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IRAN : L'EXÉCUTION D'UN PRISONNIER KURDE ÉMEUT L'OPINION PUBLIQUE INTERNATIONALE

Le 11 novembre, Ehsan Fattahian, un Kurde âgé de 28 ans, condamné à mort par le tribunal révolutionnaire de Sanadadj a été pendu, malgré les nombreuses protestations et appels de différentes ONG, comme Amnesty International.

Ehsan Fattahian avait été arrêté le 20 juillet 2008. Il avait reconnu appartenir au Komala et avait été d'abord condamné par la Première Chambre du Tribunal révolutionnaire de Sanandadj à 10 ans de prison, au cours d'un procès où tout droit à la défense lui avait été refusé. Il avait fait appel, ainsi que le procureur et, au mépris de la loi

iranienne, avait été condamné à la peine capitale par la Quatrième Chambre de la cour d'appel de la province du Kurdistan en janvier 2009.

Dans une lettre, Ehsan Fattahian mentionnait les tortures subies dès le premier jour de son arrestation et donnait aussi la cause de l'aggravation de sa peine : Il avait refusé de "confesser ses crimes" devant une caméra et de renier ses convictions politiques.

Selon l'article 285 de la loi iranienne, cependant, une peine ne peut être alourdie en appel que si elle est plus légère que le minimum prévu pour un délit. Dans le cas

d'Ehsan Fattahian, la peine minimale pour les charges dont il était accusé était d'un an, et il avait été condamné à dix ans d'emprisonnement en exil (c'est-à-dire hors de sa province natale).

Avant son exécution, Ehsan Fattahian avait, avec d'autres prisonniers politiques kurdes, participé à une grève de la faim pour protester contre leurs conditions de détention. Il n'avait jamais admis les accusations retenues contre lui, hormis celle d'appartenir au Komala. Le 10 novembre, il a été transféré au secret et a été pendu le lendemain, sans avoir pu revoir sa famille, qui n'a pu obtenir non plus la restitution du corps avant

d'apprendre qu'il avait été inhumé anonymement dans un cimetière de Kermanshah, sa ville natale. Les autorités ont par ailleurs averti les parents du jeune Kurde qu'ils ne devaient pas se livrer à une cérémonie de deuil trop ostensible, ni organiser de manifestation à sa mémoire.

L'annonce de cette exécution a indigné de nombreuses organisations ou personnalités, en Iran comme à l'étranger. L'avocate Shirin Ebadi, prix Nobel de la Paix en 2003, a dénoncé cette sentence et son application comme "hâtive" et "sans précédent", ainsi que le fait que la famille Fattahian n'a pu voir Ehsan avant d'être exécuté : "il est très inhabituel d'exécuter quelqu'un dans une telle précipitation qu'ils n'ont pas permis à sa famille de le voir lors de sa dernière nuit. C'est très inhabituel et cela ne fait qu'augmenter les suspicions sur les causes réelles de sa mort", a-t-elle déclaré sur la BBC en persan. "Je ne veux préjuger de rien... mais en raison de traitements inappropriés dans les prisons d'Iran, en particulier le traitement des prisonniers, qui sont malheureusement devenus la norme, il est juste de s'interroger sur les causes de la mort d'Ehsan."

Un peu plus tard, sur le site Internet Rooz, Shirine Ebadi conseillait à la famille Fattahian de faire examiner par un médecin de confiance le corps de leur fils.

Si les circonstances de la mort d'Ehsan Fattahian resteront probablement inconnues, il faut rappeler que ce ne serait pas le premier cas de détenu mort sous la torture : En juin 2003, Zahra Kazemi, une photographe irano-canadienne avait été ainsi battue à mort et probablement violée, selon le rapport des légistes. Akbar Mohammadi, un étudiant condamné à 15 ans de prison pour avoir participé aux manifestations de 1999, est mort de façon suspecte à la prison

d'Evin, en juin 2006, ainsi que Zahra Bani Yaghoob, un médecin de 27 ans, morte en octobre 2007 dans la prison de Hamadan. Ebrahim Lotfallahi, un étudiant mort en détention a, comme Ehsan Fattahian, été enterré en hâte et clandestinement dans un cimetière de Sanandadj, avant que sa famille soit informée de sa mort, le 15 janvier 2008. Le 30 octobre 2008, c'est un membre des Moudjaïddin, Abdolreza Rajabi, qui décédait lors de son transfert de la prison d'Evin à celle de Rajaei Shahr. Le 6 mars 2009, Amir Hossein Heshmat Saran, fondateur d'un mouvement politique, le Front national uni, mourait après 5 ans de détention. Moins de deux semaines plus tard, Omid-Reza Mir Sayafi, un blogueur qui avait été condamné six semaines plus tôt à 30 mois d'emprisonnement, mourrait à Evin.

Par ailleurs, Ehsan Fattahian n'était pas le seul Kurde en attente de son exécution. Douze autres encourent le même sort : Zeynab Jalalian, Habib Latifi, Shirkouh Moarefi, Ramezan Ahmad, Farha Chalesh, Rostam Arkia, Fazih Yasamini, Rashid Akhkandi, Ali Heydarian, Farhad Vakili, Hossein Khazari, et Farzad Kamangar. Parmi eux, Shirkouh Moarefi, âgé de 24 ans, a été, quelques jours après la mort d'Ehsan Fattahian, transféré lui aussi en cellule d'isolement, prélude à une exécution possible.

Peu de temps avant de mourir, Ehsan Fattahian avait relaté les circonstances de son arrestation, celle de ses deux jugements et de sa dernière condamnation, dans une lettre faisant figure de testament politique, qui a largement circulé dans des journaux et sur Internet et a été traduite dans plusieurs langues :

« Les dernières lueurs du soleil couchant
M'indiquent le chemin sur lequel écrire

Le bruit des feuilles mortes sous mes pas
Me dit " Laisse-toi tomber,
Et tu retrouveras le chemin de la liberté."

[Margot Bickel, poétesse allemande traduite par Ahmad Shamlou]

Je n'ai jamais craint la mort, même à présent que je la sens si proche de moi. Je sens son odeur et elle m'est familière, car c'est une vieille connaissance de cette terre et de ce peuple. Je ne parlerai pas de la mort, mais des raisons de cette mort. Puisque elle est devenue le salaire de la justice et de la liberté, comment craindre d'en finir ? "Eux" qui "nous" ont condamnés à mort pour avoir cherché une mince ouverture vers un monde meilleur, délivré de l'injustice, savent-ils ce qu'ils font ?

Ma vie a commencé dans la ville de Kermanshah, un nom qui, pour mes compatriotes a toujours voulu dire Grandeur ; le berceau de la civilisation dans notre pays. Très tôt, j'ai vu la discrimination, l'oppression, je les ai ressenties au plus profond de mon être ; cette cruauté et le pourquoi de cette cruauté, et les tentatives d'y remédier ont fait naître une foule de pensées en moi. Mais hélas, ils avaient bloqué toutes les routes menant à la justice et rendu l'atmosphère si répressive que je n'ai pu trouver le moyen de changer les choses de l'intérieur et je suis parti pour un autre lieu [*le Kurdistan d'Irak*] : Je suis devenu un peshmerga du Komala ; c'est le désir de me trouver moi-même, de trouver mon identité qui m'a fait prendre cette direction. Quitter mon lieu de naissance fut difficile, mais je n'ai jamais coupé les liens qui me rattachaient à la ville de mon enfance. De temps à autre, je souhaitais rentrer chez moi pour retrouver mes vieux souvenirs, et c'est l'une de ces fois-là que par "eux", cette visite a tourné à

l'aigre ; ils m'ont arrêté et emprisonné. Dès ce premier instant et devant l'hospitalité témoignée par mes geôliers, j'ai réalisé que le destin tragique de beaucoup de mes camarades serait aussi le mien : torture, dossier falsifié, jugement à huit-clos et sous influence, un verdict injuste et politisé, et pour finir la mort.

Permettez-moi de vous raconter cela de façon plus décontractée : Après avoir été arrêté à Kamyaran le 20 juillet 2008, et après quelques heures passées en tant qu'"invité" du bureau de renseignements de cette ville, alors que des menottes et un bandeau m'ôtaient le droit de voir et de me mouvoir, une personne qui s'est présentée comme étant l'adjoint du procureur a commencé à me poser une série de questions sans rapport les unes avec les autres, et remplies d'accusations fausses (je tiens à souligner que tout interrogatoire judiciaire en dehors d'une salle d'audience est interdit par la loi). Ce fut la première de mes nombreuses séances d'interrogatoire. La nuit même, j'ai été transféré au bureau de renseignements de la province du Kurdistan, dans la ville de Sanandadj, et c'est là que j'ai su que la partie était véritablement engagée : une cellule sale, des toilettes dégoûtantes et des couvertures qui n'avaient probablement pas vu d'eau depuis des décennies ! À partir de ce moment, mes nuits et mes jours se sont déroulés dans les salles d'interrogatoire et les couloirs du sous-sol, où j'ai été soumis à une torture extrême, et des coups. Cela a duré trois mois et durant ces trois mois, mes interrogateurs, sans doute dans l'espoir d'une promotion ou d'une petite augmentation, ont émis des accusations aussi étranges que fausses, bien qu'ils savaient mieux que personne combien ils étaient loin de la réalité. Ils ont fait beaucoup d'efforts pour tenter de prouver que j'étais impliqué dans un attentat armé ayant

pour but de renverser le régime. Les seules charges qu'ils ont pu retenir contre moi étaient d'être membre du Komalah et d'avoir pris part à des activités de propagande contre le régime. La première chambre du tribunal de la république islamique de Sanandadj m'a condamné à 10 ans en exil dans la prison de Ramhormoz [*Est du Khouzistan*]. Les structures politiques et administratives du gouvernement souffrent constamment de la centralisation, mais dans mon cas, ils ont essayé de décentraliser la justice et ont donné aux cours d'appel de la province du Kurdistan le pouvoir de rejurer les crimes des prisonniers politiques, même avec des sentences aussi lourdes que la peine capitale. Dans mon cas, le procureur de Kamyaran a fait appel du verdict de la première chambre, et la cour d'appel du Kurdistan a commué une peine de dix ans de prison en condamnation à mort, ce qui va à l'encontre des lois de la république islamique. Selon l'article 258 de la loi "Dadrasi Keyfari", une cour d'appel peut alourdir le verdict initial uniquement dans le cas où ce verdict est inférieur à la peine minimale prévue pour le crime. Dans mon cas, le crime était celui de "Moharebeh" (animosité envers Dieu), dont la peine minimale est d'un an de prison ; ma sentence était de dix ans et en exil, nettement au-dessus du minimum. Si vous comparez ma condamnation à la peine minimale pour ce crime, vous comprendrez la nature illégale et politique de cette peine de mort. Je dois cependant mentionner que, peu avant de changer le verdict, ils m'ont amené de la prison centrale de Sanandadj au bureau d'interrogatoire des Renseignements et m'ont demandé d'avouer des crimes que je n'ai pas commis dans un entretien filmé, et de dire des choses auxquelles je ne croyais pas. En dépit de fortes pressions, je n'ai pas accepté de faire cette confession filmée, et ils m'ont alors carrément

dit qu'ils allaient faire changer mon verdict en condamnation à mort, ce qu'ils ont fait en peu de temps, démontrant à quel point les tribunaux obéissent à des pouvoirs étrangers au département de la Justice. Par conséquent, sont-ils à blâmer ?

Un juge doit prêter serment de rester juste en toute situation, en tout temps et envers toute personne, et de regarder le monde d'un point de vue uniquement juridique. Quel juge dans ce pays funeste peut prétendre n'avoir jamais rompu ce serment et être toujours resté juste et équitable ? À mon avis, ces juges-là se comptent sur les doigts d'une main. Lorsque tout le système judiciaire de l'Iran, sur la suggestion d'un interrogateur (sans aucune connaissance des questions juridiques), arrête, juge, emprisonne et exécute les gens, peut-on vraiment le reprocher aux petits juges d'une province qui est depuis toujours réprimée et victime de discrimination ? Oui, cette maison a ses fondations en ruines..

Ceci en dépit du fait que, lors de ma dernière rencontre avec le procureur, ce dernier a admis que la peine de mort était illégale ; mais pour la seconde fois, ils m'ont notifié qu'ils allaient procéder à l'exécution. Inutile de dire que cette insistance à appliquer une sentence de mort résulte de pressions de forces politiques et sécurité étrangères à la justice. Dites-vous que ces gens ne regardent la vie et la mort des prisonniers d'opinion que du point de vue de leurs fiches de paie et des nécessités politiques, rien d'autre ne compte pour eux que leurs propres buts, même s'il s'agit du plus fondamental des droits humains, celui de vivre. Oubliez les lois internationales, ils se moquent complètement de leurs propres lois et procédures...

Mais voici mes dernières paroles :

Si dans l'esprit de ces dirigeants et de ces oppresseurs, ma mort va les débarrasser du « problème » appelé Kurdistan, je dois dire que ce n'est

qu'une illusion. Ni ma mort, ni la mort de milliers de personnes comme moi ne seront un remède à ce mal incurable, et peut-être

même seront-elles le carburant de cet incendie. Il ne fait pas de doute que chaque mort tend vers une vie nouvelle. »

TURQUIE :

LES MESURES POUR RÉSOUDRE LA QUESTION JUGÉES DÉCEVANTES

Annoncé depuis le début de l'été, le plan du gouvernement turc pour résoudre la question kurde a finalement été révélé au public, suscitant des déceptions de la part des Kurdes qui jugent les mesures très insuffisantes, mais provoquant les protestations des partis nationalistes turcs, toujours prompts à dénoncer les compromis avec le « séparatisme ». Parmi ces mesures, l'autorisation pour les localités kurdes ou syriaques de recouvrer leur ancien nom, turquisé d'office, lever les interdictions sur l'usage public du kurde dans les meetings électoraux, autoriser les familles de prisonniers à parler kurde au parloir. Le gouvernement souhaite également créer une commission indépendante pour résoudre les problèmes de torture et de discrimination.

Mais ces mesures ne sont pas jugées suffisantes, selon la plupart des analystes, pour mettre fin au conflit. Comme le fait remarquer l'éditorialiste Murat Yetkin, dans le journal Radikal, « si ce qu'annonce Atalay [le ministre de l'Intérieur] sont de véritables pas en avant vers le développement de normes démocratiques, c'est une bonne chose... mais le PKK ne descendra pas de ses bastions montagneux uniquement parce qu'il y a une commission indépendante pour les droits de l'homme et que les gens peuvent parler leur langue maternelle en prison. »

Le PKK a, pour sa part, déclaré

dans un communiqué à l'agence Firat que « la question kurde ne pouvait être résolue sans reconnaître la volonté du peuple kurde et entamer un dialogue avec ses interlocuteurs [c'est-à-dire le PKK lui-même]. »

Une des revendications récemment lancées par le PKK est la reconnaissance du peuple kurde au niveau constitutionnelle, ce qui est une ligne rouge qui semble pour le moment infranchissable, au moins psychologiquement, pour la classe politique ou l'opinion turque, d'autant que l'AKP ne dispose plus des 367 députés sur 550 nécessaires pour faire passer un changement constitutionnel au parlement.

C'est lors du débat parlementaire autour de la question kurde que le vice-président du CHP, Önur Öymen, a incidemment lancé une polémique annexe, concernant cette fois l'histoire kurde et la version officielle de la Turquie sur les révoltes au Kurdistan et la terrible répression qui s'en est suivie au Dersim, notamment.

Le 9 novembre, en effet, répliquant aux partisans des réformes et à l'AKP, cet ancien ambassadeur a déclaré que l'argument selon lequel la paix épargnerait à de nombreuses familles turques de porter le deuil de leurs enfants soldats n'était pas recevable : « Est-ce que les mères ne pleuraient pas pendant la guerre d'indépendance, pendant la révolte de Cheikh Saïd, et celle de Dersim ou à Chypre ? Est-ce que quelqu'un a demandé

alors d'arrêter les combats pour que les mères cessent de pleurer ? »

Mais l'envolée a non seulement indigné l'opinion kurde mais les Alévis en général, qui ont blâmé le fait qu'un élu turc compare une guerre contre un ennemi extérieur (les Puissances Alliées ou Chypre) à une répression militaire contre des citoyens comptés comme officiellement « turcs ». Les premiers concernés, les Alévis kurdes de Dersim, dont les grands-parents ont été victimes des massacres de 1937-1938 ont été les plus virulents. Des portraits d'Önur Öymen grimé en Hitler ont été affichés dans les rues de la ville. Les Alévis, par hostilité aux partis religieux et attachement à la laïcité votaient pourtant traditionnellement CHP, malgré une certaine poussée électorale en faveur de l'AKP en 2007 et aux dernières élections, le DTP avait fait un bon score à Dersim.

Les propos du vice-président ont en tout cas eu le mérite de porter sur la place publique une des pages les plus sombres de l'histoire de la république, ignorée par la plupart des Turcs. Il remet aussi sur le devant de la scène la question religieuse des Alévis qui, officiellement recensés comme musulmans et relevant donc de la Diyanet (Direction des Affaires religieuses) de l'islam, réclament le statut de minorité religieuse qui ne leur est pas reconnu, au contraire des chrétiens et des juifs. Les élèves alévis doivent aussi suivre les cours de religion islamique sunnite obligatoire à l'école.

IRAK : LA PRÉPARATION D'UNE NOUVELLE LOI ÉLECTORALE DIVISE LE PAYS

Les débats autour de la loi électorale pour les législatives de 2010 en Irak ont suscité de telles controverses qu'il est apparu impossible de garder la date de janvier, initialement prévue et tout le long du mois, de sérieux doutes sont apparus sur la possibilité de tenir un scrutin en février.

Plusieurs groupes religieux ou ethniques en Irak ont en effet protesté contre le nombre de sièges, jugés insuffisants, réservés aux minorités. C'est le président irakien lui-même, Jalal Talabani, qui a demandé au Parlement d'accroître le nombre de députés pour représenter les chrétiens, ainsi que les Irakiens vivant à l'étranger. Lors de sa visite en France, il avait même indiqué souhaiter que les 5% réservés à ces groupes passent à 15%.

Mais cette fois-ci, la menace de veto apposé au projet de loi présenté au conseil de présidence n'est pas venu de Jalal Talabani mais du vice-président sunnite, Tariq Al-Hashemi, qui a publiquement déclaré à la télévision qu'il ne ratifierait pas cette loi si les sièges réservées aux Irakiens en exil ne triplaient pas en nombre.

Actuellement, 8 sièges sont réservées aux minorités (chrétiens, mandéens, yézidis) et 8 autres aux Irakiens, très nombreux, vivant en exil. Lors des élections législatives de 2005, ce pourcentage était de 15% et a été par la suite réduit à 5%. Le président Talabani et son vice-président réclament donc un retour aux dispositions antérieures, afin, officiellement, de promouvoir « la réconciliation nationale », même Jalal Talabani n'a pas approuvé le veto de son vice-président, semblant en tout cas s'en désolidariser dans ses déclarations sur la chaîne française France 24 :

« Je crains un nouveau report des élections, c'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de ne pas m'opposer à la loi électorale. »

Les Kurdes ne sont pas davantage satisfaits de la répartition et le président du parlement du Kurdistan, Kamal Kirkouki, a appelé le président Talabani à ne pas ratifier cette loi, estimant que le pourcentage des sièges réservés aux provinces kurdes n'était « pas normal ». Le président de la Région du Kurdistan a même menacé de boycotter ces élections si la répartition des sièges n'était pas modifiée de façon « équitable ». En effet, sur les 48 sièges supplémentaires prévus dans la nouvelle loi, seuls trois reviennent aux trois provinces de la Région du Kurdistan.

S'opposant donc aux sunnites et aux Kurdes, des Irakiens des provinces chiites du sud ont manifesté devant les bâtiments gouvernementaux de Basra, pour protester contre le veto du vice-président Al-Hashemi. Ils ont reçu l'appui indirect des États-Unis, qui souhaitent que ces élections se déroulent au plus tôt, en raison de leur propre calendrier de retrait des troupes. Jalal Talabani n'a ainsi pas caché dans ses propos à la presse que Christopher Hill, l'envoyé américain en Irak insistait personnellement auprès des députés irakiens pour qu'ils approuvent la loi. Joe Biden, le vice-président des États-Unis, a, quant à lui, téléphoné aux moins à trois reprises aux leaders kurdes, en leur demandant de ne pas bloquer le processus électoral.

Le 21 novembre, la Cour suprême de Bagdad rejetait le veto du vice-président Al-Hashemi, arguant que la répartition des sièges ne dépendait pas de la loi électorale mais des organisateurs du scrutin. Le veto du conseil de présidence

ne pouvant porter que sur des litiges constitutionnels, la Cour suprême a donc statué qu'il ne pouvait s'appliquer dans ce cas précis.

La nouvelle répartition des sièges entre les différences provinces irakiennes a été faite par la Commission électorale en se basant sur les cartes de ration alimentaires renouvelées chaque année. Les chiffres donnés par le ministère du Commerce indiquaient que la population irakienne était de 32 millions en 2009 contre 27 millions en 2005. Se fondant sur ces chiffres, la Commission a estimé le nombre des électeurs irakiens à 19 millions ; chaque siège au Parlement représente 100 000 électeurs. Un quart d'entre eux est réservé aux femmes, 5% aux 2 millions de réfugiés irakiens en exil, 5 sièges sont alloués aux chrétiens des trois provinces kurdes et de Ninive, et un siège chacun aux yézidis, mandéens et shabaks.

Mais ces chiffres sont contestés, notamment par les Kurdes, qui mettent en avant le fait que la province de Ninive reçoit 13 sièges supplémentaire avec seulement un peu plus de 2 millions d'habitants, alors que la Région du Kurdistan qui en compterait au total 5 millions n'en reçoit que 5.

Dr. Mahmoud Othman, député de l'Alliance kurde au parlement de Bagdad a, lui aussi, contesté fortement les chiffres du ministre du Commerce irakien, affirmant que le nombre des cartes de rations n'était pas du tout fiable dans certaines régions, comme Ninive, où il avait été artificiellement gonflé.

Au total, la répartition des nouveaux sièges a été annoncée comme suit : 68 pour Bagdad, 31 pour Ninive, 24 pour Basra, 18

pour Dhiqar, 16 pour Babil, 14 pour Anbar, 13 pour Diyala, 12 pour Salahaddin et Nadjaf, 11 pour Wasit et Diwanayah, 10 pour Karbala et Misan, 7 pour Muthana.

Pour la Région du Kurdistan : 15

pour Sulaymaniyeh, 14 pour Erbil, 9 pour Duhok. Kirkouk reçoit 12 sièges.

8 sièges de plus sont alloués par quota aux minorités.

Ainsi, sur les 323 sièges, les Kurdes n'en auraient que 38, soit 12%, contre 57 en 2005. Comme le dernier recensement date de 1957, il est impossible d'avoir les chiffres exacts de la population irakienne.

SYRIE :

TROIS PRISONNIERS POLITIQUES KURDES ENTAMENT UNE GRÈVE DE LA FAIM

Le 15 novembre, trois Kurdes ont été condamnés à trois ans de prison chacun pour appartenance à un parti politique interdit, Azadî, bien qu'il n'ait jamais mené que des actions pacifiques (appels, manifestations) en faveur des droits culturels kurdes et de la situation des Kurdes de Djézireh déchus de leur nationalité lors d'une campagne d'arabisation de la région. Mustafa Djuma Bakr, Mohammed Saïd Hussein Omar et Saadoun Mahmoud ont été cependant reconnus coupables d'inciter à la « haine raciale », d'« atteinte à la dignité de l'État et d'avoir voulu affaiblir le sentiment national », des chefs d'accusation courants concernant les militants kurdes. Une semaine auparavant, quatre autres Kurdes avaient été condamnés à six ans de prison chacun pour appartenance au Parti de l'union démocratique du Kurdistan, également interdit.

Dans le même temps, plusieurs

prisonniers kurdes syriens poursuivent, depuis le 30 octobre dernier, une grève de la faim dans la prison d'Adra et la prison militaire de Sednaya, à Damas, pour protester contre leurs conditions de détention. Ils réclament aussi un jugement régulier, pouvoir sortir dans la cour de leur prison, recevoir les visites de leur famille, avoir accès aux media, radio, journaux et télévision, au même titre que les autres détenus.

Plusieurs manifestations ont été organisées en soutien à cette grève de la faim. Le 14 novembre, des Kurdes, membres et sympathisants du Parti de l'union démocratique, ont relayé cette grève de la faim, pour un jour, à l'Institut kurde de Bruxelles. La même manifestation s'est déroulée le même jour à Aix-la-Chapelle, en Allemagne. Le 15 novembre, le parti kurde syrien Yekitî faisait une déclaration de soutien aux prisonniers. Le 16 novembre, un ras-

semblement avait lieu devant l'ambassade syrienne à Bruxelles. Le 18 novembre, des représentants de l'Union démocratique et du Congrès national kurde rencontraient des responsables de l'Union européenne et du gouvernement de Belgique. Le 19, c'est devant l'ambassade syrienne de Londres que des Kurdes ont manifesté. Le 20, des Kurdes ont observé une grève de la faim à Genève, devant les bâtiments des Nations-Unies. Le 23 novembre un rassemblement principalement composé des familles de ces prisonniers a stationné devant les prisons de Damas, et a réclamé un droit de visite, sans succès.

Cinq prisonniers, Munthir Abdulfattah Rasho, Ciwan Mohammed Ahmed, Hassan Khalil Qudo, Khalil Fidi Khalil, qui devaient passer en jugement le 17 novembre ont vu leur date de procès reportée au 12 décembre.

PARIS :

COLLOQUE SUR LES MASSACRES DU DERSIM (1937-1938) À L'ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

Le 27 novembre, à l'Assemblée nationale, un colloque organisé par l'Institut kurde de Paris a réuni une vingtaine d'historiens et chercheurs autour des massacres de Dersim, en 1937-1938, devant 300 participants.

La première table ronde, dirigée par Joyce Blau, portait sur le contexte idéologique dans lequel ces massacres et la persécution de

toute une population ont pu être perpétrés. Le docteur Ugur Umit Ungor, de l'University College de Dublin a analysé l'idéologie pan-turque du mouvement des Jeunes Turcs, instigateur du génocide arménien de 1915 et les planificateurs des massacres de Dersim. Hovsep Hayreni, chercheur à Bruxelles, est revenu lui aussi sur le génocide arménien en évoquant les nombreux réfugiés qui trouvèrent abri dans cette région.

L'écrivain Mehmet Bayrak replace, lui, plus généralement ces événements dans une tradition de persécution des Alévis, tout au long de l'Empire ottoman, jusqu'à la république turque. Enfin Sêvê Evîn Çîçek, écrivain et chercheuse, rappelle que les massacres de Koçgiri, en 1920-1921, doivent être vus comme un « prélude aux événements de Dersim ».

