, this fails to address whether any state would stop its counter-terrorist operations when a terrorist organization actively maintains its units in the country.

In addition, just two days before the intensified clashes between the PKK and the TSK, Murat Karayilan, the acting leader of the PKK demanded that the Turkish government give the imprisoned leader of the PKK Abdullah Ocalan's roadmap to the PKK. The roadmap was prepared by Ocalan and submitted to its lawyers at the end of August, but as part of prison procedure it was withheld by the prosecutor. Karayilan claimed that "hiding the roadmap will harm the political environment. Without the roadmap the process cannot go further. I should openly say that [hiding the roadmap from the PKK] would end the ceasefire. It is up to them to determine whether they will provide it" (ANF News Agency, September 7).

The recent PKK attacks, however, has sent shockwaves across the country, which might reduce public support for the peace process. Reacting to the news, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan defined the attack as "sabotage to the democratization plan," and vowed not to back down from the Kurdish initiative. "I want to state as clearly as possi-

ble, that bullets fired at our security forces and our soldiers will not halt this democratization process, which is intended to create unity among our 72 million countrymen," he said (Today's Zaman, September 10).

One of the leading figures in the AKP, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc, has also supported Erdogan's stance by saying that, "we should not be emotional about the lost soldiers. In order to avoid further losses we will take risks and continue with our plan to resolve the Kurdish question" (www.cnnturk, September 9).

The two main opposition parties have harshly criticized the government's initiative, claiming that the plan will not end the decades-long terrorist problem in Turkey. The deaths of soldiers at the hands of the PKK will only fuel the opposition's claims and potentially stimulate public hostility against the initiative. Devlet Bahçeli, the Chairman of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) replied to Erdogan's "sabotage" argument by saying that the democratization process itself is "sabotaging the security forces' determination, sacrifice, and belief in ending terrorism" (www.cnnturk, September 9). MHP's Deputy Chairman Mehmet Sandir directly linked the recent deaths of the soldiers with the Kurdish initiative. Sandir said that the "recent martyrs will be remembered as 'martyrs of the Kurdish initiative'" (ANKA, September 9).

The recent terrorist attacks certainly damaged the Kurdish initiative and will potentially reduce public support. It especially gave "evidence" to the opposition parties that vehemently oppose the plan, and might encourage them to further undermine the process. Perhaps the PKK itself is also looking for ways to end the Kurdish initiative. The overwhelming majority of Kurdish people want to end the clashes, which in turn applies pressures on the PKK. Nonetheless, the Kurdish initiative has created a political environment that may not necessarily serve the PKK's interests.

Iran moves closer to nuclear weapon

WASHINGTON

U.S. asserts Tehran has enough fuel to achieve a 'breakout capacity'

BY DAVID E. SANGER,
WILLIAM BROAD
AND MARK MAZZETTI

American intelligence agencies have concluded in recent months that Iran has now created enough nuclear fuel to make a rapid, if risky, sprint for a nuclear weapon.

But in a series of briefings to President Barack Obama, they have concluded that the country is still holding off on taking the last critical steps needed to design a sophisticated bomb.

In the first public acknowledgment of the new intelligence findings, the American ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency declared Wednesday that Iran now had what he called a "possible breakout capacity" if it decided to enrich its stockpile of uranium, converting it to bomb-grade material.

The statement by the ambassador, Glyn Davies, was intended to put pressure on American allies to move toward far more severe sanctions against Iran this month, perhaps including a cutoff of gasoline to the country, if it fails to take up Mr. Obama's invitation for direct negotiations. But it could also complicate the administration's efforts to persuade an increasingly impatient Israeli government to give diplomacy more time to work and hold off from a military strike against Iran's facilities.

In interviews over the past two months, intelligence and military officials and members of the Obama administration have said they are convinced that Iran has made significant progress on uranium enrichment. But the officials said they could only speculate on why Iran has apparently not restarted an effort to actually design a nuclear weapon, one of the final steps needed before it could claim to be the world's newest nuclear power.

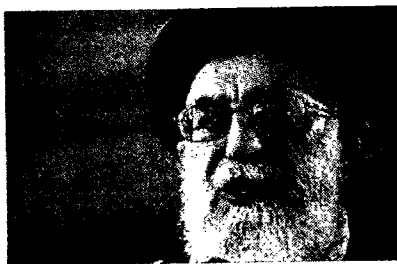
It is unclear how many months — or even years — it would take Iran to complete the final design work, and build a weapon that could fit atop its long-range missiles. That question has been the subject of a series of sharp, behind-the-scenes exchanges between the Israelis and top American intelligence and military officials, dating back nearly two years.

While there is little doubt inside the U.S. government that Iran's ultimate

goal is to create a weapons capability, there is some skepticism about whether an Iranian government that is distracted by an internal power struggle would take that risky step and how quickly it could overcome remaining technological hurdles.

But Israel draws potentially more dire scenarios from the same set of facts. Its government disputes the American assessment that Iran's design work has been suspended for nearly six years.

In classified exchanges, it has cited evidence that the weapons-design effort resumed in 2005, at the order of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khome-



CAREN FIROUZ/REUTERS

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been accused of ordering Iran's program to resume.

nei. American officials say that evidence is circumstantial and point out that the Israelis have not produced a copy of the alleged order or other convincing evidence.

"We're all looking at the same set of facts," a senior Israeli intelligence official said on a recent visit to Washington, talking about the interchanges with Mr. Obama's national security team. "We are interpreting them quite differently than the White House does."

At the core of the dispute is the "breakout capacity" that Mr. Davies referred to on Wednesday in his first presentation as ambassador to the I.A.E.A., the U.N. nuclear watchdog. The phrase refers to a nonnuclear nation's ability to race for a completed bomb before the world could react, much as North Korea did six years ago.

The Israelis have argued that there could be little or no warning time — especially if Iran has hidden facilities — and have charged that in the aftermath of Iraq, the American intelligence agencies are being far too cautious.

As American and Israeli officials expected, Iran on Wednesday turned over to European nations what it called a new set of "proposals" for negotiations. American officials said that they had not read them, but that they expected the Iranian documents would not go far

beyond a proposal last year that called for talks but excluded the possibility of Iran's suspending its production of uranium.

Mr. Obama will be grappling in coming weeks with whether to continue with his policy of trying to engage the government in Tehran or whether to increase pressure on Iran through additional sanctions.

In making those decisions, Mr. Obama will also have to sift through what administration officials say is conflicting evidence about the stability and intentions of the Iranian government following the protests that erupted after the presidential elections there in June.

U.S. administration officials are debating whether the Iranian leadership is so preoccupied with its internal problems that it is effectively paralyzed when it comes to negotiating with the West — or, for that matter, in determin-

U.S. officials said they could only speculate on why Iran has apparently not restarted an effort to design a weapon.

ing how aggressively to push ahead with its nuclear program.

At the same time, administration officials said in interviews that they believed that Mr. Obama's offer to negotiate without preconditions had thrown the divided leadership in Iran off track and had built up credibility with allies — and with Russia and China — if Mr. Obama began to press for tougher sanctions.

The intelligence updates for Mr. Obama follow the broad outlines of the conclusions delivered to President George W. Bush in 2007, as part of a National Intelligence Estimate written after espionage agencies pierced Iran's military computer networks and discovered evidence that the country had halted its weapons-design effort four years earlier.

Those officials say that, like their predecessors in the White House, they have come to the conclusion that the hardest part of the bomb-making process for Iran lies in the enrichment of uranium — a step the country now appears to have mastered, according to international inspectors, despite a recent report that the country's production slowed slightly over the summer.

Over the past two decades, accurate intelligence about the progress of Iran's weapons programs has been notoriously poor. Much of the country's early activity was missed for nearly 18 years, until a dissident group revealed the existence of enrichment efforts.

Both the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate and the recent updates for Mr. Obama, according to officials familiar with their contents, are filled with caveats that Iran could be conducting uranium enrichment or weapons-design work at remote locations that have eluded detection.

Truck bomb kills 25 in northern Iraq

BAGHDAD

BY MARC SANTORA

A huge truck explosion in a small Kurdish village in northern Iraq on Thursday left scores dead and wounded and raised concerns that insurgents were exploiting ethnic tensions and political wrangling to establish new bases for strikes in other parts of the country.

The blast, in Wardak, outside the divided and violent city of Mosul, killed 25 people, Kurdish officials said, and was so powerful that it flattened a dozen houses. Residents worked through the night to pull victims from the rubble and treat the 43 wounded residents.

The death toll might have been worse, officials said, had they not stopped a second truck packed with explosives. The driver of that vehicle, they said, was shot after arousing the suspicions of Kurdish peshmerga forces, who provide security for the area.

Wardak is a tiny village, with only about 300 houses, most of which are made of mud with wood ceilings. Three sides of the village are protected by sand berms, with a river providing a fourth barrier. Nevertheless, two suicide bombers drove through the river under the cover of night, arriving shortly after midnight, local officials said.

"I was in my house when I heard shooting," said Amjad Kamel, 49. "There was more shooting and then I heard a huge explosion."

His roof collapsed, he said, and in the darkness it seemed to him as if he had been swept away in a sandstorm.

Many people in the village were sleeping on their rooftops, trying to keep cool in the extreme heat of the Iraqi summer, and local officials said that was fortunate because it allowed many to escape being crushed when their houses collapsed.

Jalal Talabani, Iraq's president and the highest ranking Kurdish member of



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Damage on Thursday from a suicide truck bomb in the Kurdish village of Wardak outside the divided city of Mosul. The blast raised fears of new strife in the autonomous region.

the government, released a statement condemning the killing.

Security officials said that in recent weeks, extremists have been seeking to aggravate the already tense relations between the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and the largely autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan in the north. On Wednesday, eight people were killed in the northern city of Kirkuk when their car was blown up, though the local police said they believed the car had

been meant to be used in a suicide attack and had exploded early.

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of Parliament, said political fighting between Kurdish leaders and the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki was the main reason that security in Nineveh Province, where the bombing took place, has remained a problem.

"No security can be maintained in such an unstable political atmosphere," he said. "Terrorists exploit such situ-

ations."

Even as the Americans prepare to withdraw from Iraq, they are trying to refocus on the northern region, particularly the boundary between Kurdistan and the rest of the country, which they call the fault line.

Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the American commander, said there have been discussions about forming joint patrols in the north, but that no agreement had been reached.

"One thing that's been clear in the discussions we've had is that all parties involved are concerned about Al Qaeda and the fact that they're exploiting the disputed areas," he said in an interview this week. "And everyone wants to stop Al Qaeda's capability to exploit these areas."

Abeer Mohammed and Steven Lee Myers contributed reporting from Baghdad and a reporter for The New York Times contributed reporting from Mosul.



LE KURDE POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS DANS UN THÉÂTRE NATIONAL TURC

ANKARA, 22 sept 2009 (AFP) —

Des dialogues en langue kurde seront pour la première fois présentés au public d'un théâtre national turc, brisant un nouveau tabou en Turquie où l'usage de cette langue était autrefois banni, rapporte mardi l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La pièce "Vivre la mort", du célèbre écrivain turc Orhan Asena, traite des vendettas et des "crimes d'honneurs", traditions féodales particulièrement répandues dans le sud-est anatolien peuplé majoritairement de Kurdes, rapporte l'agence.

La pièce sera jouée en turc mais contiendra des dialogues en kurde, car elle se déroule dans une zone kurde, a indiqué son metteur en scène, Tamer Levent, cité par l'agence.

La première représentation aura lieu le 1er octobre à Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est, selon les autorités locales.

Le gouvernement turc prépare depuis des mois une série de mesures démocratiques en faveur de la communauté kurde - environ 12 des 71 millions d'habitants en Turquie - pour tenter de mettre fin à 25 ans d'insurrection et de conflit avec cette minorité.

Elles devraient être présentées au Parlement après la fin des vacances parlementaires, le 1er octobre.

Pour renforcer ses chances d'adhérer à l'Union européenne, la Turquie a levé ces dix dernières années les restrictions sur l'usage du kurde, interdit cependant dans la fonction publique.

Le pays a franchi une nouvelle étape dans son ouverture démocratique en faveur des Kurdes en lançant au début de l'année une chaîne de télévision publique avec des émissions entièrement en kurde.

The State

september 10, 2009

Kurds demand security after bomb kills 19 in Iraq

By DAVID RISING Associated Press Writer

Kurdish lawmakers demanded the government step up security in northern Iraq after a suicide truck bomb flattened a neighborhood in a small village Thursday, killing 19 people and injuring 30 others in the most recent in a spate of attacks.

Two suicide truck bombers targeted the Shiite Kurdish village of Wardek, about 35 miles (55 kilometers) southeast of Mosul just after midnight.

Local security forces fired on the driver of one truck when he refused to stop, but he was still able to detonate his bomb. The second assailant in the other explosives-laden truck was shot and killed before his bomb exploded, according to local officials and villagers.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing, but it bore the hallmarks of al-Qaida in Iraq and other Sunni insurgents who remain active in Mosul and surrounding areas in Ninevah province - a region where U.S. commanders have warned that insurgents appear to be trying to stoke an Arab-Kurdish conflict.

It follows several other deadly bombings in small villages of ethnic and religious minorities, indicating that insurgents are seeking out relatively undefended targets to maximize casualties as the strapped Iraqi army focuses its efforts on more central areas. Members of Iraqi minority groups are bearing the brunt of the violence.

"The ongoing terrorist and criminal acts in Ninevah are aimed again at the Kurds, Turkomen, Shiites and Yazidis - they are ethnic cleansing operations in which hundreds of innocent people have been killed," Abdul-Muhsin al-Saadoun, a lawmaker of the Kurdistan Alliance parliamentary bloc, said at a press conference in Baghdad after the attack.

"We call on the federal government to take the necessary measures to prevent further attacks, find the perpetrators and bring them to justice."

Insurgents in northern Iraq, who have maintained a stronghold in the city of Mosul, have frequently targeted remote villages and towns that depend on small local security forces for protection.

The violence that continues to plague Iraq's north and the capital has forced the government in Baghdad to acknowledge gaps in security.

In an indication of the challenges ahead in restoring confidence and

security, the government of the semiautonomous Kurdish region announced the arrest of the head of neighboring Ninevah's provincial intelligence service on Thursday, Brig. Abdul-Rahman Ali, on accusations he was directly involved in the planning of an Aug. 13 bombing near Mosul.

The Interior Ministry said it was not aware of his arrest.

He is accused of involvement in a double suicide bombing that devastated a cafe packed with young people, killing 21 people, in Sinjar, a city near the Syrian border dominated by members of the Kurdish-speaking Yazidi religious group.

He was arrested after four other people being held in connection with the bombing said he had ordered the attack, the Kurdish government intelligence service said.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have identified the split between Iraq's majority Arabs and the Kurdish minority as a greater long-term threat to Iraq's stability than the Sunni-Shiite conflict.

At the heart of the dispute is the oil-rich city of Kirkuk as well as villages in Ninevah province like Wardek that the Kurds want to incorporate into their semiautonomous area despite opposition from Arabs and the minority Turkomen ethnic group.

Following the bombing, Wardek residents picked through the ruins, pulling out what possessions they could and loading them onto pickup trucks.

The villagers, Shiite Kurds from a small religious sect, blamed Sunni al-Qaida in Iraq for the attack.

"I'm certain that we were targeted by al-Qaida extremists as they consider us renegades," said one resident, 53-year-old Haso Narmo.

In violence elsewhere, three successive bombs exploded at a popular market in the city of Mahmoudiya, south of Baghdad, killing four people and wounding 30, an Iraqi military officer in the area said. The officer did not want to be identified because he is not allowed to release information publicly.

Two others were killed and 20 injured when a bomb exploded in the main market of the nearby provincial capital Hillah, according to Mahmoud Abdul-Rhida, a local health official.

StarTribune

september 13, 2009

Kurdish policeman's family killed in Iraq's north as Kurdish-Arab tensions build

By David Rising,

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD - Gunmen killed a Kurdish policeman's wife and three young children with execution-style shots to the head Sunday as they slept in their home in the northern city of Kirkuk, where tension is building between Arabs and Kurds over land and oil.

Police Sgt. Omed Abdul-Hamid had already left for work when the gunmen burst into the house and shot the woman and children as they lay sleeping together on a mattress on the floor, police Brig. Gen. Sarhad Qadir said.

In vivid crime scene photos released by police, a 2-year-old boy could be seen

lying on his back to the right of his mother with his head on a pillow, his face caked with blood where he had been shot. The boy's two sisters, ages 6 and 9, lay to the left of their mother; all three were face down and shot in the back of the head.

At the house later in the day, Abdul-Hamid sat by his doorway weeping, unable to talk.

U.S. commanders have warned that insurgents are trying to exploit tension in Kirkuk and elsewhere in Iraq's north between Arabs and Kurds. The potential for conflict between them over land and oil poses a greater long-term threat to Iraq's stability than the Sunni-Shiite conflict that nearly plunged the country into civil war in 2006 and 2007, U.S.

and Iraqi officials say.

Though nobody claimed responsibility for the killing of Abdul-Hamid's family, the police sergeant had recently been involved in raids on suspected insurgents' homes, according to Qadir. Nothing had been stolen in the home, he said, also suggesting insurgents were behind the killings. Three gunmen are believed to have been involved, he added.

The oil-rich city of Kirkuk has been at the heart of the dispute between Arabs and Kurds.

Kurds want to incorporate the city, along with villages in the next-door province of Ninevah, into their semiautonomous region in northern Iraq, despite opposition from Arabs and the minority

Turkomen ethnic group.

Abdul-Hamid is one of the tens of thousands of Kurds who were forced out of the area under Saddam Hussein's massive resettlement effort to Arabize the region, Qadir said.

He, like thousands of others, returned after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 toppled Saddam's regime, and there is now an uneasy coexistence of about 850,000 Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen - an ethnic Turkish minority - in Kirkuk.

Arif Taifoor, the Kurdish deputy speaker of Iraq's parliament, issued a statement unrelated to Sunday's attack in which he called for all Arabs who had been resettled in the region to be returned to their original homes. He blamed them for being the cause of recent violence and instability in the region.

"The evidence for this is the increase of terrorist operations aimed against citizens of the province," he said in a statement. "We demand the authorities ... hasten the return of all Arab families who immigrated to the province to where they originally lived."

After a series of horrific bombings in August that targeted non-Arab minorities in the north of the country, the top U.S. commander in Iraq proposed the idea of deploying U.S. troops alongside Iraqi and Kurdish forces to help increase security in the region.

Gen. Ray Odierno suggested the deployment of the U.S.-Iraqi-Kurdish forces could start in Ninevah province, which includes the restive city of Mosul, and then extend to Kirkuk and to Diyala province north of Baghdad.

The move to deploy U.S. troops there, which has not been implemented, would represent a step back from a security pact that saw Americans pull out from populated areas - including cities, villages and localities - by June 30.

Elsewhere in Iraq on Sunday, a civilian contractor was shot and killed on an American military base in Tikrit and a U.S. soldier was detained in the incident, said Maj. Derrick Cheng, a public affairs officer.

Houston-based KBR confirmed in a short statement that the person killed at Camp Speicher was one of its employees. The investigation into the incident is ongoing, and no further details were immediately available.



september 17, 2009

Biden: If Iraqis move up troop withdrawal deadline, U.S. will abide by it

ABC News

"Whatever the Iraqi people decide, we will abide by it," Biden told reporters in Baghdad.

On his third and final day in Iraq, Vice President Biden said the United States remains committed to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on troop withdrawal deadlines, but said that it is up to the Iraqis to decide if they want to speed up that departure.

"Whatever the Iraqi people decide, we will abide by it," Biden told reporters in Baghdad.

The vice president said there is nothing the U.S. military or political representatives have seen to suggest that the agreed upon deadlines would not be met. The agreement calls for the U.S. will withdrawal U.S. combat brigades by the end of August 2010 and all remaining U.S. troops by the end of 2011.

Biden said it was clear in all of his meetings that the Iraqi political leadership understands how critical the January election is to Iraq's future and said they are committed to a transparent and legitimate election.

Asked about the security situation and recent violence in Iraq, Biden said that if these "god awful" and "spectacular" attacks had happened four years ago, it would be a very different situation.

Biden ate lunch with American troops at Camp Liberty today, posing for pictures and shaking hands with servicemen and women.

Later the vice president traveled to northern Iraq to meet with Kurdish leaders and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani.

As Biden was greeted by Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish Regional Government, he recalled a planned visit to Irbil in July that was scrapped because of severe dust storms.

"So good to see you. Thank you for having me. It's an honor to be here. I didn't bring a sandstorm this time," the vice president said.

After his meeting with Barzani, Biden touted the "posi-



US Vice President Joe Biden, left, and President of the Kurdish controlled part of Iraq Masoud Barzani talk during a press conference in Irbil, 350 kilometers (217 miles) north of Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, Sept. 17 2009. AP Photo

tive activity" taking place in the region, including building and development.

He noted that Barzani was "negotiating good faith" with his political counterparts in Baghdad his colleagues in Baghdad on a number of outstanding political issues.

"He knows, and we all know, these are difficult issues. If they weren't, they would have been resolved a long time ago," Biden said.

Biden said the United States "fully understands, recognizes, and supports" the sovereign Iraqi government and is committed to a united Iraq.

"We stand ready to continue this partnership with President Barzani and the other leaders of Iraq -- all those who are willing to make this country safer -- and to take the concrete, although difficult steps that still remain to ensure Iraq's long-term success and unity," the vice president said.

Coopération militaire: les Kurdes courtisent la France

Par Georges Malbrunot

DES ARMES FRANÇAISES réclamées au Kurdistan! Alors que les accrochages, au nord de l'Irak, sont de plus en plus fréquents entre Kurdes et Arabes, les responsables kurdes ont multiplié, ces derniers mois, les tentatives d'approche pour que Paris entame une coopération militaire avec les peshmergas, ces miliciens qui assurent la sécurité dans les provinces kurdes.

« On nous a demandé de

l'équipement militaire, mais aussi des formations en France pour leurs hommes », affirme au Figaro un diplomate, qui ajoute : « Nous bottons en touche à chacune de leurs demandes, en leur conseillant de passer par le gouvernement central à Bagdad, qui relaiera leurs requêtes. Ces demandes nous mettent dans l'embarras, compte tenu des amitiés kurdes de Bernard Kouchner (le ministre des Affaires étrangères, ndr) et de son vif intérêt pour le développement du Kurdistan

».

A Bagdad, le Premier ministre, Nouri al-Maliki, s'oppose aux aspirations autonomistes kurdes. Mais grâce à l'argent du pétrole dont ils disposent, ces derniers cherchent à renforcer leurs positions, avant la fin du retrait militaire américain d'Irak, au plus tard fin 2011.

Jusqu'à présent, la coopération entre Paris et les Kurdes se limitait aux échanges de renseignements. Depuis 2007, la France dispose d'un consulat à

Erbil, où des entreprises françaises participent au boom économique local. Mais en matière d'armement, comme de pétrole, la position de Paris est claire: "ne faisons rien qui puisse fâcher le gouvernement central à Bagdad". Normal: la France, même si elle reconnaît le fait kurde, reste fermement attachée à l'unité de l'Irak. Et elle négocie depuis des mois d'importants contrats pétroliers et militaires avec Bagdad.

**TRIBUNE
DE GENÈVE**

14 septembre 2009

IRAK | Reportage dans le nord du pays, où les tensions ethniques alimentent plus encore qu'ailleurs la violence.

Traque aux terroristes à Kirkouk

GABRIELLE DANZAS ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE À KIRKOUK

Les forces de l'ordre irakiennes encerclent habituellement les villages en pleine nuit. C'est la meilleure tactique pour qu'aucun habitant ne manque à l'appel. Cette fois, la police, l'armée et les forces américaines ont opté pour une opération matinale. L'objectif des 250 hommes mobilisés est le contrôle de tous les employés de la zone industrielle de Kirkouk, ville du nord de l'Irak parmi les plus violentes du pays. Sarhad Kadr, le chef de la police, responsable de la lutte antiterroriste dans la province, soupçonne la présence des auteurs d'attentats commis la veille.

Kirkouk et sa province, dont les sous-sols sont gorgés de pétrole et de gaz, sont écartelées entre le gouvernement fédéral irakien et les autorités locales du Kurdistan. Les Kurdes revendiquent leur rattachement à leur région autonome. Cette rivalité politique fait de la province un des foyers les plus instables du pays, selon les Américains. «Al-Qaida s'engouffre dans le fossé qui s'est creusé entre Arabes et Kurdes» dans le nord irakien», a déclaré en août le général Ray Odierno, commandant des troupes américaines en Irak.

Pour enrayer le cycle des violences, il a proposé la mise en place d'une force composée de soldats américains, irakiens et de peshmergas, les miliciens kurdes. Elle aurait pour mission de sécuriser les villages des territoires disputés. Ce projet marque une rupture avec l'accord de sécurité passé entre Washington et Bagdad, qui prévoit le



Contrôle d'identité dans la zone industrielle de Kirkouk, une des villes les plus violentes d'Irak. La police soupçonne la présence ici des auteurs d'attentats commis récemment.

départ définitif des GI d'Irak en 2011. En juin, une première étape avait été franchie avec leur retrait des villes.

Le général Sarhad Kadr, un Kurde, soutient le plan américain. «Vue la superficie de la région, la nettoyer en entier est difficile. Et il faut prendre en compte le risque de guerre entre les communautés. Ce projet de force multiethnique est donc positif.» A ses côtés, le lieutenant-colonel Andrew Shoffner opine. Pour l'opération dans la zone industrielle, il a mis à disposition du général cinquante soldats américains.

Traces d'explosifs

Les vérifications d'identité des ouvriers dure depuis deux heures déjà. La police, l'armée et les services de renseignements irakiens vérifient si leurs noms figurent sur les listes des personnes recherchées. Quinze ouvriers ont été mis à l'écart et sont accroupis le long du grillage. Huit n'ont pas de papier ou ont une carte d'identité suspecte. Sept sont fichés comme terroristes. Tous ont

une vingtaine d'années et jettent des regards inquiets autour d'eux. Un soldat américain relève leurs empreintes digitales, photographie leur iris. Le tout sera passé dans la base de données américaines. Joseph Raucher, chargé de l'identification, s'intéresse particulièrement à un grand gaillard qui sue à grosses gouttes. «Tu es bien nerveux toi? Tu es sûr que tu n'as jamais participé à une petite attaque?» «Non, je le jure, je ne suis qu'un chauffeur, j'ai jamais tué, pas même un poulet.» Le militaire se marre. Le timbre passé sur ses mains a réagi aux tests chimiques et a viré au rose, révélant des traces d'explosifs.

A la fin de la matinée, les forces de l'ordre remontent dans les pick-up. «C'était une bonne descente.» Aucun atelier de fabrication de bombes n'a été découvert dans la zone industrielle. Dans l'après-midi, une voiture piégée a explosé dans la ville. Elle était stationnée dans un garage d'une maison particulière. Huit habitants ont été tués.