La seconde table ronde, présidée

par le professeur Hamit Bozarslan (EHESS) aborde la question, à la fois juridique et historique, de l'aspect génocidaire des massacres. Le docteur Hans-Lukas Kieser, de Genève, expose le contexte, le cadre et les « questions ouvertes » autour de la « campagne du Dersim en Turquie kémaliste ». Le docteur Ali Murat, de l'Institut alévi d'Ankara analyse le Dersim à travers le prisme de l'État ». Erdogan Aydin, chercheur et écrivain (Istanbul) se penche lui aussi sur la politique de l'État vis-à-vis du Dersim et les caractéristiques de la résistance qui lui fut opposée. Une chronologie des événements est exposée par Mete Tekin, chercheur à Paris et Ali Kiliç examine la question du Dersim à travers les archives françaises de l'époque.

La troisième table ronde, présidée

par Gérard Chaliand, traite du Dersim dans la mémoire collective, avec la lecture d'un témoignage d'Ihsan Sabri Çaglayangil (1908-1993), ancien président de la République de Turquie en 1980, reconnaissant que l'armée a utilisé des gaz toxiques contre les civils, femmes et enfants réfugiés dans des grottes, et qu'ils ont été « exterminés comme des rats ». Le docteur Bilgin Ayata, de l'université John Hopkins, traite de la question de la mémoire et de l'amnésie des populations victimes et le professeur Mithat Sancar, de la Faculté de Droit d'Ankara, plus spécifiquement du Dersim dans les mémoires collectives kurde et turque. Son intervention est suivie de celle de Marie Le Rey, doctorante à l'IREMAM d'Aix en Provence : Mémoires croisées: "Dersim 1938" au coeur d'une réinvention dispu-

tée du local » et de celle de Serafettin Halis, député de Dersim : « La confrontation avec l'Histoire: faire face au massacre de Dersim ».

Enfin le colloque se conclut par la lecture d'un message du sociologue Ismail Besikçi, sociologue, qui qualifie les massacres de Dersim qui ont fait entre 50 000 et 90 000 morts selon les sources, de « génocide » et appelle les chercheurs à mieux étudier cette page noire de l'histoire de la Turquie et dans son discours de clôture, Kendal Nezan, président de l'Institut kurde de Paris, a lui aussi parlé de la nécessité de multiplier ce genre de colloques et de rencontres, pour mieux connaître l'histoire kurde du 20^{ème} siècle et en tirer des enseignements pour la nouvelle génération.

Ankara fait un grand pas vers les Kurdes d'Irak

Le chef de la diplomatie turque a effectué, vendredi, la première visite officielle d'un ministre turc dans la région autonome kurde d'Irak

ANKARA
De notre correspondant

Le mot tabou de « Kurdistan » a été soigneusement évité, mais la visite n'en reste pas moins historique. Le chef de la diplomatie turque a effectué vendredi la première visite officielle d'un ministre turc dans la région autonome kurde d'Irak. Après avoir reçu une chaleureuse accolade du premier ministre de cette autorité venu l'accueillir à l'aéroport d'Erbil, au milieu d'enfants portant drapeaux kurdes, irakiens et turcs, Ahmet Davutoglu s'est entretenu avec son président, Massoud Barzani.

Cette visite, qualifiée de « *tar-dive* » par Ahmet Davutoglu lui-même, scelle un changement de fond de la politique d'Ankara envers les Kurdes d'Irak. Alors que la Turquie s'est refusée durant des années à tout contact direct avec eux, le ministre turc a annoncé l'ouverture d'un consulat à Erbil « dans les plus brefs délais ».

Si le but central de ce voyage était la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, Ahmet Davutoglu a toutefois veillé à ne pas se rendre uniquement dans le nord de l'Irak. Après Bassora, bastion chiite du sud du pays, il s'est rendu à Mossoul, ville à majorité sunnite. Car la Turquie, avec 12 millions de citoyens kurdes, le répète: elle souhaite le maintien d'un Irak unitaire et regarde d'un très mauvais œil le spectre d'un Kurdistan irakien indépendant. Dans le même temps, avec ce déplacement, Ahmet Davutoglu anticipe le départ des troupes américaines d'Irak et donne corps à sa doctrine de bonne entente avec ses voisins.

Accompagné de 70 chefs d'entreprise, Ahmet Davutoglu est aussi venu entériner l'importance des



Si le but central de ce voyage était la capitale du Kurdistan irakien, Ahmet Davutoglu a toutefois veillé à ne pas se rendre uniquement dans le nord de l'Irak. Après Bassora, bastion chiite du Sud, il s'est rendu à Mossoul, ville à majorité sunnite.

relations déjà existantes entre citoyens turcs et kurdes d'Irak, comme le prouve la multitude de produits « made in Turkey » disponibles sur les étals d'Erbil ou de Dohuk. Erbil exporte son pétrole via le port turc de Ceyhan et, rien qu'en 2008, la compagnie turque Genel Enerji a investi plus de 500 millions de dollars dans l'exploitation du champ pétrolier de Tak Tak. Au total plus de 50 000 citoyens et 1 200 entreprises turques travaillent dans cette région dont la seule porte vers l'Occident est Ankara.

Mais avec cette visite, le chef de la diplomatie turque confirme aussi l'importance d'Erbil dans la résolution de la question kurde. « *Les montagnes ne nous sépareront pas mais nous rapprocheront* », a-t-il déclaré aux côtés de Massoud Barzani, en allusion aux montagnes du nord de l'Irak où se sont repliés les militants du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) contre lesquels l'armée turque mène des raids depuis deux ans.

Ankara souhaite désormais collaborer directement avec les Kurdes d'Irak pour isoler cette

organisation kurde avec qui elle est en conflit depuis vingt-cinq ans. « *Nous sommes contre la violence et ne voulons pas la mort de jeunes Turcs et de jeunes Kurdes* », a répondu Massoud Barzani, qui a aussi qualifié de « *pas en avant courageux* » l'ouverture démocratique lancée par Ankara pour régler la question kurde. C'est dans ce cadre qu'une trentaine de sympathisants et militants du PKK ont pu retourner définitivement y a deux semaines en Turquie sans être arrêtés. De sa prison d'Imrali, le chef historique du PKK, Abdullah Ocalan observe toutefois ces développements avec suspicion. Il vient d'annoncer qu'aucun autre groupe du PKK ne se rendra aux autorités turques. « *Cette ouverture est une comédie qui vise à liquider le PKK* », estime-t-il.

DELPHINE NERBOLIER

L'Irak reste en panne de loi électorale à deux mois d'un scrutin crucial

Les députés continuent de s'affronter sur le statut de Kirkouk, convoitée par les Kurdes et les Arabes.

GEORGES MALBRUNOT

MOYEN-ORIENT Le temps presse en Irak. Alors que la violence aveugle frappe de nouveau le pays, des élections législatives sont prévues le 16 janvier prochain, mais les différentes factions politiques représentées au Parlement restent incapables de s'entendre sur une loi électorale.

Avant-hier, la Commission électorale a demandé au Majlis de fixer au plus tard à aujourd'hui le mode de scrutin pour cette consultation, cruciale pour le partage du pouvoir dans un Irak fédéral. « Nous entrons dans une période critique », déclarait récemment à l'AFP Qassem al-Aboudi, haut responsable de la commission. Selon lui, « le Parlement doit au moins se prononcer sur les modalités du scrutin », c'est-à-dire le nombre de sièges à pourvoir, les quotas pour les femmes et les minorités, le nombre de circonscriptions, et s'il s'agit d'un vote avec des listes ouvertes ou fermées.

Impasse politique

Les difficultés persistantes autour de ce chantier électoral soulignent l'extrême fragilité d'institutions bâties, après l'invasion américaine de l'Irak en 2003, et contestées depuis par plusieurs communautés. Des Américains aux Nations unies en passant par le premier ministre, Nouri al-Maliki, les appels à un vote rapide du Parlement se sont multipliés, ces derniers jours. Mais une fois de plus, c'est la question de Kirkouk, où vivent Kurdes, Arabes et Turkmènes, qui empoisonne les débats.

Les représentants des différentes communautés de cette province riche en pétrole continuent de s'opposer sur la répartition des sièges dans les instances dirigeantes de la région. Les Kurdes exigent d'être majoritaires à Kirkouk, qu'ils comptent annexer à leurs trois provinces autonomes, plus au nord. De leur côté, les Arabes et les Turkmènes accusent les Kurdes de s'y être installés en masse depuis 2003, pour renverser l'équilibre démographique.

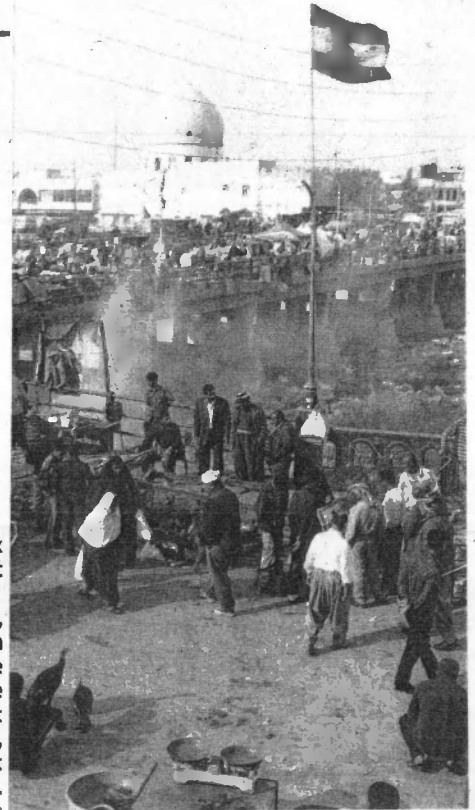
L'impasse politique a dégénéré en affrontements entre groupes armés rivaux, conduisant les Américains à tirer la sonnette d'alarme. « Les tensions entre les communautés arabes et kurdes dans le nord et l'est de l'Irak sont le principal facteur d'instabilité en Irak », avertissait, il y a quelques semaines, le général Steve Lanza, haut responsable à Bagdad. Devant la menace terroriste, même si le nombre de tués dans des attentats a doublé en octobre par rapport à septembre, avec 410 morts.

Mais des mois de négociations, menées sous l'égide des Nations unies, n'ont pas permis de rapprocher les positions des uns et des autres. Selon nos informations, le dernier compromis élaboré par l'ONU consisterait à « rajouter des sièges au profit des Arabes et des Turkmènes à Kirkouk », et pour gagner les faveurs kurdes, à conserver les listes électorales du scrutin provincial de février 2009, qui leur sont favorables. Enfin, les députés de Kirkouk ne seraient élus que pour une durée d'un an, en attendant que le sort de la province soit définitivement tranché.

« On doit tout faire pour que ces élections aient bien lieu le 16 janvier, affirme un diplomate occidental joint au téléphone à Bagdad, y compris à Kirkouk. » Mais les Kurdes, grands gagnants de l'après-Saddam Hussein, campent sur leur intransigeance. « Après 2003, ajoute un expert français de retour d'Irak, les Américains ont autorisé les Kurdes à occuper 80 000 km² limitrophes de leurs provinces, c'est-à-dire le double de leur territoire. Comment faire rentrer leurs miliciens chez eux maintenant ? C'est toute la question »,

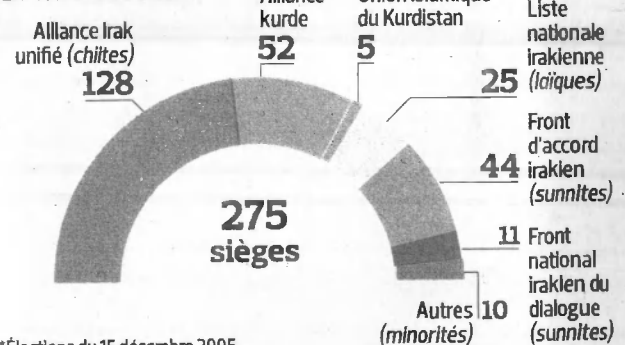
Les drapeaux kurdes sont déployés à Kirkouk, capitale de la province riche en pétrole, que se disputent Kurdes, Turkmènes et Arabes.

M. IBRAHIM/AFP



Le Parlement irakien

EN NOMBRE DE SIÈGES*



*Élections du 15 décembre 2005.

se demande cet expert. Et même si Nouri al-Maliki entretient d'exécrables rapports avec le président du « Parlement autonome » kurde, Massoud Barzani, le premier ministre irakien a besoin des 57 députés kurdes, s'il veut obtenir l'investiture du prochain parlement à Bagdad.

Avant-hier, le vice-président américain, Joe Biden, a décroché son téléphone pour s'entretenir avec Massoud Barzani. Rien n'a filtré de l'entretien. À Bagdad, les observateurs estiment généralement que si les députés ne votent pas, d'ici à la fin de cette semaine, la loi électorale, le scrutin ne pourra pas être tenu à la date prévue. ■



IRAK/KURDISTAN: LE PREMIER MINISTRE VEUT UNE BAISSÉ DU SALAIRE DES OFFICIELS

ERBIL (Irak), 1 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LE CHEF DU gouvernement kurde irakien Barham Saleh veut obtenir une baisse de 10% du salaire des ministres et des autres hauts responsables régionaux, afin de consacrer les montants économisés à l'investissement, a affirmé dimanche un député kurde irakien.

M. Saleh, qui vient d'obtenir la confiance du Parlement régional, a sollicité les députés "pour qu'ils légifèrent en ce sens", a indiqué à l'AFP ce député, Tarek Jawha.

Selon la même source, cette mesure s'appliquerait aux ministres ainsi qu'aux autres hauts responsables, politiques et de la sécurité.

Barham Saleh était auparavant vice-Premier ministre irakien.

Son gouvernement régional compte 21 ministres contre 42 (dont 13 sans portefeuille) dans le précédent cabinet de Nachervan Barzani. Il a obtenu mercredi dernier à Erbil la confiance du Parlement régional.

Le scrutin s'est toutefois tenu en l'absence des députés de l'opposition, qui ont quitté la séance en signe de protestation pour n'avoir pas obtenu un vote séparé sur chaque ministre.



IRAK/ÉLECTIONS: JOE BIDEN PRESSE MASSOUD BARZANI D'ABOUTIR À UN ACCORD

ERBIL (Irak), 2 nov 2009 (AFP)

Le vice-Président américain Joe Biden a insisté auprès du président du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani sur la nécessité d'adopter la loi électorale pour que les élections se tiennent bien le 16 janvier, ont indiqué lundi les autorités kurdes.

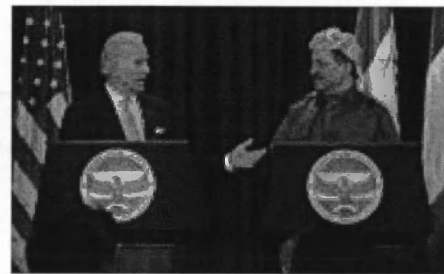
Les deux hommes se sont entretenus dimanche au téléphone alors que la tenue des élections générales à la date prévue semble de plus en plus compromise en raison du conflit opposant les Kurdes aux Arabes et Turcomans sur la répartition des sièges dans la riche région pétrolière de Kirkouk.

"MM. Barzani et Biden ont mis l'accent sur la question des prochaines élections et les obstacles entravant le vote de la nouvelle loi électorale", a indiqué un communiqué du gouvernement autonome de la région du Kurdistan dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Les deux parties ont souligné la nécessité de trouver une solution satisfaisante à ce problème", ajoute le texte.

Dimanche, la commission électorale avait demandé au Parlement de fixer immédiatement le mode de scrutin afin de permettre la tenue des élections générales comme prévu le 16 janvier.

"Il y a un calendrier à respecter et nous entrons dans une période critique. Si le Parlement ne peut pas approuver la totalité de la loi électorale, il doit au moins se prononcer aujourd'hui (dimanche) ou demain (lundi) sur les modalités du scrutin", a affirmé à l'AFP Qassem al-Abboudi un haut responsable de la com-



Le vice-président américain Joe Biden (G) et le président du Kurdistan irakien, Massoud Barzani, lors d'une conférence de presse commune, le 17 septembre 2009 à Arbil

mission électorale.

Selon lui, les députés doivent se prononcer sur le nombre de sièges à pourvoir, les quotas pour les femmes et les minorités, le nombre de circonscriptions et décider d'organiser un scrutin avec des listes ouvertes ou fermées.

Le Parlement doit décider s'il veut faire passer son nombre de sièges de 275 à 311 pour s'ajuster à la Constitution qui prévoit un député pour 100.000 habitants. Il doit aussi trancher la question de savoir si les listes seront bloquées ou si les électeurs pourront les panacher avec des candidats indépendants, comme le demande le guide spirituel de la communauté chiite, le grand ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

"Le temps presse et sans ces informations les élections sont en danger. La question de Kirkouk peut être tranchée par les députés ultérieurement", a-t-il ajouté.



DE LEUR BASTION IRAKIEN DES MONTS KANDIL, LES REBELLES KURDES NARGUENT ANKARA

MONTS KANDIL (Irak), 3 novembre 2009 (AFP)

DE LEUR BASTION des monts Kandil, en Irak, les rebelles kurdes de Turquie se défient des efforts de paix du gouvernement d'Ankara et se disent prêts à soutenir une guerre de 50 ans.

"Nous tenons des centaines de montagnes en Turquie, en Irak et en Iran. Rien qu'ici, les monts Kandil ont les dimensions d'un Etat européen: ils font deux fois la taille du Luxembourg. Nous pouvons continuer la guerre pendant 30 ans, 50 ans s'il le faut", affirme, Sozdar Avesta.

Escortée par deux militantes en salwar (pantalon bouffant) kaki, Kalachnikov en bandoulière, cette figure historique du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), membre de sa direction politique, le KCK, reçoit les journalistes dans la "zone politique" des monts Kandil, un massif montagneux du nord de l'Irak, près de l'Iran, abritant le quartier général de la rébellion.

Ces montagnes irakiennes servent de base arrière au PKK, dans ses opérations de harcèlement des forces de sécurité turques.

Dans la "zone politique", pas d'unités combattantes: elles sont dans les hauteurs, sous un régime de "mobilité permanente" pour éviter d'être surprises par une attaque aérienne de l'aviation turque ou les fréquentes salves des canons iraniens, explique-t-on.



Cet espace, où les rebelles cohabitent avec des villageois kurdes irakiens, héberge en revanche un hôpital —une femme médecin allemande y exerce, tiennent à préciser les rebelles, soucieux de mettre en valeur le "soutien international" à leur cause—, des infrastructures de communication et des points de rencontre avec les médias.

On y accède depuis la plaine irakienne par une route en bon état, où une guérite arborant des drapeaux à l'effigie du chef emprisonné du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, et une escouade de "douaniers" armés contrôlant les véhicules signalent l'entrée dans le territoire sous contrôle rebelle.

Pour éviter les contrôles mis en place par le gouvernement autonome kurde

d'Irak, les convois "sensibles" —dont ceux acheminant des journalistes— doivent cependant opter pour de longs détours à travers les montagnes sur des chemins de contrebandiers.

Le 19 octobre, huit rebelles ont quitté sur ordre d'Öcalan les monts Kandil pour rejoindre le poste frontière turc de Habur, dans un geste de soutien aux efforts de paix du gouvernement turc, qui s'apprête à présenter au Parlement une série de réformes renforçant les droits des Kurdes.

La justice turque a laissé les rebelles en liberté —une décision d'une rare mansuétude dans un pays où la simple affirmation de sympathies pour le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux autres pays, peut conduire en prison. Pourtant, Sozdar Avesta se dit sceptique.

"Les réformes du gouvernement ne sont que des mots en l'air. Concrètement, il

n'y a rien", assène cette femme d'une cinquantaine d'années.

"Au regard du droit turc, nos huit camarades devraient aller en prison, mais le gouvernement préfère gérer la situation avec des petits arrangements plutôt que d'affronter les vrais problèmes: une réforme des cadres juridiques et de la Constitution pour prendre en compte la réalité kurde", poursuit la militante.

Fines lunettes sur le nez et pistolet à la hanche, Roj Welat, préposé aux "relations extérieures", se dit lui aussi peu désireux d'abandonner le combat entamé il y a 25 ans pour l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, qui s'est transformé en une revendication d'autonomie, en échange d'un hypothétique "retour à la maison".

"Notre maison, c'est la liberté du peuple kurde", scande le militant.



AU CAMP DE MAHMUR, LES OUBLIÉS DU CONFLIT KURDE ATTENDENT L'HEURE DU RETOUR EN TURQUIE

CAMP DE MAHMUR (Irak), 4 nov 2009 (AFP)

AU CAMP DE réfugiés de Mahmur (nord de l'Irak), 12.000 Kurdes de Turquie chassés par les violences attendent depuis 15 ans l'heure du retour. En dépit d'ouvertures d'Ankara, celle-ci n'est pas encore venue, affirment ces partisans affichés de la rébellion kurde.

La position des exilés est unanime: "Nous sommes ici pour une cause, et tant que nous n'aurons pas obtenu satisfaction, nous ne pourrions pas rentrer", résume Makbule Ören, 29 ans, mère de six enfants.

Alors que le gouvernement turc prévoit des réformes pour améliorer les droits des Kurdes, dont il doit révéler les grandes lignes la semaine prochaine, les habitants du camp, érigé en 1998 dans une zone semi-désertique à une cinquantaine de kilomètres au sud d'Erbil, posent leurs conditions.

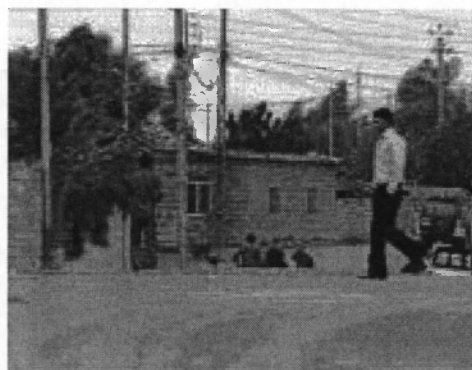
Elles ne sont autres que celles des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK): reconnaissance constitutionnelle de l'identité kurde, enseignement en langue kurde, autonomie régionale, et arrêt immédiat des combats.

Et pour cause. "Nous sommes tous des partisans du PKK, même si nous n'en sommes pas membres", affirme Mahmud Manav, un des conseillers municipaux du camp. "Nous sommes les familles du PKK. Nos frères, nos enfants se battent en ce moment dans ses rangs."

Au cœur de la petite ville, un mausolée abritant les photos de près de 600 "martyrs" (rebelles morts au combat) originaires du camp, atteste de la puissance des liens unissant les exilés au PKK, un mouvement considéré comme terroriste par Ankara et de nombreux pays.

Des liens forgés par un destin tragique, aujourd'hui conté aux 5.000 enfants du camp comme un "destan", une épopée: la fuite à travers les montagnes en 1994, alors que le conflit kurde battait son plein en Turquie, puis quatre ans d'errance dans le nord de l'Irak, soumis au harcèlement des Kurdes d'Irak, alors alliés d'Ankara contre le PKK.

Les exilés ont finalement trouvé refuge sur le 36e parallèle, dans le no man's



Dans le camp de réfugiés de Mahmur (nord de l'Irak), 12.000 Kurdes de Turquie chassés par les violences dans le sud-est anatolien attendent depuis 15 ans, l'heure du retour.

land qui séparait alors le nord de l'Irak, sous contrôle kurde, du sud, aux mains du régime de Saddam Hussein.

"D'un côté, les Kurdes irakiens tiraient sur nous, de l'autre, c'était les champs de mines de Saddam", se souvient M. Manav, dont un fils a perdu une jambe dans l'explosion d'une mine. "Nous couchions nos enfants sous des sacs en plastique, au milieu des scorpions... En une seule nuit 51 personnes ont été piquées par des scorpions."

Depuis, la situation a considérablement évolué: le Haut-commissariat pour les réfugiés de l'ONU a pris le camp en charge, les réfugiés ont bâti des maisons de parpaings, des écoles, des cafés. Ils peuvent travailler sur les chantiers et dans les champs alentour.

Une initiative du PKK, qui a envoyé le mois dernier huit rebelles et 26 réfugiés se présenter à la frontière turque dans un geste de paix, a mis en évidence cette aspiration au retour.

Pour désigner les membres de ce "groupe de paix", les responsables du camp ont ouvert un appel à candidature. "En une journée, nous avons reçu 400 candidatures. Si notre assemblée municipale l'avait autorisé, tout le monde, de 7 à 77 ans, aurait déposé une demande", déclare M. Manav.



Kurdish issue heads to Turkish Parliament

ANKARA, Turkey, Nov. 3, 2009 (UPI) --

Pro-Kurdish leaders in Turkey called for delays on talks on the Kurdish initiative due to conflicts with the key anniversary for the republic.

Ankara submitted a motion to Parliament to consider a series of initiatives intended to find a political solution to the so-called Kurdish question.

Turkey has struggled with Kurdish separatist ambitions for decades. Pro-Kurdish parties, for their part, made considerable gains in municipal elections earlier this year.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a motion to discuss

the issue and sent it on to members of Parliament on Tuesday, Turkish daily Hurriyet reports. Lawmakers had scheduled Nov. 10 for considerations, the 71st anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic.

Opposition lawmakers in the Republican People's Party, or CHP, rejected the proposed date, saying the measure was dishonorable to Ataturk.

"Should we be discussing the Kurdish move on a day that Turkish flag flies at half-staff?" asked CHP leader Deniz Baykal.

Parliamentary consideration comes on the heels of a move by PKK leaders to form "peace groups" who would surrender to Turkish authorities as part of the reconciliation effort.

That program was met with mixed reaction by Turkish leaders and the public.

Ankara postponed further returns of Kurdish separatist from Europe in response to the outcry.



LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC ESSAIE DE TROMPER LES KURDES, AFFIRME LE NUMÉRO DEUX DU PKK

MONTS KANDIL (Irak), 3 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC essaie de tromper les Kurdes et l'opinion internationale en annonçant depuis plusieurs mois des réformes pour résoudre la question kurde, a affirmé à l'AFP Murat Karayilan, le numéro deux de l'organisation rebelle kurde du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK).

"Le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) n'a jamais eu l'intention de résoudre la question kurde. Il joue la comédie. (...) S'il l'avait vraiment voulu, en une journée toutes les armes se seraient tues", a déclaré M. Karayilan, interrogé dans les monts Kandil, repaire du quartier général du PKK, dans le nord de l'Irak.

"Tout ce qu'ils font, c'est essayer de tromper le peuple kurde et l'opinion publique internationale", a insisté le président du KCK, organe de direction politique du PKK, qui est le numéro deux de l'organisation derrière son chef historique Abdullah Öcalan, emprisonné en Turquie depuis 1999.