AFP

TURQUIE: 7 SOLDATS TUÉS DANS DES COMBATS AVEC DES REBELLES KURDES

DIYABAKIR (Turquie), 8 sept 2009 (AFP)

SEPT SOLDATS turcs ont été tués et cinq autres blessés mardi dans des combats avec des rebelles kurdes dans le sud-est du pays, a-t-on appris des forces de sécurité.

Les affrontements ont éclaté dans la zone montagneuse proche de la ville de Erüh dans la province de Siirt lors d'une opération des forces de sécurité contre des rebelles du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), a indiqué la même source sous couvert d'anonymat.

Cinq soldats ont trouvé la mort et quatre autres blessés, a-t-on précisé, tandis que des combats ont également éclaté près de Cukurca dans la province de Hakkari à la frontière irakienne, faisant deux morts et un blessé parmi les militaires. Des renforts de troupes ont été dépêchés par hélicoptère dans cette zone de combat.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, l'Union

européenne et les Etats-Unis, se bat depuis 1984 pour l'autonomie du sud-est de la Turquie, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes dans un conflit qui a fait 45.000 morts.

Les rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont annoncé qu'ils prolongeaient jusqu'à la fin du ramadan, fixée au 22 septembre, une trêve de leurs opérations armées entamée en avril.

Les autorités turques n'ont jamais reconnu jusqu'à présent les trêves unilatérales déclarées par les rebelles et ont promis de les pourchasser jusqu'au dernier.

Ces dernières semaines, le gouvernement turc travaille sur une "ouverture démocratique" censée mettre fin au vieux problème kurde. Mais le plan reste très flou et se heurte déjà à l'hostilité de l'opposition qui y voit un danger pour l'unité nationale.

Les milieux kurdes jugent de leur côté qu'elle n'ira pas assez loin pour répondre à leurs revendications.

AFP

IRAK: QUINZE MORTS DANS DES ATTAQUES, DONT UNE MÈRE ET SES TROIS ENFANTS À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK — 10 sept 2009 (AFP)

QUINZE personnes ont été tuées dans des attaques dimanche en Irak, dont une mère et ses trois jeunes enfants abattus durant leur sommeil à Kirkouk (nord), ont indiqué des sources policières et médicales.

Des hommes armés ont pénétré avant l'aube dans le domicile de la mère à Banja —un quartier où sont venues s'installer des familles kurdes chassées par Saddam Hussein— tuant les enfants âgés de 3, 6, et 9 ans, et leur mère d'une balle dans la tête, selon le colonel de police Chirzad Moufri.

Le père, Omid Abdel Hamid, un policier de Kirkouk, se trouvait à son travail quand l'attaque a eu lieu, a précisé le colonel, indiquant qu'une enquête avait "été ouverte pour connaître les raisons de ce crime".

Quatre soldats ont également été tués lors de combats avec des insurgés dans la région à majorité sunnite de Riyadh, à 35 km au sud-ouest de Kirkouk, ont indiqué la police et l'armée. Deux insurgés ont aussi été tués.

A Kirkouk, un lieutenant de l'armée a été tué dans l'explosion d'une bombe contre son véhicule.

Kirkouk est une province riche en pétrole que se disputent Kurdes, Arabes et Turcomans. Les autorités régionales du Kurdistan souhaitent le rattachement de la province et de la ville du même nom à leur région autonome, ce que les deux

autres communautés refusent.

La province est le théâtre de tensions et de violences perpétrées par les différents groupes armés, dont Al-Qaïda.

Par ailleurs, à Mouqdadiya, à 90 km au nord-est de Bagdad, deux personnes ont été tuées et 12 blessées dans un attentat à la voiture piégée commis sur un marché, selon le centre de commandement militaire de la ville et le Dr Firas al-Doulaïmi, de l'hôpital de Baqouba où ont été transportées les victimes.

Au sud de Mossoul (nord), ce sont quatre personnes qui ont été tuées dans un règlement de compte entre les membres d'une tribu à la suite de la mort d'un des membres, selon une source policière.

Enfin, la police de la province de Kirkouk a annoncé la mort dans des affrontements avec les forces de sécurité irakiennes d'un chef d'Ansar al-Sunna, un groupe salafiste qui a commis de nombreux attentats.

Le chef de la police de la province, Sarhad Qadir, a affirmé à l'AFP que Rafiq Mahmoud al-Jaouali, l'émir du groupe pour Kirkouk, avait été tué dans une opération organisée par les forces de sécurité irakiennes après avoir reçu des informations sur l'emplacement de sa cache.

Un des adjoints de l'émir, Ghanim al-Azaoui, a été blessé dans l'opération et arrêté, a-t-il ajouté.

AFP

TURQUIE: TROIS REBELLES KURDES ET UN SOLDAT TUÉS DANS DES HEURTS

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 14 sept 2009 (AFP)

TROIS REBELLES kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) et un soldat turc ont été tués dans des accrochages survenus dimanche et lundi dans l'extrême sud-est de la Turquie, a-t-on indiqué de source de sécurité locale.

Les heurts se sont produits près de la petite localité de Cukurca, juste à la frontière irakienne, a-t-on souligné de même source.

Trois rebelles ont été abattus dimanche et un militaire a été tué lundi dans des opérations qui se poursuivent depuis quatre jours dans cette zone, a-t-on ajouté.

Samedi, un civil a été tué et un autre blessé par l'explosion d'une mine posée par des rebelles kurdes à Kulp, dépendant de Diyarbakir, la principale province du sud-est anatolien peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes.

Le PKK a annoncé le 1er septembre avoir prolongé jusqu'à la fin du ramadan, soit le 22 septembre en Turquie, une trêve unilatérale de ses opérations armées entamée en avril. Mais les autorités civiles et militaires turcs n'ont jamais reconnu les trêves du PKK.

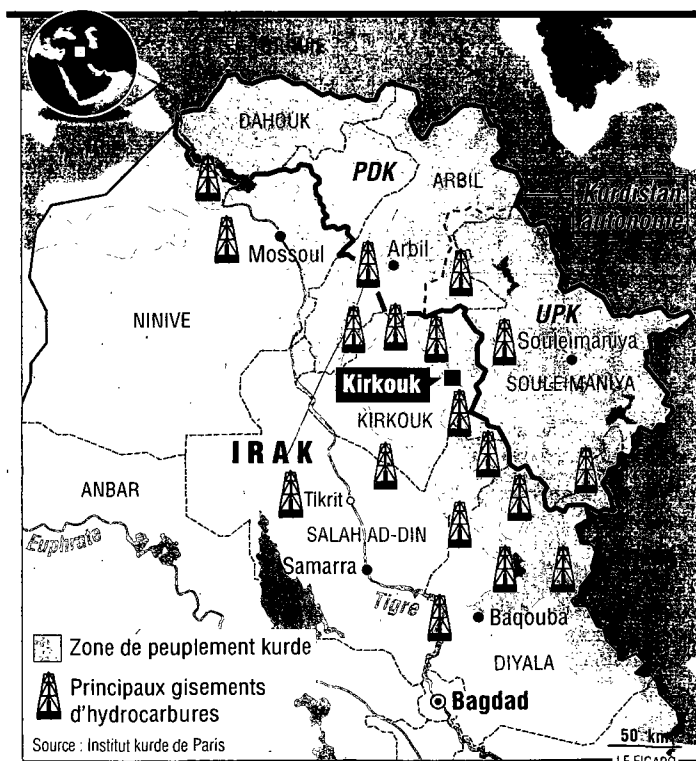
Dimanche, le Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a assuré que la lutte armée contre le "terrorisme" du PKK se poursuivait tant que les rebelles ne déposeraient pas les armes.

Le PKK est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie, les Etats-Unis et l'Union européenne. Il mène depuis 1984 une insurrection pour l'indépendance du Sud-Est anatolien où la population est majoritairement kurde. Le conflit a fait plus de 40.000 morts.



L'armée et la police irakiennes, appuyées par l'armée américaine, effectuent le 9 septembre le contrôle des identités des employés de la zone industrielle au sud de Kirkouk. *Marchand/Le Figaro*

Sur l'or noir de Kirkouk, le terrorisme prospère



MOYEN-ORIENT

Tandis que les autorités kurdes réclament à Bagdad le rattachement de ce centre pétrolier à la région autonome du Kurdistan, les attentats contre les forces de l'ordre irakiennes ou américaines se multiplient. « Le Figaro » a passé une journée dans les pas de la police locale.

De notre envoyée spéciale à Kirkouk

À HUIT heures du matin, les blindés bouclent la zone industrielle de Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak. Des hélicoptères tournent au-dessus des bâtiments. Personne ne pourra en sortir tant que les contrôles d'identité de tous les ouvriers n'auront pas été effectués et les ateliers fouillés. La veille, deux bombes ont explosé lors du passage de convois militaires sur des routes des environs. Bilan : deux policiers tués et sept blessés, dont trois soldats américains. Sarhad Kadr, le chef de la police chargée de la lutte antiterroriste dans la province, a « reçu des informations ».

Les auteurs de l'attaque auraient pu se replier ici. Pour « cette opération de routine », ce général kurde a déployé 250 hommes, des policiers, des soldats des armées irakienne et américaine, venues en renfort à sa demande.

Kirkouk et ses gigantesques réserves de pétrole se trouvent au cœur d'une dispute entre le gouvernement central de Bagdad et les autorités kurdes, qui réclament son rattachement à la région autonome du Kurdistan. Selon le général Ray Odierno, commandant des troupes américaines en Irak, « al-Qaida s'engouffre dans le fossé qui s'est creusé entre Arabes et Kurdes », et la province, ainsi que ses deux voisines, Ninive et Diyala, sont devenues les principaux foyers d'instabilité du pays. Rompant avec l'accord de sécurité conclu entre Bagdad et Washington, qui a entraîné le retrait des troupes américaines des villes en juin avant leur départ définitif en 2011, Odierno a proposé en août l'établissement d'une force composée de soldats américains, irakiens et de pechmegas kurdes. Leur mission consisterait essentiellement à sécuriser les villages de ces territoires disputés.

Le général Kadr a envoyé ses troupes inspecter les bâtiments. Assis sous un ventilateur fatigué, il passe en revue les atouts du plan américain : « Vu l'importance de la superficie, la nettoyer en entier est difficile. En plus, il faut prendre en compte un possible risque de guerre entre les communautés. Ce projet de force multiethnique est donc positif. » À ses côtés, le lieutenant-colonel Andrew Shoffner estime que « l'opération en cours représente un bon exemple du fonctionnement des futures troupes mixtes. Seuls manquent les pechmergas. Mais les Irakiens sont désormais capables de conduire ce type d'actions. Il y a deux ans, c'était impossible ».

« T'es bien nerveux, toi ! »

Une usine d'emballage de cannettes de jus de fruits importées d'Arabie saoudite a été réquisitionnée. Dans la cour, des dizaines d'ouvriers patientent en file indienne. Les services de renseignements irakiens, l'armée et la police vérifient si leur nom figure sur leur liste

des personnes recherchées. Au bout de deux heures, quinze hommes ont été mis à l'écart et se retrouvent accroupis, le long du grillage. Des garçons d'une vingtaine d'années. Huit n'ont pas de papiers ou une carte d'identité suspecte. Sept sont fichés comme terroristes. Un GI prend les empreintes digitales, photographie les iris et entre le tout dans la base informatique qui contient les dossiers de terroristes traqués en Irak et à l'étranger par les Américains. « Les Irakiens n'ont pas encore le matériel », explique Joseph Raucher, un policier new-yorkais à la retraite, qui supervise l'identification. Il tâte le poulx d'un colosse à la chemise trempée de sueur. « T'es bien nerveux toi. Si t'habites à Bagdad, qu'est-ce que tu fais ici ? T'es sûr que tu n'as jamais participé à une petite attaque ? », le questionne-t-il. « Non, je le jure, je ne suis qu'un chauffeur, j'ai jamais tué, pas même un poulet. » Le militaire rigole. Le timbre passé sur ses mains a réagi aux tests chimiques et a viré au

rose, révélant des traces d'explosifs.

L'Armée des adeptes de Naqchabandiya

Une dizaine de groupes, principalement des djihadistes sunnites, sont actifs dans la région. Al-Qaida et l'État islamique d'Irak arrivent en tête. Mais, depuis quelques mois, l'Armée des adeptes de Naqchabandiya multiplie les attentats. Dirigée par d'anciens fidèles de Saddam Hussein, elle recrute des nostalgiques de l'ère baasiste, principalement des Arabes sunnites, mais aussi des Turkmènes et des Kurdes. « Nous nous sommes aperçus que cette fraction commettait de nombreuses attaques que l'on attribuait à d'autres », explique le général Sarhad Kadr. Elle est notamment spécialisée dans les bombes le long des routes, comme celles qui ont visé les deux convois la veille. Sur les quinze ouvriers arrêtés, trois font partie de l'Armée des adeptes de Naqchabandiya. L'un d'eux, tout juste sorti de l'adolescence, fait nerveusement craquer ses doigts.

« On a ton nom, Saïd Ibrahim, tu devrais être en prison. Qu'est-ce que tu fais ici ? », l'interroge le chef de la police. Il avait été arrêté en janvier. Son ordinateur était bourré d'informations sur cette organisation rebelle. Mais, à Kirkouk, la lutte antiterroriste doit aussi compter avec la compromission de la justice et des forces de l'ordre. Selon un rapport de la Commission pour l'intégrité publique, il s'agit de la ville d'Irak où la corruption de fonctionnaires est la plus répandue.

À midi, les militaires grimpent dans les pick-up, satisfaits de leur tableau de chasse. La zone industrielle n'hébergeait aucun atelier de fabrication de bombes. L'après-midi, une maison est partie en fumée en plein centre de Kirkouk, tuant huit habitants. Une voiture piégée stationnait dans le garage. À la fin de la semaine dernière, cinq militaires ont péri dans une attaque et la famille d'un policier a été massacrée.

LAURE MARCHAND

La « Jérusalem des Kurdes » veut un référendum

■ « Repousser le recensement en prétextant des problèmes de sécurité est un grand mensonge, c'est parce que Bagdad sait bien que les Kurdes sont majoritaires à Kirkouk », assure Hiwa Mohamed. Ce commerçant a été blessé le 30 juin lors de l'explosion d'une voiture piégée, qui a tué 27 personnes à dix mètres de son étal : « Les attentats sont organisés pour empêcher le rattachement de Kirkouk au Kur-

distan. » Quelques rues plus loin, un épicier arabe se félicite du décret du gouvernement irakien, publié le 3 septembre, renvoyant à octobre 2010 l'organisation du comptage démographique. « Après le recensement, il y aura le référendum (sur le statut final de Kirkouk) et les Kurdes se vengeront sur nous », redoute-t-il. Des milliers d'Arabes ont été installés dans la province par Saddam Hussein afin d'affaiblir

numériquement la majorité kurde. Kirkouk compte aussi des minorités turkmènes et chrétiennes. Mais le Kurdistan autonome revendique la « Jérusalem des Kurdes », dont les sous-sols sont gorgés de pétrole et de gaz. Début septembre, le président de la région kurde, Massoud Barzani, a de nouveau écarté toute « concession ». Au cours de la visite à Erbil du représen-

tant spécial des Nations unies en Irak, Ad Melkert, il a réclamé l'application de l'article 140 de la Constitution irakienne, qui prévoit la tenue du recensement et du référendum, estimant que ce processus constituait « la clé de la solution ».

Les élections générales irakiennes, prévues en janvier 2010, font craindre une augmentation de la violence à Kirkouk.

L. M. (À KIRKOUK)

IRAN: ASSASSINAT D'UN IMPORTANT RELIGIEUX DANS LA PROVINCE DU KURDISTAN

TEHERAN, 17 sept 2009 (AFP) —

Un important religieux de la province du Kurdistan iranien (nord-ouest) a été assassiné jeudi soir par des inconnus, a rapporté l'agence officielle iranienne Irna.

Le mollah Mohammad Cheikh Olislam, représentant de la province à l'Assemblée des experts, a reçu deux balles dans la tête dans une mosquée de Sanandaj, chef-lieu de la province du Kurdistan, selon Irna.

L'assemblée des experts est un organe élu de religieux chargé d'élire le guide suprême, de surveiller son action et éventuellement de le démettre.

Il s'agit de la troisième "attaque terroriste" contre des personnalités de la province en l'espace d'une semaine, selon Irna.

L'agence a par ailleurs indiqué qu'un juge du tribunal révolutionnaire de

Sanandaj avait échappé à un attentat le 9 septembre.

L'imam de la prière à Sanandaj, un sunnite considéré comme proche du président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, avait été assassiné samedi soir par des inconnus, selon des agences de presse.

"Cet attentat a été probablement commis par des groupes extrémistes sunnites ou apostats", avait alors déclaré le préfet de la ville.

"Ils veulent provoquer des divisions dans la région", avait-il ajouté.

La province du Kurdistan, frontalière avec l'Irak, est peuplée en majorité de sunnites.

La région est régulièrement le théâtre d'actions armées, notamment du Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), actif en Turquie.

Should the PKK be included or not?

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

The Turkish Workers Union in Holland (HTIB) organised a debate on the "Kurdish opening" of the AKP-government on Friday evening with the Dutch socialist MP Harry van Bommel and Joost Lagendijk, former chairmen of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, also called the son-in-law of Turkey. Both disagreed on including the PKK in the possible negotiations process.

Leftwing stance is regretful

The Dutch politician Lagendijk who just moved to Istanbul to become an advisor at the Sabanci university, says it's regretful that the Turkish leftwing party CHP cannot come with a solution for the Kurdish question, but the more rightwing AKP. For this reason he said, the CHP should actually be kicked out of the International Socialists.

Lagendijk warned that the opposition of ultranationalists (MHP) and social-democrats (CHP) could block the process. "The AKP should have a strong will to continue, it can be possible that the government will fear to lose votes, but I think that this would give them more votes, among both Kurds and Turks."

Turkey is making history

The Socialist MP Harry van Bommel, who have visited PKK celebrations and last week welcomed Leyla Zana to the Netherlands, says that he is envious of the Turkish political process. "There are historical things hap-

pening there, it gives me twinkles inside."

Van Bommel is happy with the Kurdish opening of the AKP-government, although he would like to see immediate changes in the constitution. "This space in Turkey is historical and irreversible. You see the same in Iran and China. I think Erdogan understands this and wants to change this. I am a supporter of Turkey to joint he EU and I think we could together give them support. I am very optimistic. From a global perspective: this will continue".

PKK should be included

During the conference it was concluded that there are possibly be three Kurdish negotiation partners: The PKK in the Mountains, Ocalan Imrali and the pro-Kurdish DTP party. Although some say these are all the same. Joost Lagendijk also includes the Iraqi Kurds as a factor and said they could play a role in cracking down on the PKK.

Although the AKP government refuses to talk with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Van Bommel says that the government should also talk with the PKK. "The same situation is in Israel, they tried to exclude Hamas. There are huge risks for



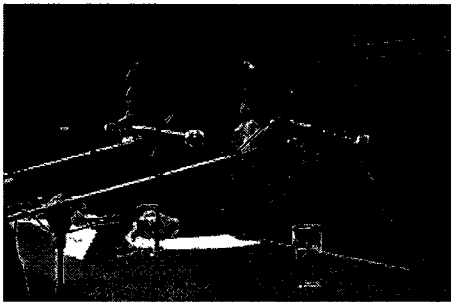
ignoring the PKK. I think PKK, like other movements like Hamas, want peace and democracy. With this I have a different view then the Netherlands or the EU. If I could, I would also speak with Hamas or PKK. I don't think the PKK wants to destroy the Turkish state, maybe reform it."

Part of PKK will remain drugs dealers

Lagendijk was less positive about the PKK and said that the representative of the Kurds is the DTP. "A part of the PKK will stay in the drugs business, you also saw that with the IRA. I always say this is not a conflict between Kurds and Turks, but a conflict between negative and positive sides of Turks and Kurds." Still he added, that it's likely that there are secret govt' negotiations with the PKK.

Van Bommel added that he doesn't disagree with this. "But if you don't talk with the PKK, it will be for sure that the whole PKK will radicalize and they will be an impregnable threat to every peace process," he concluded

(Photo's: Rudaw.net)



Two killed at huge PKK festival in Germany

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Gelchenkirschen - Ten thousands of Kurds celebrated the 17th International Kurdish Culture Festival in Germany Saturday organized by the Federation for Kurdish Organizations (Yek-Kom). The motto of the festival was "Freedom of Öcalan - Freedom in Kurdistan".

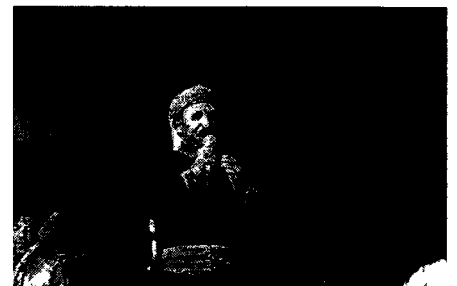


During a concert of the famous German-Kurdish rap star Azad, two persons died.

According to PKK associated organization YEK-KOM there were more then 50.000 Kurds. Chairman of Yek-Kom Ahmet Celik called on Europe and Germany to lift the ban on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and support a solution of the Kurdish question in Turkey. The concertgoers also protested against the arrest of 11 DTP-members in Turkey. The PKK was banned in Germany on November 26 1993 after attacks against Turkish shops and organizations.

Karayılan warns Turkey

During the festival there were concerts of Kurdish artists like Sivan Perwer, Arzu Sahin, Eylem and Rotinda. There were also political speeches of the a DTP MP from Van and a video message of the PKK-general Murat Karayılan.



Karayılan called on the Turkish state to stop military operations against the PKK. "Stop the bombing, or you will pay a heavy price for it." According to Karayılan the Turkish state is not sincere in solving the Kurdish issue.

Perwer shows support for PKK

The Kurdish nationalist singer Siwan Perwer, who was invited by the Turkish government to come back to his homeland and his songs were hailed by the

Turkish prime minister Erdogan, asked the Turkish government to sit with the PKK at the negotiation table.

Kurdish rap

There were also Kurdish rap artists Serhado and 'The Boss' Azad, who is one of the most known rappers in Germany and made a song with the R&B artist Akon. Members of Yek-Kom took away the Kurdish flag from the hands of Azad and gave his rap group


PKK-flags. The Kurdish flag Azad used, is the official flag of the Kurdish administration in Northern Iraq.

The singer Azad said that he will die for his Kurdish country. When he left the stage, he shouted: "Freedom for Kurdistan, freedom for Bero Bass," a Kurdish rapper from Turkey charged with a murder attempt who is imprisoned, instead of the traditional PKK slogan for the imprisoned PKK-leader

Öcalan.

Two died in chaos

During the chaos also two people died who were crushed by the hysteric crowds. One of the victims was Sükrü Cicek Destan (50), a survivor of the military prison of Diyarbakir and a PKK member. Thursday the PKK organized a memorial in Germany and his body will be sent to Diyarbakir Silvan.

 Rudaw.Net
september 14, 2009

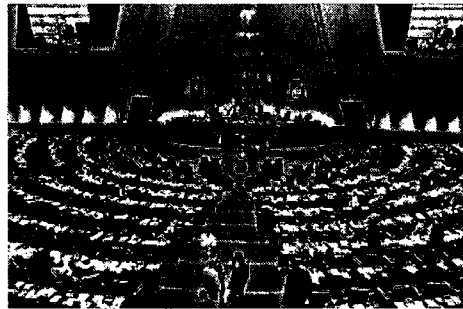
Kurdish speaking MP causes trouble in Iranian parliament

By Sabir Qadri

Teheran – A Kurdish MP Muhammed Qasim Othmani caused trouble in the Ahmadinejad government: He used some Kurdish words in a parliamentary session. Immediately the parliament speaker Sadiq Larijani warned him not to use foreign words.

According to article 15 of the Iranian constitution the use of regional and national languages is free, but after 30 years, this law is not used for minorities.

Muhammad Qasim Othmani is part of the reformist wing of Musavi and congratulated the Iranian president Ahmadinejad with his electoral victory, despite allegations of fraud. Kurdish MPS didn't react against the words




of Larijani.

Under the reformist government of Khatami there was a Kurdish MP list headed by Bahaadin Adib and also wore Kurdish clothes, but after Ahmadinejad came to power, there was no more Kurdish list.

Former Kurdish Iranian MP Hasly Dasa from Piranshah criticized the attack on Othmani. "Kurdish MPS must be active in this parliament, so that they don't have regrets in the future."

Among the 290 MPS, there are 18 Kurds, but they didn't form a Kurdish list. Iranian human rights activist Raza Washahi criticized the attitude of the government against Kurds. "The government doesn't act positively towards the language and culture of non-Persian nations like the Kurdish nation. The government always sees them as enemies. We should take advantage from the experience of the other countries like Switzerland and India".

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september 16, 2009

13th Kurdish smuggler killed by Iranian forces

Colemarg – On the Iranian-Turkish border another Kurdish young smuggler was shot by Iranian security forces. This reports the Kurdish press agency ANF. In a short time, Iranian border troops have killed thirteen Kurdish civilians.

Shefik Mirzai was arrested in the border town Aylava (A?açlı) by Iranian forces and was later killed. The Iranian troops took his body to Iran.

Tuesday it became known that in September 12 smugglers were killed, in August 8 and in July

5. This week four smugglers that carried gasoline to Turkey, were killed by Iranian forces when stopped by Iranian forces.

Teheran says that the smugglers who are killed are probable guerrilla fighters of the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an Iranian sister party of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Next to smuggling gasoline, more than \$2.5 million worth of liquor a day is transported through smuggling operations by Kurds on both sides of the Iraqi-Iranian border. Smuggling has been going on this way for cen-



turies. Iranian security forces often shoot smugglers when they spot them

(Photo: Rudaw).

 Bloomberg.com

Sept. 16, 2009 (Bloomberg) --By Ali Sheikholeslami

A JUDGE in Iran's Kurdistan province was shot outside his home, the third attack in a week on a prominent person in the western region.

Judge Hasan Davtalab was targeted early today in the city of Sanandaj, where witnesses said he was struck in the neck, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported. He was hospitalized and is recovering, the state-run Fars news agency said.

The attacks include the fatal shooting of the temporary leader of Friday

IRANIAN JUDGE SHOT IN KURDISTAN PROVINCE'S THIRD ATTACK IN WEEK

prayers in Sanandaj, Mamousta Borhan Ali, who campaigned for the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, state-run Press TV said. A week ago, another judge was shot and is now in satisfactory condition, Fars said. There were no claims of responsibility for the shootings in Kurdistan, which is on the border with Iraq.

The province is part of a region stretching across areas of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria where Kurds are seeking a homeland. The government in Iran is concerned that Iranian Kurds may seek autonomy, as enjoyed by their neighbors in northern Iraq's Kurdistan.