Le gouvernement turc a multiplié au cours des derniers mois les consultations avec la société civile dans le but annoncé de préparer des réformes renforçant les droits de la minorité kurde, forte d'une quinzaine de millions de personnes habitant principalement le sud-est anatolien.

Les premiers détails de ce projet devraient être révélés dans une semaine, le 10 novembre, lors d'une séance de présentation au Parlement. Mais les rebelles kurdes affichent leur scepticisme.

"Il s'agit de réformes de façade. La mentalité est toujours la même: le refus de l'affirmation de l'identité du peuple kurde, le refus de le considérer comme un interlocuteur", a commenté M. Karayilan, dénonçant les "lignes rouges" établies par Ankara, comme le refus d'inscrire l'identité kurde dans la Constitution, le maintien en détention d'Öcalan et la poursuite des opérations armées.

"Les Kurdes ne pourront pas être libres tant que le leader de cette insurrection, Abdullah Öcalan, ne sera pas libre", a-t-il souligné.

Pour le chef rebelle, deux conditions sont nécessaires à une avancée vers la paix: l'arrêt immédiat des combats et le début d'un dialogue entre le gouvernement et les représentants des Kurdes.



"Nous avons confiance en notre leader Öcalan. Si le dialogue commence avec lui, le processus va progresser. Si on ne dialogue pas avec lui, on peut aussi parler avec nous", a-t-il dit, assurant qu'aucune négociation secrète n'avait pour l'heure eu lieu.

"Sinon, il y a un parti qui a été élu par le peuple et qui est au Parlement, avec qui (le gouvernement) peut aussi parler, c'est le DTP", a-t-il ajouté, faisant référence au Parti pour une société démocratique, principale formation prokurde de Turquie, menacée de fermeture par la justice pour des liens supposés avec le PKK.

Le gouvernement s'est toujours refusé à négocier avec les rebelles.

En l'absence de négociations, le PKK poursuivra sa lutte, affirme M. Karayilan, précisant toutefois que l'organisation ne fera usage de ses armes qu'en cas de "légitime défense".

"Quelle que soit l'intensité des combats, le peuple kurde est avec nous et nous pouvons continuer de résister depuis les montagnes du Kurdistan pendant des dizaines d'années", a-t-il assuré.

Le PKK a entamé en 1984 une insurrection visant à l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien. Cette revendication s'est progressivement muée en une demande d'autonomie régionale et de renforcement des droits culturels des Kurdes. Le conflit kurde a fait quelque 45.000 morts, selon l'armée turque.

Rudaw.Net
NOVEMBER 2, 2009

PKK leader: Davutoglu wants to separate Kurds from Kirkuk

Qandil – In an interview with Rudaw, senior PKK-leader Murat Karayilan said that the visit of the Turkish FM Ahmet Davutoğlu was related to the Kirkuk issue. Karayilan also spoke about the comments of the outgoing premier Nechirvan Barzani.

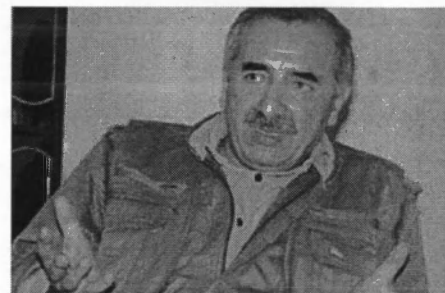
"The principles of the old Turkey, cannot be found in the policies of Davutoglu. This means that he can go to Hewler [Erbil] and even to Qandil, as long if he is not scared for the MHP [nationalist Turkish party]," Karayilan said.

The PKK politician thinks the new Turkish approach to the Kurdistan region is positive, but he calls for caution.

"Turkey wants to open a consulate in both Hewler and Kirkuk, to separate it from Kurdistan."

Murat Karayilan also spoke about the comments of premier Nechirvan Barzani who warned in an interview with Rudaw, that the PKK that provocative actions won't help the Kurdish issue. There was a fierce Turkish nationalist backlash against the celebratory welcome of the PKK groups. According to Karayilan, the Turkish media distorted the words of the Nechirvan Barzani.

The senior PKK leader said that he didn't expect there were thousands of Kurds waiting on the two 'peace' groups sent by the PKK to Turkey. "We could have been more careful," but Karayilan



added that the PKK took some precautions. "To not disturb the peace process, we have sent eight guerrilla's of which none participated in [military] actions."

TODAYS ZAMAN

november 2, 2009

Turkey extends peace initiative to northern Iraq

TODAY'S ZAMAN ARBIL

Only two years after coming to the brink of war over the presence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the country's mountainous north, Iraq and Turkey are now building a partnership in areas ranging from economy and transportation to security at a breathtaking pace. And Kurdish-run northern Iraq, once the No. 1 target of Turkish accusations of harboring terrorists, is a major part of this historic rapprochement.

When 12 soldiers were killed in a PKK raid on the Da?lica border post in 2007, nega-



tive implications were huge for both Turkish-Iraqi relations and within Turkey, as the attack worsened tensions between Turks and Kurds in Turkey. However, Turkish diplomacy successfully transformed a probable crisis into an opportunity and developed ties with northern Iraq.

Almost exactly two years after the times of high tension, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu paid a landmark visit to Arbil on Friday, the capital of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, smashing Turkish foreign policy taboo. The minister officially launched a Turkish consulate in the northern Iraqi province of Mosul and announced the consulate

in Arbil is to be opened soon. Before Arbil, Davutoglu -- accompanied by a large delegation of 80 businessmen, 20 reporters and ministers -- had talks with top officials in Basra and opened a Turkish consulate there.

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani warmly welcomed Davutoglu, praised Turkey's foreign policy vision and efforts to address the Kurdish problem through democratic reform, and said the PKK should either change or face massive pressure from the Kurds. Davutoglu upholds that Barzani's warm welcome reflects the northern Iraqi Kurds' affinity with Turkey. This welcome is a concrete sign of a change in atmosphere in northern Iraq.

The friendly atmosphere is not only affecting the ties with northern Iraq; indeed Turkey has already taken steps to establish a strategic cooperation with the central government in Baghdad. When Davutoglu phoned Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, saying, "I am on your lands so I wanted to say hello," Maliki responded by saying, "These are your lands as well."

TODAYS ZAMAN

november 2, 2009

Barzani: PKK will either change or face rejection by Kurds

BÜLENT KENES ARBIL/MOSUL

While praising Ankara's steps to address Turkey's decades-old Kurdish issue, Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani suggested the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is now at a crossroads requiring the organization to change.

The government recently launched an initiative that is expected to expand freedoms for Turkey's Kurds. The reforms, which include easing restrictions on Kurdish language and culture, are important for advancing the country's application for membership in the European Union, which wants Ankara to meet the bloc's human rights standards.

During a meeting with Barzani in Arbil late on Friday, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told Barzani that "a bright joint future" is ahead of Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds if the PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by a large majority of the international community, is completely eliminated.

"Reaching that bright future is impossible so long as sisters and brothers continue killing each other. There is need to resolve the PKK issue by keeping track of it on three legs. The first leg is inside Turkey, and we will sort it out. The second leg is in northern Iraq, in the Kandil [Mountains], and here, we need your support. The third leg is in Europe, and we also expect your cooperation on this leg," Davutoglu told Barzani. "History can move forward if it is written by the appropriate hands. We expect your support," Davutoglu said. Davutoglu is the first Turkish foreign minister

to travel to Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdish region.

"During our difficult days, you have always been helpful to us. No harm came to us from you. We are people of the same region. I feel sad when a Turkish youth is killed. We will resolve our issues in time. We don't embrace the line of the PKK. I congratulate democratization. They [the PKK] have two choices ahead: Either they will change themselves, or the Kurdish people will get rid of them," Barzani told Davutoglu.

In response, Davutoglu underlined his government's determination to continue its democratization efforts.

Ties between Ankara and the government of Iraq's Kurdish region were marred for years by the presence of the PKK along the border, but relations have improved under the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government as the two sides have increased cooperation on security and expanded energy and trade deals.

Acknowledging the very existence of the Kurdish regional government, which has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Baghdad since 1991, had been taboo among Turkish politicians, mindful of reigniting Kurdish hopes of statehood on Turkish soil.

Turkey has accused Barzani of failing to stop PKK attacks, even as Iraq's Kurdish leaders openly called on the PKK to lay down its arms.

Improving ties with Turkey has gained urgency as US forces withdraw from Iraq, leaving behind a possible security vacuum.

Arbil was the second stop in Davutoglu's visit to the region, with Basra being the first.



Davutoglu concluded his visit with a stop-by in Mosul on Saturday. In Basra and Mosul, Davutoglu officially inaugurated Turkey's consulates general, pledging to open another in Arbil.

In a speech delivered during the official inauguration of the consulate general in Mosul, which has been de facto functional since 2006, Mosul Governor Atheel al-Najafi underlined that much time had passed since they had hosted foreign ministers in the city.

Najafi voiced his appreciation of Turkey's stance of maintaining an equal distance from all religious and ethnic groups in Iraq.

Also during the inauguration ceremony, the University of Mosul conferred an honorary doctorate on Davutoglu, who has an academic background in political science and international relations.

Meanwhile, the Mosul governor gave two horses as a gift to Davutoglu and Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan, who also participated in the visit to northern Iraq.

Turkish government reconsiders Kurdish initiative

by Wladimir van Wilgenburg*

A Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) "peace" group had planned to go to Istanbul on Wednesday to convince Turkey to negotiate with the PKK upon the orders of the imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, but the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government cancelled it at the last moment.

The group says the government refused to grant visas to the 15 members of the group. It seems that the AK Party is now reconsidering its options for solving the Kurdish issue.

Kurds in Turkey comprise approximately one-fifth of the country's population, but their identity was denied during the establishment of the Turkish Republic and their culture suppressed. This resulted in a Kurdish insurgency by the militant PKK in 1982 that changed its goals from separatism to more cultural rights within Turkey. The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union and America.

The charismatic Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has taken the initiative to end this insurgency that has cost the lives of about 40,000 people and resulted in more than 17,000 unsolved murders. Despite that the situation of Kurds in Turkey has improved considerably, significant obstacles remain for achieving peace, such as renewed skirmishes between the army and the PKK and a nationalist backlash of the Turkish population that refuses any negotiations with the PKK. On Wednesday, five PKK members were killed in a clash with the Turkish army.

Apparently, the state negotiated indirectly with the PKK through Öcalan's lawyers to receive a PKK group at the border from Iraq. All 34 members of the PKK group were released. Previously, the government communicated with the PKK in Iraq indirectly through Turkish journalists like Milliyet's Hasan Cemal, who shared his observations with Turkish officials. When I was in Kandil myself for an interview, there were also Turkish journalists there, while in the past they would have been immediately jailed for making "terrorist propaganda." There were also talks between the director of the Turkish National Intelligence

Organization (MIT), Emre Taner, and Öcalan in prison to find a way of accommodating PKK members returning from the mountains.

Kurds celebrated the arrival of the eight PKK insurgents from Kandil and 26 Kurdish refugees from the UN Makhmur camp with a heroes' welcome and even fireworks and music on Oct. 19. The festivities were partly organized by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP). This resulted in a backlash among the Turkish population with protests against the PKK, the DTP and the AK Party government in Afyonkarahisar, Mus, Konya, Yalova, Edime, Çanakkale, Istanbul and Ankara. Many Turks had the same feelings as the victims of the Lockerbie bomber, who was received with a similar welcome in Libya.

There is a possibility that the demonstrations were planned or supported by the AK Party's ultranationalist rivals, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the socialist Kemalist party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) that form the opposition. The nationalist statements of CHP leader Deniz Baykal and MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli threw more oil on the fire by accusing the AK Party of treason. Baykal said on Tuesday that the AK Party "is collaborating with Öcalan."

An array of reactions

In addition, the influential Turkish military harshly condemned the celebrations as irresponsible. The leader of the pro-Kurdish DTP, Ahmet Türk, accused the MHP and the CHP of inciting racist attacks against Kurds, reported the pro-Kurdish news agency ANF.

On Tuesday, the PKK's European "peace group" released a press statement in Brussels. "It is clear to see the efforts by the CHP administration, MHP and Ergenekon gang in sabotaging the peace and solution process. Rather than being under the influence of this backward mentality which gets its strength from the war, the AKP must be even more accountable, assertive and strong-willed in its approach." The group urged the government to listen to the ideas of the imprisoned PKK leader.

The outgoing Iraqi-Kurdish prime minister, Nechirvan Barzani, clearly warned the DTP and PKK against holding more of this kind of welcome celebration in an interview with the Kurdish newspaper Rudaw on Sunday. "The PKK should use these groups to strengthen the Turkish initiative, so that Kurds and Turks



live side by side, instead of provoking Turkish public opinion against this process, which strengthens the people who are against the process."

The Kurdish prime minister is right that it could result in a total failure of the initiative if tensions continue. It's clear that the AK Party has backed down out of fear of a nationalist backlash. The AK Party is walking a tightrope between the Turkish opposition and Turkish nationalists waiting to crush the party, and the PKK which wants to be recognized as a legitimate negotiation partner.

The PKK is putting pressure on the AK Party government and even the pro-Kurdish DTP party to legitimize the role of the PKK and the role of Öcalan. While during the peace process in Ireland, Sinn Fein pressured the IRA to disarm, the PKK is following the opposite direction as a result of its leader's imprisonment. The main goal of PKK supporters is the recognition of its leader – other goals are secondary, which limits the options of the PKK to solve the Kurdish issue.

It's no surprise that the AK Party now needs time to think. This can also be seen by Erdoğan's frank choice of words: "Let's take a break, and we will assess the process later." The AK Party government is now reconsidering a way to manage the Kurdish issue, but it promised to go ahead with reforms. Analyst Emrullah Uslu wrote for Today's Zaman that the government should wait for people to internalize and normalize the process first before taking further steps considering the return of PKK insurgents. If the AK Party government were to carry out this process too quickly, it could easily backfire and result in early elections and a loss of votes. Solving the Kurdish issue is "all or nothing" for the AK Party.

**Wladimir van Wilgenburg is a Dutch analyst specializing in the Middle East and Turkey with expertise in journalism, Turkology, conflict studies and international relations.*

CHINA DAILY

November 5, 2009

(China Daily)

BAGHDAD: Iraqi politicians have been turning up their rhetoric over Kirkuk, the oil-rich city that both Kurds in the north and Arabs in the south want to control.

The dispute has caused a deadlock over the country's election law, threatening to delay Iraq's nationwide elections set for mid-January. Any vote setback could, in turn, disrupt US plans to withdraw troops from Iraq, scheduled to ramp up after the vote.

The Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission has warned that today will be the last day for the lawmakers to agree on an election law.

Commission head Faraj al-Haidari told the parliament speaker late on Tuesday in writing that if the law is not approved by today's end, it will be impossible to carry out the vote on Jan 16.

"We are getting to a crisis," said Marina Ottoway, director of the Middle East Program at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "They have been trying for over a year to reach a compromise on Kirkuk."

"Now," she warns, "it is becoming a problem for the United States."

For years, tensions have simmered over Kirkuk and its surrounding province of about 1.3 million people, 290 km north of Baghdad. Boasting an ancient citadel, it is in many ways an ordinary, if somewhat shabby, Iraqi city.

But it sits on a political and cultural fault line among ethnic Kurds and smaller groups of Arabs and Turkomen, or ethnic Turks. Vast oil fields, dotted with flaming smoke stacks, lie just to the north and west, raising the stakes.

Displacement by Saddam

Kurds consider Kirkuk a Kurdish city and want it part of their self-ruled region. But

KIRKUK OIL MAY MAKE OR BREAK IRAQ'S FUTURE

during the rule of former dictator Saddam Hussein, tens of thousands of Kurds were displaced under a forced plan by Saddam to make Kirkuk predominantly Arab.

Regaining control of the city is thus extremely symbolic for Kurds and many Kurds have returned since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. But other groups claim Kurds have packed more Kurds into the city than before.

The population breakdown remains in dispute but US officials estimated last spring that Kurds make up 52 percent of Kirkuk and its province, with Arabs at 35 percent and Turkomen about 12 percent.

The Arab-led central government in Baghdad vehemently opposes anything that would remove Kirkuk from its control. A referendum on the city's future - required by the Iraqi constitution - has been repeatedly postponed. The Turkomen have generally sided with Arabs, believing they'll be treated better than under the Kurds, a longtime enemy of their Turkish supporters.

The immediate dispute centers on voting rolls listing who can vote in Kirkuk in the January national election. While many proposals have been discussed, Kurds have favored using the 2009 voter registry, which likely reflects the Kurdish growth, while Arabs generally prefer the 2004 voter registry, when the Kurdish population wasn't so large. That has delayed the necessary deal on the election law.

A different divide

The Kurdish-Arab dispute over Kirkuk is different from Iraq's main political dispute between Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs, which plays out more in the capital of Baghdad and surrounding areas.

The Sunni-Shiite split has less relevance in Kirkuk where both Kurds and Arabs are mostly Sunni Muslims. There, the fear among Arabs - both Sunnis and Shiites - is



Kirkuk's rich oil fields are coveted by both the self-ruling Kurds and the Arab central government.

that Kurds will gobble up all jobs and government benefits if Kirkuk joins Kurdistan.

The US has been watching the debate intensely for any repercussions it may have for a US military withdrawal.

Under a plan by President Barack Obama, all US combat troops will be out of the country by the end of August 2010, leaving about 50,000 trainers and support troops in Iraq. Those remaining troops would leave by the end of 2011.

US military commanders say the majority of the troop departures would come about 60 days after the planned Iraqi election - the idea being to get the country on stable footing before making any major troop changes.

Any delay in the election date could possibly push back the troop withdrawal. US officials have said that they are still hoping the Jan 16 date will go forward, but say their troop draw-down plan is not set in stone.

Election politics

As the election approaches, tensions have increased with Arab lawmakers saying Kirkuk is an Iraqi city and Kurdish lawmakers boycotting a parliament session last week over the issue.

Iraq's central government should have tried to resolve the underlying Kirkuk issue long before now, asserts Mohammed Ihsan, the former Minister of Disputed Territories, who is now in the Kurdistan regional government.

"They forget that without sorting out this issue, you cannot develop a serious partnership throughout the country," Ihsan said.

But a Turkomen lawmaker, Abbas al-Bayati, said Iraq's parliament has not given up hopes of a deal on the election law. "Delaying the elections is a red line. Elections must not be postponed at any price."

The tensions over Kirkuk - already high - rose last week after Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdish autonomous region in the north, said in a speech: "We refuse to give Kirkuk a special status in the election."

The wording refers to an April United Nations report recommending giving Kirkuk such "special status" with oversight by both the near-autonomous Kurdish region and the central government in Baghdad. Kurds reject that.

The controversy over Barzani's words was further complicated, at least initially, by a mistranslation of his remarks on Iraqi state television, which inaccurately quoted him as saying he pledged to "annex" Kirkuk - a more hardline position.

The mistranslation aside, emotions run high.

Fawzi Akram, a legislator in radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's bloc, who listened to Barzani's speech in the original Kurdish, called his comments provocative.

"We must contain the situation, not make it more complicated," he said. "Kirkuk is an Iraqi city."

Protesters crash anti-U.S. rally in Tehran

BEIRUT

BY ROBERT F. WORTH

Iran's opposition movement struggled to reassert itself Wednesday, as tens of thousands of protesters braved police beatings and clouds of tear gas on the sidelines of a major government-sponsored anti-American rally.

The protests — in Tehran and several other cities — were the opposition's largest street showing in almost two months, and came on a day of great symbolic importance for both Iran and the United States: the 30th anniversary of the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in 1979. Although a huge deployment of police officers beat back and scattered many of them, the protesters took heart at their ability to openly challenge the government despite a stream of stark warnings from all levels of Iran's hard-line establishment.

Protesters openly flouted the day's official anti-American message, with about a thousand people, many wearing clothing and accessories in the opposition's signature bright green color, gathering outside the Russian Embassy in Tehran and chanting, "The real den of spies is the Russian Embassy." For decades, the Iranian government has said that the U.S. Embassy was a "den of spies" when it was seized. Many opposition supporters were angered by Russia's early acceptance of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed victory in Iran's presidential election in June.

It was a day of scattered protests and violence across central Tehran, and even some government officials seemed to grudgingly concede that the opposition had — for the first time — disrupted the annual anti-American rally. The official IRNA news agency reported in mid-afternoon that "rioters," many wearing the opposition's green symbols, had gathered in front of their offices on Valiasr Street chanting "death to the dictator" and other anti-government slogans.

At the same time, a new theme emerged on Wednesday, with many protesters declaring their impatience with President Barack Obama's policy of dialogue with the Iranian government. Many could be heard chanting: "Obama, Obama — either you're with them or you're with us," witnesses said.

Mr. Obama issued his own statement on Wednesday to note the 30th anniversary of the embassy takeover, repeating his appeals to move beyond the two countries' mutual distrust. The statement hinted at a sympathy for Iran's opposition movement and suggested that time was running out on a plan backed by the U.N. Security Council



Wearing masks, anti-government protesters braved police beatings and clouds of tear gas in Tehran on Wednesday, the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the U.S. Embassy.

that is aimed at averting a showdown over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"The world continues to bear witness to their powerful calls for justice and their courageous pursuit of universal rights," the statement said of the Iranian people. "It is time for the Iranian government to decide whether it wants to focus on the past, or whether it will make the choices that will open the door to greater opportunity, prosperity, and justice for its people."

On Tuesday, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, gave an angry speech accusing the United States of dictating the terms of the nuclear deal, and suggested that Mr. Obama was no different from his predecessor.

There were reports of several dozen arrests Wednesday, including some outside Tehran, and many injuries. The reformist cleric Mehdi Karrubi, who has become the government's most outspoken critic, narrowly avoided injury when pro-government forces fired a tear gas cylinder at him as he marched with protesters in Tehran, according to Radio Farda, which is financed by the U.S. government. Two of his guards leaped to defend him and were hospitalized for their wounds, the station reported.

Mir-Hussein Moussavi, the opposition leader who was Mr. Ahmadinejad's main challenger in the elections, was prevented from attending the protests by security men on motorbikes who arrived at the Cultural Center in central Tehran, where he has his offices, Radio Farda reported.

Over all, the police appear to have fought back protesters more aggressively than they did in September, when opposition supporters came out in much larger numbers and virtually hijacked a state-sponsored rally marking Jerusalem Day.

On Wednesday, the streets of central Tehran were lined with police officers and Basij militiamen starting early in the morning, witnesses said, and in the subways, officers singled out people wearing green armbands, bracelets, or head scarves and ripped them off. The protest turnout may also have been limited by the fact that it took place on a workday, unlike the Jerusalem Day protest.

One young man who had been leading anti-government chants in Valiasr Square summed up the day's events like this: "One day we come out and it's our day, another day they suppress us. Today we did not get to have our say, but it was good enough that we brought them out onto the streets."

The day was a tonic to the opposition, which has struggled to maintain its momentum since the June election set off the country's worst domestic unrest since the 1979 Islamic revolution. The authorities have brutally suppressed the movement in recent months through a combination of arrests, show trials and intimidation. Many leading reformist figures remain in jail, and while some detainees have been released, the government continues to arrest more every week.

Many protesters seemed acutely conscious of the government's vulnerability after a week during which Mr. Ahmadinejad often seemed to be alone in his support for concluding a nuclear deal with the West.

"They should get rid of all this 'death to, death to' — death to what?" said one middle-aged woman who was marching with her two daughters. "On the one hand they shout 'death to America' and on the other hand they go and make deals with them."

Mr. Ahmadinejad himself has argued

that Iran has tamed the West's arrogance and should now agree to the proposed nuclear deal, under which Iran's uranium would be shipped abroad for processing and eventually returned in

the form of fuel rods for a reactor.

But his political enemies, both conservative and reformist, have assailed the nuclear plan as a surrender to the West, seizing on an opportunity to humiliate

him, much as he did to them in years past. The status of the plan remains unclear, with Western leaders showing signs of impatience over Iran's delays.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune NOVEMBER 5, 2009

The rise of Turkey

Ankara has emerged from its pro-U.S. straitjacket to become a powerful regional actor.

Patrick Seale

It is generally accepted that America's destruction of Iraq overturned the balance of power in the Gulf, opening the way for the Islamic Republic of Iran to emerge as a major regional power, able to challenge the dominance of Sunni Arab states and pose as a rival to both Israel and the United States.

Its influence has spread to Iraq itself — now under Shiite leadership — and beyond to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and even perhaps to Zaidi rebels in northern Yemen fighting the central government in Sana'a, a development that has aroused understandable anxiety in Saudi Arabia.

However, the Iraq war has had another important consequence that is also attracting serious notice. America's failure in Iraq — and its equal failure to tame Israel's excesses — has encouraged Turkey to emerge from its pro-American straitjacket and assert itself as a powerful independent actor at the heart of a vast region that extends from the Middle East to the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Turks like to say that whereas Iran and Israel are revisionist powers, arousing anxiety and even fear by their expansionism and their challenge to existing power structures, Turkey is a stabilizing power, intent on spreading peace and security far and wide.

Turkey is extending its influence by diplomacy rather than force. It is also forging economic ties with its neighbors, and has offered to mediate in several persistent regional conflicts. It has, however, not hesitated to use force to quell the guerrillas of the PKK, a rebel movement fighting for Kurdish independence.

But even here, Turkey is now using a softer approach. The rebels have been offered an amnesty and Turkey's influential foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, has this past week paid a visit — the first of its kind — to the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq. There is even talk of Turkey opening a consulate in Erbil.

In recent years, Turkey's diplomacy has scored many successes, winning great popularity in the Arab world and strengthening Turkey's hand in its bid to join the European Union. Some people would go so far as to argue that there is no future for Turkey without the E.U., and no future for the E.U. without Turkey.

Turkey's dynamic multi-directional foreign policy started to take shape when the Justice and Development party, or AKP, came to power in 2002 under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul, now president of the Turkish Republic. These men are rightly considered to be conservative and moderately Islamic — their wives wear headscarves — but they are careful to stress that they have no ambition to create an Islamic state. Turkey's population may be largely Muslim, but the state itself is secular, democratic, capitalist and close to both the West and the Arab and Muslim world. Indeed, Turkey sees itself as a bridge, vital to both.

Ahmet Davutoglu is credited with providing the theoretical framework for Turkey's new foreign policy. He was Mr. Erdogan's principal adviser before being promoted foreign minister.

Two visits in October illustrate Turkey's activism. Prime Minister Erdogan, accompanied by nine ministers and an Airbus full of businessmen, visited Baghdad, where he held a session with the Iraq government and signed no

A moderate Islamic leadership forges a multi-faceted foreign policy that reaches out in several directions.

fewer than 48 memoranda in the fields of commerce, energy, water, security, the environment and so forth.

Muallim, of which perhaps the most important was the removal of visas, allowing for a free flow of people across their common border.

Turkey also broke new ground in Oc-

tober by signing two protocols with Armenia, providing for the restoration of diplomatic relations and the opening of the border between them. Not surprisingly, Turkey's ally Azerbaijan has strongly objected to this development, since it is locked in conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated pocket of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenian forces.

Indeed, Turkey's protocols with Armenia are unlikely to be fully imple-

mented until Armenia withdraws from at least some of the districts surrounding Karabakh — but, at the very least, a historic start has been made toward Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

From the Arab point of view, the most dramatic development has undoubtedly been the cooling of Turkey's relations with Israel. The relationship has been damaged by the outrage felt by many Turks at Israel's cruel oppression of the Palestinians, which reached its peak with the Gaza War.

Even before the assault on Gaza, Prime Minister Erdogan — a strong supporter of the Palestine cause — did not hesitate to describe some of Israel's brutal actions as "state terrorism." A total breach between the two countries is unlikely, but relations are unlikely to recover their earlier warmth so long as Israel's hard-line prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, remain in power.

Underpinning Turkey's diplomacy is its central role as an energy hub linking oil and gas producers in Russia and Central Asia with energy-hungry markets in Europe.

One way and another, a resurgent Turkey is rewriting the rules of the power game in the Middle East in a positive and non-confrontational manner. This is one of the few bright spots in a turbulent and highly inflammable Middle East.

PATRICK SEALE is the author of "The Struggle for Syria," "Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East" and "Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire."

AGENCE GLOBAL

Iraq attacks feed fears of spike in pre-election violence

BAGHDAD

BY JOHN LELAND

A week after the deadliest day of violence here in more than two years, a scattering of smaller bomb attacks around Iraq killed at least 12 and wounded more than 50 on Sunday.

Though violence in Iraq has fallen sharply over the course of the year, many observers fear an escalation before parliamentary elections that are scheduled to be held on Jan. 16. Since the Oct. 25 attacks that killed 155 and destroyed three government buildings, the authorities have arrested dozens of suspects and security officers, and critics have lashed the government for failing to provide security.

Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi said in a statement that the attack last week in Baghdad could have been prevented, and he blamed "catastrophic gaps and breaches in security forces."

The attacks Sunday came as Iraq's legislators again failed to agree on laws governing the January elections, despite warnings that any delay might prevent the vote from taking place on time. Discussions in Parliament on Sunday instead focused on other matters.

The bombs Sunday, the first day of the Iraqi workweek, killed police officers and civilians and struck Sunni as well as Shiite areas. In the deadliest of the attacks, a bomb placed on a parked motorcycle exploded in a crowded fruit and vegetable market near the southern city of Hilla, killing five people and wounding 37.

Hilla, a predominantly Shiite city about 100 kilometers, or 60 miles, south



MUSHTAQ MUHAMMED/REUTERS

Iraqi police officers transporting a wounded woman after a bomb attack Sunday in Karbala.

of Baghdad, was the site of a 2005 suicide bomb that killed at least 114 people, until then the deadliest single attack since the 2003 invasion.

Elsewhere, a magnetic bomb attached to a minibus filled with 21 passengers exploded near a checkpoint in Karbala Province, southwest of Baghdad, killing three people and wounding 12 others. Karbala, home of one of the most sacred Shiite mosques, had been relatively peaceful until a spate of attacks in the last few months.

Near Ramadi, the southwest point of Iraq's Sunni Triangle, a car bomb and a suicide bomber wearing a belt laden with explosives killed two police officers and wounded five people.

Ramadi, once one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq, has for two years been a model for progress in Iraq since tribal leaders and United States counterinsurgency forces defeated a Qaeda cell. But recent attacks there have led to concern that Al Qaeda and other insurgent forces may be regaining strength.

Also on Sunday, an improvised explosive device in Mosul Province killed two Iraqi soldiers and wounded a third, and four police officers were killed in two shootings there.

Iran accuses 3 American hikers of espionage

BY JACK HEALY AND NAZILA FATHI

Three American hikers arrested in Iran this summer after straying across its border with Iraq have been accused of spying, an Iranian state news agency reported Monday.

The Tehran prosecutor told Iran's official IRNA news agency that Iranian officials were pursuing espionage charges against the Americans, who were detained in late July after trekking through the Kurdistan region of Iraq

and toward the Iranian border.

News of the spying accusations drew a quick rebuke from Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"We believe strongly that there is no evidence to support any charge whatsoever," she said in Berlin, according to The Associated Press. "And we would renew our request on behalf of these three young people and their families that the Iranian government exercise compassion and release them so they can return home."

The specter of three American tourists on trial in Iran could add strain to relations between Iran and the United States at a time when the countries are negotiating over Iran's nuclear program, and it raises questions about whether Iran will try to use the Americans as a bargaining chip. Earlier this year, the case of Roxana Saberi, an Iranian-American journalist arrested in Tehran, drew international attention and sparked accusations that the Irani-

an government was trying to use one woman's arrest to gain leverage with the United States. She was released in May, a month before disputed presidential elections in Iran.

The United States has been pursuing the release of the American hikers through Swiss diplomats in Tehran.

Statements from family members and the Kurdish authorities have said that the three travelers, all graduates of the University of California, Berkeley, had crossed from Turkey into Kurdistan, where they stayed at a hostel and camped as they headed toward Ahmed Awa, a resort area of caves and waterfalls on the border.

A statement on a Web site set up for the hikers, freethikers.org, makes a plea for their release: "We hope the Iranian authorities understand that if our children and friends did happen to enter Iran, there can only be one reason: because they made a regrettable mistake and got lost."

IRAN

Ce pays où la mort compte plus que la vie

A la suite de plusieurs condamnations prononcées contre des opposants, l'écrivaine Fariba Amini dénonce la banalisation de la peine capitale et le culte des martyrs.

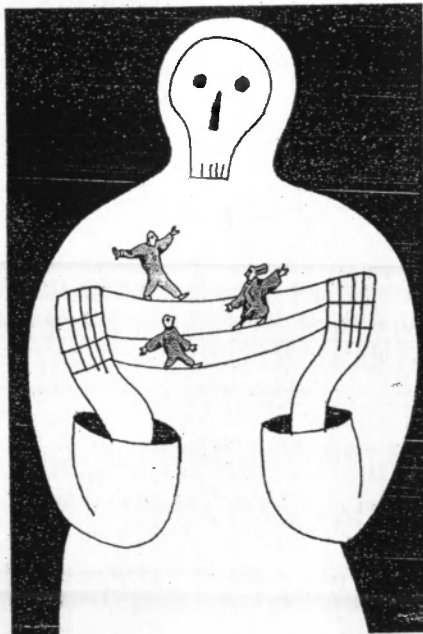
IRANIAN.COM (extraits)

New York

Il y a trente et un ans, quelques mois après la révolution [islamique] de 1979, les généraux et les proches du chah, dont son Premier ministre de longue date Amir Abbas Hoveida, ont été tués sans autre forme de procès. La foule s'est réjouie. Quelque temps après, le Premier ministre Mehdi Bazargan, inquiet des exécutions massives [de généraux et de partisans de l'ancien régime], vint demander à Khomeyni la grâce d'un général de 85 ans. Le fondateur de la République islamique lui répondit : "Cette classe doit être éradiquée."

Une fois enclenché, le carnage ne s'est jamais arrêté. Il est prouvé que des exécutions massives ont eu lieu à la prison d'Evine pendant les premières années du régime islamique. Au Kurdistan, des exécutions sommaires ont été commises. De jeunes hommes, les futurs gardiens de la révolution [milice du régime], ont tué de nombreux protestataires. Puis les nouveaux juges, intronisés par leur turban plutôt que par leurs connaissances juridiques, ont commencé à prononcer des peines de mort. Sadeq Khaikhal, surnommé le "juge qui pend", était l'un d'entre eux. Quand on lui demandait : "Et s'ils étaient innocents ?" Il répondait : "Alors ils iront au paradis !"

Peu d'Iranjens se sont opposés aux exécutions des partisans du chah. Quelques-uns ont exprimé leurs doutes lors des assassinats de moudjahidin. Beaucoup ont dit leur horreur face aux exécutions massives d'Evine. Ceux qui l'ont fait ont été soit ignorés, soit emprisonnés. Mais la culture de la mort est restée et s'est développée dans notre société. En 1986, l'ayatollah Montazeri, après avoir été informé de ce qui se passait dans les prisons, a écrit à Khomeyni pour lui signaler les abus, mais celui-ci a balayé toutes les accusations d'un revers de main.



▲ Dessin d'Ajubel paru dans El País, Madrid.

Les élections de 2009 n'ont fait qu'intensifier les tortures et qu'accroître le nombre des morts. La République islamique a légitimé une culture de la mort (qui existait déjà au temps du chah, mais de manière souterraine). Les Iraniens en sont arrivés à l'accepter. Que les personnes jugées soient innocentes ou coupables, la peine capitale est devenue la norme plutôt que l'exception. Ces derniers temps, la peine de mort est utilisée contre les prisonniers politiques comme une tactique d'intimidation, afin d'en dissuader d'autres de se lancer dans des activités subversives. Souvent, la sentence est transformée en peine de prison.

DEVENIR UN MARTYR EST L'ACTE ULTIME DE COURAGE

Comment détermine-t-on qu'une personne est engagée dans des activités représentant une menace pour la sécurité de l'Iran ? C'est une allé-

gation globale, appliquée à tous les opposants du régime, journalistes, militants et écrivains. C'est simple et pratique. Le régime iranien n'a besoin d'aucune justification pour tuer. La loi de *qesas* (qui en arabe signifie "représailles et punition") est un code pénal discriminatoire ratifié sous Rafsandjani et qui autorise la mort par exécution dans diverses circonstances, même insignifiantes.

L'exécution récente d'un jeune homme, Behnoud Shojai, qui avait 17 ans au moment de son arrestation [et 21 au moment de son exécution, le 11 octobre 2009], a suscité la rage et la consternation. Pourtant, beaucoup n'ont pas vu d'objection à ce que l'on exécute ce "criminel". Sur le réseau social Facebook, certains s'interrogeaient pour savoir s'il devait être considéré ou non comme un martyr, étant donné qu'il n'était pas exempt de tout soupçon. Mais là n'est pas le vrai débat ! Qu'il soit coupable d'actes criminels ou non, aucun mineur au moment des faits ne devrait être condamné à mort ! D'autant que la loi iranienne stipule que des mesures doivent être prises pour réinsérer les criminels, ce qui n'est que très rarement appliqué.

En Iran, la mort est devenue plus importante que la vie. Le culte des martyrs est profondément ancré dans la religion chiite. Pour les chiites, devenir un martyr est l'ultime acte de courage. Dans chaque ville d'Iran, le premier panneau d'accueil que l'on voit vous souhaite la "Bienvenue dans la ville du martyr Untel", en référence à ceux qui sont morts pendant la guerre Iran-Irak [1980-1988]. Khomeyni avait prolongé inutilement cette guerre, le plus longtemps possible, pour des raisons de politique intérieure, au prix de centaines de milliers de vies.

Un jour prochain, si un nouveau système judiciaire se met en place, nous devons éradiquer cette culture de la mort pour instaurer une société où la vie compte davantage que la mort.

Fariba Amini

Turquie et Europe : l'intenable position française

La scène se déroule dans le café d'Hamsiköy, un hameau perché dans les montagnes de la région de la mer Noire. Calés autour d'un poêle à bois et d'un thé brûlant, les représentants des 27 pays européens, dont 14 ambassadeurs, sont venus promouvoir l'action de Bruxelles auprès des PME turques. Mais les anciens du café n'ont qu'un sujet en tête : « Sarkozy veut fermer la porte au nez de la Turquie en nous parlant de partenariat privilégié ! Mais qui êtes-vous pour laisser la Turquie à la porte ? », gronde l'un d'eux. Le chef de la délégation européenne à Ankara, le Français Marc Pierini, tente de le rassurer : « Les Etats membres sont libres de dire ce qu'ils veulent. Pour stopper le processus, il faut l'unanimité des Vingt-Sept, ce qui n'arrivera pas. Les négociations ne vont pas s'arrêter, c'est la réalité. »

La nouvelle position française – « processus d'adhésion sans adhésion » – ressemble à un numéro de funambulisme

Du village d'Anatolie aux salons d'Istanbul, l'opposition répétée de la France à l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union européenne a fait des dégâts. De quoi éclipser cinq ans de processus européen. Avec les élites francophiles, intellectuels et entrepreneurs, le divorce est consommé. Le refus français est devenu le symbole d'une Europe timorée et nourrie de préjugés. Pour ne plus hérisser les Turcs, la diplomatie française a donc décidé de ne plus parler de « partenariat privilégié ». A la place, on évoque pudiquement des « liens particuliers » entre Ankara et l'UE.

De passage à Istanbul, le secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires européennes, Pierre Lellouche, qui, il y a un an, défendait l'adhésion, a tenté de convaincre que la France et la Turquie devaient « se concentrer sur les intérêts communs ». « Nous avons

Analyse

Guillaume Perrier
Istanbul, correspondance

une relation très importante sur le plan géopolitique et énergétique... Et pourtant, a-t-il dit, notre relation est dominée par des querelles sur la finalité du processus d'adhésion.

La nouvelle position française – « le processus d'adhésion sans l'adhésion » – tient du funambulisme. Elle demeure inaudible dans une Turquie candidate à l'Europe depuis 1959. Dans les milieux turcs éclairés, elle est qualifiée au mieux d'« incohérente » voire d'« irrationnelle ». « Ce serait comme célébrer des fiançailles en sachant qu'on ne pourra pas se marier », a comparé Pekin Baran, vice-président du patronat turc, au lancement de l'Institut du Bosphore, un cercle de réflexion mis sur pied pour renforcer les liens franco-turcs.

L'émergence de la Turquie comme puissance économique, géopolitique et énergétique est devenue trop évidente pour continuer à être ignorée. Une diplomatie hyperactive a replacé le pays au centre du jeu régional et son influence culturelle se diffuse à travers le monde musulman, mais aussi dans le Caucase et en Europe orientale. Sa position géographique, argument habituel des antiadhésion (la Turquie n'est pas en Europe mais en Asie), est vue comme un atout : la Turquie s'est imposée comme carrefour des routes énergétiques à destination des marchés européens. Gaz de France courtise Ankara pour intégrer le projet Nabucco...

Economiquement, enfin, ce marché dynamique de 72 millions d'habitants garde un potentiel d'investissement alléchant. M. Lellouche n'a pas manqué de souligner l'intérêt français pour la construction du troisième pont sur le Bosphore. Les entreprises hexagonales régulièrement exclues des marchés publics ne

veulent plus rester sur la touche. C'est ce qui risque d'arriver à Areva pour la centrale nucléaire turque, promise aux Russes. « Si la France espère sauver les gros contrats avec cette position ambiguë, elle se met le doigt dans l'œil », ironise un diplomate européen. Les milieux d'affaires soulignent aussi que Nicolas Sarkozy est allé vendre la France dans la plupart des pays émergents : Brésil, Mexique, Chine ou Kazakhstan... Mais qu'il continue étonnamment de bouder la Turquie, membre du G20 et 16^e économie mondiale.

Malgré le discours apaisant, le processus européen de la Turquie est sensiblement freiné par l'attitude française : les cinq chapitres des négociations indissociables de l'adhésion restent bloqués. Une vingtaine de députés UMP militent pour que les crédits de préadhésion accordés à la Turquie, 3,9 milliards d'euros d'ici à 2012, soient drastiquement réduits. « Les Français ne comprennent pas que l'on encourage financièrement ce pays à faire des réformes », estiment les auteurs d'un amendement au projet de loi de finances 2010.

« Un amendement de cohérence avec la politique européenne de la France », selon le député Richard Mallié. Cohérent aussi avec l'atmosphère qui a entouré la visite à Paris du président turc, Abdullah Gül, début octobre. D'Istanbul à Hamsiköy, les Turcs ont lu dans les journaux que leur président avait été accueilli avec « désinvolture » par M. Sarkozy, arrivé au Grand Palais pour inaugurer l'exposition « De Byzance à Istanbul », en mâchonnant un chewing-gum. La visite s'est effectuée au pas de charge, en douze minutes, dans une gigantesque bousculade.

Enfin, en essayant de convertir la Grèce et Chypre à sa position sur la Turquie, Paris commet une autre erreur d'appréciation. Les pays voisins ont intérêt à voir la Turquie se démocratiser et intégrer le concert européen. Le premier ministre grec, George Papandréou, s'est même prononcé pour une adhésion « dès 2014 ». ■

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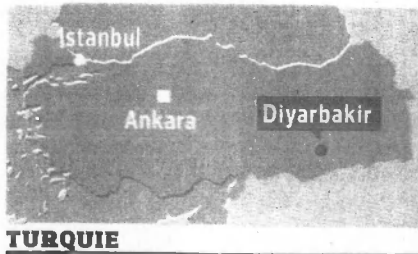
LE FIGARO
jeudi 12 novembre 2009

Des rebelles kurdes déposent les armes

Les combattants du PKK attendent un engagement fort d'Ankara pour régler un conflit qui dure depuis 25 ans.

LAURE MARCHAND
ENVOYÉE SPÉCIALE À DIYARBAKIR

TURQUIE En pantalon et chemise de ville, Lütfi Tas, 59 ans, se sent un peu à l'étroit. Sa tenue de guérilla était plus confortable. La nuit, le matelas en mousse le fait transpirer. Difficile de s'habituer au synthétique après avoir dormi 15 ans à même le sol dans les montagnes du Nord de l'Irak, où sont installées les bases arrières du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan). L'homme ne reconnaît plus Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde à l'Est de la Turquie. « Autrefois, on voyait les vieux quartiers entourés par les remparts, aujourd'hui ils sont noyés dans un océan de béton. » Lütfi est l'un des huit combattants de l'organisation kurde qui ont déposé les armes et ont été autorisés à rentrer en Turquie, le 19 octobre. « J'ai tellement rêvé de ce retour sur ma terre natale, les mots manquent pour exprimer mon émotion, nous étions 1 000 volontaires pour faire partie de cet instant historique et porter ce message de paix », s'émeut-il. À la frontière turco-irakienne, le « groupe de la paix », envoyé par Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK, pour tester la détermination du gouvernement turc à régler le conflit qui dure depuis 25 ans, a été accueilli en héros par des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes. « Nous avons pris les armes contraintes, car nous n'avions pas d'autre choix pour réclamer nos droits, déclare Mehmet Serif Gençdal, le porte-parole. L'objectif de notre venue est de poursuivre la lutte politiquement, il faut que l'État l'accepte, qu'il cesse de nous percevoir comme des séparatistes mettant en danger l'unité de la Turquie. »



La reddition d'un plus grand nombre de rebelles dépendra de l'ampleur de l'« ouverture démocratique » lancée par le premier ministre. Demain, Recep Tayyip Erdogan devrait présenter devant le Parlement des propositions concrètes en faveur de la minorité kurde. Selon la presse, pourraient être annoncés le retour de

12 000 Kurdes réfugiés en Irak, l'assouplissement de la « loi de repentance » afin de faciliter le désarmement, un usage élargi de la langue kurde, comme son autorisation dans les meetings politiques et son apprentissage optionnel dans l'enseignement secondaire ou encore la reconversion progressive des miliciens kurdes payés par l'État pour combattre la guérilla.

Débats au Parlement

La tâche qui attend le gouvernement s'avère néanmoins ardue. Le ministre de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, a estimé que le temps était venu d'agir avec « courage, sincérité et détermination ». Mais le soutien de l'armée est ténu. Et l'opposition, qui compare cette initiative à une « conspiration », se déchaîne. « Ne laissons pas la République tomber dans ce guet-apens », s'est emporté Deniz Baykal, à la tête du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP). « L'AKP (le parti au pouvoir, NDLR) est en train d'accomplir ce que le PKK n'a pas réussi par les armes », a renchéri Mehmet Sandir, le député d'extrême droite du Parti pour une action nationaliste (MHP).

Cette hostilité ulcère Abdullah Demirbas, maire de Sur, une municipalité de Diyarbakir : « Quelle est cette mentalité ? Ils veulent donc que la guerre continue ? N'ont-ils pas d'enfants soldats ? » L'édile, qui a déjà 23 procès à son actif, revient d'une audience au tribunal. Cette fois-ci, il est poursuivi pour

avoir édité des brochures en kurde. Une photo de son fils, en uniforme de lycéen, est posée sur son bureau. En mai, l'adolescent est parti rejoindre les rangs de la guérilla. « Je venais d'être condamné à deux ans et six mois de prison pour avoir fait l'apologie d'Abdullah Öcalan, raconte son père, la gorge nouée. J'ai tenté de le dissuader, mais il m'a répondu que tout ce que je faisais ne m'avait rien rapporté. » Malgré tout, même s'il estime que « les premiers pas du gouvernement sont encore insuffisants » pour mettre un terme à ce conflit qui a fait plus de 45 000 morts, Abdullah Demirbas croit que le



Le 19 octobre, des milliers de Kurdes ont salué, à Sirnak, le retour de combattants du PKK autorisés à rentrer en Turquie après avoir cessé le combat. FIGEN EKI/NAR PHOTOS-REA

« long et difficile processus vers la paix » est enclenché.

Les débats à venir dans l'enceinte du parlement turc constituent en eux-mêmes une avancée. « Jusqu'à présent, les députés se limitaient à renouveler l'autorisation donnée à l'armée de conduire des opérations dans le nord de l'Irak, souligne l'avocat kurde, Sezgin Tanrikulu. Débattre du problème kurde au Parlement est la bonne méthode même si on ignore ce qui en sortira. » Mais pour l'ancien bâtonnier de Diyarbakir aussi, il y a urgence. Au fil des ans, les nationalismes kurde et turc se sont renforcés mutuellement. « Le gouvernement a conscience des risques d'affrontement entre les deux sociétés, il sait qu'il n'a pas le droit d'échouer. » ■



IRAK: LES MINORITÉS, VICTIMES COLLATÉRALES DU CONFLIT ARABO-KURDE

BAGDAD, 10 nov 2009 (AFP)

LES MINORITÉS, notamment chrétiennes, du nord de l'Irak sont les victimes collatérales du conflit entre Arabes et Kurdes pour le contrôle de territoires disputés et doivent être protégés, affirme mardi l'organisation de défense des droits de l'Homme Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Dans un rapport, cette organisation estime qu'elles "sont prises pour cible dans la lutte opposant Arabes et Kurdes pour le contrôle de territoires dans la région de Ninive", dont Mossoul est la capitale.

Les minorités visées par les attaques et les pressions sont les 550.000 chrétiens, les 220.000 yazidis (une secte accusée d'être adoratrice du diable) et les 60.000 chabaks (une minorité ethnique), ainsi que des minorités turkmènes et des kurdes kakais (une communauté réduite aux croyances syncrétiques).

"Elles se retrouvent dans une position de plus en plus précaire alors que le gouvernement central dominé par les Arabes et le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan se disputent le contrôle des territoires convoités", assure HRW.

"Un des principaux fronts du conflit est Ninive, la deuxième province la plus peuplée d'Irak, et qui présente une concentration unique de groupes de minorités ayant une présence historique dans la région", explique-t-elle.

HRW, basée à New York, accuse les forces kurdes de recourir, pour consolider leur emprise sur ces territoires, "à des détentions et arrestations arbitraires, à des actes d'intimidation et dans certains cas à des violences de faible intensité contre les minorités qui ont défié le contrôle du gouvernement régional sur les territoires convoités".

Par ailleurs, selon elle, "des éléments extrémistes de l'insurrection arabe sunnite, qui considèrent ces communautés minoritaires comme des +croisés+ et des -infidèles+ ont lancé des attaques dévastatrices qui ont tué des centaines de civils".

HRW appelle le gouvernement régional kurde à modifier sa Constitution afin que les chabaks et les yazidis "soient reconnus légalement comme des groupes ethniques distincts et à cesser la répression contre les organisations de la société civile et politique qui s'opposent à la politique kurde dans les régions disputées".

Elle lui demande aussi d'enquêter sur les agissements des milices kurdes accusées de s'attaquer aux minorités.

Le rapport appelle également le gouvernement irakien à protéger "les minorités au niveau local, provincial et national, et à enquêter sur les meurtres et les déplacements de chrétiens et sur les agressions mortelles dirigées contre d'autres minorités".

En août 2007, des attentats simultanés au camion piégé à Ninive, vraisemblablement commis par des islamistes sunnites, ont tué plus de 400 yazidis dans la pire attaque contre les civils depuis 2003.

Fin 2008, une campagne systématique de meurtres et de violences ciblées a fait 40 morts parmi les chrétiens, entraînant le départ de Mossoul de plus de 12.000 d'entre eux. Les diverses communautés se rejettent la responsabilité de ces attaques.

En outre, les groupes rebelles ont repris les attentats à la bombe depuis le retrait des villes des forces américaines le 30 juin. Des attaques contre les minorités entre juillet et septembre ont tué plus de 157 personnes et ont fait 500 blessés, selon HRW.



SYRIE: QUATRE KURDES CONDAMNÉS À SIX ANS DE PRISON

DAMAS, 10 nov 2009 (AFP)

LA COUR DE sûreté de l'Etat, un tribunal d'exception, a condamné dimanche à Damas quatre Kurdes syriens à six ans de prison pour appartenance à un parti interdit, a annoncé mardi une ONG, l'Observatoire syrien pour les droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

"La Cour de sûreté de l'Etat a condamné dimanche quatre Kurdes syriens à six ans de prison pour appartenance à un parti interdit qui est le Parti de l'Union démocratique, et pour tentative de s'emparer d'une partie du territoire syrien pour l'annexer à un Etat étranger", a indiqué l'OSDH dans un communiqué.

Les quatre Kurdes condamnés sont Nasser Ahmad Mohammad, Fawaz Ali, Saoud Tchikhmous et Abdel-Rahmane Moustapha Mohammad, qui avaient été arrêtés en 2008 et début 2009.

L'OSDH, basé à Londres, a demandé aux autorités syriennes de "supprimer" la Cour de sûreté de l'Etat.

En Syrie, les détenus kurdes sont systématiquement accusés de vouloir rattacher une partie du territoire syrien à un futur Etat indépendant du Kurdistan.

Estimés à plus de 1,5 million de personnes, les Kurdes de Syrie représentent environ 9% de la population du pays. Ils réclament la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture.



IRAK: LE RAPT D'ENFANT, UNE INDUSTRIE FLORISSANTE À KIRKOUK

KIRKOUK (Irak), 11 nov 2009 (AFP)

Fin octobre, le fils du chef de la tribu kurde des Zangana a été enlevé par des hommes armés sur le chemin de l'école à Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, où les rapt d'enfant sont devenus une industrie florissante.