REUTERS

No Iraq land, oil feud solution before poll: Biden

September 17, 2009 By Ross Colvin

* *Biden says no oil law before January vote*

* *Washington is pressing Baghdad and Kurds to compromise*

ARBIL, Iraq (Reuters) - U.S. Vice President Joe Biden pressed leaders of semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan on Thursday to compromise on the potentially explosive issue of how to manage and share the country's vast oil wealth.

Biden said he did not expect the long-running feud over land and oil between Iraq's minority Kurds and its Shi'ite Arab-led government in Baghdad, seen a main threat to its fragile stability, would be settled before national polls in January.

"I am convinced there is good faith and a genuine desire to reach a fair compromise," Biden said, giving no specifics from meetings with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, and Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurds' northern enclave.

Still, there are few signs that Kurds, who have long dreamed of their own state and hope to expand the borders of their northern region, or the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shi'ite Arab, are ready to back down anytime soon.

Before Biden flew to the Kurdish capital Arbil on the third day of his Iraq visit, a top U.S. administration official said Biden would repeat to Kurds what he told Iraqi leaders in Baghdad a day earlier -- it was in the interest of all Iraqis "to accept a slightly smaller piece of a much larger pie."

Biden has also used the Iraqi visit, his second within three months, to urge passage of critical hydrocarbon legislation held up by Kurd-Arab feuding for years.

The laws would lay out a legal framework for oil firms investing in Iraq's oil sector, which has the world's third largest reserves but needs foreign cash to boost production.

Who has the authority to sign oil deals is just one of the sticking points between Kurdistan and the Iraqi Oil Ministry.

Biden, who once proposed splitting Iraq into separate regions for Sunni Arabs, Shi'ite Arabs and Kurds, arrived in



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden (L) meets Kurdish President Masoud Barzani in Arbil, 310 km (190 miles) north of Baghdad, September 17, 2009. Biden pressed leaders of semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan on Thursday to compromise on the potentially explosive issue of how to manage and share the country's vast oil wealth. REUTERS/Azad Lashkari (IRAQ POLITICS)

Baghdad on Tuesday to urge greater political unity for Iraq as the Obama administration turns its attention to Afghanistan.

LINGERING VIOLENCE IN MIXED AREAS

While overall violence has fallen sharply, lingering tensions between once dominant Sunnis, majority Shi'ites and ethnic Kurds still threaten to destabilize Iraq.

Much of the violence in Iraq is now found in areas where Arabs, Kurds and other minorities co-exist, such as Kirkuk, the oil-producing city Kurds want to absorb into their region.

Some fear the row could trigger fresh fighting just as Iraq recovers from years of sectarian bloodletting unleashed by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, which killed tens of thousands.

"In truth some of the more difficult problems are always difficult to solve in the midst of an election cycle," Biden told reporters traveling with him before leaving for Arbil.

"So, a number of the problems, whether it is the oil law or some of the disputed internal boundaries, are going to have to wait for final resolution until the election."

But leverage from the United States and United Nations on such issues is waning along with the dwindling foreign military presence ahead of a full U.S. withdrawal by the end of 2011.

Biden said this trip gave him a more positive outlook on Kurd-Arab relations than he got last time.

"There were a whole range of uncertainties that existed two months ago when I was here that haven't been resolved, but a process has been put in motion that leads me to believe all the parties are seized with the need to resolve."

The Obama administration needs Iraq to be strong and stable if it is to wind up the U.S. presence on schedule. The election next year, which some fear could be a catalyst for more violence, is viewed as key to determining whether Iraq manages to establish a peaceful democracy.



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden (L) shakes hands with Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki after a joint media conference in Baghdad September 16, 2009.

Bashar Al Assad's Turkish diplomacy

By **Marwan Al Kabalan**
Special to Gulf News

ON Wednesday, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad paid his second visit to Turkey this year. The trip signalled efforts from both sides to improve relations between two neighbours facing different sets of challenges. This diplomacy came amidst rising tensions between Syria and Iraq because, following last month's massive explosions in Baghdad, the Nouri Al Maliki government had accused Damascus of harbouring terrorists and demanded the extradition of former Baathists living in Syria.

Ankara, meanwhile, is seeking to further its influence by acting as a firefighter for most of the region's problems. While seeking membership of the European Union, the Islamist government of Turkey is also pursuing better economic relations with the Arab and Islamic world and coordinating with Iraq's neighbours on the Kurdish question.

Despite the longstanding animosity between the two countries, it seems that Damascus and Ankara have chosen to cooperate to serve their economic and security interests. This new approach marks a revolution in the way the two countries understand regional politics and conduct their foreign relations.

Syrian-Turkish rapprochement began in 1998, when the two countries signed a security pact after narrowly avoiding a war. But relations between the neighbours only improved notably when the Islamists assumed power in Turkey following the November 2002 general elections. The thaw

came as a surprise to those who had long argued that Turkey and Syria, taking into account their geo-strategic dispositions and divergent interests, could never develop normal relations. Indeed, if we consider the history of the two countries, their differences and the politics of the Middle East, where most states are involved in one dispute or another, this development is significant.

For decades, Syria and Turkey have tried to contribute to each other's security dilemma globally, regionally and domestically. Globally, the two countries, motivated by fears and anxieties over their own security, aligned themselves with opposite sides of the Cold War divide. Turkey joined Nato in 1952, whereas Syria became the USSR's major ally in the region. Regionally, Damascus and Ankara have tried to isolate and intimidate each other by forming alliances with neighbouring states. Syria established close relations with Iran, Armenia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus; whereas Turkey built a strategic military alliance with Israel and strong relations with Jordan. Domestically, the two countries have tried to undermine each other by supporting insurgencies. Turkey suppor-

ted the Muslim Brotherhood against the Damascus government; whereas Syria supported the Kurdistan Workers' Party against the Ankara government.

Yet, despite periods of high tension, the two countries have never engaged in a military confrontation, mainly due to the nature of the international system. With the end of the Cold War, the foreign policies of Damascus and Ankara underwent notable changes. As the restrictions of the East-West rivalry eased, Turkey became keen to play a major role in the region, whereas Syria was forced, after the collapse of its superpower ally, to look for other ways to ensure its security and survival. In the new environment, the likelihood of military confrontation dramatically increased as the balance of power in the Middle East seemed to have been disrupted, particularly when Turkey aligned itself with Syria's bitter enemy, Israel.

But, after the 1998 crisis, when the two countries were on the brink of war, everything changed. Syria and Turkey started to realise that cooperation, rather than conflict, would help to resolve most of their problems. Bombast began to disappear and mutual

interests were recognised.

By adopting a neo-liberalist perspective, concentrating mainly on commercial opportunities and a free-market economy, issues of conflict such as water and border disputes became incentives for cooperation. In addition, the two countries came to realise that some of their problems were of their own making, while others were forced upon them by the nature of the international system.

Recent regional developments have brought the two countries closer together. Both opposed the US invasion of Iraq and expressed the position that it must remain a sovereign state. They were mutually concerned that America might be tempted to weaken Iraq by replacing its strong central government with a weak federal one, thereby paving the way for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Al Assad's visit to Ankara put all these factors into perspective and will help to further develop the burgeoning relationship between Turkey and Syria.

Dr Marwan Al Kabalan is a lecturer in media and international relations at the faculty of Political Science and Media, Damascus University, Syria.



AP Associated Press

Turkish FM says Syria and Iraq must jointly struggle against terrorism

ANKARA, Turkey September 17, 2009 (AP)

SYRIA AND IRAQ should unite against terrorism, Turkey's foreign minister said Thursday amid efforts to defuse tensions over Iraqi allegations that Syria has been used as a launching pad for violence in Baghdad.

Ahmet Davutoglu's remarks came after the foreign ministers of Syria and Iraq met in Istanbul for talks. It was not clear whether any tangible results have been reached during the meeting between Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem and his Iraqi counterpart Hoshiyar Zebari.

Davutoglu and Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa also attended the meeting.

"We are very happy to see that both ministers are committed to this common security and solidarity against terror," Davutoglu said.

Davutoglu said Turkey and the Arab League urged Syria and Iraq to refrain from inflammatory remarks to the media and take "concrete steps" in the fields of security and diplomacy.

"This process should continue, all the efforts should be spent to find out the reasons and prevent future terrorist attacks," Davutoglu said.

Iraq is demanding Syria hand over two members of Saddam Hussein's now-outlawed Baath Party who are blamed by Iraq for the Aug. 19 truck



Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem, left, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, second from left, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, second from right, and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, right, are seen during their meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, Thursday, Sept. 17, 2009. (Photo/IBRAHIM USTA, AP)

bombings that killed more than 100 people in Baghdad.

Syria rejected Iraq's request, saying it had failed to provide evidence implicating the two suspects.

Ex-Iraq deputy PM's new role may calm Kurd-Arab feud

REUTERS

SULAIMANIYA, Iraq, Sept 16 ,2009 (Reuters) -

- * Former Iraqi deputy PM heads Kurdistan parliament
- * Salih seen as moderate in Kurd dispute with Baghdad

IRAQ'S former deputy prime minister was chosen on Wednesday to head the government of semi-autonomous Kurdistan, a move that could bring a more cordial tone to tense ties between Kurds and majority Arabs.

At the heart of the dispute is the oil producing northern region of Kirkuk, which Kurds see as their ancestral homeland and want to fold into their enclave. Non-Kurds disagree.

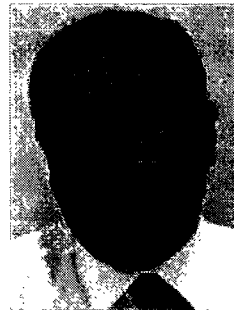
Barham Salih resigned from his position as one of Iraq's two deputy prime ministers in August after an alliance of his party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and Iraqi Kurdistan's other main political force, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of President Masoud Barzani, won 57 percent in a regional parliamentary vote.

Viewed as a moderate, the appointment of Salih as prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after having worked closely with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki could help calm a bitter dispute between the two sides, diplomats say.

"Kurdistan Parliament just nominated me for Prime Minister of regional gov. President Barzani will officially task formation of new KRG," Salih posted on his Twitter feed.

He will start work after Eid, the holiday marking the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan, that is expected to run from Sunday to Tuesday, an official in his office said.

The KRG governs a largely autonomous part of Iraq's north, and disagreements between it and Maliki's Shi'ite Arab-led government in Baghdad over land and oil have raised fears among diplo-



Kurdish lawmaker.

"Barham Salih has the ability to develop the relationship between Kurdistan and the federal government to reach a common understanding and vision on the points of difference."

Sunni Islamist insurgents such as al Qaeda have grown stronger in Iraq's north in recent months by exploiting the tensions, leaving some disputed areas with little security.

U.S. combat troops pulled out of Iraqi city and town centres at the end of June under a bilateral security pact, leaving the protection of the population in the hands of Iraqi forces.

The rows between Iraq's ethnic Kurd minority and Arab majority have also stalled legislation governing the extraction and sharing of Iraq's vast oil and gas reserves.

Tensions calmed after Maliki made a rare visit to Kurdistan last month. A high-level Kurdish delegation is expected to come to Baghdad after the formation of a new KRG government.

mats they could trigger Iraq's next war.

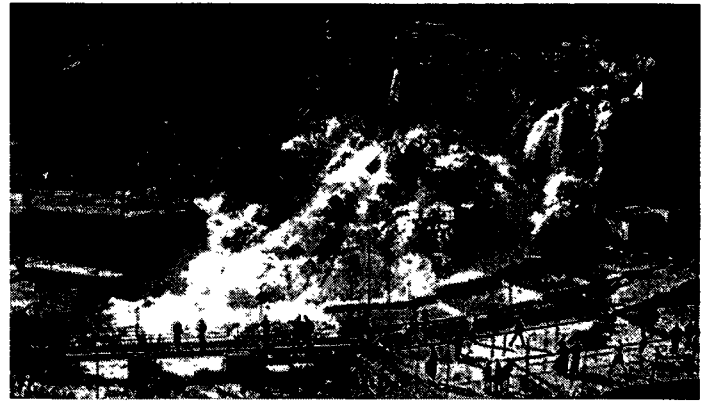
The sectarian bloodshed that tore through Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion has abated and some U.S. officials see the Kurd-Arab issue as the biggest long term threat to stability.

"One of the positive reasons behind (Salih's) election is his experience in Baghdad," said Abdul-Bari Zebari, a federal

KURDISTAN'S ECONOMY: ITS POTENTIAL AND ITS CHALLENGES

Kurdish Herald Vol. 1 Issue 5,— September 2009 —
by Delovan Barwari

The most essential elements of a nation's economy are its natural resources and its labor force to convert these resources into end products. Since the liberation of Iraq from the tyrannical rule of the dictator Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Kurdistan has undergone great economic growth as the dual sanctions were lifted that included UN-imposed international sanctions on Iraq and Iraqi sanctions on the autonomous Kurdistan region. With an abundant amount of proven natural resources and a tremendous labor force, Iraqi Kurdistan has the potential to become a regional economic powerhouse.



The Bekhal Summer Resort in Iraqi Kurdistan

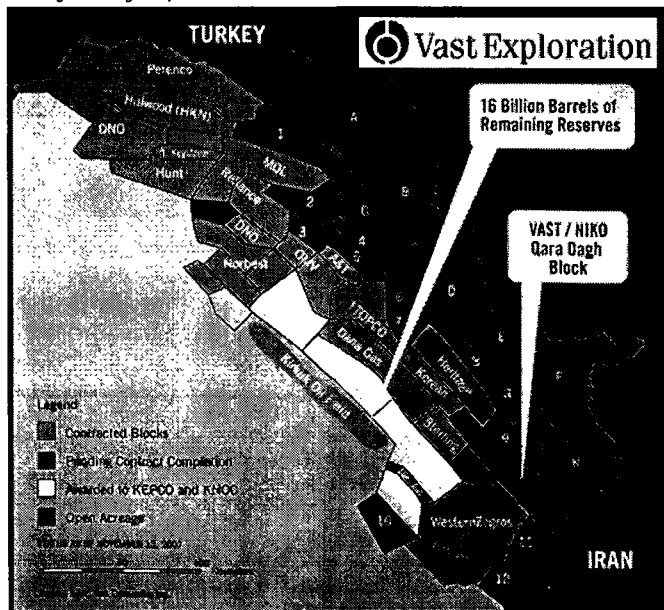


KRG Head of Foreign Relations, Mr. Falah Mustafa Bakir

In an exclusive interview with *Kurdish Herald*, Mr. Falah Mustafa Bakir - the Kurdistan Regional Government's Head of Foreign Relations - stated that a free market economy has been promoted as the driving force to build Kurdistan's economy. Mr. Bakir further acknowledged, "The Kurdistan Region Investment Board was created as an institutionalized 'one-stop-shop' for all domestic and foreign direct investment and enterprise. This is a body to which foreign companies refer; the Board streamlines the work of national and international firms and facilitates business in the [Kurdistan] Region. The Board has licensed more than 160 projects, valued at more than \$16 billion, thus far."

In addition, an investment law was passed and promotes foreign venture by providing numerous incentives and legal guarantees to protect their investment in the Kurdistan Region.

The population of the three provinces (Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah) under the administration of the Kurdistan



Map identifies the Kurdistan Region's Qara Dagh Block - Photo Courtesy Vast Exploration www.vastexploration.com

Regional Government (KRG) is approximately 4 out of the total 26 million living in Iraq. With seven established universities in the Kurdistan Region, thousands of students graduate each year, many of whom cannot find professional employment. Based on unofficial estimates, Kurdistan's unemployment rate is significantly high (nearly 50%) compared to any healthy economy. In addition, according to a published report by Iraq News Monitor, the estimated unemployment of Iraq is over 60%. While these numbers are certainly joyless, they also mean that the availability of professional and unskilled laborers in the Kurdistan Region is abundant.

The economy of Iraqi Kurdistan is fundamentally composed of three segments: Agriculture, Crude Oil, and Tourism. Iraqi Kurdistan is geographically located in northern portion of Mesopotamia and naturally has an ample amount of water, making it a highly arable land for agriculture. Most recently, numerous gigantic petroleum reserves have been discovered in the region. In addition, due to its stunning nature and its historical and archeological sites, it has historically been a regional tourist destination, visited by thousands. With all this in hand, Kurdistan has great potential to establish a strong economy.

Black gold and its abundance

According to various studies, Kurdistan sits on 43.7 billion barrels (bb) of proven oil and 25.5 bb of potential reserves. In addition, the majority of the estimated 200 trillion cubic feet of gas in Iraq is reported to be in Kurdistan Region.

Against the backdrop of challenges by the Iraqi central government over the past few years, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has granted over 30 contracts to foreign companies for the exploration, development, and production of petroleum in the Kurdistan Region, and has begun exporting crude oil via Turkey. In addition, a number of refineries are currently being built to meet its domestic energy needs.

In a *Kurdish Herald* interview with Mr. Ahmad Said - the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian-based Vast Exploration Inc. - he stated that the KRG has been receptive and transparent to their firm with regards to business matters. Yet, he also acknowledged a number of areas that are in need of improvements. Mr. Said stated, "KRG is a developing democracy in the heart of Middle East. As such it is in a transition phase. We have found it to be efficient and transparent. There are deficiencies which are not uncommon to developing countries such as bureaucracy, banking and legal infrastructure. The KRG needs to work on developing these areas as to

not hinder their progress and investment potential in the short and long term."

Vast Exploration Inc. primarily focuses on the exploration and production of petroleum in the Qara Dagħ Block. Currently, it does not intend to conduct business in marketing of products or the refining sector; however, as it has significant operations throughout the world, it would consider potential mining opportunities in the Kurdistan Region in the future.

Crude oil is considered as the most critical ingredient needed to cycle the world economy. Dozens of products are distilled as it is processed. The most common concentrates of petroleum are fuels such as ethane, diesel fuel, fuel oils, gasoline, jet fuel, kerosene, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG); in addition, other derivatives such as alkenes to manufacture plastic, lubricants such as motor oil and greases, wax, sulfuric acid, bulk tar, asphalt, petroleum coke, paraffin wax, aromatic petrochemicals can be manufactured from the residue.

The majority of all the electrical, mechanical, or manufacturing products produced throughout the world contains or requires petroleum based products. Hence, the world economy is greatly reliant on not only crude oil, but also on petroleum derivatives. Therefore, as an economic development measure, it is essential for KRG to further diversify and expand its oil industry and develop the infrastructure for this special sector. Implementing such projects will generate thousands of jobs for its citizens, and will increase the domestic products exported from Kurdistan.

Agriculture: Moving back towards self-sufficiency

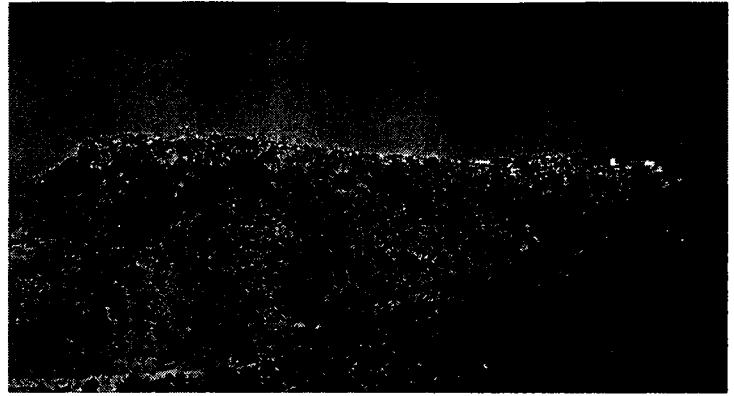
Kurdistan is believed to be where humans first domesticated animals and planted crops. In a scientific publication by Rice University School of Science and Technology, it was reported, "Recent archaeological finds place the beginning of agriculture before 7000 B.C. and animal domestication (mostly dogs used as hunting aids) thousands of years before that. There is some evidence that the people of Shanidar, in Kurdistan, were domesticating sheep and planting wheat as long ago as 9800 B.C."

With over 10,000 years of experience, and a fertile land, it is certainly ironic that the great majority of its agricultural products are imported from the neighboring countries of Turkey and Iran.

Many factors have contributed to the loss of what was once known as the breadbasket of the Middle East. Perhaps the greatest factors were the decades of oppression and the wars waged by various Iraqi regimes against the people of Kurdistan. Most significantly, in the late 1980s, Saddam Hussein's forces brutally destroyed over 3,500 villages in the infamous Anfal campaign that killed over 182,000 innocent civilians. Tens of thousands of survivors were forced out of their homeland and became refugees, and many are currently living in the Diaspora. In addition, the great majority were forced to abandon their villages and moved to the Kurdish cities. As a result, the backbone of the agricultural economy in Iraqi Kurdistan took a devastating hit.

In a press release, the former Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, stated that the year 2009 will be dedicated to the agricultural sector. A five-year plan has been set for achieving self-sufficiency. Some of the methods intended to implement the plan is tackling the challenges through solving the agricultural land issues, applying modern technology, encouraging citizens to return to their villages, and attracting local and foreign private investors to invest in Kurdistan.

According to The National - an online magazine - the KRG plans to invest \$10.5 billion in the next few years in the agricultural sector: "Among its many goals, the strategy calls for doubling of milk production to 400 million liters per year, build-



Amediyah is a unique and historic city located high atop one of many mountains in the Kurdistan Region - Photo Courtesy Goran Sadjadi © Kurdish Herald 2009

ding 30 agricultural factories and providing farmers access to \$100m of micro-loans annually to run their businesses."

Based on the same report, KRG officials have been accommodating various investment delegations from Western Europe, the US, and other locations. The first investment thusfar is by a US-based private equity firm known as The Marshall Fund, which took place in the form of an investment of \$6 million into the development of a Tomato Paste and Fruit Processing Plant in Harrir, a small town north of Erbil.

Tourism

Another segment of the Kurdistan Region's economy with significant potential is tourism. The tourism sector is quite new to KRG and some limited planning and work has been gone underway. Mr. Bakir stated, "Quality hotels are being built across the [Kurdistan] Region, and we are seeing more and more international visitors. We plan to take advantage of the mountains and to offer tourists a glimpse of the archeological and historical sites throughout the [Kurdistan] Region on visitor-friendly tours. A number of foreign tour companies have commenced operation already."

Iraqi Kurdistan is a region with stunning natural sites and is dominated by gorgeous mountains, waterfalls, and rivers, and an amazingly beautiful countryside. In every city, one can find pleasure and let loose by touring various sites. Kurdistan is also a region that is rich in history and includes such archeological sites as the Sumerian-built citadel known as 'Qalat' in Erbil, the infamous Shanidar cave where Neanderthals first buried their dead with flowers, the Zoroastrian and Assyrian sites in Dohuk, what is believed to be the home of the biblical 'Three Wise Men' in Amadiyah, the Delal bridge from the Roman Era in Zakho, and many more.

Nevertheless, there are some political challenges that must be resolved in order to fully develop the tourism sector in certain areas of the countryside. The unresolved Kurdish issue in Turkey and Iran has been a cause of numerous cross-border military operations and aerial bombardments near the strongholds of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK). In addition, during the Iraq-Iran war, millions of land mines were planted in the country side, and these still must be cleared to make the region safe.

Kurdistan certainly has the fundamental ingredients -- a considerable amount of natural resources and a healthy labor force -- to become a strong economic force in the region. KRG has managed to progress greatly in various sectors, with massive development projects since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Nevertheless, there are numerous challenges, shortcomings, and unresolved political issues that must be dealt with through unity, commitment, and objectivity, in order to achieve the ultimate dream.

Turkey's Kurdish question at a crossroads

Kurdish Herald Feature - Vol. 1 Issue 5, September 2009

Turkey has changed drastically over the last two decades. The politics of the officially secular republic are today dominated by the firmly entrenched Justice and Development Party (AKP); a party with a national following and an unambiguously Islamist tendency. At the same time, the country is closer than ever before to being regarded as a member of the European community. With respect to the Kurdish question, much has happened over the last two decades that have significantly changed the relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish people, including demands, concessions, and methods of dialogue. It cannot be disputed that the Kurdish people living within Turkey's borders have more right to the expression of their identity than ever before. However, just as equally undeniable are the presence a number of draconian and selectively enforced laws remaining in place that effectively restrict the most basic rights.

While for the first time Turkish high officials are openly expressing their intentions to resolve the unsettled and overdue Kurdish question, there still remains a lack of will in Turkey both politically and socially to approach the conflict in an effective and resolute manner. Each year, deadlines come and go, pivotal events transpire, and yet no solution that comes close to satisfying all parties involved in this conflict seems any closer to reality.

Over the last several weeks, a number of developments that are believed to be a prelude to the Turkish government's so-called Kurdish initiative have given some cause for optimism. The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issued an unprecedented statement urging members of society to engage in discussions and debates in support of the government's efforts towards solving the Kurdish issue. Additionally, the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), shunned from the mainstream political process for years, has been invited for public discussions on the Kurdish issue with members of the AKP and the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP); both refused to meet with the DTP in the past. At the same time, the very existence of a plan to unveil a Kurdish initiative has prompted the mainstream Turkish press to address the Kurdish issue in an uncharacteristically open way.

Ever more subtle yet significant developments with regards to



Kurds in Turkey hold signs that write "peace" and rally against the Turkish government's refusal to negotiate with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party - Photo Courtesy Ozgur Gundem



Rebbaz Royee © Kurdish Herald 2009

cultural and political rights have also been taking place. In the Kurdish stronghold of Diyarbakir, a move by the city's provincial council to change the name of the village of 'Kirkpinar' back to its original Kurdish name of 'Celkaniya' was allowed, rather than being blocked by the city's governor as was the fate of previous motions. At the same time, an open discussion is taking place on the possibility of offering some education in Kurdish language and Kurdish studies.

While one may think that the official and open discussion of a solution to Turkey's Kurdish question, including concrete steps being taken to right some wrongs of the past, would mean that a peaceful resolution is on the horizon, it appears that this is not the case. Indeed, the public debates surrounding the AKP's Kurdish initiative on one hand and a roadmap drawn up by the imprisoned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader, Abdullah Ocalan, on the other, simply serves to show - in very plain view - the fault lines that still prevent any true solution from being reached. While the prime minister has made calls for engagement by virtually all segments of society, the government's candid aim to preemptively dismiss the roadmap seems counter-productive as has been further exemplified by recent public reaction in the Kurdish region. At the beginning of this month, millions rallied in predominantly Kurdish city streets to protest the government's current approach to the drawing up of a Kurdish initiative.