"Cela s'est passé à 07H40 (03H30 GMT) le 26 octobre et 36 heures plus tard j'ai reçu une vidéo. Quand j'ai vu Mohammed enchaîné, les yeux bandés, qui criait parce qu'on le frappait, je me suis évanoui", confie à l'AFP cheikh Othmane Abdel Karim Agha, 55 ans.

Après 11 jours de captivité et le versement d'une rançon de 40.000 dollars, son fils de 14 ans a été libéré dans une rue du sud de cette cité multiethnique de 575.000 habitants.

"Depuis septembre, les rapt d'enfant se sont accrus. Nous connaissons au moins dix cas mais en réalité il y en a bien plus", affirme le chef-adjoint de la police régionale, le général Torhan Youssef.

"Deux ont été libérés par nos forces, un enfant a été relâché après paiement d'une rançon, trois autres l'ont été après négociations directes entre les

parents et les ravisseurs et quatre, dont deux filles, sont toujours séquestrés", a-t-il ajouté.

Les quatre jeunes encore détenus sont un sunnite de 12 ans enlevé le 23 octobre, un Kurde de 16 ans kidnappé le 27 octobre et deux Turcomanes de 13 et 14 ans enlevées les 29 octobre et 1er novembre, selon la police.

En général issus de familles aisées, ils ont tous disparu sur le chemin de l'école. "Beaucoup de familles n'osent pas nous signaler la disparition de leur enfant soit par peur des ravisseurs, soit parce qu'ils n'ont pas confiance dans nos services ou soit pour des convenances sociales quand il s'agit de filles", assure le général Youssef.

La semaine dernière, la police avait annoncé la libération de deux écoliers turcomans de 14 ans, enlevés le 20 octobre alors qu'un chauffeur les conduisait dans une école turque du centre-ville.

Le premier, Ahmad Mohammed Nouredine, est le fils d'un célèbre ophtalmologue et le second, Judat Sonay, appartient à une riche famille. Les parents d'Ahmad ont refusé de payer une rançon alors que ceux de Judat ont déboursé 50.000 dollars, selon la police.



LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC PRÉSENTE SON PLAN KURDE, VEUT ÉLARGIR LES LIBERTÉS

ANKARA, 10 nov 2009 (AFP)

LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC s'est engagé mardi à "une ouverture démocratique" en Turquie, en présentant son projet de mesures en faveur de la communauté kurde, une initiative controversée censée apporter une solution politique à la sensible question kurde.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay a expliqué lors d'un débat houleux la nécessité de ce plan d'action, avant que le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan expose, probablement jeudi lors d'un deuxième débat, les grandes lignes de cette "ouverture démocratique" très critiquée par l'opposition, qui y voit une menace pour l'unité nationale.

"Aucune mesure pouvant porter atteinte à l'unité du pays ne figurera dans cette ouverture", a assuré M. Atalay. Sans entrer dans les détails, il a affirmé que son gouvernement souhaitait parvenir à un "consensus" pour des réformes étendant les libertés et les normes démocratiques.

Sans dévoiler de mesure concrète, le ministre a souligné que le temps était venu de traiter le problème avec "courage, sincérité et détermination" et de présenter des mesures "réelles et non palliatives" pour éradiquer, à terme, l'insurrection séparatiste kurde.

Depuis l'été, le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste) de M. Erdogan s'efforce de préparer l'opinion à l'annonce de son plan, destiné à saper le soutien dont dispose le Parti illégal des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) parmi une frange de sa population kurde.

Le projet vise essentiellement à améliorer les droits des Kurdes. Il pourrait, selon la presse, envisager l'usage de la langue kurde à l'école dans le secteur éducatif, assurer le retour d'Irak des réfugiés kurdes et investir dans le sud-est, majoritairement kurde et défavorisé.

Le 19 octobre, le processus a pris une nouvelle dimension lorsqu'un "groupe de paix" composé de rebelles et de civils kurdes issus de camps irakiens, est rentré en Turquie. Cet événement a été suivi de manifestations de joie dans les villes kurdes. Mais le tollé suscité par cette liesse a amené Ankara à reporter le retour en Turquie d'autres groupes.

La Turquie combat le PKK au prix de 45.000 morts depuis 1984.



10 novembre, une vive discussion, notamment sur les questions Kurdes qui devaient être débattues, a dégénéré en pugilat au Parlement turc.

L'opposition a dès l'ouverture de la séance mardi tenté en vain de bloquer les discussions, avançant qu'elles ne pouvaient se faire au jour anniversaire de la mort du père-fondateur de la Turquie moderne, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Ses porte-paroles ont ensuite vivement attaqué le gouvernement.

"C'est un projet de trahison et de destruction", a martelé un député nationaliste, Kemal Erdal Sipahi, accusant le parti d'Erdogan de vouloir diviser le pays sur des bases ethniques.

Onur Öymen, un intervenant social-démocrate a accusé le gouvernement de "parler pour ne rien dire" et de s'engager dans un dialogue tacite avec le chef-fondateur du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, condamné à la prison à vie en Turquie.

Pour manifester sa volonté d'ouverture, le gouvernement a présenté mardi au Parlement un projet de loi réduisant les peines encourues par les enfants kurdes arrêtés lors de manifestations pro-PKK.

Le PKK qui est sur la liste noire des organisations terroristes, a rejeté les efforts de l'AKP, évoquant "des réformes de façade" et réclamant une référence à l'identité kurde dans la Constitution turque.

Consciente que le problème kurde gêne sa candidature à l'Union européenne, la Turquie a depuis ces dernières années accordé d'importants droits culturels à sa population kurde, estimée à plus de 12 millions d'habitants (sur 71).



TURQUIE: UN NOUVEAU DÉBAT VENDREDI AU PARLEMENT SUR LES DROITS DES KURDES

ANKARA, 11 nov 2009 (AFP)

UN DEUXIÈME débat, avec une intervention du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan, aura lieu vendredi au Parlement turc après une séance houleuse consacrée mardi au projet de mesures démocratiques du gouvernement en faveur de la minorité kurde, ont rapporté mercredi les médias.

Les parlementaires turcs ont eu mardi un débat préliminaire sur le projet d'"ouverture démocratique", destiné à contribuer à mettre fin à 25 ans de rébellion séparatiste kurde.

Un nouveau débat sur la même question ne pouvait intervenir avant au moins 48 heures, donc a priori tard jeudi. Le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste), que dirige M. Erdogan, a décidé dans ces conditions de reporter le deuxième débat à vendredi, selon les chaînes de télévision.

M. Erdogan prévoit d'expliquer à l'assemblée les grandes lignes de son plan controversé sur la question kurde.

L'opposition, qui dit craindre pour l'unité de la nation, est farouchement opposée au processus.

Parmi les réformes envisagées par Ankara figurent, selon la presse, l'assouplissement de la législation sur l'usage de langue kurde et des mesures politiques et sociales visant à inciter les rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du



Kurdistan (PKK, interdit) à déposer les armes.

Depuis 1984, le conflit a fait 45.000 morts.

"L'objectif de l'initiative est de mettre fin au terrorisme et d'améliorer la démocratie", a déclaré au Parlement le ministre de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, lors d'une séance particulièrement mouvementée, sans révéler les détails du plan, mais soulignant la volonté du gouvernement d'étendre les normes démocratiques dans le pays.

Le gouvernement turc a déjà accru les droits culturels des Kurdes, en autorisant notamment le lancement d'une chaîne de télévision.

AFP

KURDISTAN : LE DIFFÉREND PÉTROLIER AVEC BAGDAD PAS RÉGLÉ AVANT LES ÉLECTIONS (BARZANI)

BRUXELLES, 10 nov 2009 (AFP)

LE DIFFÉREND pétrolier entre la région autonome du Kurdistan et le gouvernement central irakien "ne sera pas résolu" d'ici les élections de janvier 2010, a affirmé mardi le président du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani au Parlement européen à Bruxelles.

"D'ici aux élections, je ne pense pas que les différends entre notre région autonome et le gouvernement fédéral seront résolus. Je ne pense pas que ça pourra être fait dans les mois à venir", a dit M. Barzani.

La région autonome du Kurdistan irakien a cessé d'exporter son pétrole en raison d'un conflit avec le gouvernement central sur le paiement des compagnies étrangères qui exploitent les gisements.

Le Kurdistan irakien avait commencé le 1er juin à exporter du pétrole pour la première fois de son histoire, dans un climat d'hostilité avec Bagdad qui nie à sa province du nord le droit de signer des contrats sans son aval.

Avec l'entrée en exploitation de deux champs pétroliers, 90.000 barils étaient acheminés quotidiennement vers l'oléoduc reliant Kirkouk au port turc de Ceyhan.

M. Barzani a justifié la signature de contrats avec les compagnies étrangères qui sont "nécessaires pour le développement" du Kurdistan.

"Les hydrocarbures (du Kurdistan) représentent environ 17% du revenu national et cela devrait retourner directement à la région Kurdistan et non pas à Bagdad ou utilisé comme une arme contre nous", a insisté le président kurde.



"Le pétrole et le gaz appartiennent à l'ensemble du peuple irakien, nous n'avons aucun problème avec ça", a reconnu M. Barzani mais, a-t-il ajouté "nous ne voulons pas que la politique centralisée sur le pétrole et le gaz nous soit imposée, car ce ne serait pas juste".

"Il faut un partage équitable des revenus", a-t-il dit.

"Le Kurdistan possède des ressources majeures", a rappelé M. Barzani qui a estimé que sa région pourrait produire un million de barils/jour à la fin 2011.

Les exportations pétrolières sont un enjeu fondamental en Irak. Le pays dispose des troisièmes réserves au monde et tire 90% de ses revenus du pétrole et du gaz. La baisse des prix des hydrocarbures a creusé un important déficit budgétaire.

AFP

LE GOUVERNEMENT TURC ANNONCE DES MESURES POUR AMÉLIORER LES DROITS DES KURDES

ANKARA, 13 nov 2009 (AFP)

LE MINISTRE turc de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, a annoncé vendredi au Parlement des mesures très attendues pour améliorer les droits de la population kurde, qui prévoient notamment la possibilité pour les villes "turquisées" de force au fil des ans de revenir à leurs noms kurdes .

"Si les localités le désirent, on leur donnera l'occasion d'utiliser de nouveau leurs noms d'origine", a dit M. Atalay en exposant les détails de l'"ouverture démocratique" à laquelle le gouvernement est prêt à procéder à l'égard de la minorité kurde afin de venir, à terme, à bout de 25 ans d'insurrection séparatiste kurde.

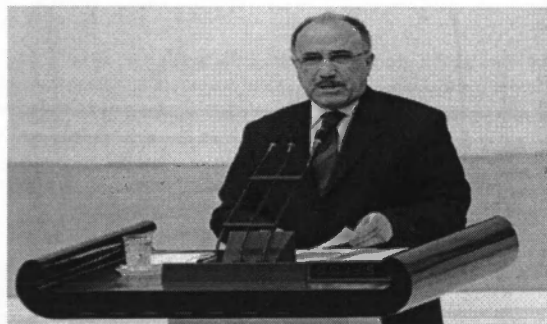
C'est la première fois depuis l'été, date à laquelle le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, issu de la mouvance islamiste), au pouvoir a annoncé vouloir régler le vieux conflit kurde en Turquie, que des mesures concrètes sont rendues publiques.

Parmi les autres dispositions légales que prendra la majorité gouvernementale figure la mise en place d'une commission indépendante chargée d'enquêter sur les violations des droits de l'Homme, en particulier dans le sud-est, région peuplée majoritairement de Kurdes.

"Cette commission publiera dans les plus brefs délais les conclusions de ses enquêtes", a souligné le ministre, affirmant que le "slogan" du gouvernement pour son plan kurde était "plus de libertés pour tout le monde".

Une troisième mesure concernera l'autorisation de fait d'utiliser le kurde dans la vie politique, où l'usage du turc est pour le moment obligatoire.

Le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan devait aussi prendre la parole vendredi au Parlement, avant que les ténors de l'opposition, farouchement opposés à cette initiative, craignant pour l'unité nationale, n'exposent leur point de



vue.

Le gouvernement a déjà accru les droits culturels des Kurdes, en autorisant notamment une chaîne de télévision pour cette minorité.

Afin de montrer sa volonté d'aller de l'avant dans les réformes démocratiques, l'AKP a présenté cette semaine un projet de loi à l'Assemblée réduisant les peines encourues par les enfants kurdes arrêtés pendant des manifestations en faveur du PKK (Parti -illégal- des travailleurs du Kurdistan).

Les adolescents jetant des pierres sur les forces de l'ordre à ces occasions sont actuellement jugés comme s'ils étaient des terroristes et encourrent à ce titre des peines pouvant aller jusqu'à vingt ans de prison.

Le gouvernement a autorisé dans la foulée les chaînes privées à émettre 24 heures sur 24.

Kurdish president calls for EU support

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Rudaw, Brussels- The Iraqi Kurdistan President, Massoud Barzani called on the European countries to support the Kurdistan Regional Government in a speech at the European Union on Tuesday.

Barzani arrived in Europe on November 2 on a diplomatic tour to meet with European leaders. He arrived in Brussels on Tuesday to give a speech at the European Union. Barzani was received by Fiorello Provers, Struan Stevenson and Jim McEvoy from the EU Protocol department.

The Kurdish president talked about the role of the Kurdistan region in Iraq and said that he was proud of the role his region has played in promoting democracy and to hold free elections. He also talked about the situation under the regime of Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein.

EU support for Kurdistan

Barzani called on the EU to support Iraqi Kurdistan in the democratization process and the Iraqi election challenge.

The Kurdish President also called for more European investments in the region, especially in proposed energy projects like the Nabucco pipeline.

Barzani said that he wishes to follow the European model of governing and asked for Europe's assistance to establish transparent institutions, education and health systems in Iraq Kurdistan.

Barzani also talked about KRG's efforts to empower women and protect



their rights. He said that he personally is involved in improving the situation for women in the region and combat issues such as honor killings.

The President of Iraqi Kurdistan then talked about KRG's policy in protect the rights of ethnic groups in Kurdistan. He said that KRG is committed to guarantee the rights of Arabs, Turkmen and Christians in the region.

Supporting Turkey to address Kurdish issues

The president also called on the European countries to support KRG and emphasized that his government maintains good relations with the Turkish government.

The Kurdish president answered question of several Turkish journalists. According to the president it was too early to judge the steps of the Turkish government to address the Kurdish issues, "A peaceful political solution... is not easy, but I encourage this to continue," he said.

The president also said that the KRG is ready to support Turkey in encouraging the Turkish Kurdish refugees who have taken shelter in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Barzani said that violence should no longer be a proffered method to achieve goals, "There is no reason to take up arms, if there is a political process," he said adding that the rights of Kurds should be achieved by peaceful political means in parliaments.

The President said that Turkey's change of policy to peacefully address the Kurdish issue is welcoming, "This is an important change in the mentality and a major development. Once you address the real causes and try to find a solution, the PKK will have no reason to take up arms and will return to a peaceful and normal life and political process."

Kurdish parties will have a unified discourse

Asked about the future of the Kurdish discourse especially as Kurdish parties might participate in the upcoming Iraqi elections in separate lists, Barzani said, "There are different opinions and view, but when it comes to the Iraqi federal parliament, we have a unified position,"

(Photo: Rudaw, by Wladimir van Wilgenburg).

Iraqi parliament approves elections to include Kirkuk

BAGHDAD - Iraq's parliament has passed a long-delayed electoral law on Sunday, paving the way for nationwide elections. The Kurdish demand for elections in Kirkuk was approved by the parliament.

The key hurdle to the law's passage was how to apportion votes in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, a city claimed by both Arabs and Kurds reported AP. The majority of the parliament voted for including Kirkuk in the elections in the new law, wrote Iraqi MP Haidar al-Abadi.

Some thought an agreement would be reached on Saturday, but Iraqi Kurdish MP Mahmoud Othman said the election law took longer than they thought. Al-



Abadi said they vote was delayed to convince other politicians.

The UN plan for more seats for Turkmen and Arabs in Kirkuk was rejected and the elections will go forward as planned on January 16. The election will be rerun in a year if sufficient fraud is dis-

covered reports Foreign Policy. Both Arabs and Turkmen complained about election fraud in the last elections by the Kurds in Kirkuk. The law reportedly features the "open list" and multiple district system. (Photo: Rudaw).

Iraqi Arabs and Kurds Pursue a Common Ground

Military Commanders Are Finding Ways Cooperate to Help Counter Threat of Violence, as They Rethink Roles as Soldiers

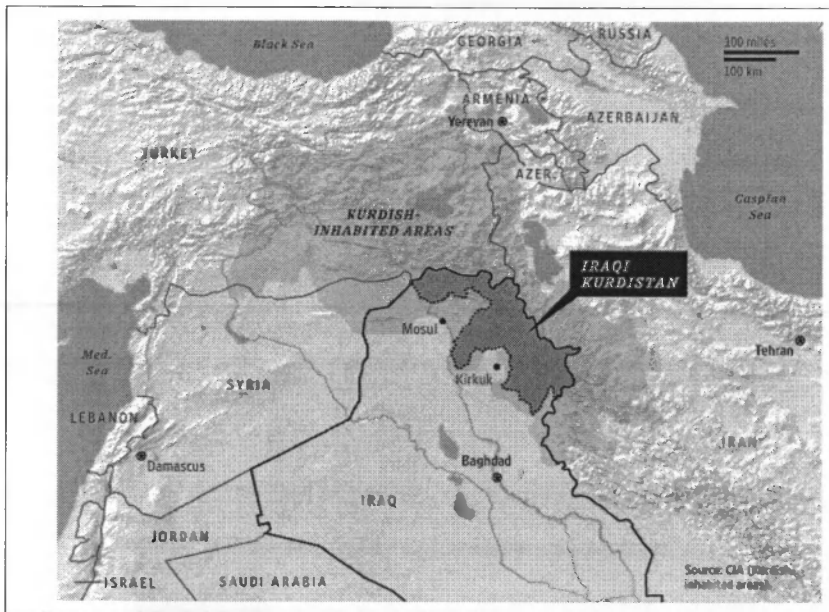
By GINA CHON

KIRKUK, Iraq -- Arab and Kurdish military commanders here are making efforts at cooperation despite their bitter political differences -- a surprising development that offers some hope that one of Iraq's most difficult ethnic divides may be narrowing.

Kurdish and Arab politicians in Iraq have clashed over contested land, petroleum legislation and a draft constitution that the Kurdish semiautonomous enclave is pushing. Most recently, the two sides squabbled for weeks in Parliament over an election law governing next year's parliamentary polls. Lawmakers finally passed the legislation on Sunday.

Gen. Ray Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, has said Arab-Kurd tensions are the country's biggest security threat. But over the past six months, in parts of Iraq's north, American commanders have brokered a quiet, if uneasy, détente between the two sides' military forces. Officers from Iraq's mostly Arab national army have started working with counterparts from the Kurdish regional government's armed militia, the peshmerga.

American military officers in Kirkuk have persuaded Arab and Kurdish commanders to cooperate partly by emphasizing what it means to be a professional soldier, which is not being involved in politics. They tell them that the problems



between Kurdish and Arab politicians in Baghdad, and between the Kurdish regional and Iraqi governments, need to be solved by the politicians -- that their job as soldiers is to take care of security.

When the Iraqi army's 12th Division, led by a former commander under Saddam Hussein, showed up in Kirkuk last year, Kurdish peshmerga commander Brig. Gen. Sherko Fatah Namik was ready for a fight. "If the Iraqi army comes here, I will kill them all," Gen. Namik told his American counterparts then.

These days, at twice-monthly meetings on a U.S. outpost, Gen. Namik's men, Iraqi army officers and U.S. officials coordinate security and talk out problems, participants from both sides say.

Gen. Namik isn't immune to the political debate. He often tells American commanders there needs to be a referendum on the status of Kirkuk, which he says will prove the city belongs to the Kurdish region. How voting will be held in Kirkuk, which is claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, had been the key hurdle holding up the election law.

Still, Gen. Namik and Maj. Gen. Abdul Ameer of the Iraqi army -- the former commander under the Hussein regime -- have hammered out a joint-patrol plan for Kirkuk province, in which the U.S. military may play referee, though many Arab and Turkmen tribal

and local government leaders oppose the plan. Such patrols for disputed Arab-Kurd areas were floated earlier this year by Gen. Odierno.

Cooperation between the two militaries is incremental but it has eased friction among security-service officials on both sides. There has been a surge in big bombing attacks across the region this year, even as overall violence in much of the rest of Iraq has eased. The peshmerga's contribution in northern Kirkuk province leaves Gen. Ameer free to focus on tamping down violence in the province's south.

Gen. Ameer initially opposed the peshmerga's presence in Kirkuk, saying they belonged in the Kurdish region, until he began meeting with Kurdish commanders, with the help of the U.S. military.

U.S. commanders also have proposed joint patrols in Gaware, an ethnically mixed rural area in Iraq's northern Ninewa province. Currently, peshmerga and Iraqi security forces staff their own checkpoints along a key route there, operated separately on opposite sides of the road. They don't coordinate their patrols, leaving big swaths of territory unguarded, U.S. commanders say.

The cooperation hasn't been easy, requiring U.S. troops to play arbitrator, grievance counselor and devil's advocate. Recently, American officers worked to



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Terry Cook, left, discusses security issues with peshmerga commander Brig. Gen. Sherko Fatah Namik at his headquarters in Kirkuk. Above hangs a portrait of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd.

rein in the Kurdish intelligence agency, known as the Asayeesh. U.S. commanders told the Kurds the agency can't conduct offensive operations. That's the job of the Iraqi army or police, they argued.

Both sides say the new relationship would have been impossible without a strong push from the Americans. That has raised worry about whether it will endure once U.S. forces start to draw down as planned next year.

Gen. Namik joined the peshmerga in 1985, at age 16, to fight Mr. Hussein's oppressive regime. A year later, the central government launched a campaign of oppression in the north, killing at least 150,000 Kurds and displacing hundreds of thousands. After Baghdad's military defeat in the Gulf War, the Kurdish region was given semiautonomy in 1991.

When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, Gen. Namik joined American forces as they entered Kirkuk that April. He has been based in the province since. In 2008, Baghdad sent in the Iraqi 12th Army division, headed by Gen. Ameer.

After several near-clashes, the U.S. military convinced peshmerga and Iraqi army commanders to sit down together at a lunch in March. The Iraqi army and local police, which are ethnically mixed but led by a Kurd, started to coordinate raids against insurgents in May.

In June, representatives from the Kurdish and Iraqi security forces began working together at a U.S. base in Kirkuk, exchanging intelligence and coordinating security efforts. "Gen. Ameer and I are friends," Gen. Namik says. "I've told him the Kirkuk issue is bigger than us and can't be solved by us."

We're soldiers and we have to take care of security for all Iraqis."

Gen. Ameer said communication has been key to understanding each other because their efforts are now coordinated.

Iraqi Ministry of Defense spokesman Mohammed al-Askari says the government supports cooperation between the Iraqi army and the peshmerga. Joint patrols involving the Iraqi army, peshmerga and U.S. forces in disputed areas of northern Iraq may start before the end of this year.

Guardian

November 10, 2009

Barzani : Iraq's Kurds will hold on to oil revenues

* Kurdish president says revenues belong to Kurds
* Iraqi government failed with oil law, Barzani says

By Luke Baker – Reuters,

BRUSSELS - The president of Iraq's Kurdish region criticised the central government on Tuesday for its failure to draw up a clear law on sharing oil revenues and said the Kurds would hold on to what they earn for now.

Speaking during a visit to the European Parliament, Masoud Barzani said Kurdistan had the right to retain the income from the export of about 100,000 barrels of oil per day, despite a law stating that all Iraq's oil and gas assets are shared.

"Eight billion dollars has been used by the Iraqi oil ministry for development of oil production but unfortunately the level of production has dropped. Therefore we have no faith in that law that already exists," Barzani told a news conference.

Iraq's central government and semi-autonomous Kurdistan have since 2004 engaged in a long-running dispute over Iraq's vast oil and gas assets and the growing revenue generated by them. The discord threatens to aggravate the political strains that already exist between autonomy-minded Kurds and Shi'ites.

According to Iraq's constitution, all the country's hydrocarbon assets are shared



and there is a formula for distributing the income among regions, with the Kurdish region entitled to 17 percent of total oil revenues.

But Kurdistan, which occupies the top third of Iraq along the borders with Turkey, Iran and Syria, has been quicker to exploit the oil and gas assets that lie in its territory and is reluctant to give up the revenue they generate.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Foreign investors including Norway's DNO International and Toronto-listed Addax Petroleum have helped expand the region's oil production to 100,000 barrels a day, generating potential income of \$2.9 billion a year at current oil prices of nearly \$80 a barrel.

But because of the disagreement over revenue sharing with Baghdad, the Kurdish region is currently not exporting production via the pipeline to Turkey's Ceyhan but instead selling oil into the

domestic market.

Heritage Oil, a small exploration and production company partnered with Kurdistan, said last month that nearly all the output from Kurdistan's Taq Taq oil field was being diverted to the local market because of the dispute.

Still, Barzani said on Tuesday total Kurdish output was set to grow to more than 1 million barrels a day by the end of 2011, bringing forward a previous forecast for that level of output in 2012. But even then, he said, the income would not be shared.

For Barzani control over the distribution of oil revenues was key.

"Until the disputed areas are resolved, we feel that the share of Kurdistan of 17 percent should go to the account of Kurdistan by itself and not be distributed by the finance (ministry) in Baghdad because often they use that as a weapon against us," Barzani said. "We believe it is our right."

While the Kurdish region moved rapidly after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 to boost oil output, the central government is catching up, signing a series of development contracts with major international oil companies in recent months.

If all the deals in the pipeline come together in the coming years, Iraq is set to triple its total oil output to 7 million barrels per day, making it the world's largest producer after Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Minorities in Iraq's North Seen as Threatened

By SAM DAGHER

ERBIL, Iraq — The policies and tactics of Kurdish authorities could expose minority groups in northern Iraq to “another full-blown human rights catastrophe” unless the minorities receive better protection, according to a report released Tuesday by Human Rights Watch.

Members of the minority groups are being singled out by extremist insurgent groups and also are caught in the middle of a struggle for land and resources between Arabs and the central government on one hand and leaders of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region on the other, said the report, which was released in the Kurdish region's capital, Erbil, and focused on Christians, Shabaks and Yazidis in Nineveh Province.

The extremist attacks have cost many hundreds of lives and, the report notes, “struck at the social infrastructure of minority communities, leaving victims and others fearful to carry on with their everyday lives.”

Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said, “When you talk about wiping out a whole community that has been there since antiquity, it's a looming catastrophe.”

The report is particularly critical of the policies and tactics pursued by Kurdish authorities who control Nineveh's disputed territories through the heavy presence of their security forces and political party offices. The report describes how the Kurdish government has sought to repress minorities, subsume the identity of Shabaks and Yazidis into that of Kurds and sow rifts within the groups with bribes and patronage while suppressing dissent through violence, torture, arrests and kil-

lings.

The United States military has recognized the Arab-Kurdish conflict in northern Iraq as the main driver for continued instability in Iraq. The disputed territories extend from Sinjar in Nineveh, in northwestern Iraq, to Mandali in Diyala Province, in the east, and include the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

After a series of bombings in July and August against minorities in Nineveh that killed at least 143, wounded scores and flattened villages, the American military commander in Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno, announced plans to deploy United States troops along with members of the Kurdish pesh merga force and the Iraqi Army in the disputed areas to stop groups linked to Al Qaeda from exploiting friction between Arabs and Kurds.

With the exception of occasional joint operations and meetings between pesh merga and Iraqi Army officers that occur because of American insistence, no progress has been made in deploying the joint forces in the disputed areas or getting the Kurds and the central government to cooperate on security in a meaningful way, said Sheik Jaffar Sheik Mustafa, who is the Kurdish region's equivalent of minister of defense.

Mr. Mustafa said the combined forces would be based throughout the north and conduct joint raids and patrols and staff checkpoints. He said the Kurdish authorities had agreed to the idea but opposition was coming from Baghdad and the Arab-led provincial government in Nineveh, which see the arrangement as an infringement on their sovereignty and want Kurdish troops to retreat from the areas they occupy outside their region's 1991 border.

“I think this joint force is crucial at this

juncture,” he said.

A senior American official in Kirkuk said he was optimistic that the joint force would ultimately become functional.

A representative of the United States Embassy in Baghdad said that “in tandem with an ambitious push to improve security for all in the province, including embattled minorities,” American officials were working to resolve a political standoff between Sunni Arabs and Kurds in Nineveh's provincial capital, Mosul, that has exacerbated the situation.

After its victory in the provincial elections in January in Nineveh, a Sunni Arab-led coalition excluded the second-place Kurdish coalition from all senior posts in the new local government and demanded that the pesh merga leave the Nineveh areas they controlled. In response, the Kurds boycotted meetings of the provincial council and used force to prevent the Arab governor and other senior officials allied with him from entering parts of Nineveh.

Mr. Mustafa said the joint forces must include Americans in order to secure the area and carry out Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which outlines the mechanism for resolving the fate of disputed territories. Kurds are clinging to it, but Arabs reject it.

“We will not give up one inch of the areas that we occupy until Article 140 is implemented,” Mr. Mustafa said.

He dismissed the findings of the Human Rights Watch report as “false.” He said that there might have been violations committed by individual Kurdish security officers against minorities in Nineveh but that this did not reflect the policy of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



NOVEMBER 12, 2009

Kurdistan government rejects HRW report

ARBIL / Aswat al-Iraq: The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) expressed their rejection of the Human Rights Watch report on the minorities' affairs in Ninewa, describing the report as a delusive.

“The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has a long standing and productive relationship with Human Rights Watch (HRW). We appreciate what HRW has done in the past,” said an official statement.

“As an oppressed community ourselves, we fully understand the value of ensuring justice for all members and factions of society. In addition, the KRG appreciates the expressed interest in the condition of the minority communities in Ninewa Province's disputed territories. We regard the well-being of all communities in these areas to be of paramount concern,” it added.

“The KRG is ready and willing to look into each and every allegation, and we are ready to work on these issues under the legal framework of both the Kurdistan Region and the Republic of Iraq, with the help of HRW and other reputable human rights organizations.”

“The KRG will investigate each specific claim outlined in the report carefully and thoroughly. There may be instances of maltreatment and neglect; the KRG does not claim to be flawless.”

“But the report reveals a systematic mis-perception of the circumstances in Ninewa and a worrying ignorance of Iraqi history. HRW therefore produces an inaccurate portrayal of the situation. Furthermore, due to the methodology employed to produce this report, it cannot be the basis for legitimate judgments or assertions,” it added.

“The main thrust of this report could be grossly misleading and the KRG affirms its strong disagreement in this regard. The KRG has done more for the protection of minorities than any other entity in Iraq, and continues to insist on tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the Region and throughout Iraq.”

However, it is imperative to consider the broader social and politi-

cal context regarding these claims. Neither the KRG nor the Peshmerga forces have created instability in the disputed territories. On the contrary, the Peshmerga have sacrificed their lives to protect the residents in these areas from terrorists. They have been part of the solution, not the problem. Terrorists and extremists have utilized violence and intimidation, repeatedly violating the human rights of minorities. The blame falls squarely on their shoulders, and they should be held accountable.

"The HRW investigation appears to have ignored the majority of people from the ethnic and religious minorities in Ninewa, who welcome the presence of the Kurdish security forces and are grateful for the assistance provided by the KRG, especially during periods of intense sectarian violence and repeated intimidation. In fact minorities, regardless of their ethnic and religious background, have come to the Kurdistan Region, fleeing violence and persecution. This stems from the KRG policy of religious and ethnic tolerance. The KRG has invested heavily in the welfare of citizens in the disputed territories, at a time when no other entity was willing to do so."

"The report fails to mention the fact that following every major incident in which Iraq's minorities have been targeted by terrorists, the KRG has provided humanitarian aid and received hundreds, sometimes thousands of families into the KRG area, where many continue to live today in peace. If the minorities in Nineveh were being systematically intimidated by the Kurds, why would so many seek shelter in KRG-administered land?"

"From reading the report it would appear that all minorities in Ninewa province are against KRG policy, which is far from the truth, as elections results in the disputed areas have consistently

shown," the Kurdistan government underlined.

"The real problem in Ninewa province are the terrorists and the extremists, intent upon marginalizing minorities and who also wish to marginalize the Kurds. Iraq needs an inclusive system of governance for all communities."

One of the mis-perceptions in the report is the assertion that Shabak and Yazidi individuals are not Kurds. The report states that these groups are ethnic minorities, and criticizes the KRG for not making such a specification. But the right to make such an ethnic categorization does not belong to HRW, just as it does not belong to the KRG. It is for the individuals themselves to decide. This is one reason why the KRG has advocated a census, to help ensure that democratic rights are secured for all citizens.

"The KRG considers minority issues of genuine importance in Iraq, and we are ready to play our part to ensure that all citizens are respected and valued as equals - as we have in the drafting of both the Iraqi and the Kurdistan Region Constitutions. The KRG stands committed to the provision of fair treatment to all residents of the Kurdistan Region and the disputed territories. It is the KRG policy to ensure political stability, personal security, and the rule of law, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation."

"The way forward in Ninewa is to address these issues through a coordinated and collaborated effort between the KRG and federal government of Iraq, and to establish security in this troubled area, with the support of the coalition forces. Our common enemies are terrorists and extremists. We must establish delineated procedures through which we can, together, eliminate the scourge of terrorism and sectarian violence," the statement concluded.

The New York Times November 12, 2009

Iran Executes Kurdish Activist Who Was Accused of 'Armed Struggle'

By NAZILA FATHI

TORONTO — Iran hanged a Kurdish activist on Wednesday morning in a prison in the Kurdish city of Sanandaj, his lawyer said.

The activist, Ehsan Fattahian, 28, had been sentenced to death after he was accused of "armed struggle against the regime."

He was arrested more than a year ago in the Kurdish city of Kamyaran and received a 10-year prison term. But in an unusual move, an appeals court changed his sentence to death by hanging after the prosecutor general of Kamyaran demanded a tougher punishment against him.

At least 13 other Kurdish activists are in prison on death row.

"The execution was carried out between 6:30 to 7 a.m. local time this morning," Mr. Fattahian's lawyer, Nassrollah Nassri, said in a telephone interview. "His family has been informed to go and bury his body."

The execution appeared to be part of efforts by the government to extinguish opposition in the wake of Iran's disputed presidential election, which touched off waves of protests after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed an overwhelming victory. His opponents have accused him of rigging the results.

Ethnic groups have also stepped up their opposition since the protests broke out. At least four senior officials — the Friday

A protester holds a portrait of Kurdish activist Ehsan Fattahian during a demonstration against the Iranian government in Turkey on Saturday.



Prayer leader in Sanandaj, the city's representative to the senior clerical body of the Assembly of Experts, a judge and a member of the city council — have been assassinated in the past months.

Last month, an explosion in the southern province of Sistan-Baluchistan killed at least 41 people, including top commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. An ethnic Baluchi opposition group, Jundollah, took responsibility for the bombing.

Before his execution, Mr. Fattahian wrote in a letter that the opposition in the Iranian province of Kurdistan would not end with his death, opposition Web sites reported. "My death and the death of thousands of others like me will not solve the issue of Kurdistan; they will only add to the flames of fire," the letter said.

Mr. Fattahian was a member of the Party

of Free Life in Kurdistan, a militant group outlawed by Iran. It has often carried out attacks in western Iran against the government.

Many Iranians and human rights groups fear that the government could start carrying out more executions to silence the opposition, which has continued to simmer despite the violence directed at it by the government. At least one protester, Muhammad-Reza Ali-Zamani, has been sentenced to death.

"The execution today is very alarming," said Omid Memarian, a consultant at Human Rights Watch, which is based in New York. "We are faced with a new wave of violence by the government which is only comparable to the early days after the revolution."

The government executed many people after the 1979 Islamic Revolution after summary trials.

Ambrosio: Opposition is good for KDP and PUK

By Hawar Abdulrazaq

Associate professor of political science Thomas Ambrosio thinks that the new opposition movement Change (Gorran) is not only good for Kurdistan, but also for the ruling parties KDP and PUK to perform better. However, he also warns that if Gorran is only seeks its own interests, this will only divide the power of the Kurdish people.

Ambrosio is an associate professor of political science in the Criminal Justice and Political Science Department at North Dakota State University and director of NDSU's International Studies Major. He has written extensively on the relationship between ethnic groups and nation states. As a result he has also written about Kurds and Iraq.

A lot of people think Barham Salih will help KRG go forward and will make progress in Kurdish political situation, what do you think about that?

The PM will play an important role in the future of the KRG, but ultimately the future will be determined by two, interrelated issues: (a) the relationship between the three key ethnic groups in Iraq and (b) the stability of the government in Baghdad. The decision on how much autonomy to give to the KRG (and possibly other regions), must be made within a medium-term timeframe. Up to now, the government has largely muddled-through on this issue -- despite the 2005 constitution's provisions. Eventually, some key issue will likely divide the 'center' and the KRG which will need to be resolved. If this can be done in a manner acceptable to all sides, then Baghdad and the KRG will settle into a new living arrangement. If not, then the 'state-within-a-state' KRG will be called into question. In my view, the most likely 'flashpoint' will be borders of the KRG and the disputed territories.

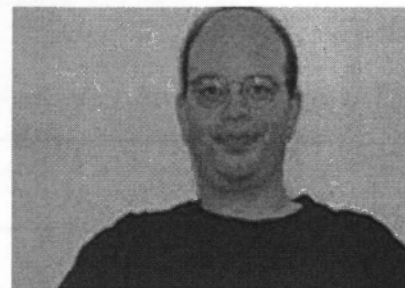
The new Kurdish Parliament will have a bigger opposition than in the past; do you think this will make the parliament active than in the past?

The history of the KRG was been one of a condominium between the KDP-PUK. This has worked well to bring about a certain level of stability, but will tend toward stagnation, corruption, and a resistance to accept opposition. We see this in other cases, though mostly like those of 'dominant' party political systems such as found in the pasts of India, Mexico, and Japan -- nominal democracy, without political opposition. The best thing that the newly-empowered opposition can do is to use parliamentary tools to ensure oversight over the KRG executive. Obviously the differences between the US and KRG government structures is stark, but the most effective 'check' on executive power in the US is the US Congress. The opposition in the KRG can play a similar role to ensure that the 'rule of law' is obeyed. Bringing sunlight onto the darkness is the most effective tool of freedom and democracy.

Do you think the emergence of Gorran Movement (Change) will help political situation, or will they make it more difficult and complex?

Well, I do not see the two as mutually exclusive. Ultimately, the emergence of an opposition force will be good, not just for Kurdistan as a whole, but for the KDP and the PUK. This is the thing that those in power often do not see: a loyal opposition, with a positive message, forces those in power to ensure that they fully represent the people, rather than their own interests; this, in turn, makes all parties more responsive to the needs of their constituents and allows for them to adapt to changing circumstances. To use the American example,

Obama's election will ultimately be good for the Republicans: it will force them to better seek out the people's will, adjust to new political realities, and craft their message. Sure, they have lost power in the short term, but long-term the competition is good for them.



However, if the Gorran Movement seeks its own ends and its own interests, and aims at little more than the accumulation of power, it will be bad for the KRG: having three parties dividing up the same pie will leave even smaller pieces for the Kurdish people.

How do you think the US sees the Change movement. Do you think Washington will sit down with them?

The US, if it is smart, will not be too tied to any party, but rather seek its goals (stability, democracy, alliances against terrorism, etc.) with any legitimate voice of the Kurdish people. While they are not the majority party, Washington will not view them with hostility.

Some people predict a bleak future for Kurds, especially in Baghdad. What's your vision on the future for Iraqi Kurds?

This is similar to my answer to the first question. Ultimately all parties involved will have to come to a decision about the future of Iraq -- a decision which will be hastened if/when the U.S. leaves. It is nice to think that everyone can compromise, but sometimes the interests of differing sides are not conducive to such an outcome. While the aspirations of the Kurdish people for independence is understandable, regional actors (Turkey, Iran) will find this unacceptable. The highest levels of autonomy (i.e., still de jure part of Iraq but de facto not) may not be acceptable to the powers in Baghdad. The Kurds have always faced this conundrum and, alas, they will continue to face it for the foreseeable future.

Do you think the new government can make difference in Kurdish society and eradicate corruption?

Eliminating corruption from within one of the two 'big' Kurdish parties is going to be difficult. However, the rise of the Gorran movement may inspire it to change from within.

Is there a way or a mechanism in eliminating corruption in Kurdistan?

It is tough. Coming originally from one of the (if not THE) most corrupt state in the United States (New Jersey), I can tell you corruption is never easy to eliminate. Ultimately, it is a choice that is made by politicians to put the people before their own interests AND a choice made by the people not to support politicians who primarily seek their own interest, even if you are personally 'aligned' with the corrupt party. A lot of people benefit from the status quo. More needs to be done to make it clear that everyone is a loser under corruption.

In your view, what has to be done in the disputed regions, in particular in Kirkuk?

This is very difficult and likely not easily resolvable. Possibly the politicians need to 'think outside the box': autonomy for the KRG, and then autonomy for these regions/cities WITHIN the KRG (Photo: ssrc.org).

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Subversion trial haunts Turkey

ISTANBUL

Vast case defines division between secularists and Muslim-inspired party

BY DAN BILEFSKY

What exactly, ask people inside and outside Turkey, is Ergenekon?

For ancient Turks, it was a mythical valley. Its contemporary meaning, attached to the most explosive trial in modern Turkish history, is far less clear.

In thousands of pages of indictments of stunning complexity, prosecutors allege that an underground organization named Ergenekon has committed dozens of terrorist acts and ultimately sought to topple Turkey's Islamic-inspired government.

Since June 2007, when 27 hand grenades, other explosives and illegal documents were found in the attic of an ultranationalist retired officer's house in an Istanbul shantytown, more than 300 suspects have been detained. They include an erotic novelist, four-star generals, newspaper editors and underworld figures. Of those, 194 have been charged and 43 are under investigation.

Few here discount the seriousness of the allegations at the core of the case. But depending on whom you ask, some of these suspects are either innocent victims of a weak justice system manipulated by the authorities, or a genuine danger to Turkey and its government who must be brought to justice.

The case has brought into sharp relief a fierce battle between the country's secular establishment — including intellectuals, judges and business elites — and a governing, Muslim-inspired party that has solidified its grip over the country since it came to power in 2002. It also has subjected the military, which sees itself as the guardian of Turkey's secular state and has overthrown four elected governments in the last 50 years, to unprecedented scrutiny.

Prosecutors, investigators and Ministry of Justice officials declined to comment on the specifics of the case, since the trial had not yet ended.

Legal experts contend that the elaborate charges and sometimes wild allegations in the case have the broad reach of an Inquisition. Zealous prosecutors, they say, have detained dozens of suspects without charge while conversations from tapped mobile telephones have surfaced mysteriously in pro-government newspapers, threatening to damage the credibility of the Turkish judicial system.

"Ergenekon has become a larger project in which the investigation is being used as a tool to sweep across civic society and cleanse Turkey of all secular opponents," said Aysel Celikel, a former



MUSTAFA OZER/GETTY IMAGES-AFP

Demonstrators in July outside the courthouse in Silivri, Turkey, to protest the trial of those suspected of trying to topple the government.

justice minister and head of a charity that finances the secular education of underprivileged girls. "As such, the country's democracy, its rule of law, and its freedom of expression are at stake."

Evidence of that, in Ms. Celikel's view, is the fate of her predecessor at the charity, Turkun Saylan, an outspoken 73-year-old secularist.

In April, as Ms. Saylan was recovering from chemotherapy for the breast cancer that would shortly take her life, police officers raided her home, sifting through personal belongings and carting away dozens of files. Colleagues say she was put on a watch list by prosecutors because of her political views. No charges were ever brought.

The terrorist incidents laid at Ergenekon's door by the authorities include an armed attack on a senior state court in 2006, as well as the 2007 bombing of Cumhuriyet, a leftist newspaper in Istanbul.

Prosecutors contend that the group planned to engage in civil unrest, assassination and terrorism to create chaos and undermine the stability of Turkey to provoke a coup.

Proponents of the investigation argue that Ergenekon is a long-overdue historical reckoning aimed at bringing to account what Turks call "the deep state." The term is used to describe a murky group of operatives connected to the military that is thought to have waged an extrajudicial battle against perceived enemies of the state dating back to the time of Cold War.

"The freedom of expression doesn't give anyone the right to establish a militia to overthrow a democratically elected government," Egemen Bagis, the minister for European Union affairs, said in an interview.

At a time when Turkey's prospects for

joining the European Union are falling, the case is being watched closely in Brussels as a barometer of Turkey's adherence to Western standards of the rule of law. Ergenekon has taken on added significance because Turkey, a NATO member, is an indispensable ally for the United States and Europe, and an important example of the compatibility of Islam, secularism and democracy.

In an extensive study of the case for the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, a Washington research institute affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, Gareth Jenkins, a Turkey specialist, noted the pervasive fear among Western analysts of Turkey that Ergenekon "represents a major step, not — as its proponents maintain — towards the consolidation of pluralistic democracy in Turkey, but towards an authoritarian one-party state."

Others argue that the trial has evolved into a power struggle between a secular class determined to preserve its power and an Islamic-inspired ruling party determined to strengthen its legitimacy and silence opponents.

The case certainly seems intertwined with other major battles over Turkey's way forward — as a more Islamic state, or a more secular one.

On March 14 last year, the chief prosecutor of the Court of Appeals filed suit in the Constitutional Court seeking to ban the governing party, the Justice and Development Party, or A.K.P., on the ground that it was undermining Turkey's secular state by, among other things, seeking to relax a prohibition on the wearing of Islamic head scarves by women in universities.

One week later, the police rounded up new Ergenekon suspects, including several influential secular intellectuals.

When the court ruled on the head-

scarf case, four months later, the A.K.P. was narrowly kept alive by just one vote. Six members of the court voted to shut it down for violating Turkey's secular principles, but seven votes were required.

Critics say the Ergenekon case is part of a concerted effort by the A.K.P. to restore its dented credibility by demonizing its secular opponents.

Mr. Jenkins, the Turkey specialist, who has analyzed the first two Ergenekon indictments — 2,455 and 1,909 pages — argued that some allegations ranged from the fantastical to the absurd.

For example, Mr. Jenkins said, the first Ergenekon indictment said the organization had met with Dick Cheney when he was vice president to discuss toppling the government and replacing it with a more acceptable alternative.

Mr. Jenkins said the indictment also maintained that investigators had uncovered evidence that the "Ergenekon Terrorist Organization" planned to "manufacture chemical and biological weapons and then, with the high revenue it earned from selling them, to finance and control every terrorist organization not just in Turkey but in the entire world."

Ms. Celikel, former justice minister, said that in April, Ergenekon investigators raided 95 of her charity's offices

across Turkey, using several large trucks to remove over 15,000 student files, confiscating computers and interrogating 14 board members, some of whom were remanded to prison without charges.

Their crime, she contended, was to have been associated with an organization offering a secular education to poor, rural girls. Ms. Celikel said prosecutors had also sought to link about 15,000 teenage students financed by the charity to the P.K.K., a Kurdish terrorist organization. She said such a link was baseless since each applicant had to submit an updated criminal record before qualifying for a scholarship.

Suheyl Batum, a professor of constitutional law at Balıcesehir University, in Istanbul, is advising the defense team of several Ergenekon defendants, including Ergun Poyraz, who has written more than five books critical of the government, and Tuncay Ozkan, a secular journalist and critic of the ruling party who helped organize anti-government rallies two years ago.

Professor Batum said Mr. Poyraz had been detained for 29 months and Mr. Ozkan for 13 months, without any evidence that either had committed a crime. He argued that snippets from their recorded cellphone conversations like "What should we do about antiseccular policies?" were construed as evi-

Suspects are seen either as victims of a weak justice system or a genuine danger to Turkey and its government who must be brought to justice.

dence that they were plotting to overthrow the government.

Sections from dozens of cellphone wiretap transcripts and private documents — most of them linked to Ergenekon suspects — have been published in pro-government newspapers.

Intellectuals and journalists said that it had become commonplace at dinner parties to begin the evening by switching off mobile phones.

"I believe that people who hope that Turkey's dark past will be enlightened by the Ergenekon case will be disappointed," said Nedim Sener, a journalist who has investigated Ergenekon for Milliyet, a leading newspaper, and now fears that he could also be a target in the investigation. "As a result of Ergenekon, the Turkish justice system has been broken in pieces."

Hurriyet
DailyNews.com

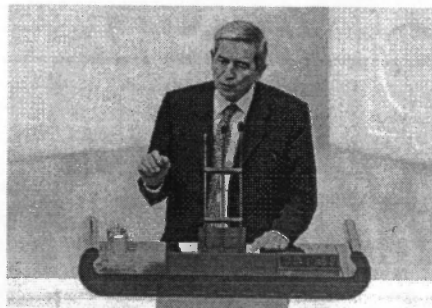
november 12, 2009

CHP deputy leader 'favored massacre,' say opponents

ANKARA Onur Öymen, deputy leader of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, angered certain social circles, especially Alevis, with the speech he gave in Parliament on Monday.

The opposition to the government's Kurdish initiative is commonly blamed for wanting the mothers' tears to continue. Öymen responded by saying, "Didn't mothers cry during the Independence War, the Sheikh Sait Rebellion, the Dersim [Tunceli] Rebellion and in Cyprus Did anybody say, 'Don't let the mothers cry, let us stop fighting?'"

Ali Kenanoglu, president of Hubyar Sultan Alevi Culture Association, responded to Öymen and mentioned the Tunceli massacre. "Öymen is offering a massacre as a model," he said. Tunceli was previously called Dersim and is populated mostly by Alevi Kurds. "The deputy leader of a social democrat party is offering this as a solution, while we should be offered an apology for the violence and the massacre brought upon us. We are



condemning Öymen who has committed this offense against humanity and we invite him to learn about humanitarian values," said Kenanoglu.

Reactions against Öymen also came from the ranks of Parliament. Serafettin Halis, a deputy from the Democratic Society Party, or DTP, spoke at the discussion for the parliamentary question his party offered on the recent unsolved murders in Tunceli. "I speak as somebody who lost 24 people from his family during the operation of 1938. I grew up with the stories and mourning but I do not have an inch of hatred inside me, but

I do have anger. With Mr. Öymen, there is not only anger but he is also still not purified from feelings of hatred and revenge," Halis said.

Selahattin Demirtas, group deputy chairman for the DTP, said Öymen meant that the Kurdish problem would be solved just like the massacre in Tunceli. "Mr. Deputy's mention of events that went down in history as massacres as an example in the name of solution has caused great anxiety among us."

Kamer Genç, an independent deputy from Tunceli, said, "A great mass of people were murdered in 1938. We should look into the reasons."

Öymen released a written statement on Thursday and said his words had been twisted and what he meant was that it was wrong that the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, was trying to base the initiative on the words of Atatürk. "What I mentioned in my speech was that Atatürk never favored negotiating with armed terrorist organizations," Öymen said.

Interior Minister Atalay outlines democratic initiative



ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News
Parliament Bureau

Turkey's interior minister asserts 'democracy is the only solution to chronic social and economic problems' as he outlines the ruling Justice and Development Party's democratic initiative to address the decades-old Kurdish issue and strengthen human rights

Interior Minister Besir Atalay stood before Parliament on Friday and finally pulled the curtain back for all to see the ruling government's brief list of concrete ideas regarding the Kurdish initiative. The opposition was not impressed.

"We see that democracy is the only solution to the chronic social and economic problems," Atalay said.

"We have taken steps as a result of our human-oriented political stance, which identifies an honorable system of human rights and freedoms," said Atalay in his address to Parliamentary on Friday.

A comprehensive strategy, based on social and economic rehabilitation along with military measures, will achieve the result, Atalay said.

"Our socio-economic as well as political illnesses stem from injustice. A healthy relationship between the state and the citizen exists as long as there is justice. That's why we are trying to strengthen the feeling of justice," he said.

Six initial steps for democratic initiative

The democratic initiative aims to protect and extend the human rights and freedoms of every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, religion and political or social choices, Atalay said.

"These developments will align our domestic policies with the European Convention on Human Rights," Atalay said, disclosing six medium-term goals as part of the democratic initiative:

- An independent human-rights institution

- A commission to combat discrimination

- Parliamentary ratification of the U.N. Convention Against Torture and a national preventative mechanism.

- An independent body tasked with receiving and investigating accusations of torture or mistreatment by the security forces.

- Renaming of residential areas in line with demands from locals

- Political parties will be free to communicate in languages other than Turkish

"There is no final list because we see

the democratic initiative as a dynamic process, not a closed package. We can revise these steps in light of new developments," Atalay said.

The existing constitutional law fails to meet the standards of the 21st century and a civil and democratic constitution is immediately required, he said. However, he underscored an important exception: "The first three articles cannot be changed. Unitary state, flag, national anthem and official language will be outside any debate."

Healing wounds thanks to economic projects

Economic development plays a key role in tackling the terror organization and sapping its resources, the interior minister said.

Development projects related to Konya, eastern and southeastern Anatolia are set to finish by 2013. Having taken steps to create employment opportunities, more than 1 billion Turkish Liras were also paid to those who suffered from terror attacks in the region, Atalay said.