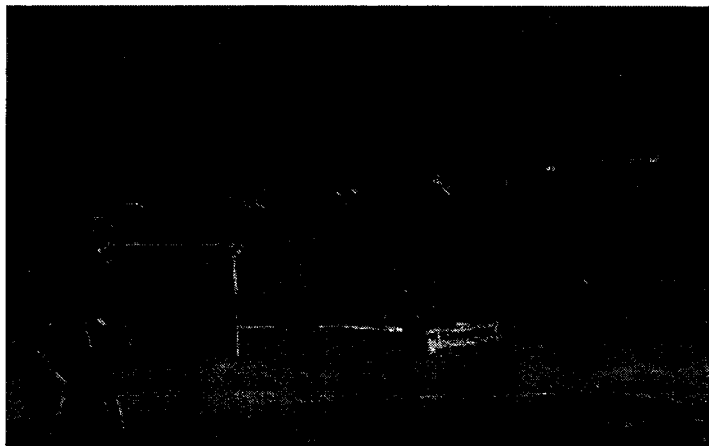
Kurdish question, PKK, and recurring state denial

When Turkey emerged from the ruins of the collapsed Ottoman Empire after the former died a slow and painful death, denial quickly became a technique for painting over the significant cracks in the logic of the ideology underpinning the new Turkish republic. While the Ottomans used religion as the glue to hold together the various components of their empire, the new Republic of Turkey would use Turkish identity and nationalism to establish itself. As a substantial portion of Turkey's citizens were Kurdish, and not ethnic Turks, the new republic would need to conveniently deny the existence of the Kurdish identity, and eventually, this denial would become a hallmark of Turkish nationalist ideology dedicated to the unity of the new Republic.

When the PKK became a major force, transforming itself from a small group of leftists into a significant and very disruptive political and military entity, the Turkish state added a new facet to its policy of denial with respect to Turkey's Kurds,

choosing to deny the fact that the PKK enjoyed grassroots support among the Kurdish population while trying to convince the Turkish masses and others that the PKK had minimal popular support and was primarily backed by foreign actors. The folly of this approach is clear – 30 years after the founding of the PKK, the party remains a powerful movement and Ocalan is still a potent symbol to many of Turkey's Kurds over a decade after his capture.

Turkish denial has entered a new state and despite groundbreaking changes and the apparent ability of Turks to address the Kurdish question openly, this denial persists and manifests itself as the major obstacle to reaching a true solution to the Kurdish question. The Kurdish question in Turkey is as old as the Turkish Republic, and owes itself to the aforementioned denial of Kurdish identity by the Turkish state. Disparity in development and living standards between the primarily



Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) base high up in the Qendil Mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan - © Kurdish Herald 2009

Kurdish southeast and the rest of the country stoked the flames of discontent among Turkey's Kurds.

The PKK emerged as this era's incarnation of Kurdish rebellion in Turkey and quickly gained support among disgruntled Kurds impacted by the injustices virtually mandated by the founding principles of the Turkish Republic. As the PKK gathered strength and support, the Turkish state took a paradoxical approach to explaining the nature of the group. While, on one hand, the PKK was characterized as a terrorist group backed by foreign actors, on the other hand, most expressions of Kurdish national identity were characterized as "separatist" and thus associated with the PKK. The false assertion by the Turkish state about expressions of Kurdish identity became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as an increasingly restrictive policy against Kurdish identity prompted Kurds who still sought to preserve their identity to move closer towards the PKK.

Past policies and statements from the Turkish establishment had the perhaps unintended consequence of causing the Kurdish issue in general and the PKK as a movement to become very much intertwined with one another in both practice and in the mindset of Turkish and Kurdish citizens of Turkey.

Despite these realities, while the state is assembling its own Kurdish initiative, it seems once again that the Kurdish issue and the PKK are being characterized as two issues that are quite separate from one another. While ostensibly seeking to solve the Kurdish question in Turkey, the Turkish government's attempt to circumvent the PKK and refusal to address the party directly is among the most definite flaws that may prevent an effective solution to the conflict from being reached. Yet again, basic truths are being ignored for the sake of avoiding the contradiction of patently false beliefs that are part of

the Turkish state's rigid ideology.

Ending conflict requires engagement

Exact details of the Turkish government's Kurdish initiative are still unknown. However, reactions in the predominantly Kurdish region to preliminary details and public statements by government representatives have not been positive thus far. Earlier this month, thousands of Kurds rallied in Diyarbakir, many of them waving portraits of Ocalan and PKK flags, calling for peace and holding signs with slogans such as "We want our roadmap" and "The counterpart for a democratic solution of the Kurdish question is in Imrali." Meanwhile, representatives of the pro-Kurdish DTP who have strong support in Diyarbakir and throughout the Kurdish region soundly reject any plans that do not consider the points laid out by their own so-called democratic initiative.

The Turkish government has already dismissed Ocalan's roadmap even before its release, with Turkish President Abdullah Gul stating that people should "forget about Imrali," a reference to the island prison where the PKK leader is currently being held. Undoubtedly, many Kurds in today's Turkey, including some of the democratically-elected political representatives of the Kurdish people, support Ocalan and look to him for a solution to the current state of affairs. Protests and rallies along with complaints of disregard for their own demands are enough to demonstrate that the Turkish government is not taking the required steps to engage the most critical people to the process; people that would most directly be affected by any reform.

It is of great concern that one significant item, an amnesty for PKK fighters, has already been ruled out by the Turkish state. While claiming to pursue an end to war, the Turkish government is reportedly rejecting the idea of giving amnesty to rebels. Indeed, this shows that decisive steps to address the Kurdish issue and end conflict are not part of the state's initiative. The end of armed confrontations would be perhaps the most crucial sign of the achievement of a solution to the Kurdish issue. If the PKK has not been defeated in twenty-five years by Turkey's large modern army, then it makes very little sense to believe that the PKK will cease to exist simply because



Kurds in Batman hold a banner in Turkish that says "We want our roadmap" referring to the unreleased roadmap of the imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan - Photo Courtesy Ozgur Gundem

the state formally demands that the rebels, still branded as terrorists, should capitulate.

Overcoming the Political Obstacles

The lack of political will to confront the Kurdish question with the necessary steps and solve the conflict via diplomacy is the biggest roadblock on any map to peace in Turkey. Turkey has fought a brutal war against the PKK for many years. At the same time, the Turkish state's harsh restrictions on expres-

sions of Kurdish identity has made suspicion of and opposition to basic concessions to the Kurdish people a hallmark of nationalist policy and a litmus test for patriotism among many Turks. Thus, there is an unquestionable political risk for any Turkish politician pondering the idea of promoting reforms relative to the Kurds, and a political risk of significantly greater magnitude which would be faced by anyone who might suggest engaging the rebels. The CHP, Turkey's oldest political party, has been critical of the ruling AKP for their evident reluctance to involve the opinions of all parties in the political process, but for completely different reasons. Those proposals that the AKP has communicated have generated a great deal of emotional debate and has prompted CHP leader Deniz Baykal to protest that it would "pave the way for separation of the country."

Furthermore, Ocalan himself remains an extremely polarizing figure among both Kurds and Turks. For many years, he was considered Turkey's most serious threat and most wanted terrorist, and branded a "baby killer" in both official and unofficial discourse. His capture elicited massive celebrations in Turkey. It is not difficult to see that any political figure who entertains the idea of engaging Ocalan or even simply acknowledging his efforts to find a solution to Turkey's Kurdish question will face great pressure from the Turkish masses as well as elements Turkey's military and political establishments.

Today, more than ever, the Kurdish issue is acknowledged and, to some extent, addressed in Turkey, and this in and of itself is certainly a positive development. At this critical juncture, the specifics of the Kurdish issue that make a resolution so elusive



Citizens in Turkey wave the Turkish flag and rally against attacks by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party - Photo Courtesy Getty

are more apparent than ever, not only to Turks and Kurds, but also to the world community that keenly follows developments in the republic, especially in light of Turkey's bid to join the European Union. It remains to be seen whether or not today's new circumstances will bring the Turkish and Kurdish nations any closer to understanding and a just peace.

Turkey's top commander urges PKK to lay down arms

REUTERS

ANKARA, Sept 21 (Reuters) -By Ibon Villelabeitia

- * *Turkey ready to "share its wealth" to end conflict: army*
- * *State theatre to stage first play in Kurdish*
- * *Kurdish rights will boost EU membership bid*

Turkey's top military commander on Monday called on Kurdish rebels to lay down their arms in a speech in the country's mainly Kurdish southeast that coincides with government efforts to broaden rights of minority Kurds.

In a step aimed at addressing grievances by Kurds who have long complained of political and cultural discrimination at the hands of authorities, a state theatre in the Kurdish southeast will stage a play partly in the once-banned Kurdish language for the first time in the European Union candidate country.

General Ilker Basbug, addressing troops in the city of Mardin, said Turkey was ready to "share its wealth" among all Turks to end a decades-long separatist conflict driven by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

"We cannot reach a solution with guns and blood. The only solution is that the terrorist organisation lays down its weapons," Basbug said.

Although it was not the first time the army had called on the PKK to abandon violence, the timing and location were significant. Basbug's conciliatory words come as Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party faces resistance from opposition parties as it pursues steps to expand Kurdish rights and create jobs in the poverty-stricken region.

The main opposition secularist party, which traditionally sides with the powerful military and accuses Erdogan of having a hidden Islamist agenda, has rejected a government initiative towards Kurds, arguing Turkey's unity was at stake.

However, Basbug also warned the military will continue fighting the PKK, a group branded terrorists by Ankara, Washington and the EU.

Last week, the army requested an extension of the mandate to launch operations against PKK rebels in northern Iraq. The mandate, first approved by parliament in 2007, expires in October. Turkish media has said there is concern in Ankara that extending the mandate may harm the reform process.

EU MEMBERSHIP

Erdogan hopes that giving more rights to Kurds and boosting the economy in the southeast will help end a conflict that has hampered progress toward EU membership and has killed 40,000 people since the PKK took up arms in 1984.

Under EU pressure, Ankara has eased bans on Kurdish.

In a departure from the past, a state theatre in Diyarbakir, the largest city in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey, will stage on Oct. 1 "Living Death", a play partly in Kurdish about "honour killings" of women, Anatolian news service said.

The Kurdish language, which is related to Persian, was banned in Turkey until 1991. It is spoken by Kurds who make up about 17 percent of Turkey's population of 71 million.

Earlier this year, state broadcaster TRT launched a Kurdish-language television station. Other government moves to ease restrictions on Kurdish include allowing state-run mosques to preach sermons in Kurdish.

The EU has said Turkey must improve the cultural and political rights of its minorities.



Iranian rallies pit reformers against hard-liners

BEIRUT

BY ROBERT F. WORTH

The Iranian government and its relentlessly defiant critics used an annual day of support for Palestinians on Friday to promote their agendas, with tens of thousands of protesters taking to the streets in their largest rally in two months and the president making some of his harshest comments on the Holocaust, which he called "a lie."

Anti-Israel comments by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came the day after President Barack Obama, in a major national security reversal, scuttled his predecessor's missile shield plan to focus instead on protecting Israel and Europe against short- and medium-range Iranian missiles.

Through a tumultuous day of street rallies, police officers were often on the sidelines as protesters faced off against huge crowds of pro-government supporters — many of them bused in from outside the cities — and chain-wielding Basij militiamen. There were reports of arrests in Tehran and the southern city of Shiraz, but no shootings or deaths, with the police apparently showing greater restraint than at earlier protests.

Conservatives had warned against using the annual pro-Palestinian march, known as Quds Day, as an excuse for renewed protests against Mr. Ahmadinejad, whose disputed re-election in June plunged Iran into its worst internal crisis in three decades.

But the protesters turned out anyway, often walking alongside larger groups of state-sanctioned marchers bearing huge banners denouncing Israel. The protesters even flouted Iranian support for pro-Palestinian militants, chanting, "No to Gaza and Lebanon, my life is for Iran." And when officials shouted "Death to Israel" through loudspeakers, protesters derisively chanted "Death to Russia" in response.

Many opposition supporters are angry about the quick acceptance by Russia of Mr. Ahmadinejad's election victory.

The opposition leaders Mir Hussein Moussavi, Mehdi Karroubi and Mohammad Khatami, the former reformist president, joined the crowds, drawing appreciative cheers and chants of support. Later, Basij militia members tried to attack Mr. Khatami and Mr. Karroubi, but defenders fought them back, opposition Web sites reported.

The Reuters news agency quoted an unidentified witness as saying 10 supporters of Mr. Moussavi, the leading opposition candidate in the election, were arrested after thousands of people wear-



Hard-line protesters attacked Mohammad Khatami, the reformist former president, center, during a pro-Palestinian rally in Tehran. Reformist protesters pushed them back.

ing the opposition's hallmark green wristbands and shawls joined crowds in the marching to mark Quds Day.

Mr. Ahmadinejad — who has been trying to silence critics for months — has called the Holocaust a myth before, a charge that he repeated Friday and that generally plays well domestically.

Several reports quoted him as saying Friday that the Holocaust was a false pretext for the establishment of Israel in 1948. "It is a lie" based on an unprovable and "mythical claim," he was quoted as saying in the speech. Mr. Ahmadinejad said the Israeli "regime has no future. Its life has come to an end," Reuters reported.

He also called confrontation with "the Zionist regime" a "national and religious duty," news reports said.

Mr. Ahmadinejad made similar remarks after his first election as president in 2005. But, coming only days before scheduled talks between his government and Western powers, his latest

Mr. Ahmadinejad said the Israeli "regime has no future. Its life has come to an end."

denial of the Holocaust seemed likely to cast a cloud over those discussions.

The talks are expected to take place Oct. 1. In addition to the United States, they will involve Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. Possible locations for a meeting include Geneva, Vi-

enna and Istanbul, a senior State Department official said.

Iran offered to talk in a five-page letter delivered to several nations this month. Titled "Cooperation, Peace and Justice," it touched on political, social and economic themes, calling for a reform of the United Nations and a Middle East peace settlement, as well as universal nuclear disarmament.

But the letter said nothing about Iran's nuclear program. Mr. Ahmadinejad has vowed never to halt nuclear fuel production, saying Iran would not relinquish its fundamental rights.

Before the rallies Friday, the government had halted street protests just weeks after the election by harshly cracking down on marchers and arresting hundreds of them. But it has been unable to quiet the opposition leaders, who have kept up their criticism of the election and the government's violent response. They further ratcheted up tensions when they leveled accusations that some protesters had been raped and tortured in prison.

The rape accusations have been especially embarrassing for the religious leadership, and the government has denied the claims, though it has acknowledged that some people were tortured.

Pro-Palestinian marches are traditionally held on the last Friday before the end of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan. But this year, coincidentally, they also fell on the eve of the Jewish New Year.

AFP

BIDEN PRESSE LES DIRIGEANTS IRAKIENS D'ADOPTER UNE LOI-CLÉ EN SUSPENS

ERBIL (Irak), 17 sept 2009 (AFP) —

LE VICE-PRÉSIDENT américain Joe Biden a tenu jeudi après-midi des discussions à Erbil, au Kurdistan irakien, pour pousser les dirigeants irakiens à accélérer l'adoption de lois, dont celle sur les hydrocarbures, avant les élections législatives de janvier.

L'adoption d'une loi sur les hydrocarbures, visant à ouvrir les secteurs du pétrole et du gaz irakiens et établir un cadre pour le partage des recettes, tarde, et la campagne en vue des législatives n'arrange rien, a déclaré M. Biden.

Plus tôt à Bagdad, il a estimé que les élections de janvier représentaient une étape "critique pour l'avenir de l'Irak", et a rencontré des soldats américains dans une base militaire à l'extérieur de Bagdad.

"En vérité, certains des problèmes les plus difficiles sont plus difficiles (encore) à résoudre lors des périodes électorales", a-t-il dit.

M. Biden a soulevé la question de la loi sur les hydrocarbures lors d'entretiens dans la capitale, notamment avec le Premier ministre irakien Nouri al-Maliki, a indiqué un responsable américain, sous couvert de l'anonymat.

Il devait discuter du même sujet avec les dirigeants kurdes, a-t-il ajouté.

Une adoption rapide de la législation est "dans l'intérêt du pays", a encore dit le responsable.

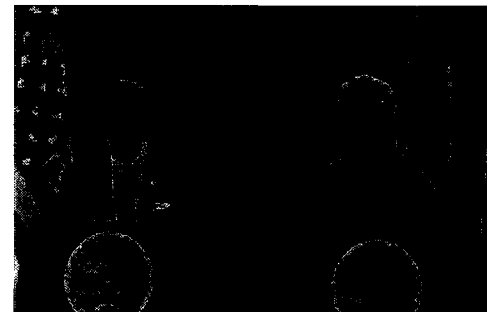
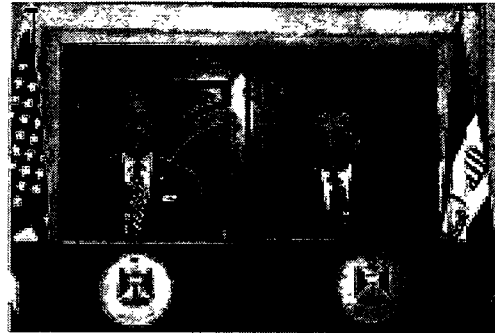
M. Biden a pressé les dirigeants irakiens de réviser à la baisse les conditions d'exploitation de champs pétroliers après l'échec fin juin d'une première phase de mise aux enchères, selon le haut responsable américain.

Lors de ses entretiens mercredi, M. Biden a affirmé aux responsables irakiens que des offres "plus généreuses" devaient être proposées aux compagnies pétrolières étrangères qui participeront à la deuxième phase de mises aux enchères en décembre, a affirmé ce haut responsable.

"A notre avis, il est dans l'intérêt de chaque Irakien d'accepter une plus petite part d'un gâteau beaucoup plus grand", a-t-il ajouté, assurant que le gouvernement irakien avait "appris beaucoup" de la première mise aux enchères en juin.

Fin juin, les compagnies pétrolières internationales avaient refusé les conditions proposées par le ministère du Pétrole pour l'exploitation de cinq des six champs pétroliers et de deux champs gaziers offerts à la concurrence pour la première fois depuis 37 ans.

Seul le champ de Roumeila, qui recèle les plus grandes réserves de pétrole d'Irak, avait trouvé preneur avec la compagnie britannique



BP Exploration Operating Company et la société chinoise CNPC.

Les autres compagnies avaient notamment jugé la rémunération par baril trop basse.

Dans une interview à la chaîne de télévision américaine CNN, M. Biden s'est félicité des progrès enregistrés selon lui dans les discussions entre les dirigeants kurdes et le gouvernement central sur une série de contentieux comme la question de l'expansion des régions kurdes.

"Je pense qu'ils (...) font de réels progrès (...) Je pense que les tensions ont diminué entre les Arabes et les Kurdes", a-t-il dit.

A l'issue de ses discussions avec le président du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani, M. Biden a indiqué qu'il croyait que le leader kurde "négociait de bonne foi avec le gouvernement central".

M. Barzani a lui réitéré l'engagement des Kurdes à respecter la constitution irakienne qui prévoit un référendum sur l'avenir de la région riche en pétrole de Kirkouk (nord), revendiquée par les Kurdes.

Arrivé mardi en Irak pour une visite destinée à plaider la réconciliation nationale, M. Biden devait quitter jeudi ce pays.



17 septembre 2009

Xinhua News Agency

L'ancien vice-Premier ministre irakien, Barham Saleh, a été élu mercredi nouveau Premier ministre de la région autonome du nord du pays, le Kurdistan, a rapporté la télévision nationale Iraqui.

M. Saleh a été élu au nouveau poste après avoir remporté 73 voix au sein du parlement de 111 sièges, selon le média.

M. Saleh, qui remplace Nechirvan Barzani, a occupé le poste de Premier ministre du Gouvernement régional du Kurdistan (KRG) de 2001 à 2004.

Irak: Barham Saleh élu PM du gouvernement régional kurde



Homme politique kurde, il est né en 1960 et a occupé la fonction de vice-Premier ministre d'Irak à partir de 2006.

En août, M. Saleh a démissionné de son

poste de vice-Premier ministre irakien.

Il était une figure clé de l'alliance kurde aux élections législatives kurdes du 25 juillet. L'alliance est composée du Parti démocratique kurde (PDK) mené par Masoud Barzani, président de la région kurde, et de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) du président irakien Jalal Talabani.

Il a été élu à l'Assemblée nationale irakienne en décembre 2005 dans le cadre de la liste de l'Alliance kurde. M. Saleh a également été en charge d'un comité sur la politique pétrolière et énergétique.

AFP

LA TURQUIE RESSERRE SES LIENS AVEC L'IRAK ET LA SYRIE

ISTANBUL — 17 septembre 2009 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE a tenu cette semaine à Istanbul des réunions de haut niveau pour renforcer sa coopération économique, politique et diplomatique avec deux de ses voisins, l'Irak et la Syrie.

Plusieurs ministres turcs et irakiens ont entamé jeudi à Istanbul une réunion de deux jours pour lancer un "nouveau modèle de partenariat" entre leurs deux pays.

"Un nouveau modèle de partenariat voit le jour", a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie turque, Ahmet Davutoglu.

"Pour la première fois, les ministres des deux pays, responsables de différents secteurs, se retrouvent pour donner vie à des projets communs", a-t-il poursuivi.

La réunion interministérielle rassemble neuf ministres de chaque pays —dont la Défense, l'Energie ou le Commerce extérieur— pour préparer un "conseil de ministres conjoint", en octobre.

Le programme prévoit deux jours d'entretiens réunissant les ministres selon leur secteur d'activité. La rencontre entre dans le cadre d'un accord de "coopération stratégique au plus haut niveau" signé en novembre par Ankara et Bagdad.

"Notre objectif ici (...) est de mettre en place une intégration économique complète et dans le plein sens du terme, de la plus grande envergure. Les projets que nous allons mettre en oeuvre vont relier Edirne (nord ouest de la Turquie) à Bassorah (sud de l'Irak)", a expliqué M. Davutoglu.

Son homologue irakien Hoshiyar Zebari a insisté sur l'importance que Bagdad accorde à ce partenariat.

"Nous désirons une coopération qui puisse donner une direction à l'avenir de la région, dans le domaine de la sécurité, de la politique, de l'économie, de l'énergie", a-t-il dit.

Mercredi à Istanbul, la Turquie avait signé un accord de coopération similaire, avec la Syrie.

M. Davutoglu et son homologue syrien Walid Mouallem ont annoncé la suppression des visas entre leurs deux pays, et ont signé un accord instituant un "conseil de coopération stratégique de haut niveau" visant, selon le ministre turc, à "maximiser l'intégration", notamment économique, entre les deux voisins.



Bashar al-Assad (g) en compagnie de Recep Tayyip Erdogan, à Istanbul le 16 septembre 2009

Le texte, inspiré de la démarche avec l'Irak, prévoit l'organisation régulière de rencontres ministérielles, et la tenue une fois l'an d'un conseil des ministres conjoint.

La rencontre entre les ministres a été précédée d'un entretien entre le chef de gouvernement turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan et le président syrien Bachar al-Assad, au cours duquel ils ont évoqué les efforts de paix au Proche-Orient et la lutte contre les rebelles kurdes de Turquie.

Les relations entre la Turquie et la Syrie se sont améliorées ces dernières années après une longue période de méfiance, Ankara accusant Damas de soutenir les rebelles kurdes de Turquie.

La Turquie a servi d'intermédiaire l'an dernier à des négociations de paix indirectes entre la Syrie et Israël.

Parallèlement au lancement de ces partenariats avec la Syrie et l'Irak, la Turquie devait animer, jeudi à Istanbul, une réunion entre responsables syriens et irakiens.

La Turquie a lancé une médiation entre les deux pays face à la crise née d'accusations de Bagdad contre Damas concernant la lutte contre le terrorisme.

L'Irak accuse la Syrie d'abriter les commanditaires d'un double attentat contre deux ministères, le 19 août à Bagdad, qui a fait 95 morts et 600 blessés.

AFP

L'ARMÉE TURQUE VEUT POURSUIVRE SES RAIDS EN IRAK CONTRE LES REBELLES KURDES

ANKARA, 18 sept 2009 (AFP) —

L'armée turque demande le renouvellement de l'autorisation donnée par le parlement de mener des raids contre les rebelles kurdes en territoire irakien, a annoncé vendredi l'agence de presse Anatolie, citant un responsable militaire.

Cette autorisation d'un an prend fin le 17 octobre.

L'état-major a envoyé cette semaine au gouvernement une proposition de renouvellement de cette autorisation, a déclaré le général Ferit Guler, selon Anatolie.

Le parlement turc a déjà renouvelé une fois cette autorisation, votée initialement en 2007. Un nouveau vote des parlementaires aura lieu si le gouvernement le demande.

Cette autorisation permet à l'armée turque de mener des raids des deux côtés de la frontière contre les repaires du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, interdit).

Avec l'aide du renseignement américain, l'aviation turque frappe régulièrement les bases arrière du PKK en Irak. En février 2008, l'armée de terre turque est intervenue une semaine en territoire irakien.

Selon certains médias, le gouvernement pourrait cette fois s'abstenir de demander une nouvelle autorisation au parlement, car il s'apprête à annoncer des réformes démocratiques en faveur des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, pour tenter de mettre fin à 25 ans d'insurrection et de conflit avec cette minorité.

Depuis l'an dernier, la Turquie s'est par ailleurs rapprochée du gouvernement autonome kurde d'Irak, accusé par Ankara dans le passé de tolérer, voire de soutenir le PKK.

Mais le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan et l'armée turque refusent de cesser les opérations militaires contre le PKK, comme le demandent des activistes kurdes.

Le PKK, qui est considéré comme une organisation terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays, a pris les armes dans le sud-est du pays en 1984, et le conflit a fait au moins 45.000 morts.



Le gouvernement turc s'en prend au magnat des médias

Le groupe Dogan, opposé au cabinet Erdogan, a été condamné à un redressement fiscal record

Istanbul
Correspondance

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, est-il en train de mettre à genoux l'empire industriel d'Aydin Dogan ? La question est posée depuis l'annonce, mardi 8 septembre, d'un redressement fiscal record contre le baron de la presse turc, en guerre ouverte avec le gouvernement : environ 3,75 milliards de livres turques (1,75 milliard d'euros) d'amende pour des sommes impayées entre 2005 et 2007.

Le groupe Dogan, déjà frappé par une taxe de plus de 420 millions d'euros en février, pour la vente de 25 % de ses chaînes de télévision à l'allemand Axel Springer, dénonce dans ses journaux un acharnement du gouvernement et une attaque contre la liberté de la presse. « Cela montre que la fiscalité

est désormais politisée en Turquie », a réagi Arzuhan Dogan-Yalçindag, la présidente de l'association des industriels turcs (Tüsiad) qui est aussi la fille du magnat.

L'empire industriel a déjà été frappé par une taxe de 420 millions d'euros en février

Plusieurs associations de journalistes voient dans cette « amende exorbitante » une volonté de « faire taire les critiques contre le pouvoir politique ».

La Commission européenne a vivement regretté cette peine, la jugeant peu compatible avec la candidature de la Turquie à l'Union : « Quand la sanction est d'une telle ampleur qu'elle menace l'existence même d'un groupe de presse entier,

comme c'est le cas, alors la liberté de presse est en jeu », a commenté un porte-parole, à Bruxelles.