Also, a project specializing in returnee villages and rehabilitation has been operating in 14 provinces in the country.

"The steps taken so far are not enough. We will continue to pursue new measures to ensure the democracy that our people deserve," Atalay said.

In an effort to ease the tension, Atalay affirmed that the democratic initiative did not serve a specific group in the country. "As we said earlier, it targets the whole country, not a specific group. That's why the democratic initiative is conducted under the slogan of 'more freedom for everyone.' It will not weaken Turkey. On the contrary, it will make Turkey stronger," he said.

HH-Tension mounts as protesters target AKP deputy

Ömer Çelik, political advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan, addressed on behalf of the parliamentary group of the ruling Justice and Development Party. "We are holding a very important debate," began Çelik, but was interrupted by protesters among visi-

tors' gallery and MPs from opposition parties.

Tension raised at climax in the parliamentary hall when Çelik accused the opposition parties of not being sincere in their political stance.

"Politicians cannot avoid their responsibilities by ignoring the existing serious human rights violations in the country. A real political vision and courage is required to achieve (democratic development)," Çelik opined.

"As the AKP, we are voluntarily taking all risks in order to establish Turkey of the future," he wove.

Challenging to those criticizing the democratic initiative, he concluded: "Even AKP is left alone in this way, it will continue to struggle thanks to its wide network across the country."

Tension mounts as protesters target AKP deputy

Ömer Çelik, political advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan, also addressed Parliament on Friday. He spoke on behalf of the parliamentary group of the ruling Justice and Development Party.

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Challenging those who have criticized the democratic initiative, he said: "Even the AKP is left alone in this way. It will continue to struggle thanks to its wide network across the country."



IRAK/MINORITÉS: LES KURDES REJETTENT UN RAPPORT DE HWR MAIS PRÊTS À ENQUÊTER

ERBIL (Irak), 12 nov 2009 (AFP)

Le gouvernement régional du Kurdistan s'est dit prêt jeudi à enquêter sur d'éventuelles violences contre des minorités dans le nord de l'Irak mais a "rejeté avec vigueur" qu'il s'agisse d'une stratégie pour imposer sa loi à ces communautés sans défense.

"Le gouvernement régional va enquêter de manière précise sur toutes les informations se trouvant dans le rapport de Human Rights Watch (HRW). Il peut y avoir eu des mauvais traitements ou des négligences car nous ne pré-tendons pas être à l'abri de fautes", affirme un communiqué publié jeudi à Erbil.

"Mais nous rejetons fermement l'esprit de ce rapport car nous nous efforçons plus que tout autre en Irak de protéger les minorités et nous insistons pour renforcer les coexistences pacifiques et la tolérance dans notre région et en Irak", ajoute le communiqué du gouvernement kurde.

Dans un rapport publié mercredi, l'organisation des droits de l'Homme basée à New York estime que les minorités, notamment chrétiennes, "sont prises pour cible dans la lutte opposant Arabes et Kurdes pour le contrôle de territoires dans la région de Ninive", dont Mossoul est la capitale.

"Les pechmergas (combattants kurdes) ont sacrifié leur vie pour protéger des terroristes les habitants des régions disputées et ils sont une partie de la solution et non du problème. Ce sont les intégristes et les terroristes qui usent de la violence, transgressent les droits des minorités et ce sont eux qui doivent être blâmés et punis", assure le communiqué.

HRW accuse les forces kurdes de recourir, pour consolider leur emprise sur ces territoires, "à des détentions et arrestations arbitraires, à des actes d'intimidation et dans certains cas à des violences de faible intensité contre les

minorités qui ont défié le contrôle du gouvernement régional sur les territoires convoités".

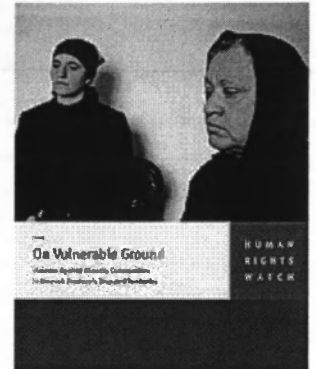
Par ailleurs, selon elle, "des éléments extrémistes de l'insurrection arabe sunnite, qui considèrent ces communautés minoritaires comme des +croisés+ et des +infidèles+ ont lancé des attaques dévastatrices qui ont tué des centaines de civils".

"Si les allégations de HWR étaient correctes et que les minorités étaient la cible de la terreur kurde, pourquoi tant de leurs membres ont trouvé refuge dans les régions sous contrôle du gouvernement kurde", s'interroge le gouvernement.

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement considère que HRW décrit faussement les yazidis et les chabaks comme des "minorités ethniques" alors que selon lui elles sont kurdes. "HWR n'a pas le droit de les décrire ainsi", assure le gouvernement.

HRW appelle le gouvernement régional kurde à modifier sa constitution afin que les chabaks et les yazidis "soient reconnus légalement comme des groupes ethniques distincts et à cesser la répression contre les organisations de la société civile et politique qui s'opposent à la politique kurde dans les régions disputées".

Les minorités visées par les attaques et les pressions sont les 550.000 chrétiens, les 220.000 yazidis (une secte qui croit au diable) et les 60.000 chabaks (une minorité linguistique), ainsi que des minorités turkmènes et des kurdes kakais (une communauté aux croyances ésotériques).



IRAK: LES KURDES EN ORDRE DISPERSÉ AUX ÉLECTIONS LÉGISLATIVES

ERBIL (Irak), 13 nov 2009 (AFP)

POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS, les partis du Kurdistan irakien, en conflit territorial avec Bagdad, vont se présenter en ordre dispersé aux élections législatives de janvier, après l'apparition sur l'échiquier régional d'une nouvelle force d'opposition.

Jeudi, les deux parti qui ont régné en maîtres sur la politique du Kurdistan pendant trois décennies, ont annoncé la création d'une alliance avec 10 autres partis allant des islamistes aux communistes.

Mais le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), dirigé par le président de la région Massoud Barzani, et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), du président irakien Jalal Talabani, affronteront une liste dissidente, appelée Goran (Changement en Kurde) aux deuxièmes législatives de l'après Saddam Hussein.

Et deux autres listes seront également en lice: la Jamaa islamia, un mouvement salafiste, et l'Union islamique kurde, proche des Frères musulmans.

"Notre coalition comprend toutes les tendances, des socialistes aux islamistes", a affirmé Fadel Mirani, le secrétaire du bureau politique du PDK lors de l'annonce à Erbil de la constitution de la "Liste de la coalition kurde".

"Nous souhaitions que toutes les forces politiques et tous les partis se rassemblent, nous les avons contactés mais certains ont refusé", a-t-il ajouté.

Affirmant "respecter le choix" de Nichinwan Moustapha, le dirigeant de Goran, il a toutefois critiqué sa décision, qui selon lui, affaiblit le Kurdistan, au moment où la région et Bagdad se disputent le contrôle de régions riches en pétrole comme la ville de Kirkouk.

"La période actuelle requiert que nous unissions nos rangs pour affronter les ennemis des Kurdes, particulièrement ceux qui souhaitent réduire notre poids à Bagdad", a lancé le responsable du PDK.

Et déjà, tous les coups sont permis entre les nouveaux adversaires politiques.

Pour le discréditer, plusieurs quotidiens locaux proches de l'UPK ou du PDK ont affirmé, en citant des sources anonymes, que M. Moustapha avait conclu une entente électorale informelle avec le Premier ministre Nouri al-Maliki, la bête noire du Massoud Barzani. Goran a fermement démenti.

Les réformateurs ont créé la surprise en se hissant à la deuxième place lors des élections de juillet au Parlement kurde, grâce à une campagne axée sur la lutte contre la corruption et contre l'hégémonie des deux partis historiques.

Ils espèrent rééditer l'exploit. "Nous avons rejeté l'appel des deux partis principaux à les rejoindre", a expliqué à l'AFP Adnane Othmane, un de ses dirigeants.

"Nous avons nos idées concernant l'avenir de la province, sur les relations avec Bagdad (...) Le vote doit se faire sur la base d'un programme électoral cohérent et non en faveur d'une coalition dont les composantes ont des visions différentes", a-t-il insisté.

Il n'a pas écarté une alliance post-électorale avec d'autres mouvements kurdes, espérant qu'un bon score lui permette de peser de tout son poids au Parlement national.

Pour l'analyste politique et ancien ministre de la Culture kurde, Sami Chourach, les intérêts de la région, autonome depuis 1991, risquent de pâtir de ces divisions.

"En général, la pluralité est une bonne chose pour la démocratie mais dans le contexte kurde, et irakien en général, elle présente des désavantages car le Kurdistan est dans une situation délicate avec Bagdad", a-t-il estimé.

Et de citer pêle-mêle la pomme de discorde que représente la ville de Kirkouk, la dispute entre Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan, et Bagdad sur la signature de contrats pétroliers ou encore la présence controversée des combattants kurdes, les Pechmergas, dans les zones disputées.



IRAN: PENDAISON D'UN ACTIVISTE KURDE (AGENCE)

TEHERAN, 11 nov 2009 (AFP)

Un activiste kurde iranien, reconnu coupable d'action armée contre le pouvoir islamique, a été pendu mercredi matin, a déclaré Ali Akbar Gharoussi, le chef de la justice de la province du Kurdistan (nord-ouest), a rapporté l'agence Fars.

La peine capitale a été "appliquée ce matin contre le condamné, reconnu coupable d'opération contre la sécurité nationale par action armée", a affirmé M. Gharoussi.

Selon lui, le condamné, Ehsan Fatahian, a "reconnu" être membre du groupe armé kurde Komala. Il a été arrêté alors qu'il était en possession d'arme.

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.

Cette nouvelle pendaison porte à 248 le nombre de personnes exécutées en Iran depuis le début de l'année, selon un décompte de l'AFP établi à partir d'informations diffusées par la presse locale.

En 2008, 246 personnes ont été exécutées en Iran, selon la même source.

Le meurtre, le viol, le vol à main armée, le trafic de drogue, l'adultère et l'action armée contre le pouvoir sont passibles de la peine de mort en Iran.



L'OFFRE FAITE AUX KURDES RISQUE DE MÉCONTENTER TOUT LE MONDE (ANALYSTES)

ANKARA, 14 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LES MESURES limitées annoncées à Ankara en faveur de la communauté kurde ne convaincront pas les rebelles de déposer les armes et elles provoquent déjà la colère de l'opposition nationaliste, qui accuse le gouvernement de céder au "terrorisme" kurde, estiment des analystes.

Vendredi, lors d'une séance tumultueuse au Parlement turc, le ministre de l'Intérieur a annoncé les premières mesures concrètes du plan d'"ouverture démocratique" du gouvernement en faveur des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie, qui compte au total 71 millions d'habitants.

Une initiative destinée à terme à saper le soutien dont jouit, au sein d'une partie de la population, le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), le mouvement armé en lutte depuis un quart de siècle pour l'indépendance puis l'autonomie du sud-est du pays.

Parmi les mesures annoncées: l'autorisation pour les villes et villages kurdes de retrouver leurs noms originels, une levée de l'interdiction d'utiliser le kurde dans les activités politiques, et l'autorisation aux détenus kurdes de parler leur langue, lors des visites de familles.

Le gouvernement va aussi créer des commissions indépendantes pour prévenir les discriminations et les actes de torture par les forces de sécurité, a expliqué M. Atalay.

Mais ces décisions sont peu de choses, après des mois de suspense créé par un gouvernement qui faisait miroiter la perspective de "mesures courageuses" pour mettre fin à des années de "bains de sang et de souffrances", estime l'analyste Murat Yetkin dans le quotidien libéral Radikal.

"Le PKK n'abandonnera pas ses repaires, dans les montagnes, parce qu'il y a l'annonce d'une commission sur les droits de l'Homme et que les gens peuvent utiliser leur langue maternelle en prison", écrit-il.

Le PKK veut que le gouvernement cesse ses opérations militaires, donne aux Kurdes une reconnaissance officielle dans la constitution, autorise l'éducation en kurde et qu'il propose une solution aux rebelles, pour qu'ils mettent un terme à un conflit qui a fait au moins 45.000 morts depuis 1984.

Samedi, il a rejeté l'initiative gouvernementale, la jugeant "superficielle".

"La question kurde ne peut pas trouver de solution sans la reconnaissance de la volonté du peuple kurde et sans dialogue avec ses représentants", a déclaré le mouvement dans un communiqué transmis par l'agence pro-kurde Firat.

Devant le parlement, M. Atalay a certes évoqué la nécessité d'une nouvelle constitution, plus libérale, mais il a écarté toute modification des articles clé qui font de la Turquie un Etat unitaire avec une seule langue, le turc.

"C'est là que le bât blesse", car les militants kurdes veulent une nouvelle constitution, estime un autre commentateur, Guneri Civaoglu, dans le journal Milliyet (populaire).

Et même si le Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP) au pouvoir est majoritaire au Parlement, il ne dispose pas des 367 sièges sur 550 nécessaires pour changer la constitution.

Vendredi, l'opposition s'est déchaînée.

Le dirigeant nationaliste Devlet Bahçeli a accusé le gouvernement de négocier avec une bande de terroristes, et le leader de l'opposition Deniz Baykal l'a soupçonné de vouloir "détruire et démanteler la Turquie".

Le gouvernement islamo-conservateur est bien seul avec son initiative pro-kurde et prend le risque de faire "monter la tension, qui est déjà forte dans le pays", affirme Husnu Mahallin dans le journal Aksam (populaire).

"Le Premier ministre (Recep Tayyip) Erdogan devra choisir entre électeurs kurdes et les électeurs nationalistes", ajoute-t-il.

2009 et les deux autres en octobre 2008.

L'OSDH, basé à Londres demande au gouvernement syrien de "libérer les trois membres de l'instance dirigeante du parti Azadi car ils n'ont fait qu'exercer leur droit à la liberté d'expression, garantie par la Constitution syrienne et les traités internationaux paraphés par la Syrie".

Il demande également "la libération de l'avocat et militant des droits de l'Homme Anouar Bounni et de tous les détenus politiques et de conscience dans les prisons syriennes, en mettant fin à la détention arbitraire à l'encontre des opposants politiques".

Anouar Bounni a été incarcéré le 17 mai 2006 et condamné à cinq ans de prison pour "propagation de fausses informations".

Estimés à plus de 1,5 million de personnes, les Kurdes de Syrie représentent environ 9% de la population du pays. Ils réclament la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture.



SYRIE: PEINES DE PRISON POUR DES DIRIGEANTS D'UN PARTI KURDE INTERDIT

DAMAS, 15 nov 2009 (AFP)

Un tribunal de Damas a condamné dimanche trois Kurdes, membres de la direction d'un parti interdit, à trois ans de prison, a annoncé l'Observatoire syrien pour les droits de l'Homme (OSDH).

Moustapha Jomaa Bakr, Mohammad Saïd Hussein Omar et Saadoun Mahmoud Cheikho ont été condamnés par la Cour pénale de Damas pour "avoir porté atteinte à la dignité de l'Etat, affaibli le sentiment national et incité à des dissensions raciales", a dit l'OSDH dans un communiqué.

Responsables du parti Azadi kurde (interdit), Bakr avait été arrêté en janvier

Le plan Erdogan pour clore le conflit au Kurdistan turc

Le premier ministre défend l'« ouverture démocratique » en direction des Kurdes



Diyarbakir (Turquie)
Envoyé spécial

Près de 15 millions de Kurdes de Turquie avaient les yeux rivés sur le Parlement d'Ankara, la capitale, vendredi 13 novembre. Dans toutes les maisons et les

échoppes de Diyarbakir, la grande ville kurde du sud-est du pays, la télévision retransmettait en direct, la présentation par le gouvernement d'un programme de réformes destinées à mettre fin au conflit avec la guérilla du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) qui

a fait 40 000 morts en un quart de siècle.

Le débat parlementaire de vendredi a été salué, en soi, comme un événement « historique » à travers le pays. Au cours d'un long et vibrant discours, le premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a défendu le projet d'« ouverture démocratique » de son gouvernement. « Les problèmes de ce pays sont les nôtres. C'est pourquoi nous ne pouvons plus les ignorer », a-t-il lancé aux députés.

Les mesures détaillées par le ministre de l'intérieur, Besir Atalay, visent à renforcer l'identité culturelle des Kurdes et à défendre les droits de l'homme dans la région. La diffusion de programmes en langue kurde sera autorisée à la radio et à la télévision. Les partis politiques pourront faire campagne en kurde alors que, jusqu'à récemment, le premier ministre refusait toute rencontre avec les députés du parti kurde DTP (Parti pour une société démocratique). Les noms « turquifiés » des municipalités pourront être remplacés par les noms d'origine kurde, syriaque ou arménienne, notamment.

La Turquie (candidate à l'Union européenne) va également ratifier la convention de l'ONU contre la torture, et créer une commission indépendante pour enquêter sur les milliers de plaintes déposées contre les forces de sécurité pour torture ou mauvais traitements.

« C'est bien mais cela fait plus d'un an que nous réclamons cette

commission », commente Muharrem Erbey. Et l'avocat, qui est aussi président de l'Association des droits de l'homme de Diyarbakir de poursuivre : « On ne guérit pas si vite une maladie qui dure depuis si longtemps. En deux siècles, une trentaine de révoltes kurdes ont éclaté. Le problème ce n'est pas le PKK mais le déni des Kurdes, de leur culture et de leur identité. »

« Insuffisant et timide »

De fait, au lendemain du discours du chef du gouvernement, des questions clés restent sans réponse : le sort de centaines de jeunes lanceurs de pierres, poursuivis après des manifestations et parfois condamnés à de lourdes peines au titre de la loi antiterroriste, n'est pas réglé.

L'amnistie des combattants du PKK, exilés dans les montagnes du Nord de l'Irak, n'a pas davantage été évoquée. Et les opérations militaires contre les camps rebelles se poursuivent.

Sur le plan culturel, le droit à l'éducation dans la langue maternelle, réclamé par les Kurdes, a été rejeté par le gouvernement. L'ouverture d'Ankara est « insuffisante et timide », juge l'éditorialiste Mehmet Ali Birand : « Je crois qu'il faut aller plus loin et plus vite. »

Mais le gouvernement doit aussi composer avec les réactions virulentes des partis nationalistes de l'opposition qui accusent M. Erdogan de diviser la Turquie et de céder aux « terroristes ». ■

Guillaume Perrier

LE FIGARO samedi 14 - dimanche 15 novembre 2009

Ankara donne de nouveaux droits aux Kurdes

Le gouvernement turc autorise l'usage de la langue kurde dans la vie politique.

LAURE MARCHAND
ISTANBUL

TURQUIE Les ambitions du gouvernement turc pour répondre aux revendications de la minorité kurde et tenter de convaincre la guérilla du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) de déposer les armes se précisent. Martelant sa volonté de satisfaire les demandes de toutes les ethnies de la Turquie, le premier ministre a défendu devant le Parlement, vendredi, « l'ouverture démocratique » qu'il a lancée et a rejeté « un nationalisme étriqué ». « Pendant vingt-cinq ans, la lutte contre le terrorisme n'a été envisagée que sous

Le premier ministre turc Recep Tayyip Erdogan a défendu « l'ouverture démocratique » qu'il a lancée et rejeté « un nationalisme étriqué », hier devant le Parlement.

UMIT BEKTAS/REUTERS



l'aspect sécuritaire », a critiqué Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Auparavant, le ministre de l'Intérieur, Besir Atalay, avait détaillé le plan gouvernemental qui vise à renforcer les droits des douze millions de Kurdes de Turquie. Parmi les mesures phares,

figure l'autorisation d'utiliser la langue kurde dans la vie politique. Cette décision est hautement symbolique car des dizaines d'élus prokurdes ont été traînés devant les tribunaux ces dernières années pour ne pas avoir respecté l'obligation de

s'exprimer en turc. Les villages kurdes dont les noms ont été turquifiés auront aussi le droit de reprendre leur appellation d'origine. Sur le plan législatif, la création d'une commission indépendante chargée de traiter les plaintes pour atteintes aux droits de l'homme a été annoncée. Cinq mille meurtres, essentiellement de Kurdes et perpétrés principalement dans les années 1990, au plus fort de la « sale guerre » entre l'armée turque et les rebelles, restent toujours inexpliqués.

Le début d'un processus

Ces avancées s'ajoutent à celles déjà rendues publiques cette semaine : les mineurs, qui étaient jusqu'à présent condamnés à des peines de prison très lourdes pour avoir jeté des pierres contre les forces de l'ordre, devraient désormais être jugés par des tri-

bunaux pour enfants et ne seront plus emprisonnés. Les restrictions concernant les programmes en kurde dans les médias seront également entièrement levées. « Notre objectif est d'élargir les droits politiques et les libertés de tous nos citoyens », a déclaré devant les députés Besir Atalay. Le ministre de l'Intérieur a souligné que le processus lancé, qui ne se limitera pas à ce premier « paquet » de réformes, était nécessaire pour « remplir les critères d'adhésion à l'Union européenne » et a appelé à l'établissement « d'une nouvelle Constitution, pluraliste et libérale ». Ce projet fait écho à la revendication du PKK de réformer la loi fondamentale en vigueur, héritée du coup d'État de 1980, afin d'y inscrire la reconnaissance de l'existence du peuple kurde. En revanche, l'amnistie des membres de la

Une commission va enquêter sur 5 000 meurtres commis lors de « la sale guerre »

guérilla n'a pas été évoquée. Il s'agit d'une demande clé de l'organisation rebelle.

Le parti prokurde, vitrine politique de la guérilla, tout en dénonçant la poursuite des opérations de l'armée turque contre les camps du PKK basés en Irak, a indiqué vouloir privilégier une « solution politique ». ■

Le Monde

Dimanche 15 - Lundi 16 novembre 2009

Les chancelleries occidentales constatent l'impasse diplomatique avec l'Iran

L'offre sur le circuit d'uranium est considérée comme rejetée. Téhéran refuse une nouvelle réunion avec les Six pour parler du nucléaire. Le président Obama veut gagner du temps

Barack Obama devait rencontrer le président russe Dmitri Medvedev, dimanche 15 novembre, à Singapour en marge du sommet Asie-Pacifique. Le dossier du nucléaire iranien devait être évoqué au cours de l'entretien, dans un contexte où la diplomatie de la main tendue américaine à l'égard de Téhéran n'a pas permis de récolter les fruits espérés.

Devant la perspective d'un échec annoncé, l'une des priorités de la stratégie occidentale consiste à préserver, face à l'Iran, une unité – au moins de façade – entre les grandes puissances traitant le dossier nucléaire. Or la Russie et plus encore la Chine, où M. Obama fera étape cette semaine, sont perçues comme les maillons faibles du groupe des Six qui tente de négocier avec Téhéran.

En fait de négociation, les choses sont au point mort. « La réponse iranienne à l'offre est de fait négative. Nous faisons tous ce constat. Mais la question est de savoir quand et comment l'administration Obama voudra en prendre acte ouvertement, commente un diplomate occidental proche du dossier. Pour Obama, il y a des considérations de politique intérieure qui pèsent lourd. »

L'impasse diplomatique actuelle est de deux ordres. D'abord, la proposition faite le 21 octobre à

l'Iran de transformation à l'étranger (en Russie puis en France) de la majeure partie de son stock d'uranium enrichi n'a pas reçu de réponse positive. Le pouvoir iranien a refusé les conditions mises à cette opération par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique (AIEA) malgré les efforts de son directeur, Mohamed ElBaradei, en quête de succès à quelques semaines de la fin de son mandat. C'est un revers pour l'équipe Obama.

Les partenaires des Etats-Unis observent qu'ils veulent laisser courir le calendrier jusqu'à la fin de l'année

La Turquie – encouragée par M. ElBaradei – s'est certes proposée comme potentiel pays de stockage de l'uranium iranien, mais ce schéma apparaît inacceptable pour Washington et Paris, très à cheval sur le respect des conditions de l'offre du circuit d'uranium telle qu'émise par l'AIEA.

Plutôt que d'être saisie par le régime iranien comme un véhicule de rapprochement avec les Etats-Unis, l'offre en question s'est retrouvée au cœur des luttes de fac-

tions politiques à Téhéran, dans un ballottage incessant qui n'aboutit qu'à un blocage.

Le point d'orgue – en apparence paradoxal – a été ce moment où « l'ère de la coopération nucléaire » avec les Occidentaux était vantée par le président iranien, le radical Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, qui cherche le moyen de se relégitimer. Tandis qu'à l'inverse l'opposant Mir-Hossein Moussavi, et le chef du Parlement, Ali Larijani, souvent décrit comme un pragmatique, critiquaient le projet d'évacuation d'uranium comme un renoncement national et un piège tendu par l'étranger.

L'autre impasse diplomatique porte sur le processus plus large des discussions entre l'Iran et les « Six » (Etats-Unis, Russie, Chine, France, Royaume-Uni, Allemagne). Le 1er octobre à Genève, lors de la première rencontre de ce type impliquant un membre de l'administration Obama, il avait été annoncé qu'une nouvelle réunion se tiendrait « avant la fin du mois ». Depuis, plus rien.

« Les Iraniens ne refusent pas une rencontre avec les Six, mais exigent que le dossier nucléaire, qu'ils prétendent clos, ne figure pas dans la discussion – ce qui revient à un refus », explique-t-on de source européenne.

Le contenu du prochain rap-

port de l'AIEA sur l'Iran – singulièrement sur le site secret de Qom, exposé en septembre – est guetté avec grand intérêt par les chancelleries occidentales qui veulent en faire un argument de poids pour rallier les Russes et les Chinois à un durcissement de la diplomatie au moyen de sanctions, ou d'une nouvelle résolution à l'ONU.

La grande inconnue reste cependant l'approche du président Obama lui-même. Les partenaires de Washington observent qu'il veut encore laisser courir le calendrier jusqu'à la fin de l'année, le délai initialement fixé pour jauger l'attitude iranienne.

Barack Obama voudrait éviter d'avoir à annoncer à l'opinion américaine la mauvaise nouvelle d'une impasse avec l'Iran, au moment où la stratégie à appliquer en Afghanistan lui donne du fil à retordre.

Au plan extérieur, il aurait une autre raison de ne pas se précipiter pour sonner la fin de certains espoirs avec l'Iran. Il lui faut d'abord un succès avec les Russes sur la négociation d'un traité post-START concernant le désarmement nucléaire, la date-butoir étant le 5 décembre. Les négociations se sont récemment compliquées. Encore un sujet à aborder dimanche avec le président Medvedev. ■

Natalie Nougayrède

U.S. adviser to Kurds could reap huge oil profits

OSLO

BY JAMES GLANZ
AND WALTER GIBBS

Peter W. Galbraith, an influential former United States ambassador, is a powerful voice on Iraq who helped shape the views of policy makers like Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Senator John Kerry. In the summer of 2005, he was also an adviser to the Kurdish regional government as Iraq drafted its Constitution — tough and sensitive talks not least because of issues like how Iraq would divide its vast oil wealth.