Le chef du gouvernement turc s'est défendu, lundi, de toute sanction politique prise à l'encontre de son vieil opposant. Le ministre des finances, Mehmet Simsek, a, quant à lui, assuré qu'il s'agissait d'une procédure purement fiscale, précisant que d'autres entreprises de presse étaient visées par des enquêtes. « Si la décision n'est pas politique, alors le ministre des finances doit immédiatement rectifier ce rapport », prévient Eyüp Can, rédacteur en chef du grand quotidien économique *Referans*, également propriété de Dogan.

En coulisses, les négociations seraient engagées pour tenter de renégocier le montant de l'amende et de trouver une issue au litige, estiment les analystes économiques. Suivant ces rumeurs, l'action du groupe Dogan est remontée de manière spectaculaire à la Bourse d'Istanbul, mercredi, après avoir perdu plus de 20 %.

Entre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, premier ministre islamo-conservateur, et Aydin Dogan, proche de l'establishment kémaliste et de l'armée, la rivalité ne date pas d'hier. Les deux hommes s'affrontent régulièrement à coups de procès et de menaces. En septembre 2008, M. Erdogan avait publiquement appelé ses partisans à boycotter les journaux de Dogan, dont certains parmi les plus lus du pays : *Hürriyet* et *Milliyet*. Plusieurs manchettes agressives, accusant le parti au pouvoir (Parti de la justice et du

développement, AKP) d'être lié à un scandale financier en Allemagne, avaient fait sortir de ses gonds le chef du gouvernement.

Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'AKP, en 2002, le groupe de presse dominant s'est positionné comme son plus sérieux opposant, multipliant les attaques politiques, mêlées de rancunes personnelles. Une photo publiée à la « une » de *Hürriyet* a récemment montré la robe blanche d'Emine Erdogan, la femme du premier ministre, qui laissait entrevoir ses jambes en transparence. « Indécent », a raillé le quotidien.

Au-delà du différend qui oppose les deux hommes, c'est le marché des médias privés qui est en jeu. Créé en 1980, l'année du coup d'Etat militaire, le groupe Dogan s'y est taillé la part du lion, rachetant récemment certains de ses concurrents comme *Star* ou *Vatan*. Outre ses huit quotidiens, il possède une vingtaine de chaînes de télévision – dont deux des quatre plus grosses audiences –, des radios, des maisons d'édition, des sites Internet... Dogan a également investi dans l'industrie et détient, avec Petrol Ofisi, le premier réseau de stations-service du pays, dont la vente pourrait être accélérée pour renflouer les caisses.

Le quasi-monopole de Dogan sur les médias turcs est de plus en plus contesté par des groupes concurrents, proches du gouvernement, comme la holding Calik, propriétaire du journal *Sabah* et de chaînes de télévision, dont le directeur général n'est autre que le genre du premier ministre. ■

Guillaume Perrier

PÉTROLE: LE NORVÉGIEN DNO CONTRAINT DE SUSPENDRE SES ACTIVITÉS EN IRAK

OSLO, 22 sept 2009 (AFP) —

Le groupe pétrolier norvégien DNO International, un des premiers étrangers autorisés à opérer en Irak après la chute de Saddam Hussein, a vu sa licence d'exploitation provisoirement suspendue par le gouvernement régional kurde, a-t-il annoncé.

Dans une lettre rendue publique par le groupe lundi soir, Ahti Hawrami, ministre des Ressources naturelles de la province autonome du Kurdistan, estime que des révélations parues dans la presse norvégienne avaient causé « des dégâts injustifiables et incalculables à la réputation » du gouvernement kurde.

« Nous avons décidé de suspendre, avec effet immédiat, toutes les activités de DNO (...) dans la région du Kurdistan », écrit-il. « Toutes les exportations (impliquant DNO, ndr) cesseront et DNO n'aura aucun droit économique (sur les contrats) pendant la période de suspension », ajoute-t-il.

En toile de fond figure un conflit entre DNO et la Bourse d'Oslo. Cette dernière vient d'infliger au groupe une amende de 1,1 million de couronnes (127.000 euros) pour ne pas l'avoir suffisamment informée d'une transaction financière.

En octobre 2008, DNO, en manque d'argent frais, avait vendu 4,8% de son capital pour 175,5 millions de couronnes, officiellement à un investisseur non-identifié.

Or, selon la Bourse d'Oslo, DNO a cédé ces actions en connaissance de cause à M. Hawrami qui les a revendues cette année au turc Genel Enerji.

Entre-temps, l'action DNO s'est fortement appréciée après que le même M. Hawrami eut annoncé qu'après un long différend entre le gouvernement central à Bagdad et les autorités kurdes, le norvégien pourrait enfin commencer en juin à exporter le pétrole produit sur son gisement de Tawke.

Selon le journal norvégien *Dagens Naeringsliv*, l'opération aurait permis au gouvernement kurde ou à M. Hawrami d'empocher une plus-value de 100 millions de couronnes, dont on ignore ce qu'il est advenu.



L'opposition iranienne réaffirme son existence lors de la journée d'Al-Qods

Malgré la répression, des dizaines de milliers de contestataires ont manifesté à Téhéran

Combien étaient-ils ? L'opposition réformatrice parle de 500 000 personnes dans les rues de Téhéran, voire plus. D'autres de plusieurs dizaines de milliers. Une seule certitude : la journée traditionnelle d'Al-Qods (Jérusalem), instituée par l'ayatollah Khomeyni il y a trente ans pour soutenir les Palestiniens, s'est transformée, vendredi 18 septembre, en une grande vague de contestation « verte ». Verte, comme la couleur du mouvement de protestation lancé par Mir Hossein Mousavi, ex-premier ministre et candidat malheureux à la présidentielle de juin, qui conteste la victoire de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Quatre mille arrestations en trois mois (près de 200 personnes au moins sont encore détenues), des « aveux » forcés à la télévision d'Etat pour certains militants, des tortures pour d'autres, rien n'a, semble-t-il, pu dissuader les militants de l'opposition de profiter de la marche annuelle pro-palestinienne pour se faire entendre. Pas même la dernière vague d'arrestations, cette semaine, qui vise des enfants de personnalités du régime déjà emprisonnés comme l'ex-vice-président du Parlement, Mohsen Mirdamadi, dont le fils a été interpellé, ou de grands religieux trop critiques du pouvoir actuel : les petits-fils du grand ayatollah Montazeri ont été arrêtés à Qom, la ville sainte, ainsi que le fils de l'ayatollah Mousavi Tabrizi. Une pratique qualifiée de « prise d'otage familiale pour faire des pressions politiques » par le site Modvj sabz (Bague verte).

Bracelets et chemises vertes, banderoles, drapeaux : les signes de ralliement, se sont multipliés, vendredi, dans les grandes avenues de Téhéran, ceinturées par la police antiémeute et les miliciens bassidji armés de matraques. Des affrontements ont eu lieu.

Le périmètre de l'université de Téhéran, lieu de la prière du vendredi où parlait M. Ahmadinejad, était réduit à l'état de bunker surprotégé par la police, selon des témoins. Et tandis que M. Ahmadinejad prononçait un violent discours contre Israël, les manifestants ont scandé à plein poumons : « *Dorough gou! chast o seh darsadat koo!* (Menteur ! Où sont tes 63 %) ». Le bruit



L'ex-président réformateur Mohammad Khatami bousculé par des partisans de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pendant les manifestations du vendredi 18 septembre. AP

était tel que le président aurait écourté son discours.

Après quoi, les opposants ont entonné un chant, devenu le mot d'ordre de la journée, tiré d'un texte du poète Mochini. Que dit ce poème ? « *Laisse tomber ton fusil, je hais cet instrument sanguinaire aussi bien au Liban, à Qods que dans les rues d'Iran.* » Ce qui est déjà une forme de contestation publique de la « diplomatie » musclée et militariste de M. Ahmadinejad au Moyen-

M. Ahmadinejad dénonce le « mythe » de l'Holocauste

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a qualifié de nouveau l'Holocauste de « mythe », dans son discours vendredi 18 septembre. « *L'existence même de ce régime est une insulte à la dignité des peuples* », a-t-il affirmé en parlant d'Israël. Et d'ajouter : « *Les jours de ce régime sont comptés. Il est sur le point de s'effondrer.* » Des paroles jugées « détestables » par la diplomatie britannique. La Maison Blanche parle de « mensonges » et de « propos haineux ». Le Quai d'Orsay condamne « avec la plus grande fermeté » des propos « inacceptables et choquants ».

Orient. En réponse aux « *Mort à Israël!* », traditionnels dans cette journée de soutien à la Palestine, ont aussi fusé dans la foule des slogans nouveaux « *Mort à la Russie! Mort à la Chine!* », alliés de l'Iran. Ce n'était pas le seul changement dans l'attitude des manifestants « verts » qui, vendredi, se sont comptés dans les rues, ce qu'ils n'avaient pu faire depuis la manifestation du 9 juillet commémorant le soulèvement étudiant de 1999, durement réprimé.

Behzad A., ancien restaurateur au chômage, était parmi eux. Au téléphone, il nous a confié son témoignage : « *Lors des grandes manifestations de juin, j'étais terrorisé. Vendredi, nous n'avions plus peur. En nous voyant tous dans la rue, nous avons repris confiance. La différence, c'est que cette fois nous avons répliqué. Mon neveu a été battu à coups de matraque par des bassidji près de la place Valli-a-Ast. Quand ils ont voulu l'embarquer, les gens autour de nous les en ont empêchés en leur jetant des pierres et tout ce qu'ils pouvaient.* »

Même solidarité au secours des trois chefs réformateurs qui s'étaient rendus à la marche. L'ex-président Mohammad Khatami, attaqué par un groupe de fonda-

mentalistes, s'est vu arracher son turban. La foule a empêché qu'il soit blessé car, selon certaines sources, ses assaillants étaient munis d'armes blanches. M. Mousavi a été assiégé dans sa voiture et traité d'« hypocrite ». Quant à Medhdi Karoubi, ce religieux réformateur qui a dénoncé viols et tortures en prison, il a pu, sous la protection des manifestants, participer à la marche plus d'une heure sous les ovations : « *Karoubi notre héros ! S'ils t'arrêtent, ce sera la révolte.* »

Des arrestations, il y en a eu des dizaines, notamment en province à Tabriz, Ispahan ou Karaj. A Chiraz, selon des témoins, une vingtaine de personnes détenues auraient été délivrées par les manifestants des mains des miliciens.

« *Voir cette foule pas intimidée du tout dans la rue après la répression terrible des mois derniers a dû être un choc pour le pouvoir* », disait encore Behzad. Et l'analyste Ahmad Salamatian de conclure : « *Vendredi, l'angoisse et la crainte ont changé de camp. L'hésitation s'installe au plus haut du pouvoir.* » De fait, dans la soirée, le vice-président du Parlement, Mohammad Reza Bahonar, dénonçait la répression. ■

Marie-Claude Decamps

Outline of Kurdish initiative emerges at security summit

ERCAN YAVUZ

According to the framework of a democratic initiative proposed by the government to settle Turkey's long-standing Kurdish issue, determined at a security summit held by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Monday, the government plans to eliminate limitations in education and broadcasting in Kurdish while ensuring that Turkish remains the sole official language of the country, a government official has said.

A high-ranking government official, preferring to remain anonymous, provided details on some of the main points of the democratic initiative, which was discussed on Monday at a security summit attended by Erdoğan as well as ministers who participate in the National Security Council (MGK) meetings in Ankara. Stressing that the government is not considering changing the Turkish alphabet to include the letters Q, W and X as part of the initiative, the same source said the law banning education in languages other than Turkish will be amended, allowing private language schools to teach Kurdish.

According to the government's reform draft, the Education Ministry will also revise its curriculum to include Kurdish as an elective course at schools in addition to English and German. Although official education in languages other than Turkish will not be allowed, citizens who want to learn Kurdish will be able to study it at

public education centers. With an amendment to the Law on the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), the government also plans to extend the period of time private television and radio stations are allowed to broadcast in Kurdish. According to the amendment, RTÜK will grant more time to private TV and radio stations to air broadcasts in Kurdish. Private TV stations currently have the right to broadcast programs in Kurdish provided that they do not exceed four hours per week, and radio stations have the same right provided that they do not exceed five hours a week.

Other issues currently on the agenda of the Kurdish initiative, according to the data provided by the same government official:

- 1- The former Kurdish names of settlements will be restored. Other ethnic groups in the country will also be able to use place names in their mother tongue as long as they apply to change them.
- 2- The scope of freedom of expression will be expanded with changes to Article 216 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). At the same time, the government will take measures to ensure that there are no gaps in the law that allow hate speech or hate crimes.
- 3- Turkish citizenship will be restored to individuals who were forced to leave the country following Sept. 12, 1980 coup.
- 4- Two-hundred fifty new schools will be built in the East and the Southeast of the country. The practice

of the morning reading of the Turkish pledge of allegiance at primary schools will be abolished.

5- Local governments will be strengthened. The bulk of authority of the central government will be transferred to local governments in a way that it will not damage the structure of the unitary state.

6- The content of history courses at high schools and primary schools will be changed over time to exclude the denial of Kurds as an ethnic group.

7- Children from Kurdish families who throw stones at police officers during demonstrations in the East and Southeast have been facing trial in high criminal courts under the Counterterrorism Law. The government will put an end to this practice by changing Article 9 of the law, thus preventing courts from handing down adult sentences for these children.

8- As part of the package, the 81st Article of the Political Parties Law on the Prevention of the Formation of Minorities, which limits the use of non-Turkish languages in political demonstrations, campaign slogans, signs, brochures and other materials, will be changed, allowing the use of Kurdish.

9- A general pardon will not be granted for terrorists of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

10- The partial amnesty law stipulated under Article 220 of the TCK – known as the active repentance law – will be made effective.

11- Drafting a new Constitution is not included in the reform plan of the government.

Medium-term steps on Kurdish issue to be taken in 2010

Hürriyet Daily News

ANKARA – The government is pondering short-, medium- and long-term steps for the solution of the Kurdish issue, hinting that a number of laws will be passed in 2010.

“We will start to take short-term steps after Parliament resumes its work [on Oct.1]. There will be some circulars to be issued. In the medium term, we’ll sign some drafts in Parliament. These steps are likely to be taken in 2010,” Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said late Thursday at a meeting with the editors in chief of several media outlets.

Erdoğan did not detail the drafts that he anticipates signing into law. However, granting more cultural rights to citizens of Kurdish origin is expected to be a large part of the legislative work.


Erdoğan added that while working on this issue, he seeks contributions from all responsible politicians, and that the support of social democrats is particularly important.

“I will write a letter to Mr. Baykal. Let’s see what he will say.

It’s up to him if he refuses to meet,” Erdoğan said. Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People’s Party, or CHP, refused to meet with Interior Minister Besir Atalay, coordinator of the government-led efforts to solve the Kurdish issue.

“We are talking about not a specific plan but a process. We want every responsible politician to be a part of it. We want to realize this democratic initiative together,” Erdoğan stated. The CHP has softened its position in recent weeks and hinted that a meeting might be possible under certain conditions. However, the other opposition bloc, the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, burned its bridges with the government.

Recalling that the CHP prepared two reports on the Kurdish issue in 1989 and 1999, Erdoğan said that what he seeks is to discuss the content of these reports with Baykal and to use them to contribute toward current efforts. “They say that they don’t want selective [Kurdish] courses [in state schools]. Who told them that we oppose this idea?” asked Erdoğan.

 Rudaw.Net
september 20, 2009

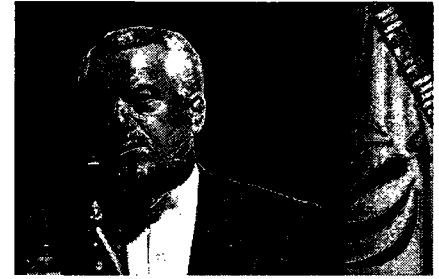
Iran blames foreign powers for attacks in Kurdistan

Teheran - Iran's first vice president says the recent unrest in the western province of Kurdistan is linked with 'malicious groups' based outside the country, reports the Iranian gov't channel Presstv.

Mohammadreza Rahimi described the recent spate of assassinations in the Kordestan Province as a 'regretful' event and hoped that those behind the attacks will be apprehended and brought to justice in the near future, Fars News reported on Saturday. "Interior Minister Mostafa

Mohammad-Najjar will hold a meeting with committee members and provincial officials in Kordestan to dry out the roots of the recent instabilities which are linked with malicious groups outside the country," Rahimi concluded.

In the recent days more than six officials of the Iranian republic were attacked by unknown gunmen. Five of them were killed. According to Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan's representative to the United Kingdom, Loghman H. Ahmedi, thou-



sands of Revolutionary Guards and Basiji militia patrol the streets of Sanandaj and other Kurdish cities in fear of new attacks

Fleeing heat, bombs, Iraqis go north for holiday

 Associated Press

September 20, 2009 / BUSHRA JUHI / (AP)

BAGHDAD — Iraqis celebrating the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan set off in droves Sunday on family trips to the country's northern Kurdish region, a prized escape from the sporadic violence that still batters the capital and other cities.

Such journeys by road — perilous in years past — have greatly increased because of an overall improvement in security around the country, and this year Kurdish authorities in the self-governing region eased entry procedures and ran TV ads to attract visitors from the rest of Iraq.

For the war-weary traveler, the Kurdish region offers not just a refuge from violence but also reliable electricity, stunning natural beauty, cooler weather and fewer social restrictions.

"We have heard from people who have been there ... that it's like being in a different country," said Haidr Mohammed Ali, a 36-year-old government employee from Baghdad who was taking his wife, two children and his cousin's family to the Kurdish city of Irbil by minibus.

In years past, many Iraqis spent the three-day Eid al-Fitr holiday indoors out of fear. Some of those who did venture out were killed by car bombs that tore apart markets and parks. Mosques were emptied of worshippers. Instead of visiting one another, relatives would speak by telephone.

For most Muslims, this year's holiday began Sunday; others will celebrate starting Monday.

Throughout the more than six years of war, Iraqi Kurdistan — which runs its own affairs and is protected by its own militia force known as the peshmerga — has been safer than the rest of the country. It is home to some of the country's most beautiful countryside, attracting even a handful of tourists from the U.S. and Europe to see its waterfalls, mountains and lakes.

Muslims typically celebrate Eid al-Fitr by visiting relatives and packing into parks to mark the end of a month of sunrise-to-sunset fasting. Many also visit family graves.

In the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah, Baghdad resident Tamara Murad was out shopping for brand-name clothes that she cannot find in the capital.

The 24-year-old said she feels "suffocated" by Baghdad's violence and its more conservative social environment. She and a female cousin were dressed in clothing young women would not dare to wear in Baghdad — Murad in jeans and a low-cut T-shirt and her cousin in a short skirt.

"We came here because in Baghdad we do not feel that we are free to wear what we want or walk on the street without the fear of being kidnapped or targeted by explosions," she said.

"We came here to smell the scent of freedom. But the fact that this journey must come to an end and we must head back to Baghdad, where we wither with the bitterness of life, spoils my happiness," she said.



Over the years, many Iraqi artists, doctors, professors and others have moved to the Kurdish north for its safety. An American-style university opened in January 2008 in Sulaimaniyah, 160 miles (260 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad and a world apart from its trouble.

After the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq's Kurdish minority — which suffered terribly under Saddam Hussein's government — came under the protection of U.S.-led air patrols and broke nearly all ties with Baghdad. During the insurgency that followed the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Kurdistan remained safer ground.

Kurdistan's Tourism Ministry, which has renovated resorts and advertised on satellite TV, did not have exact figures but said it estimated the number of visitors had doubled compared with last year's Eid.

On Sunday, Iraqi visitors packed markets to buy clothes and holiday sweets.

The owner of one of Sulaimaniyah's best-loved sweet shops was happy to see Arab tourists coming to try a sugary desert known as mann al-samma, or the sweet of heaven. It is made with the fruit of a mountain tree and is found nowhere else.

"My income depends greatly on Arab tourists coming from Baghdad and southern Iraq," said Tawfiq al-Halawji. "I expect a big increase in my income during Eid because more people are coming."

In Baghdad, many Eid celebrants tried hard not to be consumed by the capital's woes. They danced, greeted one another warmly at mosques and visited an amusement park.

And there was one auspicious sign welcomed by all: The night before, the drought-stricken country got a rare heavy rain storm.

"Although I lost two sons in the sectarian strife, I am very optimistic this Eid. I feel that relief is coming to Iraqis," said housewife Umm Mohammed after Eid prayers. "What makes me more optimistic is to see that rain fell on the eve of Eid, the rain which we were deprived of for years."

TODAYS ZAMAN

september 24, 2009

Basbug dismisses fears of split over Kurdish initiative

TODAY'S ZAMAN

Chief of General Staff Gen. Ilker Basbug has advised citizens not to be concerned about the unity and future of the country based on what is stated on TV programs in what seems to be a strong response to claims by some circles that ongoing efforts to settle the decades-old Kurdish question are aimed at dividing Turkey.

"I am setting it straight. A certain part of the public is concerned that the country will become divided. TV stations are discussing everything. Our citizens feel uneasy after watching TV programs. Everyone -- including members of the military and civilians -- ask me whether Turkey will become divided. I advise them not to be preoccupied as not everything discussed on TV programs should be taken seriously," Basbug told reporters on Tuesday in Mardin, where he was visiting a military outpost.

The army chief said it was normal to discuss anything in democracies but advised citizens not to be overwhelmed by what is spoken about on TV programs. "They ask me whether Turkey will be divided. I ask them not to watch such programs. I advise them not to take everything being discussed seriously," he noted. Basbug also voiced support for the government's ongoing efforts to settle the decades-old Kurdish question through democratic means.

"Our position in the fight against separatist terror is pretty clear. What we are saying is very clear. We clarified our position in the General Staff's message congratulating the nation on the occasion of National Victory Week. I am speaking

on behalf of the Turkish Armed Forces [TSK]. No questions should linger in people's minds," Basbug told reporters on Tuesday in Mardin.

Asked whether his remarks could be interpreted as support for the Kurdish initiative, Basbug said, "Within this framework, of course."

In the General Staff's message, which was released on Aug. 25, Basbug touched on the ongoing debate over a democratization initiative recently introduced by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), saying: "As is expressed in the third article of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic, which cannot be changed, Turkey is a single undivided state with its country and nation. Its language is Turkish. The Turkish Armed Forces supports the nation-state and the unitary state of Turkey."

The statement was interpreted as a strong response to harsh criticism leveled by the leaders of both the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP), who had said the government's recent move has not unified Turkey but rather polarized it and put the unitary structure of the state at risk.

However, Basbug expressed disapproval about debates concerning schooling in the Kurdish language. "I don't agree that there is a problem with education in the Kurdish language. Where do these people learn Kurdish? Where do people learn their mother tongue? From their mothers and fathers. Does anyone forbid mothers and fathers to teach Kurdish to their children?" asked Basbug.

He also dropped hints that the TSK is not warm to the idea of introducing a general amnesty to outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party



(PKK) terrorists. "Do not be obsessed with amnesty. There are those [terrorists] who surrendered and were released under Article 221 of the Turkish Penal Code [TCK]. They may be few in number but not insignificant," Basbug noted.

The article, also called the "active repentance" law, stipulates the release of terrorist organization members who turn themselves in without any punishment, as long as they have not been involved in any armed clashes with security forces or any other terrorist attacks against Turkey.

Basbug also welcomed the remarks of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who said they would grant amnesty to PKK members in Syria if they were to lay down their arms. The army chief stated that Assad's position would contribute to regional efforts on the fight against terror.

"The fight against terror is a process. There is no miraculous formula to instantly end terror. ... Do not expect terror to end immediately. You cannot manage unless you destroy the presence of the PKK holed away in the north of Iraq," Basbug added.

Hurriyet DailyNews.com
september 23, 2009

'Gov't road map includes more democracy, more freedom'

GÖKSEL BOZKURT

ANKARA- Daily News

The ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, has produced a draft road map for its Kurdish move and plans to implement it by October, a source has revealed.

The draft includes democratic steps that would grant more rights to secure freedom of expression for Kurds, broaden the authority of local administrations and increase economic prosperity in Southeast Anatolia.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has already confirmed that the process will include short-, medium- and long-term measures that are expected to be launched in the coming weeks. After his return from the United States, Erdogan will make an overall evaluation of the plan and then give the necessary instructions for its implementation.

According to sources, the government will give the utmost importance to protecting the country's "red lines" and will not discuss issuing a general amnesty for members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. The unitary structure of the country will also be untouched and the ruling party will avoid steps that could draw negative reactions from the people.

As part of the democratic measures, the government is planning to return the original names to residential districts upon application. Families will no longer be banned from giving Kurdish names to their children. Traffic signs and other road markings in Kurdish will also be possible in the near future. After an amendment to the current law, prisoners will be allowed to communicate with their visitors in Kurdish.

Not to be lost in translation

Introducing Kurdish as an elective course at state schools is still an option standing before the government. The Education Ministry is still working on it but a source has said the final decision will be made by Prime Minister Erdogan. Two other important steps are opening literacy courses in Kurdish at public education centers and publishing the Koran in Kurdish by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Providing translations into Kurdish in public offices, mostly in the Southeast, is another important measure the government is considering taking.

Apart from the cultural use of Kurdish, the government is also discussing whether to remove the ban on using languages other than Turkish in political life. Many pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP, deputies faced criminal prosecutions for speaking Kurdish during their election campaign.

A planned amendment of Article 216 of the Penal Code would grant more freedom of expression for people with Kurdish origin, a

source said.

Reinforcing local administrations

Among medium-term measures, the government is planning to grant more power to local administrations. Some authority belonging to the central government will likely be transferred to local municipalities without disrupting the country's unitary regime. This proposal is also in line with the DTP's suggestions to give more rights to the municipalities.

Penitence Law

Though the government has denied that it would issue a new general amnesty to the members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, efforts to reinforce the implementation of the Penitence Law are on the table. The Justice Ministry is working on ways to secure more defectors from the PKK with some minor changes to its wording. But the final decision on this issue will also be given after consultation with the military.

The evacuation of the U.N. refugee camps in northern Iraq is also being coordinated with the United Nations. The results of a poll conducted in the Mahmour Camp showed that around 6,000 refu-

gees would consider returning Turkey.

The future of village guards

The government is planning to deal with the issue of village guards in the long term. The party brass has argued that the guards should return their weapons to the state gradually. According to the Interior Ministry, there are currently 53,000 guards. The state will find other equivalent forms of employment for them.

In the long term, the government is also planning to increase the quality of education in the Southeast. Sending experienced teachers to the region and renewing school buildings are part of the measures to be taken.

Long-term investment

To accompany the aforementioned measures, the government is also considering ways to make business life more vivid in the region. Speeding up work to conclude the Southeastern Anatolia Project, or GAP, which is a huge project designed to create massive employment and attract more investment, before 2012 is among the government's plans.



INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING

SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Iraqi Crisis Report

Special Report: Iraq's Ominous Language Gap

ECHOES OF ARABIC FADE FROM KURDISTAN

Young people in semi-autonomous region reject Arabic language, amid rising tensions with Baghdad.

By Najeeba Mohammed in Erbil (ICR No. 306, 24-Sep-09)

Shaida Khidir is dreading teaching students in the language she spent four years studying at college.

A recent graduate of the Arabic department at a major university in Iraq's Kurdistan region, the 24-year-old complains that her education did not give her the confidence to speak everyday Arabic.

"We only studied Arabic grammar and literature," she said. "Why should we have to learn about the poems and life of an Arab poet who lived hundreds of years ago?"

"After years of learning, I cannot speak Arabic. I'm scared of teaching at a school with Arab students."

Arabic is officially the second language of Kurdistan and the primary language of Iraq, a country in which Kurds are the largest ethnic minority. Though studying Arabic is currently compulsory in Kurdish schools, the number of Kurds who can speak it fluently is rapidly shrinking.

Kurdish speakers of Arabic tend to belong to the older generation, including the current political elite, that was schooled before the creation of their semi-autonomous region in 1991. Many below the age of 35 do not speak the language.

The Kurds' growing neglect of Arabic corresponds with a longer standing neglect of the Kurdish language by Iraqi Arabs.

VICTIM OF POLITICS

The widening language gap coincides with an intensifying dispute between Kurdish and Arab leaders that the United States has highlighted as the biggest long-term threat to Iraq's stability.

Tensions between the two groups are at their highest since the US-led invasion in 2003, with Baghdad and the Kurdish government at odds over the latter's plan to strengthen its autonomy and expand its territory.

The areas in dispute are to the south and west of Kurdistan, where Kurdish and Arab communities abut each other. In one of the contested provinces, Nineveh, language studies have acquired a political

accent.

Arab leaders in the province have accused the Kurds of imposing their culture on minority groups to strengthen their claim over the region. Kurdish leaders deny this, saying they seek merely to reverse the policies of Saddam Hussein, who suppressed their culture and did not permit their language to be taught in the province.

On a recent visit to the town of Bashiqa in Nineveh, a senior Kurdish official, Khasro Goran, called for more emphasis on teaching Kurdish.

"The Kurds or any other nation should not forget their mother tongue," Goran, a former deputy governor of Nineveh, later told IWPR. "Most of the Kurds [in Bashiqa] cannot speak Kurdish."

Goran denied that his call for more Kurdish classes had a political motive, pointing out that he was also in favour of Kurds learning Arabic. "The tensions between the two nations have nothing to do with education," he said.

Suspicion between Arabs and Kurds, he said, had been fostered during the rule of Saddam Hussein and now stood in the way of closer linguistic exchange. "For the Arabs and Kurds to learn each others' languages, the political issue should be solved," Goran told IWPR.

KURDISH RESURGENCE

The language gap, arguably a symptom of Kurdish-Arab tensions, may also soon exacerbate them. Analysts say the next generation of Kurdish leaders could be compromised by their lack of fluent Arabic.

"It is politically dangerous for an official who cannot speak and argue in Arabic to be among Arabs," said Asos Hardi, a commentator. "A Kurdish official who knows Arabic well is 10 times better [equipped] than another official in the same position who does not know the language."

Fareed Asasard, head of the Kurdistan Centre for Strategic Studies, agreed with Hardi, saying the region's future leaders must speak fluent Arabic if they are to represent Kurdish interests in Baghdad. Kurdish youth no longer speak Arabic well, he said, because "they have less interaction with [Arabic-speaking parts of] Iraq".

Iraq's current president, foreign minister and former deputy prime minister are all Kurds fluent in Arabic. The Kurdish bloc in the

Baghdad parliament has a reputation for punching above its weight, acting as kingmaker in Arab-dominated coalitions.

Abdullah Qirgaiy, a 60-year-old writer and journalist for Rudaw magazine, said he perfected his Arabic as a young man conscripted into the Iraqi military. He later married an Arab woman. He says military service and mixed marriages helped many young Kurds of his generation learn Arabic.

In the period between the Kurdish uprising of 1991 and the US-led invasion of 2003, the three provinces that form Kurdistan gained effective autonomy in Iraq. In schools and offices, Kurds reasserted their identity after decades of repression by Baghdad by replacing Arabic with their own language.

"After the 1991 uprising, Kurds came to regard themselves as independent," Qirgaiy said. "They no longer felt obliged to learn Arabic and made no effort to master it."

CULTURAL SHIFT

Naznaz Mohammed, head of the higher education committee in the Kurdish parliament, described the period after 1991 as an experiment in asserting the strength of the Kurdish language.

Until the uprising, she said, most Kurds who pursued higher education were from wealthier families. However, as numbers increased, standards fell. "After the uprising, the door was flung open and this led to overcrowding in schools. The level of literacy began to fall," said Mohammed.

She said the government was planning to update the curriculum, as well as build more schools and improve teacher training.

Dr Othman Amin Salih, an assistant professor of Arabic at Salahadin University in the Kurdish capital, Erbil, said many graduates in Arabic could not speak it fluently. "Politics and the Kurdish stance towards Arabs are the main reasons," he said. He also blamed an outmoded curriculum for failing to equip students for colloquial Arabic.

The Kurdish government's education minister, Dilshad Abdulrahman, confirmed the region's language curriculum was being reviewed – but did not give a firm date for the introduction of a new system.

"The plan will be applied in years to come," he said. He added that poor schooling alone could not be blamed for the decline in Arabic. Cultural exposure also played a part.

"Learning a language does not depend completely on education," he said. "Before the uprising, television and radio broadcasts were mostly

in Arabic, so the public had to learn Arabic to understand them."

Hardi, the political analyst, also said it was unfair to blame the education system for a problem whose roots lie in individual indifference.

"The new generation does not feel the need to learn Arabic. It has nothing to do with the curriculum," he said, pointing out that the older generation managed to master Arabic using the same textbooks.

ENGLISH ON THE RISE

Recent years have seen a slight revival in Arabic teaching in Kurdistan. Schools that specialise in the language have been opened to cater for refugees displaced by violence in other parts of Iraq. Most of the displaced are Arabs or ethnic Kurds who speak Arabic as a first language.

There are currently some 44 schools offering Arabic-medium education out of a total of 21,635 schools in Kurdistan, according to figures kept by the region's government.

However, most Kurds seeking to master a second language increasingly look westwards. Private language academies have mushroomed in the region and anecdotal evidence suggests English courses are the most popular.

At the OSA institute, a language school established in Erbil in 1992, 240 students are currently enrolled on a three-month English course. The Arabic course has 40 students.

The popularity of English appears to be driven by a desire for profitable employment – particularly in new fields such as computing or telecoms.

"Advanced European technology is spreading its lexicon," said Hakim Kaka Wais, a linguist and writer in his sixties. He is untroubled by the decline in Arabic.

"It is normal that young Kurds do not speak Arabic – they have a different land. It is not compulsory to learn another language if you do not like it."

A bookseller in downtown Erbil offered confirmation. Trade in Arabic books has declined, he said, and "only people over 40 still buy them."

"I sell more English dictionaries now than Arabic ones."

Najeeba Mohammed is an IWPR-trained journalist in Erbil.



Iraqi Crisis Report

Special Report: Iraq's Ominous Language Gap

KURDISH LESSONS LEAVE ARABS COLD

Arab students' neglect of Iraq's second language adds cultural dimension to political dispute.

By Husam al-Saray in Baghdad (ICR No. 306, 24-Sep-09)

Baghdad teenager Amir Muayyad returned from a holiday in northern Iraq with a couple of words of Kurdish to share with his friends. "I was passing through an area and heard its name by chance – Swara Tukah," said the 17-year-old.

Over a game of pool in central Baghdad, Amir's friends repeat the exotic Kurdish words. "Come on, don't play the Kurd on us Baghdadis," they teased, to which he responded, defensively, that his knowledge of Kurdish is barely better than theirs.

Neither Amir nor his friends are aware of the historic significance of Swara Tukah, an area between the Kurdish towns of Amedi and Dohuk that was the centre of a major uprising against British colonial rule. The revolt is the Kurdish equivalent of the so-called Revolution of 1920 – a date taught in

schools across Iraq as a landmark in the struggle against British rule.

Though they share the same country, Arabs and Kurds know little of each other's history and even less today of each other's languages.

Their shared legacy of revolts against colonial Britain lies long forgotten amid a simmering internal conflict over land and resources.

DECADES OF DOMINANCE

Since 1991, the Kurds have governed a semi-autonomous region in the north. Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki wants to check Kurdish ambitions to cement their autonomy and expand their territory. With United States troops preparing to withdraw, many fear the dispute could turn bloody.

Language and ethnicity mark Arabs and Kurds apart. Iraq's constitution accords both groups equal rights as citizens and says both their languages must be taught in all Iraqi schools.

In reality, however, few young Kurds speak Arabic and even fewer young Arabs learn Kurdish.

According to Dhia al-Shakarchi, an independent politician, the language gap reflects the political rift between Kurds and Arabs, and both sides are to blame.

"It is a pity there is hardly any desire among Iraqi Arabs to learn Kurdish," he said. "This is a result of the erroneous policies of both the federal government and the local Kurdish authorities."

Members of the larger ethnic group, the Arabs, ought to have "taken the initiative in reassuring Kurds of their status as true and equal partners in the new Iraq", Shakarchi said.

On the other hand, he says, Kurds in the semi-autonomous region have also been reluctant to learn Arabic. They now take more pride in their own language to counter "their erstwhile status as second-class citizens", he said.

Iraq's majority Arabs have traditionally dominated its politics. The Kurds, who form between a fifth and a quarter of the population, rebelled against Baghdad several times in the latter half of the last century, provoking a repressive, sometimes genocidal, response.

The last such rebellion – in 1991 – led to the creation of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region. The Kurdish language replaced Arabic as the new medium in schools there.

COMMERCIAL IMPULSES

While Kurdish students no longer pay the same attention to Arabic, young Arabs in Baghdad continue their neglect of Kurdish. Amir, the teenager, says plenty of his peers take extra lessons in English or Arabic – but he knows of no-one studying Kurdish.

Salam Abd al-Wahid, a teacher of Arabic in Baghdad's Shaab district, says Kurdish language classes are not viewed as important because ministry examinations in them are not compulsory.

"We barely have any rapport with our colleagues who teach Kurdish because they have far fewer classes and are rarely around," he said.

However, the government insists it takes seriously the task of teaching Arab students Kurdish.

Hussein Jaff, the director general of the Iraqi education ministry's department of Kurdish and other minority languages, said Kurdish is currently taught to 16- and 17-year-olds.

"It remains as binding a subject as chemistry or physics," he said. He added that Kurdish teaching would be extended to 18-year-olds from the academic year starting in 2010.

Jaff said the government in Baghdad had no reservations about teaching the language, "More and more Kurdish language teachers are being appointed in high schools in Baghdad and the provinces."

Historically, say analysts, Arabs have only learnt Kurdish when living in proximity with Kurds.

According to Abd al-Munim al-Asam, a political analyst, many Arabs speak the language of their Kurdish and Turkoman neighbours in and around the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk. "These languages are essential for doing business," he said.

Arabs with a smattering of Kurdish can also be found in districts of Baghdad such as Sadriyah where many Kurds settled.

Najah Salman, a resident of Sadriyah, says some Arabs learnt a few words of Kurdish "to show their friendliness towards their neighbours and to make them feel welcome in Baghdad".

However, most Kurds living in Baghdad speak good Arabic and younger Arabs tend to communicate with their Kurdish peers in Arabic alone.

Nazdar Muhammad, a Kurdish woman from Kirkuk who moved to Baghdad with her Arab husband 25 years ago, says she only uses Kurdish when speaking to her mother. Neither of her two children has learnt the language.

"I see no justification for teaching my children a language that none of their peers will use at school or anywhere else," she said.

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

Most Iraqis are only troubled by their lack of Kurdish when they come to Kurdistan as tourists. Thousands of Arabs annually visit the region's mountain

resorts for relief from searing summer heat and, in some cases, for a respite from sectarian strife.

Many complain of their difficulty in communicating with a new generation of Kurds that does not speak Arabic. "Kak, Arabi nazanim," is a common response from the locals they meet, roughly translated as, "Sorry mate, I don't speak Arabic."

The difficulties Arabs face in Kurdistan are akin to those that may confront a Kurd visiting Baghdad. The signs on roads and official buildings in each region tend to be either in Arabic or in Kurdish, rarely both. If a second language is used, it is usually English.

Narmin Othman, Iraq's environment minister and one of several high-ranking Kurds in the Baghdad government, said she was sad to see Kurdish-language signs limited to Kurdistan.

"If I found such a sign [in Baghdad], I would really feel that I am not a second-class citizen," she said.

Othman says cabinet colleagues occasionally correct her use of Arabic grammar. Her response, she says, usually elicits hearty laughter, "How would I prove my Kurdish identity if I did not make such mistakes in Arabic?"

Iraqi Arab leaders can currently communicate with Kurdish counterparts who were schooled in an era when Arabic was the only dominant language in Iraq. It may not be so easy dealing with another generation of Kurds less fluent in Arabic.

DANGEROUS INCOMPREHENSION

Ali Abd al-Sada, a journalist from Baghdad, said Arab neglect of the Kurds' language is compounded by an ignorance of Kurdish culture. Sada learnt Kurdish during a two-year stay in Kurdistan and encourages others to do the same.

"To learn Kurdish is to make Iraq's cultural diversity more than a mere slogan, to make it a living experience," he said.

With Kurds and Baghdad threatening to use force to further their political aims, some are alarmed by the prospect of having no common language in which to communicate.

"Mutual linguistic ignorance can seriously undercut any effort to build sound relations between the two ethnic groups," said Mufid al-Jezairy, an Iraqi Arab member of parliament and chairman of a parliamentary committee on culture and tourism.

"But by learning to speak each other's language, Arabs and Kurds can improve their relations," he said.

Political analyst Saad Sallum is not optimistic. He says even scholarly Arabs are unlikely to favour learning Kurdish, given that the works of the best-known Kurdish thinkers have already been translated into Arabic.

He warns that the Arab-Kurdish divide can only be healed when both sides learn each others' languages. Political solutions that stop short of tackling the language gap are mere "cultural decoration", he says, and are doomed to fail.

A shop-owner in Baghdad's famed Muttanabi book market says there is little appetite for books about Kurdish culture.

"Educated Arabs are not allergic to learning about Kurdish culture," he said, "but they would want to read about it in Arabic."

Husam al-Saray is an IWPR-trained journalist in Baghdad.

Leaders warn Iran over secret atom plant

PITTSBURGH

U.S., Britain and France demand inspections and warn of tougher sanctions

BY DAVID E. SANGER
AND HELENE COOPER

The United States, Britain and France accused Iran on Friday of building a secret underground plant to manufacture nuclear fuel, saying Tehran had hidden the covert operation from international weapons inspectors for years.

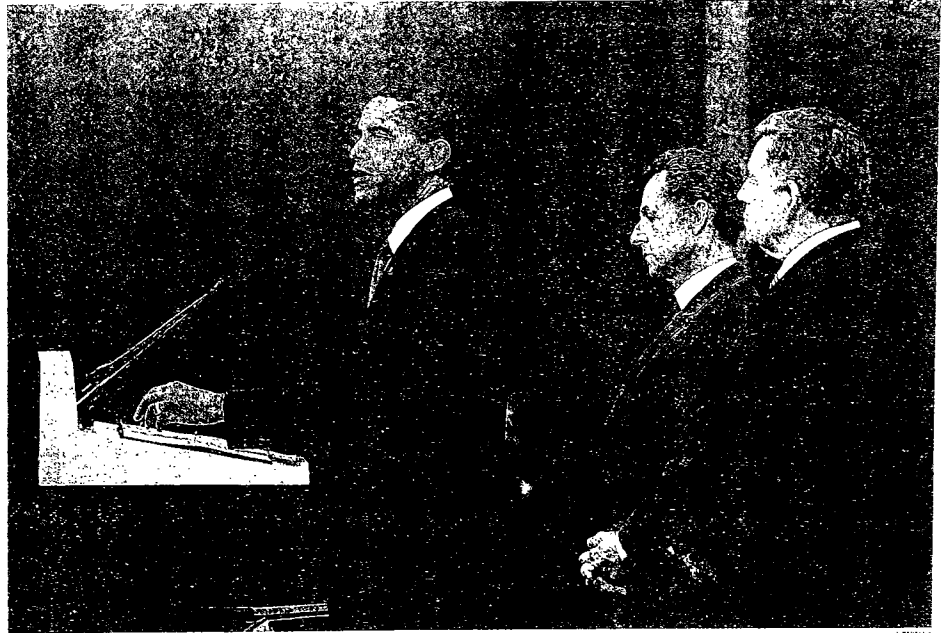
President Barack Obama said here that the Iranian nuclear program "represents a direct challenge to the basic foundation of the nonproliferation regime." President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, beside Mr. Obama, said that Iran had a deadline of two months to comply with international demands or face increased sanctions.

Joining Mr. Obama and Mr. Sarkozy, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Britain said: "The level of deception by the Iranian government, and the scale of what we believe is the breach of international commitments, will shock and anger the entire international community. The international community has no choice today but to draw a line in the sand."

The extraordinary and hastily arranged joint appearance by the three leaders — and Mr. Obama said that Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany had asked him to convey that she stood with them as well — added urgency to the diplomatic confrontation with Iran over its suspected ambition to build a nuclear weapons capacity. The three men demanded that Iran allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to conduct an immediate inspection of the facility, which is said to be about 160 kilometers, or 100 miles, southwest of Tehran, near the holy city of Qum.

American officials said that they had been tracking the covert project for years, but that Mr. Obama had decided to disclose the findings after Iran discovered, in recent weeks, that Western intelligence agencies had breached the secrecy surrounding the complex. On Monday, Iran wrote a brief, cryptic letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency, saying that it now had a "pilot plant" under construction, whose existence it had not revealed.

In a statement from its headquarters in Vienna on Friday, the I.A.E.A. confirmed that it had been told Monday by Iran that "a new pilot fuel enrichment plant is under construction in the coun-



President Barack Obama, left, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Britain at their hastily arranged appearance in Pittsburgh on Friday.

try." The agency said it had requested more information about the plant and access to it as soon as possible. "The agency also understands from Iran that no nuclear material has been introduced into the facility," the statement said.

Hours after Mr. Obama's announcement, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, confirmed in a statement that Iran was building a "semi-industrial enrichment fuel facility," designed to produce nuclear fuel that it had not previously announced to international authorities, the semiofficial ISNA news agency reported.

Mr. Salehi defended the facility, ISNA reported, calling it a "huge and successful step, which is in line with development of our country's nuclear industry," and adding that its activities "were within the framework of International Atomic Energy Agency's regulations." But as described by U.S. and European officials, the facility is too small to be of industrial use and was designed specifically to be concealed.

Under the I.A.E.A.'s rules, which Iran adapted several years ago and then renounced, countries are required to inform the agency whenever they are planning to build significant nuclear facilities. Iran has interpreted the rules differently, saying that it is only required to provide notification shortly before nuclear material is introduced to the new facility. Thus, it will claim that the Qum facility is in full compliance, a position few other countries are expected to embrace.

Indeed, President Mahmoud Ahmad-

"The level of deception by the Iranian government will shock the international community."

inejad of Iran said Friday that his country had complied with the agency's rules requiring that it be informed of any new enrichment facility six months before the facility becomes operational.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, said nothing about the plant during his visit this week to the United Nations, where he repeated his contention that Tehran had cooperated fully with inspectors.

The newly discovered enrichment plant is not yet in operation, American officials said, but could be by next year. A senior Western official characterized the facility as "excavation, tunneling, infrastructure for centrifuges."

Mr. Obama's announcement will probably overshadow the meeting of the Group of 20, whose leaders have gathered to plan the next steps in combating the global financial crisis. Instead, here and during the opening of the United Nations in New York, senior officials from several of the countries were pulled aside for briefings on the new intelligence and for strategy sessions about the first direct talks with Iran in 30 years — set for Thursday — that will include the United States.

American officials said they expected the announcement to make it easier to build a case for international sanctions if Tehran blocked inspectors or refused

to halt its nuclear program.

"They have cheated three times," a senior administration official with access to the intelligence said of the Iranians late Thursday evening. "And they have now been caught three times."

The official was referring to information unearthed by an Iranian dissident group that led to the discovery of the underground plant at Natanz in 2002, and evidence developed two years ago — after Iran's computer networks were pierced by American intelligence agencies — that the country had secretly sought to design a nuclear warhead. American officials believe that effort was halted in late 2003.

After months of talking about the need for engagement, Mr. Obama appears to

have made a leap toward viewing tough new sanctions against Iran as an inevitability. He avoided Mr. Ahmadinejad at the United Nations this week, despite his having said repeatedly that he would seek dialogue with Iranian leaders. Instead, Mr. Obama spent much of his time in New York pressing the case, particularly to Russia and China, for sterner Security Council measures to rein in Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

For years, American intelligence officials have searched for a site where Iran could enrich uranium in secret, far from the inspectors who now regularly monitor activity at Natanz. A highly classified Bush-era intelligence report identifies more than a dozen suspected nuclear sites around the country —

some for building centrifuges and other equipment, others for designing weapons or testing explosives.

Administration officials could not immediately say whether the new site, built inside a mountain within a military complex near the ancient city of Qum, one of the holiest Shiite cities in the Middle East, was on that list.

Senior intelligence officials suggested that the site could support about 3,000 centrifuges for enriching nuclear fuel, and their assessment was that this was too small to be useful for civilian nuclear power, but big enough to be used, once it became operational, for making enough bomb-grade material for about one weapon a year.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

Iran flexes muscle with test firing of 2 missiles

PARIS

BY ALAN COWELL

Locked in a deepening dispute with the United States and its allies over its nuclear program, Iran was reported Monday to have test-fired missiles capable of striking Israel, the easternmost parts of Europe and American bases in the Gulf in what seemed a show of force.

"Iranian missiles are able to target any place that threatens Iran," a senior Revolutionary Guards official, Abdollah Araqi, was quoted as saying by the semi-official Fars news agency.

The reported tests of the Shahab-3 and Sejil-2 missiles by the Revolutionary Guards were not the first, but they came only three days after President Barack Obama and the leaders of France and Britain used the disclosure of a previously secret nuclear plant in Iran to threaten Tehran with a stronger response to its enrichment efforts, including harsher economic sanctions.

The tests also came three days before the first direct contact in decades between the United States and Iran, at international talks in Geneva, set for Thursday.

David Miliband, the British foreign secretary, told Sky News television that the missile tests were "obviously reprehensible" but "mustn't distract us" from the focus in Geneva on Iranian enrichment efforts.

In Tehran, Hassan Qashqavi, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, insisted that the tests were part of long-planned military drills.

"There is no connection whatsoever with the nuclear program," he said on Press TV, Iran's official English-language station.

Iran says it wants to develop a nuclear capacity for peaceful purposes, but many in the West say it is seeking to create a nuclear weapons capability.

Analysts said the launches might have been intended to give Iranian negotiators in Geneva the appearance of a stronger hand at the talks.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, was asked at a

The tests came three days before the first direct contact in decades between the United States and Iran.

meeting of European defense ministers in Sweden whether he was concerned about the launches.

"Everything that is done in that context is a concern," he said, adding that the dispute over Iran's newly disclosed enrichment facility "has to be resolved immediately" with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iranian television stations broadcast video of a missile being launched from what appeared to be desert terrain, with a plume of flame as it streaked upward, leaving a white trail as it crossed the sky.

Press TV said the Shahab-3 and Sejil-2 had been fired as the third part of a military exercise named The Great Prophet IV. It said that an "optimized" Shahab-3 missile had a range of 1,280 to 2,000 kilometers, while the Sejil, a two-stage missile, had a similar range. Parts of western Iran lie some 1,040 kilometers, or 650 miles, from Tel Aviv.

"Both of the projectiles accurately hit their designated targets," Press TV said, without giving details.

The maneuvers included tests of missiles Sunday with shorter ranges, the Shahab-1 and Shahab-2. Press TV quoted the air force commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Brig. Gen. Hos-



SHAIEGAN/FARS NEWS, VIA AFP

sein Salami, as saying Shahab-2 missiles could hit targets up to 720 kilometers from their launch sites.

The launching of the longer-range missiles had been expected. There was no indication whether the testing was timed to coincide with the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.

There has been frequent speculation that Israel might launch a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities rather than allow Tehran to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian defense minister, Ahmad Vahidi, warned Israel on Monday against launching any attack, saying on state television that "its ultimate result would be that it expedites the Zionist regime's last breath," Reuters reported from Tehran.

But Israeli officials have expressed satisfaction at the growing international pressure on Tehran after the revelation Friday about Iran's undeclared nuclear facility.

The U.S. defense secretary, Robert M. Gates, said Sunday that the revelation increased the chances of "severe additional sanctions" against Iran; military action, he added, could do nothing but "buy time." In July 2008, the Revolutionary Guards test-fired nine missiles, including at least one that the government in Tehran described as having the range to reach Israel.

Iran first acquired the liquid-fueled Shahab-3 from North Korea. It unveiled the Sejil missile in a test-firing last November.

'National unity' slogan is the 'Yes we can' of Iraqi politics

DHULUIYA, IRAQ

Across political parties, calls for harmony are replacing sectarianism

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

Iraqi politics has a new catch phrase, the "Yes we can" of the coming parliamentary election campaign. It is "national unity," and while skepticism abounds, it could well signal the decline of the religious and sectarian parties that have fractured Iraq since 2003.

Across the political spectrum — Sunni and Shiite, secular and Islamic — party leaders have jettisoned explicit appeals to their traditional followers and are now scrambling to reach across ethnic or sectarian lines. In some cases, the shift is nothing less than extraordinary.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a conservative Shiite whose party has deep Islamic roots, has enlisted support from Sunni tribal leaders in areas that once were — and might again be — the heartland of opposition to the central government.

Here in Dhuluiya, a lush town nestled in a bend of the Tigris River, a fiery Sunni cleric who waged war against American and Iraqi forces openly courts an alliance with Mr. Maliki, saying that the time of religious parties in Iraq has passed. The cleric, Mullah Nadhim Khalil al-Jubori, said Iraq's future now rests with secular political parties.

"It would be ironic," he said of his own evolution in an interview at his home, "if it were somewhere other than Iraq."

With the election only four months away, the emergence of "national unity" as a theme has been welcomed by Iraqis and by American officials, who fear that identity politics in Iraq will only worsen tensions and risk a return to sectarian bloodshed.

Some go so far as to say the election could reinforce a sense of Iraqi citizenship and nationalism, creating a pluralistic, democratic and tolerant society out of the chaos of the war.

"I do believe that there is genuine opportunity for restoring our coexistence, our historical coexistence," said Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, who broke with the main Sunni party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, this year. "I mean, in the past, we used to live together here. What we need, in fact, is real and genuine reconciliation."

Such appeals stem from pragmatism, perhaps as much as conviction, which is why many people view the apparent transformations of some parties cynic-



JOHN SPANNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Leaders of the Iraqi National Alliance. The group was formed by the main Shiite parties that dominated the last elections in 2005 and includes Sunnis, Turkmen and Kurds.

ally. Even as Iraqi political leaders all pledge "national unity," Parliament remains so paralyzed by infighting that they are unable to pass any significant legislation, including the very bill required to hold the next election, scheduled for Jan. 16.

Even so, party leaders agree that something fundamental has changed in the Iraqi voter's mood.

Provincial elections in January showed diminishing popular support for religious or purely sectarian parties. Mr. Maliki's coalition, known as State of Law, had the strongest showing after playing down the religious roots of his own Shiite party, Dawa, and pledging security, rule of law and a nationalistic government representative of all parts of Iraq.

"What happened in 2006 showed people a taste of what will happen in a sectarian system," Haydar al-Abadi, a member of Mr. Maliki's party in Parliament, referring to the beginning of widespread sectarian killings.

Now as the national election approaches, the kaleidoscope of Iraqi political parties and movements — 296, in all, large and small — are scrambling to replicate State of Law's tactic.

This opening phase of the campaign has become a contest of assembling co-

"I mean, in the past, we used to live together here. What we need, in fact, is real and genuine reconciliation."

alitions with the broadest and most representative cast, what Ali al-Mousawi, one of Mr. Maliki's aides, called "the colors of the Iraqi bouquet."

Mr. Hashimi, after leaving the Iraqi Islamic Party, has formed a bloc called Renewal, which he vowed would be "non-sectarian and non-ethnic." Jawad al-Bolani, the interior minister, pledged that his Constitution Party would run on the "concept of citizenship."

"We need to reunite the whole nation," he said during an interview.

Even the main Shiite parties that dominated the last elections in 2005 — in part because most Sunnis boycotted them — included Sunni, Turkmen and Kurdish parties, as well as historically secular leaders, when they announced their coalition last month. In keeping with the times, they called it the Iraqi National Alliance.

"We learned very important lessons," said Ammar al-Hakim who took over one of the alliance's largest parties, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, after his influential father died last month. "And we're preparing for the next phase. This is democracy."

Mr. Maliki, for his part, refused to join the new alliance despite public appeals and, his aides said, diplomatic pressure from Iran to unite Iraq's Shiites. Instead, after meetings with Sunnis, Turkmen, Kurds, Christians and Shiites in trips across Iraq, Mr. Maliki is expected to announce his own coalition on Thursday.

Here in Dhuluiya, a Sunni town enveloped in orchards and date groves, Mullah Nadhim represents the shift in Iraqi politics at its most extreme.

He is the scion of religious family who lead the town's largest mosque. After the American invasion in 2003, he joined the insurgency and fought for four years against American and Iraqi forces. In 2007 he turned against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which controlled the town from its headquarters across the street from his mosque.

Like many Sunni fighters, he became a leader of the Salwa, or Awakening, movement of fighters who joined American and Iraqi forces. Dhuluiya still has 700 of them.

On May 2, he was arrested and accused of ordering a kidnapping in 2006, a charge he said was politically motivated and carried out by security forces he accused of sectarian bias. After more than four months in detention, however, he was released this month.

Mullali Nadhim is 31, burly and, now, clean-shaven. His remarks and his sermons remain fiery; he clashed with an American colonel after he flew a defaced Israeli flag in protest of the fighting in Gaza last winter.

And yet despite his own religious con-

victions, he denounces religious parties that aim to represent only Sunnis or Shiites. In his view, Mr. Maliki has undergone the same transformation he has. "I do not at all regret the armed struggle," he said of his four years in the insurgency, "but I'm sorry that there was no political process parallel to it."

INTERNATIONAL
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China sees little to fear as Tehran asserts itself

BEIJING

BY MICHAEL WINES

Leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee swept into Beijing last month to meet with Chinese officials, carrying a plea from Washington: If Iran were to be kept from developing nuclear weapons, China would have to throw more diplomatic weight behind the cause.

In fact, the appeal had been largely answered even before they arrived.

In June, China National Petroleum signed a \$5 billion deal to develop the South Pars gas field in Iran. In July, Iran invited Chinese companies to join a \$42.8 billion project to build seven oil refineries and a 1,640-kilometer, or 1,000-mile, trans-Iran pipeline. And in August, almost as the Americans arrived in China, Tehran and Beijing struck another deal, this time for \$3 billion, for Chinese help in expanding two more oil refineries.

The string of energy deals appalled the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Representative Howard Berman, Democrat of California, who called them "exactly the wrong message" to send to an Iran that seemed determined to flout global nuclear rules.

But inside and outside China, any number of analysts see another message: In international diplomacy, nations first pursue their own interests. And as the United States issues new calls to punish Iran for secretly expand-

ing its nuclear program, it is not at all clear that Washington's interests are the same as Beijing's.

That will make it doubly difficult, these analysts say, to push meaningful sanctions against Iran through the U.N. Security Council, where China not only holds a veto but has been one of Iran's more reliable defenders.

"Their threat perception on this issue is different from ours. They don't see Iran in the same way as we do," said Zalmay Khalilzad, who helped persuade the

"Their threat perception on this issue is different from ours. They don't see Iran in the same way as we do."

Chinese to approve limited sanctions against Iran as the American ambassador to the United Nations in the administration of President George W. Bush.

François Godement, president of the Asia Centre, based in Paris, put it more bluntly in a telephone interview.

"Basically," he said, "the rise of Iran is not bad news for China."

To be sure, China and the United States, charter members of the club of nuclear nations, share a practical interest in halting the spread of such weapons to unstable areas like the Middle East. And it is in China's interest to avoid alienating America — its economic and, increasingly, diplomatic partner — on matters of global importance.

The United States has almost no financial ties with Iran, regards its government as a threat to global stability and worries that a rising Tehran would threaten U.S. alliances and energy agreements in the Gulf.

In contrast, China's economic links to Tehran are growing rapidly, and it sees Iran not as a threat but as a potential ally. Nor would the Chinese be distressed, the reasoning goes, should a nuclear-armed Iran sap U.S. influence.

"Chinese leaders view Iran as a country of great potential power, perhaps already the economic and, maybe, militarily dominant power in that region," John W. Garver, a Georgia Institute of Technology professor and author of "China and Iran: Ancient Partners in a Post-Imperial World," said by telephone.

An alliance with Tehran, he said, would be a bulwark against what China suspects is an American plan to maintain global dominance by controlling Middle Eastern energy supplies.

Beyond that, China relies heavily on Iran's vast energy reserves — perhaps 15 percent of the world's natural gas deposits and a tenth of its oil — to offset its own shortages. The Chinese are estimated to have \$120 billion committed to Iranian gas and oil projects, and China has been Iran's biggest oil export market for the past five years. In return, Iran has loaded up on imported Chinese machine tools, factory equipment, locomotives and other heavy goods, making China one of its largest trading partners.

China scholars say that the relationship is anything but one-sided. Iran has skillfully parceled out its oil and gas reserves to Chinese firms as a sort of insurance policy to retain Chinese diplomatic backing in the United Nations.

For its part, China has opposed stiff sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, acceding mostly to restrictions on trade in nuclear-related materials and orders to freeze the overseas assets of some Iranian companies.

Inside and outside China, many experts question how much more punishment Beijing would agree to support. Iran already has been cited three times by the U.N. Security Council, with Beijing's backing, for flouting prohibitions against its nuclear program.

Li Bibo contributed research from Beijing.

Spy agencies split on Iran, hindering a response

WASHINGTON

Behind Western unity, countries diverge on nuclear-warhead threat

BY WILLIAM J. BROAD,
MARK MAZZETTI
AND DAVID E. SANGER

When President Barack Obama stood last week with the leaders of Britain and France to denounce Iran's construction of a secret nuclear plant, the Western powers all appeared to be on the same page.

Behind their show of unity about clandestine Iranian efforts to manufacture nuclear fuel, however, is a continuing debate among American, European and Israeli spies about a separate component of the nuclear program: its clandestine efforts to design a nuclear warhead.

The Israelis, who have delivered veiled threats of a military strike, say they believe that Iran has restarted these "weaponization" efforts, which would mark a final step in building a nuclear weapon. The Germans say they believe that the weapons work was never halted. The French have strongly suggested that independent international inspectors have more information about the weapons work than they have made public.

Meanwhile, in closed-door discussions, U.S. spy agencies have stood firm in their conclusion that while Iran may ultimately want a bomb, the country halted work on weapons design in 2003 and probably has not restarted that effort — a judgment first made public in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate.

The debate, in essence, is a mirror image of the intelligence dispute on the eve of the Iraq war. This time, U.S. spy agencies are delivering more cautious assessments of clandestine Iranian programs than their West European counterparts.

The differing views color how each country perceives the imminence of the Iranian threat and how to deal with it in the coming months, including negotiations this week in Geneva, the first direct talks between the United States and Iran in nearly 30 years.

In the case of the plant outside Qum, designed for uranium enrichment, some



AP

nuclear experts speculate that it is only part of something larger. But a senior U.S. official with access to intelligence about it said he believed the secret plant was itself "the big one," but cautioned that "it's a big country."

This distinction has huge political consequences. If Mr. Obama can convince Israel that the exposure of the Qum plant has dealt a significant setback to the Iranian effort, he may buy some time from the Israelis.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were discussing classified intelligence assessments.

Uranium enrichment — the process of turning raw uranium into reactor or bomb fuel — is only one part of building a nuclear weapon, though it is the most difficult step. The two remaining steps are designing and building a warhead and building a reliable delivery system, like a ballistic missile.

American officials said that Iran halted warhead design efforts in 2003, a conclusion they reached after penetrating the country's computer networks and gaining access to internal government communications. This judgment became the cornerstone of the 2007 intelligence report, which drew sharp criticism from Europe and Israel and remains the subject of intense debate.

Disagreeing with the Americans, Israeli intelligence officials say they believe that Iran restarted weapons design work in 2005 on the orders of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader. The Americans counter that the Israeli case is flimsy and circumstantial and that the Israelis cannot document their claim.

German intelligence officials take an even harder line against Iran. They say the weapons work never stopped, a judgment made public last year in a German court case involving shipments of banned technology to Tehran. In recent interviews, German intelligence agencies declined to comment further.

Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, the former head of intelligence at the Department of Energy and a nuclear expert who worked for the C.I.A., said that the apparent differences of opinion among the world's intelligence agencies might boil down to differences of interpretative style, or what he called "tradecraft."

"It's often tradecraft that gets us bol-

lixed up," he said in an interview.

"It comes down to interpreting the same data in different ways, in looking at the same information and coming up with different conclusions."

Some Israeli and European officials say the Americans are being overly cautious, having been stung by the Iraq intelligence debacle. The Americans deny this, insisting they are open-minded. One American intelligence official said the view of Iran's weapons design program, "like every analytic judgment, is constantly checked and reassessed in light of new information, which comes in all the time."

Each country bases its view on a combination of satellite imagery, human spies and electronic eavesdropping. And countries do not necessarily share it all with one another or with the International Atomic Energy Agency, an investigative arm of the United Nations.

This has created plenty of bad blood with the U.N. agency. The departing chief of the I.A.E.A., Mohamed ElBaradei, recently argued that the case for urgent action against Iran was "hyped."

He acknowledged, however, that Iran has refused, for two years, to answer his inspectors' questions about evidence that it was working on weapons design.

Now some European powers who fought with President George W. Bush over the evidence on Iraq — and were later vindicated by the failure to find unconventional weapons — are pressing Mr. ElBaradei to reveal what his agency has collected on its own, through regular inspections in Iran.

"Why doesn't he provide us with the annexes of his report?" Bernard Kouchner, the French foreign minister, asked last month, referring to material U.N. inspectors are believed to have compiled for internal discussions. Mr. Kouchner said those annexes contained "elements which enable us to ask questions about the reality of an atomic bomb. There are issues of warheads, of transport."

Western intelligence officials now want to determine whether there are even more secret enrichment sites. Washington has said there may be more than a dozen sites involved in the nuclear program, though there have been no public indications as to what they are used for. Graham Allison, the author of "Nuclear Terrorism" and a Harvard professor who focuses on proliferation, said he could not conceive of the Iranians building only one such site.

"How likely is it that the Qum facility is all there is? Zero. A prudent manager of a serious program would certainly have a number of sites," he said.

Mr. Allison said the lesson Iran took away from the Israeli destruction of an Iraqi reactor more than 25 years ago was to spread facilities around the country.

Kurds not represented in Ahmadinejad's cabinet

By Sabir Qadiri

Tehran- During the June presidential elections, Iranian officials gave a lot of promises to Kurds to give them more power in the government, but there is no Kurdish minister in the new government of Iran. The deputy mayor of Sinna city, Kordestan province, Abdul-Jabbar Karami said about this "Ahmadinejad does not believe in Kurdish ministers".

During the election campaign for the Iranian

presidency, each one of Mir-Hussein Mousavi, Mehdi Karrubi and Ahmadinejad focused on the participation of the non-Persian nations in the new cabinet of the government, and Ali Khamenei, the Islamic revolution leader of Iran, focused in his visit to the Kurdish areas that Kurds will hold high posts of the government. And this made the Kurdish MPs in the Iranian parliament to send a message to Ahmadinejad and request that Kurdish should be represented in his cabinet. But not a single Kurd has been appointed for a ministerial position.

"Ahmadinejad is talking about a country of

seventy millions and says 'we have no first class and second class citizens' but these speeches are not true, when he selected his ministers it was clear that he did not believe in his speech and there is no sign of broad base in his government," Karani added.

Iran officials are mostly of the Persian and Azeri ethnicities, while other ethnic groups have been excluded from the governmental posts. And this phenomenon is clearly seen in Kurdistan that all the chief officials of the Kurdish cities are non-Kurd persons.

Graft main worry for investors in Iraq Kurdistan

 **REUTERS**

BAGHDAD, Sept 25, 2009 (Reuters) - By Tim Cocks

- * *Graft and secretive governance may deter investors*
- * *Opposition made gains on anti-corruption message*

A **murky** stock deal between Iraqi Kurdish officials and a foreign oil company has shone an embarrassing spotlight on widespread graft that may threaten investment and growth in the prosperous northern region.

Kurdish officials are not accused of breaking any laws, but their secret stock purchase from Norway's oil firm DNO International (DNO.OL: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz) last year raises new doubts about the northern enclave's new initiative to curtail corruption, boost transparency and loosen close political ties to business.

Talk about widespread graft and the commercial clout of two parties dominating the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) could ultimately deter business in a region seen as a stable corner of a nation otherwise plagued by legal and security risk.

While the KRG rejects systematic corruption, it unveiled the drive before regional polls in July, when wide discontent gave opposition groups unprecedented gains in the Kurds' parliament.

No top officials have been charged of corruption, but ordinary Kurds say they need no proof of the failure to track money spent on public works, of contracts awarded to close associates rather than on the basis of competitive bidding or palms that need to be greased before deals can be closed.

"There's outright corruption: officials making money from contracts ... and the other one, which is more subtle: the way two political parties run the show. You have to belong to one to get jobs, to get influence," said Henri J. Barkey, analyst at Washington's Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The new initiative was thrust into the spotlight this week when the KRG suspended DNO's oil operations in Kurdistan due to a disclosure from Norway the KRG had bought DNO shares that were then passed on to DNO's Turkish partner Genel Enerji.

The transaction last October was not disclosed to the Oslo Stock Exchange, and Norway's financial watchdog has now urged a police investigation. The KRG says no officials benefited from the sale but said the flap caused it "unjustifiable ... harm".

"FRAUD, WASTE"

The KRG hired accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers to implement its new transparency strategy, a bid which reflects in part discontent from voters increasingly worried about at-home issues rather than age-old feuds with Baghdad over land and oil.

KRG officials admit it could be years before they root out a pervasive

culture of graft, which some say is partly the result of an intersection of a traditional, tribal society based on patronage with modern institutions that handle big sums of cash.

"Some things that are seen as corrupt are very, very normal ... part of the natural culture here," Jhilwan Qazzaz, an advisor in the KRG prime minister's office, told Reuters.

"We're not looking at changing anything overnight. We're looking at the next 4-5 to 10 years, even ... Frankly, this is a brave step. There's going to be lots of opposition to it."

The KRG website says the aim of the initiative is "tackling corruption, fraud, waste and abuse" and wooing investors.

"We're going to draw a line in the sand and say 'From now on, this is the new way of working'", said Qazzaz. "Those that are not on board, we're going to be hitting you with the stick."

Yet analysts are sceptical of whether the ruling alliance of Kurdish President Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) really have the political will to go after anyone bigger than low-level, bribe-taking officials.

The two presidents hail from Kurdistan's two most powerful families, which are influential in business circles.

Foreign investors complain of having to partner with local firms which invariably have strong ties to one of them.

"Corruption ... is part of the ruling elite's way of doing business," said Toby Dodge, an Iraq expert at the University of London. "To actually stop the corruption surrounding the two dominant families would be to put their survival in doubt."

Dodge said Washington, from which Kurds still feel they need protection after Saddam's persecution, could pressure reform.

There are also new internal pressures. Change, an opposition group led by Noshirwan Mustafa, was virtually unknown until it won a quarter of seats in parliament on an anti-graft message.

KRG officials deny cronyism and blame a few bad apples.

"The issue is exaggerated," said Mohammed Ihsan, KRG minister for extra-regional affairs. "Any country where you have such rapid change, expect some corruption. As political parties, KDP and PUK are not going to give someone a high position like a minister if he's not in the party. That's normal everywhere."

Ultimately, Kurdistan's best hope could be the incoming Prime Minister, Barham Salih, a widely respected former Iraqi deputy PM who has been vocal about the need to curb graft.

"He's clean as a whistle," said Barkey. "That the opposition did well in a way strengthens his hand. He'll be able say: look, we got almost hung by these guys because of corruption and I need to do something about it."



september 25, 2009

Exclusive Interview with the Head of the Militant Arm of the Separatist Group PKK

By: Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Murat Karayilan is the acting commander of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan - PKK) and chairman of the executive council of the Kurdish Democratic Confederation (Koma Civaken Kurdistan - KCK). Karayilan, whose surname means "black snake," joined the PKK in 1979, just a year before the 1980 Turkish military coup. The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union, the United States and Turkey. In an August 11 interview with Karayilan in a PKK camp located in the mountains of northern Iraq, Karayilan said that he would like to return to his home country. "But I am not dreaming about this, I am a realist."

Karayilan controls around 8000 PKK insurgents, spread almost equally through northern Iraq and Turkey. The PKK commander claims that the movement can easily increase the number of insurgents, but at the moment they are following a self-defense strategy: "The biggest part of this strategy is a political struggle. Most military actions are only for reasons of defense."

The PKK is still waiting for the release of the "roadmap" of conditions necessary for the PKK to lay down arms in its decades-old struggle against the Turkish state. The roadmap is the work of imprisoned PKK-leader Abdullah Ocalan, but rather than being released by authorities after its completion in August, the document has ended up in the hands of the public prosecutor's office (Today's Zaman, September 5; see also Terrorism Monitor, August 6; Eurasia Daily Monitor, September 10). Karayilan says that the PKK is prepared for peace, but also for a continuation of "the resistance." "The [KCK] has taken the decision, despite the approach of Ocalan to find a peaceful solution for the Kurdish question, that if the Turkish state insists on old style approaches, we have to resist these as well."

JT: How do you see the situation of Kurds today in Turkey?

Karayilan: The struggle and resistance of the PKK since August 15, 1983 has brought the Kurdish question to the point of solution. From the denial of the Kurds to the point that [Turkey] recognizes the Kurdish reality. For the last 16 years, we have been trying to solve the Kurdish question through peaceful ways and announced six unilateral ceasefires, but Turkey did not use this [opportunity] to



The acting Commander of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, Murat Karayilan

solve the Kurdish question.

When our leader announced a ceasefire in September 1998, Turkey conspired against him with American support and captured him on February 15, 1999. For the last 11 years all European countries were against us and applied great pressure on us to destroy us. It was a very heavy period.

But currently America is pulling back from Iraq and wants to redesign the region. They think that Turkey's importance for energy is growing as Turkey and Kurdistan become an energy corridor. An example is the Nabucco pipeline project [the planned Nabucco pipeline will send gas from the Caspian region and possibly Iraq to Europe through Turkey]. For this reason, it is more important to solve the Kurdish issue both internationally and regionally, because there is a need for stability. Stability can only be reached by the West through destroying the Kurdish freedom movement and oppressing Kurds or by solving the Kurdish question.

The Turkish state began this period under the name "the Kurdish Opening." But what the Turkish state is doing now is not enough to solve the Kurdish question. All around the world there [are] always two parties to talk with, and they have always talked with other parties [Britain with the IRA, Spain with the ETA, etc]. What they are doing at the moment is not considering the other party [the PKK] at all. They want to solve the question by themselves.

JT: What kind of negotiations do you mean?

Karayilan: For example, the Interior Minister Besir Atalay says the Kurdish issue will be solved in a new Turkish way, there is no other [relevant] example in the world. We are very surprised and waiting to see what kind of solution they mean. They have not shown how they are going to solve the Kurdish question. Atalay gives his red lines: Ocalan will not be freed, there will not be autonomy for Kurds and no education in the mother language. If

these are the red lines, how is he going to solve the Kurdish question? Why don't Kurds have their education in their own language? This approach cannot solve the Kurdish question at all. They might [have the intent] to mislead the international community.

JT: What will be in the roadmap?

Karayilan: For the last three months our leader Abdullah Ocalan has been getting different views from intellectuals, journalists and other people through his lawyers. The roadmap will take the constitution of the first Turkish republic into consideration. This constitution does not say that everyone [in Turkey] is Turkish, but only a citizen of the Turkish republic. At that time [1921] there were no assimilation policies. Kurds could speak their mother tongue and wear Kurdish clothes in parliament. We see the solution within the framework of the constitution of 1921. If the 1921 constitution is taken as a reference, the Kurdish question can be solved. But after July 1923, the Lausanne agreement was signed by the Western powers, which was based on the denial of Kurds and gave the new Turkish authorities the power to change the constitution in 1924. For the last 85 years, Kurds have been living through genocides and tragedies because of this approach of denying the Kurds, while this land is their own land.

Next to this there are many examples where conflicts were solved, like Ireland and Catalonia... The idea is to find examples for similar problems, we are clear about this, but the Turkish state, while having a "Kurdish Opening," is [also] having hidden meetings to prepare military attacks against the Kurdish freedom movement.

JT: You mean with the Iraqi government and America?

Karayilan: Yes, with Iran as well. We want sincerity. If they use the old methods [of repression], we have the military, political and social power to oppose this.

Everybody should know this. Between the 24th and the 27th of July this year, the second congress of the KCK decided to support the roadmap of our leader, but also took the decision to prepare for resistance against the Turkish state.

JT: Joost Lagendijk, former Chairman of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, says if the PKK stops fighting, Turkey will not have any excuse to avoid giving rights to Kurds. What do you think about this?

Karayilan: When there is no guerrilla force, Turkey will say there is no Kurdish question at all. I do not think Mr. Lagendijk understands the mentality of the Turkish state. For instance, the Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in Moscow in 2004, that "If you do not think there is a Kurdish question, there is no Kurdish question," and that is only five years ago.

JT: What about the Village Guard program and the amnesty?

We are not discussing amnesty. Who is going to forgive who? Are they going to forgive me? Almost 70.000 civilians were killed by unknown assassins. Who is going to forgive them? Both sides should forgive each other and the Turkish state has to apologize to the Kurdish people.

JT: What do you think about the Ergenekon case? [1] And the prosecution of Colonel Cemal Temizoz who is accused of killing Kurdish civilians in the 1990s? [2]

Karayilan: They have to start court cases against [former prime ministers Tansu] Ciller and [Suleyman] Demirel as well. The Kurdish question cannot be solved through cases such as Ergenekon. It is better to set up a project to reach reconciliation

within the society. For example, in South Africa there was a reconciliation commission. A fact finding commission should be established to investigate the murders and killings of both sides.

JT: What about the "peace mothers" of killed Turkish soldiers and PKK guerrillas who organized a peace march from Diyarbakir to Ankara this month [August]. What do you think about this initiative?

Karayilan: It is very nice and positive. In reality, both Kurds and Turks want to solve the Kurdish issue in a peaceful way. But the mentality of the denial of Kurds stops the solution of the Kurdish issue. For the solution a brave will is needed, but nobody can show this at the moment. Some like the CHP [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi] and the MHP [Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, both Turkish opposition parties] are also against solving the Kurdish question.

JT: You said America supports a destruction plan, but on the other hand the United States allows the DTP [Demokratik Toplum Partisi - the PKK's political wing] to open an office in Washington. There were also meetings between President Obama and the DTP. Is this not a sign that America wants a solution?

Karayilan: America has been supporting Turkish policies against the Kurds for years. They asked Turkey to [take] steps to solve the Kurdish question, but they did not do this and at the same time tried to annihilate us. From this perspective, you might say the United States wants the Kurdish problem to be solved. I think America wants a solution whether Turkey wants it or not. I do not think America will accept Turkey trying to finish off the PKK. There is an approach by the United States and Britain to solve the

Kurdish issue to bring stability to the region.

But the approach of France and Germany is different - they do not want Turkey in the EU and do not want the Kurdish question to be solved. If there is war, they can refuse Turkey's EU membership. There were 26 Kurdish politicians arrested in France without any proof. They could not even find a knife yet they were accused of collecting money for the PKK. France is giving Turkey a message: "Don't be scared, I'm attacking the PKK in my own country and you can have your war against the PKK. We will be at your back and supporting you." This might upset the Kurdish people. France should change their policies towards the Kurds.

It is important that both European countries and America support a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question and support the roadmap of Abdullah Ocalan. We will see what is going to happen.

Notes:

1. See *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 6, 2009.

2. *Gendarmerie Brigade Commander Colonel Cemal Temizoz and six others are currently on trial for their suspected involvement in 20 unsolved murders in ethnic-Kurdish southeast Turkey. The indictment claims Colonel Temizoz formed a death squad in the region in the 1990s that was involved in the murder of hundreds of Kurds under the cover of "anti-terrorism" efforts. See Today's Zaman, September 11; September 14; Milliyet, September 18.*

TODAYS ZAMAN
september 30, 2009

Prominent Kurdish politician Abdumelik Fırat dies in Ankara

MUSA TASPINAR

Famous Kurdish politician Abdumelik Fırat, who had been hospitalized on Monday for deteriorating health due to complications from leukemia, died in Ankara on Tuesday.

The 75-year-old Fırat died in the intensive care unit of Güven Hospital in Ankara, where he was taken early this week. As his son, Abdulkadir Fırat, previously told reporters Fırat's doctors said that Fırat's lungs had lost 60 percent of their function. In addition to leukemia, Fırat also suffered a diabetic coma in June, which caused serious brain damage.

About Abdumelik Fırat

A grandson of the Kurdish rebel leader Sheikh Said, Fırat's family history is full of persecution, exile and executions. A revered sheikh of the Nakshibendi sufi order and originally from Diyarbakir, Sheikh Said was captu-

red in 1925 and hanged with many other rebel leaders. His family members were sent into exile and were given the last name "Fırat" ("Euphrates").

With Turkey's transition to a multi-party regime, Fırat became a deputy from the Democrat Party (DP) in 1957 and was sent to prison following the May 27, 1960 military coup d'état, which resulted in the execution of the prime minister and two other ministers. Fırat was also sentenced to execution, but his sentence was later commuted to imprisonment.

In 1991, he entered politics under the True Path Party (DYP), but subsequently left the party because he did not agree with its policies toward Kurds. He was sent to prison again for two months on charges of helping the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

A harsh critic of the PKK, he remained on the political scene and finally established the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) in 2001. He left three years ago because of health



Kurdish politician Abdumelik Fırat died on Tuesday at an Ankara hospital, where he had been receiving treatment for leukemia.

problems and handed over the post of his party's presidency to Sertaç Bucak. Fırat also lent his support for the government's recent democratic initiative to settle Turkey's long-standing Kurdish issue.

TODAYS ZAMAN
september 27, 2009

Signs of 'reserved optimism' growing among Kurds over Kurdish initiative

AYSE KARABAT

While Kurds overall are hopeful about the government's democratization package, some have started to question whether the process will lead to the resolution of outstanding issues citizens of Kurdish background face in the country.

Several Kurdish intellectuals and groups are shifting their positions from conditional or full support to cautious optimism or even pessimism vis-à-vis the initiative, pundits say.

The government launched an initiative in late July to solve Turkey's decades-old Kurdish question. As part of this, the coordinator of the initiative, Interior Minister Besir Atalay, met with the opposition, intellectuals and civil society organizations, while Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP).

At the beginning of the process, the DTP declared its full support for the initiative, but there were two different views within the party: one suggesting adopting a "wait and see" policy and the other insisting that the solution should involve Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) jailed leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Öcalan prepared a road map outlining his solution for the Kurdish problem. According to PKK-affiliated media organizations, it runs 160 pages but has yet to be publicly released. Öcalan's lawyers claim that public prosecutors have taken his road map and are examining it prior to making it public.

Minister Atalay said the details of the government's plan will be announced in Parliament after it returns from summer recess on Oct. 1. The plan is expected to comprise several phases and will outline regulations to be taken in the short, medium and long term.

Prime Minister Erdoğan frequently underlined that the initiative, which he sometimes calls a "national unity initiative," is a process and will be realized over a long period of time.

PKK may not prolong unilateral cease-fire

Various Kurdish groups welcomed the government's initiative when it was first proposed, but over time got impatient and began shifting their perception from that of full support to cautious optimism or even

pessimism, including the outlawed PKK.

The PKK reportedly prolonged its unilateral "cease-fire" after the declaration of the government initiative. In the cease-fire, the PKK pledged not to attack or take action as long as it is not attacked. But since the initiative started, there have been clashes between security forces and PKK terrorists, resulting in loss of life.

The DTP has frequently urged for a cessation of military operations, but both Prime Minister Erdoğan and Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Basbug have repeatedly said operations against terrorist groups will continue.

There are signs that there is a growing disagreement within the PKK over the initiative. At least one armed faction has vowed to continue fighting no matter what, while others are opting for a "wait and see" approach.

The PKK is reportedly considering its position as concerns its unilateral cease-fire. PKK-affiliated Web sites note the government's actions will be carefully monitored and the PKK's position adjusted accordingly.

The PKK claims the initiative is a false attempt and that the real aim of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) is to implement a new policy in the name of the state.

Shifting hope

While describing the mood in the city, Sezgin Tanrikulu, a former chairman of the Diyarbakir Bar Association, underlined that the excitement present in the various segments of society when the initiative was first announced has all but disappeared.

"The excitement has been replaced by a wait. Some segments are still very hopeful, especially those closer to the AK Party. But some others are pessimistic and waiting to see the details of the initiative," Tanrikulu told Sunday's Zaman.

According to him, Minister Atalay's statements indicate that the government is for the time not considering constitutional amendments or a large scale amnesty, turning the mood in Diyarbakir sour.

Altan Tan, a conservative Kurdish intellectual, holds a similar view. According to him, some Kurds feel they have been cheated once more since there might not be improvements in education in Kurdish, amnesty and constitutional changes. "Most of the people are pessimists, but cautious pessimists," he said.

Another Kurdish intellectual, Ümit Fırat,



Interior Minister Besir Atalay met with Democratic Society Party leader Ahmet Türk to discuss the government's democratic initiative in mid-August.

told Sunday's Zaman that Kurds who did not have realistic expectations must now be ready for disappointment.

"Those who dreamt everything would be done very quickly, they have to be ready for big disappointments -- especially those who thought the issue would be addressed with Öcalan," he said.

According to Fırat, as time goes by, the DTP is feeling more pressure from the PKK regarding the initiative.

"The dominant idea within the DTP is similar to that of the PKK. They think they paid a price and should therefore be considered counterparts in this process. But there is another group in the DTP which is weak and thinks that, with or without them, there will be some developments, so it is better to be excluded from this process," he said.

According to him, the Kurds' expectations from the government's democratization initiative are very high and this is the essence of the problem. "Kurds are forgetting the fact that Kurds are not the only ones living in this country. Yes, it will be very nice if everything that we wish for happens very quickly -- but to not be heavily disappointed, expectations should be limited," he said.

The reason why Iran's Green Movement has no support in Kurdistan

September 28, 2009 - Kurdishaspect.com - By Loghman H. Ahmedi

Supporters of Iran's Green Movement have, during the past couple of months, complained that our party, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), is preventing the Kurdish people as well as other nations in Iran, such as the Baluchs and the Arabs, from joining this movement.

Individuals and groups that support the Green Movement have asked the governments and political parties of other countries and friends and allies of our party around the world to put pressure on us to urge the Kurdish people to take part in this movement.

Hence, explaining the reasons why our party and our people have not expressed support for the Green Movement is in order.

Our party has since its establishment 64 years ago, and especially during the past 30 years, always reached out to all progressive movements that advocate democracy in Iran. However, since the leaders of the Green Movement have not expressed any explicit support for democracy or any willingness to address, let alone accommodate, the national rights that our people demand, naturally, we cannot show any support for this movement.

The fact that the leaders of the Green Movement take every opportunity to pledge their loyalty to the Islamic Republic's undemocratic constitution and its theocratic system of governance and, furthermore, refuse to even take any of the Kurdish nation's demands into consideration, explains why it has no support in Iranian Kurdistan.

As long as this movement does not explicitly and unequivocally express its support for democracy and the rights of Iran's oppressed nations, it cannot expect any support in Iranian Kurdistan.

Meaningful and real change in Iran towards democracy can only be possible if Iran's political movements jointly reach a consensus on the need for the abolishment of the current theocratic system of government and its replacement with a multinational federal democracy.

The various nations of Iran have legitimate concerns about the positions of the leaders of the Green Movement. Furthermore, no one should forget that all of the leaders of the Green Movement have in different ways taken active part in the oppression of the Kurdish people during the past 30 years.

The fact that supporters of the Green Movement have set out to persuade our party to support this movement is testament of the fact that no movement in Iran will achieve its goals without the participation of the Kurdish people as well as other nations in Iran.

Since they have realized this fact, it is also high time for them to express their support for democracy and the rights of Iran's oppressed nations.

If support for democracy and national rights is absent from the Green Movements agenda it will only be a movement for some Iranians rather than all Iranians. The political formula for a movement with a true popular basis in all of Iran is a multinational federal democracy.

Loghman H. Ahmedi is the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan's representative to the United Kingdom.

Hurriyet
DailyNews.com
september 28, 2009

Turkey's opposition leader blasts Hollywood actor's support to Kurd move

ANKARA, Turkey, — CHP leader Deniz Baykal responds to American actor and director Kevin Costner's support of the government's Kurdish opening. 'Why are you interfering in Turkey's domestic affairs? Do your job as actor,' says Baykal

The main opposition leader has blasted famous Hollywood actor Kevin Costner's open support to the government-sponsored Kurdish initiative over the weekend, labelling it as interference in the country's domestic politics.

"Why are you interfering in Turkey's domestic affairs? Do your own job as an actor. Who are you, my brother? What do you know and speak?" said Deniz Baykal of the Republican People's Party, or CHP.

Baykal criticized the government for seeking remedy from Hollywood actors.

"The prime minister is hiding the truths from the public regarding the opening. He has a project on his mind and plans to make it accepted slowly in the face of possible reactions from the nation. Is it the prime minister's job to deceive people?" asked Baykal.

"They [government officials] have found an actor from Hollywood to make it amiable. I don't know how they convinced him [Costner] to come out and say 'I support the opening.' Why are you interfering in Turkey's domestic affairs?" said the CHP leader, referring to the actor. "If you now put a map in front of him [Costner], believe me he cannot spot where Sirnak is," he said.

U.S. actor and director Costner, who visited Turkey in 2007, voiced support for the

government's Kurdish move. Ruling Justice and Development Party's, or AKP, deputy chairperson Edibe Sözen said last week Costner had been invited for the party's general congress on Oct. 3 but the actor was unable to attend.

Debate over language

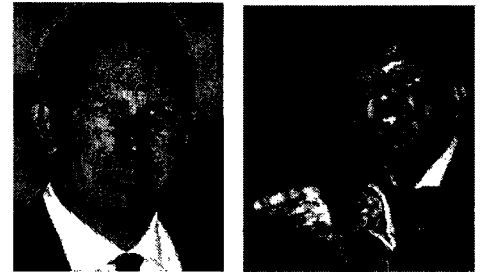
The CHP leader also criticized the government's approach toward language. He said a person could come from a different origin, tribe, race or ethnic identity but "all of us must establish a unity under a common language."

He continued: "What is the prime minister doing today? He is initiating a conflict on the language unity. The state's duty is to teach the official language to everyone and help it to develop and strengthen. The state is not in a position to accept another language and present it as a rival to the official language. Turkey's official language is Turkish and it will remain so."

'Aim is to split nation,' says MHP

Opposition Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, leader Devlet Bahçeli, in a message issued on Language Day over the weekend, said those who support a second language aimed at splitting up the nation. He argued that beginning to use other languages than Turkish would speed up the process of weakening the Turkish language.

"It should not be ignored that the equal use and spread of a different language besides Turkish in the public domain could lead to the formation of a new nation out of the blessed presence of the Turkish nation, spoiling the



thousand-year nation truth," the MHP leader said.

Minister defends

In the eastern Kurdish province of Van, Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün commented on the government's "democratic opening" commission. He said: "When you use the name 'Suzan' it doesn't split the nation. Will the name 'Zozan' split it?"

Explaining the government's move to businessmen and representatives of non-governmental organizations, the minister said there was a state that understands its citizen, instead of a state that doesn't understand its own citizen. "That's the case and that's the process," he said.

"Why do you ban people from using their local names? Why can't you use the name 'Zozan'? We would get divided. Why did we ban the name Berivan for a girl? The birth registry clerk didn't write it because it was banned," said Ergün.

The minister said there were differences in Turkey and asked to "let the people exist with their own colors."

AFP

QUESTIONS KURDE ET ARMÉNIENNE: RENTÉE POLITIQUE À RISQUES À ANKARA

ANKARA, 28 sept 2009 (AFP)

Le gouvernement islamo-conservateur du Premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan fait cette semaine une rentrée parlementaire à risques, proposant aux députés deux projets ultra-sensibles: la normalisation des relations avec l'Arménie, et une réforme en faveur de la minorité kurde.

Des débats houleux sont attendus tant sur le projet arménien, qui doit tirer un trait sur des décennies d'hostilité, que sur l'"ouverture démocratique" destinée à améliorer la situation des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie (sur 71 millions d'habitants).

Ces deux dossiers provoquent les protestations anticipées de l'opposition nationaliste ou sociale-démocrate.

La Turquie et l'Arménie doivent signer le 10 octobre à Zürich un accord en vue d'établir des relations diplomatiques, et rouvrir la frontière commune.

Mais les obstacles sont nombreux, à commencer par la question des massacres d'Arméniens par les Ottomans en 1915, qui ont fait plus d'un million et demi de morts selon les Arméniens, 300.000 à 500.000 selon la Turquie.

Ankara récuse catégoriquement la notion de "génocide" retenue par Erevan, mais également par la France, le Canada et le Parlement européen.

La Turquie a aussi fermé sa frontière avec l'Arménie en 1993 en soutien à l'Azerbaïdjan, pays turcophone et allié d'Ankara, en conflit avec Erevan pour le contrôle de la région du Nagorny Karabakh, enclave peuplée d'Arméniens en territoire azerbaïdjanais.

Sans une ratification par les parlements d'Ankara et d'Erevan, l'accord ne pourra prendre effet.

Dans le cadre des efforts de rapprochement, le président turc Abdullah Gül a invité son homologue arménien, Serge Sarkissian, au match de football Arménie-Turquie de qualification pour le mondial 2010, le 14 octobre à Bursa

(ouest de la Turquie).

M. Gül avait fait en septembre 2008 une visite historique en Arménie, à l'occasion du match aller.

Concernant les Kurdes, l'objectif du gouvernement est d'éroder le soutien, au sein d'une partie de la population du sud-est du pays, dont bénéficie le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en lutte armée depuis 1984.

Selon les médias, Ankara pourrait libéraliser l'usage de la langue kurde, autoriser le retour des 12.000 Kurdes de Turquie exilés dans les camps de Makhmour, foyer du PKK en Irak, et investir plusieurs milliards de dollars dans la région pour faire reculer pauvreté et chômage.

Les milieux Kurdes réclament qu'une référence à l'identité kurde soit incorporée dans la loi fondamentale, éventualité exclue dimanche par M. Erdogan.

"Cette constitution (rédigée après le coup d'Etat de 1980) est un obstacle aux droits démocratiques. Vous n'arriverez à rien si vous ne la changez pas", a estimé Ahmet Türk, le président du DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique, pro-kurde).

Et les mentalités ne suivent pas forcément la ligne du gouvernement. Un procureur a ainsi lancé des poursuites pour "incitation à la haine" contre l'actrice Hülya Avsar parce qu'elle avait soutenu l'initiative gouvernementale, dans une interview.

Le chef emprisonné à vie du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, a de son côté rédigé son propre plan de réformes, mais les autorités turques, qui en ont pris possession, refusent pour l'instant de le divulguer.

L'armée, qui combat le PKK, a réagi assez favorablement à la démarche gouvernementale, mais elle rappelle ses "lignes rouges": maintien de la structure unitaire de l'Etat, respect de la langue turque, refus d'une reconnaissance par la Constitution d'une identité autre que turque.

Un holà qui risque de réduire la marge de manoeuvre du gouvernement.

Agora kurde

30 septembre 2009

Abdumelik Firat est décédé.

agorakurde.com

Mercredi 30 Septembre 2009

Abdumelik Firat est décédé hier à l'hôpital d'Ankara à l'âge de 75 ans. Fondateur du Parti HAK-PAR, ancien député, Abdumelik Firat est le petit-fils de Seid Piran, célèbre pour avoir dirigé le soulèvement kurde de 1925.

Abdumelik Firat est décédé à l'hôpital d'Ankara où il était soigné pour insuffisance rénale. Il souffrait depuis des années du myé-



lome, un cancer hématologique. Admis en soin intensif à la suite de problèmes respiratoires, il s'est éteint hier à 13h55.

Abdumelik Firat était le petit fils du célèbre Seid Piran, auteur de la première guerre de libération nationale en 1925 contre la République turque fraîchement fondée par Mustafa Kemal en 1923.

En 1957 Abdumelik Firat est élu député sur la liste du Parti démocrate (DP). Mais il est arrêté et emprisonné à la suite du coup d'Etat militaire du 27 mai 1960. Il restera 3 ans en prison.

En 1991 il est élu député sur la liste du Parti de la juste voie (DYP). Mais face à la violente répression des Kurdes par le pouvoir turc, il démissionne.

En 2002, il fonde le Parti pour les droits et la liberté (HAK-PAR) qui prône la reconnaissance de l'identité kurde dans la Constitution turque et un système fédéral pour garantir des droits égaux aux Kurdes.

Téhéran dévoile ses nouveaux missiles

Deux jours après la mise en garde des Occidentaux, l'Iran a répondu par une démonstration de force dans le Golfe.

MAURIN PICARD
VIENNE

NUCLÉAIRE Les grandes puissances attendaient de Téhéran un geste d'apaisement, après la révélation vendredi de l'existence d'une nouvelle usine clandestine d'enrichissement d'uranium. La réponse est tombée hier : l'Iran a procédé à trois essais de missiles à courte portée. Deux d'entre eux, l'un en variante sol-sol baptisée « Fateh » (victoire), l'autre en variante navale baptisée « Tondar » (tonnerre) ont été tirés dans les eaux du golfe Persique. Le troisième, nommé « Zelzal », a été lancé dans la région de Qom. Téhéran devait procéder hier soir au lancement d'engins à moyenne portée, Chahab-1 et Chahab-2, et tester aujourd'hui un vecteur à longue portée Chahab-3.

Si ces tirs interviennent dans le cadre de manœuvres militaires prévues de longue date et orchestrées par le corps d'élite des gardiens de la révolution, ils résonnent comme une provocation à l'adresse des « 5 + 1 » (États-

Unis, Russie, Chine, France, Grande-Bretagne et Allemagne), qui dépêcheront jeudi des émissaires à Genève pour débattre du dossier nucléaire avec les Iraniens.

L'Iran devra s'expliquer sur l'usine d'enrichissement d'uranium au nord de la ville sainte chiite de Qom, à 100 km au sud de Téhéran. Il s'agirait d'une enceinte militaire souterraine truffée de défenses antiaériennes, abritant 3000 centrifugeuses, sous le contrôle des gardiens de la révolution. Autant de faits qui participent d'un « schéma de dissimulation préoccupant » de la part de l'Iran, selon Obama.

Pour les Occidentaux, l'AIEA doit pouvoir se rendre sans tarder à Qom, pour empêcher les Iraniens de mettre à l'abri documents et équipements compromettants, qui tendraient à indiquer des visées militaires.

Samedi, Ali Akbar Salehi, le chef de l'Organisation iranienne de l'énergie atomique (OIEA), a promis que le nouveau site serait « placé sous la supervision de l'AIEA », « dans les meilleurs délais ».

Les dirigeants iraniens arguent en outre qu'ils n'étaient « pas tenus » de déclarer l'existence de cette usine, du moins pas encore, au nom des accords de garanties nucléaires liant le pays à l'AIEA. Tout État membre doit pourtant informer l'agence au préalable de son intention de bâtir un site nucléaire.

« L'esprit de Vienne »

L'Iran, qui a signé ce document en 2003 mais ne l'a jamais ratifié, a cherché en 2007 à revenir à la version antérieure du texte datant de 1976. Celle-ci, considérée comme désuète par les juristes de l'agence, exigeait seulement des États membres qu'ils informent l'AIEA de l'existence d'un site nucléaire six mois avant d'y introduire de la matière fissile.

Si Téhéran peut prétendre retomber sur ses pieds sur un plan purement juridique, cet argument perd en revanche de sa force au regard de « l'esprit de Vienne ». En six ans et demi d'enquête sur la nature réelle de son programme nucléaire, justement, l'Iran a toujours prétendu n'avoir « rien à cacher ». La révélation soudaine de l'existence de l'usine d'enrichissement d'uranium de Qom jette un nouvel éclairage sur les limites de la transparence pour Téhéran. ■

LE CHIFFRE
2000
kilomètres

C'est la portée du missile sol-sol Chahab-3 que l'Iran doit aujourd'hui tester. Il pourrait atteindre les capitales du Moyen-Orient, Israël et les bases américaines dans le Golfe et, à terme, emporter des ogives nucléaires.

Lancement-test d'un missile à courte portée Zelzal, dimanche à Qom. L'Iran a aussi testé, hier dans le golfe Persique, deux autres types de missiles à courte portée, Fateh et Tondar.

SHAIEGAN/FARS NEWS/AFP

Obama entame une imprévisible marche face à l'Iran

LAURE MANDEVILLE

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UN NOUVEAU cycle diplomatique crucial s'ouvre jeudi 1^{er} octobre pour Barack Obama. Lors de ce face-à-face entre l'Iran et les cinq pays membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité plus l'Allemagne, la nouvelle Administration va tenter une négociation de la dernière chance visant à amener le régime d'Achmadinejad à dévoiler ses plans nucléaires et à abandonner toute idée de construction de la bombe. Cela fait maintenant sept ans que l'Occident joue au chat et à la souris avec l'Iran. C'est dire si la négociation s'annonce difficile et imprévisible.

Mais il faut reconnaître que l'Administration d'Obama aborde les pourparlers en position de force, vu le consensus qui s'est dessiné à New York et Pittsburgh sur la nécessité de durcir le ton. L'annonce par les États-Unis, la France et la Grande-Bretagne de la découverte d'un nouveau site



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clandestin d'enrichissement d'uranium près de Qom a suscité un mouvement de mobilisation de la communauté internationale. « Elle est plus unie que jamais... Même les pays hostiles à discuter des sanctions pourraient changer d'avis », a dit Obama lors de sa conférence de presse de vendredi à Pittsburgh, parlant d'une position bien plus favorable « pour appliquer des sanctions qui font mal », si la diplomatie échoue. Le changement de ton de la Russie est le plus notable. Les Américains affirment qu'ils comptent bien exploiter ce basculement général d'humeur pour exiger

des Iraniens une ouverture à l'AIEA du nouveau site secret « dans les prochaines semaines ». Le *New York Times* affirmait hier qu'ils envisageaient aussi de demander aux Iraniens d'accepter des inspections de l'AIEA à travers tout le pays.

Changement de posture russe

Pour Washington, ce durcissement de ton fait suite à une période d'appel au dialogue qui n'a pas porté les fruits attendus. Mais il ne signifie nullement que les Américains soient à la veille d'un succès majeur face à Téhéran. Les experts soulignent tous qu'une éventuelle percée dépendra essentiellement de la capacité de Washington à mettre la Russie de son côté. Or un vrai suspense demeure sur la réalité et les motivations du changement de posture russe.

Allié crucial de Téhéran, Moscou possède une série de leviers - notamment économiques - qui font défaut aux Occidentaux. Vu l'étroitesse de leur relation avec l'Iran, toute la question est de savoir « où se tiendront les Russes » à l'issue du délai fixé à la fin de l'année, résume un diplomate occidental. Les sceptiques remarquent que les Russes n'ont pas intérêt à un rapprochement irano-

occidental. « La peur d'un Iran nucléaire est-elle plus grande à Moscou que le désir de nuire aux positions américaines ? », s'interrogeait au printemps un diplomate américain. Il n'est pas sûr non plus que la Russie soit emballée par l'appel à la dénucléarisation du monde d'Obama. Comme le note l'éditorialiste Jim Hoagland dans le *Washington Post* d'hier, les militaires russes, empêtrés dans la réforme de leurs forces armées, misent toujours sur la dissuasion nucléaire et n'adhèrent pas à l'idée, selon eux naïve, que les négociations de désarmement puissent freiner la prolifération.

Les Chinois semblent encore moins emballés à l'idée de « punir » l'Iran. Le *Financial Times* a rapporté que les compagnies chinoises avaient commencé de fournir du carburant à l'Iran, remplissant le vide laissé par BP qui a stoppé ses livraisons l'an passé. Gros producteur de pétrole, Téhéran ne dispose pas de capacités suffisantes en matière de raffinage, fragilité que les États-Unis veulent exploiter. Mais le coup de pouce chinois en dit long sur la difficulté de la mise en œuvre. Instruits par la résistance de Cuba à un embargo vieux de

40 ans, les Américains se demandent si des sanctions ne tremperont pas la volonté iranienne. « Mon sentiment instinctif est qu'ils seraient prêts à en absorber le coût pour acquérir des armes nucléaires », affirme l'expert Ray Takeyh.

Le scénario militaire

Reste un scénario militaire. Si Obama ne l'a pas exclu vendredi, il n'a aucunement la faveur de l'Administration. Le secrétaire américain à la Défense, Robert Gates, estimait hier sur CNN qu'une offensive militaire contre l'Iran ne ferait que faire « gagner du temps » aux États-Unis, retardant le programme nucléaire de Téhéran « d'un à trois ans ». Selon un ancien diplomate parlant au *Figaro* sous couvert de l'anonymat, l'équipe d'Obama se prépare déjà psychologiquement à l'idée d'un Iran passant le seuil nucléaire. Une telle réalité exigerait des États-Unis, le même système de dissuasion et de couplage avec les pays du Moyen-Orient, que celui mis en place en Europe face à l'URSS pendant la guerre froide, a-t-il expliqué. ■



BARHAM SALEH NOMMÉ POUR FORMER LE GOUVERNEMENT KURDE

ERBIL (Irak), 30 sept 2009 (AFP)

L'ANCIEN VICE-Premier ministre irakien, Barham Saleh, a été officiellement chargé mercredi par le président de la région autonome du Kurdistan Massoud Barzani de former le prochain gouvernement régional, plus de deux mois après les élections dans la province.

"Je vous nomme officiellement pour former le gouvernement et vous demande de mener des discussions avec l'ensemble des forces politiques", a affirmé M. Barzani à l'adresse de Barham Saleh, membre de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), dirigé par le président irakien Jalal Talabani, lors d'une cérémonie à la présidence kurde.

Lors d'une conférence de presse, M. Saleh a affirmé que son prochain cabinet comprendrait 19 portefeuilles et serait donc plus resserré que l'ancien gouvernement qui en comptait 42.

"Je vais entamer prochainement les négociations avec l'ensemble des groupes politiques dans la région pour discuter de leur participation au gouvernement", a-t-il souligné.

Interrogé sur la question du conflit entre Erbil, capitale de la région kurde, et Bagdad autour de zones contestées, M. Saleh a adopté un ton apaisant après des mois de tensions.

"Nous devons éviter les querelles politiques car l'Irak traverse des moments difficiles et il est dans l'intérêt de tous de traiter ces questions avec calme", a indiqué le prochain Premier ministre.



Lors du scrutin législatif du 25 juillet, la liste "Kurdistania" -- du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani et de l'UPK-- a obtenu 59 des 111 sièges de l'assemblée locale.

La liste de dissidents Goran ("Changement" en kurde), de Noucherwan Moustapha, a fait son entrée au Parlement en devenant la première force d'opposition avec 25 sièges.

Massoud Barzani, qui était élu pour la première fois à un scrutin au suffrage universel, avait été élu président du Kurdistan irakien avec 69,57% des voix.