Now Mr. Galbraith, 58, son of the renowned economist John Kenneth Galbraith, stands to earn perhaps a hundred million dollars or more as a result of his closeness to the Kurds, his relations with a Norwegian oil company and constitutional provisions he helped the Kurds extract.

In the constitutional negotiations, he helped the Kurds ram through provisions that gave their region — rather than the central Baghdad government — sole authority over many of their internal affairs, including clauses that he maintains will give the Kurds virtually complete control over all new oil finds on their territory.

Mr. Galbraith, widely viewed in Washington as a smart and bold foreign policy expert, has always described himself as an unpaid adviser to the Kurds, although he has spoken in general terms about having business interests in Kurdistan, as the north of Iraq is known.

So it came as a shock to many last month when a group of Norwegian investigative journalists at the newspaper Dagens Naeringsliv began publishing documents linking Mr. Galbraith to a Norwegian oil company with major contracts in Iraq.

Interviews by The New York Times with more than a dozen current and former government and business officials in Norway, France, Iraq, the United States and elsewhere, along with legal records and other documents, reveal in considerable detail that Mr. Galbraith received rights to an enormous stake in at least one of Kurdistan's oil fields in the spring of 2004.

As it turns out, Mr. Galbraith received the rights after he helped negotiate a potentially lucrative contract that allowed the Norwegian oil company DNO to drill for oil in the promising Dohuk region of Kurdistan, the interviews and documents show.

He says his actions were proper because he was at the time a private citizen deeply involved in Kurdish causes, both in business and policy.

When drillers struck oil in a rich new field called Tawke in December 2005, no one but a handful of government and business officials and members of Mr. Galbraith's inner circle knew that the constitutional provisions he had pushed through only months earlier could enrich him so handsomely.

As the scope of Mr. Galbraith's financial interests in Kurdistan become clear, they have the potential to inflame some of Iraqis' deepest fears, including conspiracy theories that the true reason for the American invasion of their country

was to take its oil. It may not help that outside Kurdistan, Mr. Galbraith's influential view that Iraq should be broken up along ethnic lines is considered offensive to many Iraqis' nationalism.

Mr. Biden and Mr. Kerry, who have been influenced by Mr. Galbraith's thinking but do not advocate such a partitioning of the country, were not aware of Mr. Galbraith's oil dealings in Iraq, aides to both politicians say.

Some officials say that his financial ties could raise serious questions about the integrity of the constitutional negotiations themselves.

"The idea that an oil company was participating in the drafting of the Iraqi Constitution leaves me speechless," said Feisal Amin al-Istrabadi, a principal drafter of the law that governed Iraq after the United States ceded control to an Iraqi government on June 28, 2004.

In effect, he said, the company "has a representative in the room, drafting."

DNO's chief executive, Helge Eide, confirmed that Mr. Galbraith helped negotiate the Tawke deal and advised the company during 2005. But Mr. Eide said that Mr. Galbraith acted solely as a political adviser and that the company never discussed the constitutional negotiations with him.

"We certainly never did give any input, language or suggestions on the Constitution," Mr. Eide said.

When the findings based on interviews by The Times and other research were presented to Mr. Galbraith last weekend, he responded in writing to The Times, confirming that he did work as a mediator between DNO and the Kurdish government until the oil contract was signed in the spring of 2004, and saying that he maintained an "ongoing business relationship" with the company throughout the constitutional negotiations in 2005 and later.

Mr. Galbraith says he held no official position in the United States or Iraq during this entire period and acted as a private citizen. He maintains that his largely undeclared dual role was entirely proper. He says that he was simply advocating positions that the



CHRIS KLEPONIS/BLOOMBERG

Peter W. Galbraith helped Kurdish officials negotiate control over oil in their territory.

"While I may have had interests, I see no conflict."

Kurds had documented before his relationship with DNO had begun.

"What is true is that I undertook business activities that were entirely consistent with my long-held policy views," Mr. Galbraith said in his response. "I believe my work with DNO (and other companies) helped create the Kurdistan oil industry which helps provide Kurdistan an economic base for the autonomy its people almost unanimously desire."

"So, while I may have had interests, I see no conflict," Mr. Galbraith said.

Kurdish officials said that they were informed of Mr. Galbraith's work for DNO and that they still considered him a friend and advocate. Mr. Galbraith said that during his work on the Constitution negotiations, the Kurds "did not pay me and they knew I was being paid by DNO."

Citing what he said were confidentiality agreements, Mr. Galbraith refused to give details of his financial arrangement with the company, and the precise nature of his compensation remains unknown. But several officials, including Mr. Galbraith's business partner in the deal, the Norwegian businessman Andre Rosjo, said that in addition to whatever consulting fees the company paid, he and Mr. Galbraith were together granted rights to 10 percent of the large Tawke field and possibly others.

Estimating the value of any stake in the Kurdish fields is difficult given the political uncertainties. But Are Martin Berntzen, an oil analyst at Oslo's First Securities brokerage, said the Tawke field alone has proven reserves of about 230 million barrels, a figure likely to increase as new wells are drilled.

"Given no political risk, a 5 percent stake should be worth at least \$115 million," he said, though he emphasized that he knew nothing about Mr. Galbraith's arrangement.

GOV'T UNVEILS DETAILS OF DEMOCRATIZATION INITIATIVE AT PARLIAMENT

TODAY'S ZAMAN

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) on Friday submitted to Parliament long-awaited details of its democratization initiative to solve the decades-long Kurdish problem.

The details, disclosed in a special session of Parliament, envisage more freedom for everyone, Interior Minister Be'ir Atalay, the coordinator of the initiative, which was launched in mid-July, informed deputies. The plan drew strong criticism from the main-opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), whose leaders criticized the government's efforts for peace with harsh remarks yesterday.

According to Atalay, obstacles before using languages other than Turkish in "social and religious" services will be removed, former Kurdish names of settlements and geographical places will be restored and political campaigns in languages other than Turkish will be allowed.

As part of the democratization process, independent bodies will be established to promote and ensure human rights. For example, a law seeking to establish an independent body to work to eliminate discrimination will be brought before Parliament soon.

The structure of the Prime Ministry's Human Rights Directorate will be changed; it will be made independent. As a follow up to the approval of United Nations protocols on the prevention of torture, a national mechanism will be established to implement them.

Another independent body will be set up to monitor all complaints about security forces, especially as concerns violations of human rights. The interior minister also added that the government is working to remove checkpoints on roads in southeastern and eastern Anatolia and to ease traveling conditions in the region. "Amendments and mechanisms to be established aim to prevent any infringement on the freedoms of all our citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, sex or political orientation," Atalay told deputies. He emphasized that these measures are not everything and that more will follow because the government perceives the initiative as a dynamic process. Atalay also underlined that the Constitution has to be changed as it is out of touch with the people. "Our people do not deserve such a constitution. A new pluralistic constitution must be prepared with the broadest participation," Atalay stressed.

'Initiative has two aims'

Atalay underlined that the initiative has two goals – to end terror and to improve democracy. Both are intertwined, he said.

Atalay further argued that the AK Party

government has been working toward democratization due to its respect for humanity since it came to power and will continue to do so. He noted, however, that they will never change the basic principles of the state, which are listed in the first three articles of the Constitution – namely, that Turkey is a secular, democratic and social state based on the principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the republic, and that its language is Turkish.

'Guns could be silenced in three months'

Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Türk urged the government to state its intentions clearly and as soon as possible and explain how it will implement them. He signaled that if the process is approached in a serious manner, guns will fall silent within three months.

Türk, who spoke in Parliament right after Atalay, underlined that Turkey's Kurdish question should be solved inside Turkey and with its own dynamics. The lack of democracy and the denial of the existence of differences have made the problem open to the exploitation of foreign powers, he said.

He claimed that the country's non-Kurdish citizens were denied access to accurate information about the pain and suffering of people in predominantly Kurdish regions as part of a campaign of psychological warfare. "This situation has created an enormous difference in perception and sentiment. The only way to fill this gap is to explain the realities of the Kurdish question to the public. Stopping official history is a must," he said.

Türk said the existence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the EU and the US, is a result of the faulty policies pursued by the state and previous governments.

The DTP leader also asked deputies to empathize. "Think for a moment if people tell you there is no language called Turkish. Try educating your child in Kurdish despite him or her not knowing even one word of it. Will you be able to feel like an equal and respected citizen of the country?" he asked the deputies.

He stressed that even today state officials do not apologize for mistakes of the past. Türk added that the dispute is not between Kurds and Turks and that all Turkish citizens are in desperate need of democracy. "The problem is the official ideology of the state, which prevents its citizens from enjoying democracy and freedom," he said.

Kurds do not have any problem with the country's flag and border, he said, adding that there are many common values which keep the society united. "Our common language is Turkish. Even those who will be educated in their mother tongue will use Turkish as a common language of communication."

He recommended a committee be establi-



Alevi groups in Tunceli, Istanbul and Ankara continued holding protests yesterday to condemn CHP Deputy Chairman Onur Öymen's controversial remarks about the 1937 Dersim incidents, in which thousands of Alevis were killed in a military campaign to suppress a rebellion.

shed in Parliament with representatives from all political parties in order to find a democratic solution to the problem. "If this problem is the problem of all of us, if we have to find a solution, then the government, instead of trying to manage the process behind closed doors, should bring it to Parliament," Türk suggested.

Bahçeli: This is an initiative for destruction
Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), claimed that terrorism was about to come to an end in 2002, when the ruling AK Party came to power, but after seven years, instead of the elimination of terror, the elimination of the nation-state has come to the agenda.

"Parliament is talking about a plan of destruction today. What we are witnessing is the realization of a desire for terror on the part of politicians. The desire is not for individual rights and democratization but to create a minority," he said.

Bahçeli claimed that the government is building its efforts around the demands of the PKK and said this attitude is leading to the wrong perception, that is, to think that the PKK is representative of all Kurds.

"This is a plot against our citizens and a serious threat. This is why the AK Party's attitude has been wrong from the very beginning," he said. Bahçeli suggested that the owner of the country is the Turkish nation and that it has unity. "Whatever the language of our mothers, our name is the Turkish nation," he said. He claimed that for centuries there has been a plan to remove the Turkish nation from those lands and that this can be summarized as the mentality of crusaders; this problem is called the "East question." "Whatever its name, opportunity or initiative, it is an extension of the East question," he said.

"In our country, who can claim that ethnic origin is an obstacle to entering into trade, bureaucracy or administration. If there is a problem of expression, it is not because of the Constitution but because of the economic structure," he said.

Baykal: Government negotiating with PKK
Republican People's Party (CHP) leader
Deniz Baykal claimed the government's initiative is a process of deception and that it is not clear who it has taken on as a partner in this process.

Baykal added that the government is taking Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader

Abdullah Öcalan, who is serving a life sentence on Imralı Island in the Sea of Marmara, as an interlocutor.

"The government is talking to Imralı in secrecy. There is cooperation going on between the government and the PKK. But even laying down arms was not put forth as a precondition for this cooperation," he said.

Baykal said the government's fatal mistake in the process was to negotiate with an armed organization. "You don't negotiate with terror, you fight with it," he said.

THE TIMES November 14, 2009

Turkey is to allow Kurdish television as peace process gathers pace

Nicholas Birch in Ankara

Turkey's Government has unveiled a "historic" offer to end its 25-year armed conflict with Kurdish fighters that has cost more than 40,000 lives.

Besir Atalay, the Interior Minister, told parliament that he intended to end permanently the conflict with separatists, who are thought to have about 6,000 fighters. "Our slogan is more freedom for everybody," Mr Atalay said yesterday, outlining what he described as "an open-ended process" to "end terrorism and raise the level of democracy".

One of the first steps would be to lift a ban on private television channels broadcasting in Kurdish. The Government would then end a ban on political campaigning in the language, and permit the restoration of Kurdish names to towns and villages given Turkish names since the 1950s. A committee will be established to address Kurdish concerns that they suffer discrimination.

For a country that once denied it had a Kurdish community, the plan is a dramatic move and builds on small steps to build peace in the past two years. It may also help Turkey's application to join the European Union — a consideration that will not have been lost on the Government Separatists led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party — PKK — have made gestures to the Government in recent months, but Mr Atalay's plan falls short of the independent state many have long sought. However, in the long term, Mr Atalay said, Turkey needed a new "democratic and civilian" constitution to replace



Dilsha, centre, a PKK guerrilla with her unit in mountains on the border

one drafted by a junta in 1982. "The country has outgrown this constitution. Our people deserve better."

His speech follows efforts to marginalise support for Kurdish militants, and an unprecedented and open debate about the issue in the Turkish press. On October 19, in the first sign that the initiative might be showing success, eight PKK members surrendered to Turkish authorities at the Iraqi border, saying that they had come to "strengthen the foundations of a peaceful solution".

Cevat Ones, the former deputy head of Turkey's intelligence services, said conditions in Turkey and the region had never been more favourable to a solution: "On one side, you have a country ready for peace and a Government with the will to push it through. On the other, a terrorist group that knows war is no longer an alternative," he said.

But televised scenes of tens of thousands of Turkish Kurds celebrating the arrival of the PKK peace group raised anger in Turkey, and forced the Government temporarily to slow the process. In Parliament yesterday the leader of the main secular opposition party accused the Government of "col-

laborating with the PKK". A nationalist leader called the session "one of the most unfortunate days in Turkey's 89-year parliamentary history".

Their criticism was not new. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been criticised since May, when the President talked of a "historic opportunity" to end a war that has cost the country an estimated £180 billion since 1984, and severely damaged its reputation.

In May Murad Karayilan, the acting head of the PKK, told The Times that the party was ready for "a peaceful and democratic solution, to be solved within Turkey's borders". Mesut Yegen, an analyst who specialises in Kurdish affairs, said much now depended on the personal charisma of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister: "For the first time, the Kurdish issue has been openly debated in parliament ... That is historic, yes. But it is still far from clear where Turkey will go from here."

Turkey Plans to Ease Restrictions on Kurds and Help End Decades of Conflict

By SEBNEM ARSU

ISTANBUL — After months of dialogue, the Turkish government announced a plan on Friday to help end the quarter-century-long conflict with a Kurdish separatist movement that has cost more than 40,000 lives.

The plan will be debated by Parliament, but the fact that it is being discussed at all is considered to be a landmark. For decades, Kurdish political parties were routinely banned, and the ethnic identity of the Kurds was not openly acknowledged, though they make up almost 15 percent of Turkey's population.

The government's plan would allow the Kurdish language to be used in all broadcast media and political campaigns, and restore Kurdish names to cities and towns that have been given Turkish ones. It would also establish a committee to fight discrimination.

"Today is the beginning of a new timeline and a fresh start," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a live televised speech. "We took a courageous step to resolve chronic issues that constitute an obstacle along Turkey's development, progression and empowerment, and we are very sincere."

Last year, Parliament approved private Kurdish language courses and a public television channel in Kurdish, as part of what it called a democracy package. And this week, a regulation took effect allowing Kurdish prisoners to communicate with visitors in their native language.

Such measures, many of which have been required for entry to the European Union, were inconceivable in the early 1980s, when aggressive state policies pro-



hibited use of the Kurdish language and other cultural and political rights for the Kurds. That helped empower the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party, known as the P.K.K., which presented itself as the defender of Kurdish rights.

The group, which has been fighting in the predominantly Kurdish southeast, has lost much of its popular support in recent years because of its violent methods. But it still has 12,000 militants hiding in northern Iraq along the Turkish border.

The P.K.K. praised the government's efforts but called for an immediate end to operations against it. Listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, the group says it no longer seeks independence, but demands constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity.

Short of that, a blanket amnesty for militants could persuade the group to lay down arms, many Kurdish intellectuals say, a move the governing Justice and Development Party rejects.

Turkey's leading opposition party, the Republican People's Party, denounces any direct or indirect contact with the P.K.K.,

though it agrees on cultural rights for Kurds as long as they agree to be identified as Turkish citizens and are educated in Turkish.

"The world recognizes us as Turks, not as an ethnicity but as a nation," said Deniz Baykal, the opposition party's chairman. "Neither the E.U. regulations nor international human rights conventions foresee separate state structures and separate language education for each and every ethnic group. There's nothing like that."

The opposition's view resonates among other parties in Parliament, which argue that enshrining various ethnic identities in the Constitution would pave the way for independent states within Turkey and destroy unity.

What almost everyone agrees upon is that the current Constitution, which was drafted after a military coup in 1980 and is seen as the source of many antidemocratic policies, needs to be replaced.

But the government promises that its first three articles — which explicitly recognize "Turkishness" as the national identity, and Turkish as the official language — will remain unchanged.

For Kurdish intellectuals like Sezgin Tanrikulu, former head of the bar association in Diyarbakir, the largest Kurdish town, the debate in Parliament was an achievement in its own right.

"The Turkish Republic is confronting its past and ready to make a new start, which is more important than any specific measure," Mr. Tanrikulu said. "Such a government attitude would also discourage the P.K.K. from holding on to arms from now on."

November 15, 2009



Iraq's Kurdish Parties Unite Ahead Of Elections

IRBIL, Iraq — Iraq's Kurdish parties have announced the creation of a new Kurdish political bloc ahead of the January general election, RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq reported.

The Kurdish alliance will gather 14 parties, including the two biggest parties — the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Kurdistan regional government (KRG) President Masud Barzani.

Three Kurdish parties — Jamaa Islamia, the Islamic Kurdish Union, and the Change (Goran) party — have decided to stay out of the bloc and represent the opposition.

Officials from those three parties said they would provide independent lists for the elections, which are scheduled for January 18.

Kosrat Rasool Ali, a senior PUK member and a vice president of the KRG, said the 14 political parties have agreed to enter the election under the name Kurdish Coalition.

Fadhil Mirani, a secretary of the KDP office in Irbil, said that the new coalition unites different political views and ethnic groups "such as socialists, Islamic [ones], and also Turkomans." Mirani added that the decision for the three parties to remain outside the coalition is "respected."

He said Kurds need to be unified given the limitations on the KRG authorities in Iraq.

Sinkol Jabouk, a member of the Kurdish Coalition and a well-known Turkoman politician, said she hopes the new alliance will lead to the application of article 140 of the constitution about disputed areas between Baghdad and Irbil, including Kirkuk — Iraq's northern oil hub — that is an uneasy ethnic mix of Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans, and will reflect on "the brotherhood [that exists] between different parties in Kirkuk."



Turkish opposition leaders speak out against Kurdish initiative

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

The Turkish government on Friday released more details about its much-debated Kurdish initiative, which the ruling party has billed as a solution to the country's 25-year struggle against an outlawed Kurdish group in the Southeast.

In an address to Parliament, Interior Minister Besir Atalay said the government's initiative would not divide the country but strengthen it under the slogan "more democracy for everyone."

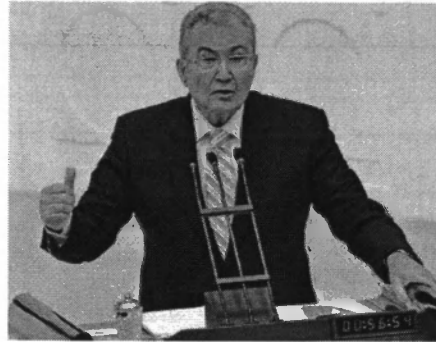
He said the government's initiative, which the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, has said will bring to an end the fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, was a project "for brotherhood."

"The democratic opening will not harm the country but consolidate it," he said.

Atalay said the government had increased the freedom to use different languages and dialects, adding that a commission would be created to combat discrimination, torture and mistreatment.

Another part of the initiative would be to restore the former Kurdish names of villages, he said.

He said that as part of the initiative, the government had been dealing with martyrs' families and their concerns and that the "return to the village" project – aimed at urging PKK members to return from PKK camps in northern Iraq – would continue in 14 provinces.



"We're preserving everyone's rights," he said. "This has to be done in order to fulfill the criteria to join the EU."

The way that past governments have handled the Kurdish issue in Turkey created the problems that the country now faces, said Ahmet Türk, leader of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, or DTP.

"We've endured these policies for years, and we want to protect ourselves from it," he said. He suggested for a commission to be established which would look at which mistakes have been made.

"The problem here is not the Kurdish-Turkish question," Türk said. "Neither is it a stance against the Turkish people. This is a stance against the policy of assimilation."

"The fight against terrorism has stopped, and negotiations with the PKK have begun," said Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, leader Devlet Bahçeli. He accused the government of politicizing the Kurdish initiative instead of promoting it as a tool to

fight terror.

"This country is called Turkey and the people who live in it are the Turkish nation," he said.

Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, which has staunchly opposed the initiative, accused the AKP of secrecy and pleaded for a slower approach.

He also referenced the "show at Habur" near the Iraqi border, where thousands gathered last month to welcome PKK members returning from camps in northern Iraq. The celebration, organized by the DTP, caused an uproar across Turkey.

"The PKK has not promised to lay down their arms," he said. "Does the Spanish government make the ETA its counterpart? Of course the PKK is going to have a party!"

Parliament was set to discuss the initiative on Tuesday, the anniversary of the death of Republic founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The timing prompted CHP and MHP deputies to protest Atalay's address.

CHP deputies raised banners reading, "My leader, we will make your Republic live forever," and later requested that the debate be postponed.

Much of the controversy surrounding the Kurdish issue stems from PKK attacks in the country's Southeast. More than 45,000 people have been killed since 1984 when the PKK picked up arms in Turkey's Kurdish-populated Southeast and east. Turkey, along with the United States and the European Union, classifies the PKK as a terrorist group.

The New York Times November 18, 2009

Kurdish Legislators Threaten Boycott of Iraq Election

By MARC SANTORA

BAGHDAD — Only a week after Iraq's leaders celebrated the passage of an election law that kept the country on course to hold its first national elections in four years, Kurdish lawmakers threatened Tuesday to boycott the election unless their demand for a greater share of parliamentary seats was met.

Their demand came on the heels of a threat by the top Sunni politician in Iraq, a vice president, Tariq al-Hashemi, to veto the election law unless Iraqi voters living outside Iraq were also given more seats in Parliament. The majority of Iraqis who fled the country after the American invasion and during the sectarian violence were Sunnis.

Lawmakers and representatives of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission met Tuesday to try to negotiate an agreement that would satisfy all parties. The election law

must still be approved by Iraq's presidency council, and details, like the allocation of seats, can be amended before then.

Any delay of the elections beyond their scheduled date of Jan. 21 would not only be an international embarrassment but could complicate the American military's plans for withdrawal.

The passage of an election law was delayed 11 times, hung up largely on the question of representation of the ethnically mixed area of Kirkuk, an oil-rich region whose Kurdish population has grown substantially since the American invasion, after shrinking under years of persecution by the government of Saddam Hussein.

When the election law was passed on Nov. 8, it seemed as if those differences had been resolved. But as the details of the law and the allocation of seats in Parliament became clear, familiar divisions have once



Members of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission met Tuesday to discuss election law. A vote is set for Jan. 21.

again surfaced.

"Unless the seat allocation formula is reconsidered in a just manner, the people of the Kurdistan region will be compelled to boycott the election," the Kurdistan regional president, Massoud Barzani, said in a statement.

Vice President Hashemi was equally forceful in his veto threat. Sunni politicians believe that the Shiite-led parties want to limit the representation of Iraqis living abroad because they are viewed as largely secular and Sunni.

Barzani: Kurdistan supports Turkey's Kurdish initiative

The Kurdish Globe

Turkey addressing causes of conflict, notes the Kurdish President.

Barzani says that allowing Kurds in Turkey to participate in the political process will give them incentive to not take up arms.

Speaking in Europe's Parliament, Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani reaffirmed that the Kurdish problem in Turkey cannot be solved by military means; rather, it can only be solved through peaceful dialogue. Barzani believes that if Kurds in Turkey are allowed to participate in the political process, they will not carry weapons or go to the mountains.

Moreover, Barzani believes that the Kurdish problem should be solved and fought in Parliament, not with weapons. "There is no reason to

take up arms if there is a political process."

He added: "We would like our brothers in Makhmur camp [where Turkey's Kurdish refugees are living in Iraqi Kurdistan] to return to their country as well as members of the PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party]."

"Turkey not only deals with the result of the conflict as they did in the past today they address the causes of the conflict. This is an important change in the mentality and major development. Once you address the real causes and questions and try to find a solution, the PKK will have no reason to take up arms and will return to a peaceful and normal life and political process."

Barzani strongly criticized the huge hero's welcome celebration for a number of PKK rebels after they returned to their homes. "They



Kurdistan Region President Barzani speaks at the European Union Parliament. Barzani said the political map will change after the upcoming Iraqi national elections. PRESS PHOTO-

[Turkey's Kurd] should not have done that because the peace process has just started, and until now it is a very weak process," he said.

Furthermore, he said but this should not be an excuse to stop the peace process.

Problems between Kurdistan Region and Baghdad

Barzani believes the problems between Kurdistan Region and Baghdad cannot be solved in the coming months. Regarding Iraqi oil, Barzani said: "Oil and gas belong to all the Iraqi people

we have no problem with that." He added: "We don't want centralized oil and gas policy imposed on us, because it would not be fair. Revenues must be fairly shared out," he said.

Barzani believes after the Iraqi national elections scheduled in January next year, the Iraqi political map will be changed. "It is difficult to predict now, but I am sure the political map will be altered." He noted that after the national election, Kurds will remain united in Iraqi Parliament.

REUTERS

Furor over Turkish plans to expand rights of Kurds

ANKARA, November 15, 2009, - REUTERS,

Turkey set out plans on Friday to expand the rights of its Kurdish population, including the creation of an independent body to investigate cases of torture and the loosening of restrictions on the Kurdish language.

The government reform initiative is seen as boosting Turkey's hopes of EU membership and stopping a conflict in which more than 40,000 people have died, but in a show of the resistance the reform process faces in parliament, the main opposition party walked out of the chamber on Friday after Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan accused opponents of not wanting an end to the conflict.

The initiative builds on steps which Erdogan's Islamist-rooted government has already taken to expand cultural rights for Kurds, such as the launch of a state-run Kurdish language television channel.

Turkish Interior Minister Besir Atalay told parliament: "An independent anti-discrimination commission will be established and a bill related to this will be sent to parliament."

The commission would aim to prevent torture and mistreatment.

Atalay said Turkey needs a new, libertarian constitution as the existing one does not meet Turkey's needs. The AK Party also plans to allow Kurdish to be used during political campaigning.

"The steps that will allow political parties to address the people in different languages and dialects used by citizens during election campaigns are among these," Atalay said, adding Turkey would remain a unitary state.

Kurdish-majority towns would officially be able to regain their old Kurdish names, which were replaced by Turkish names.

The reform is designed to encourage the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerrilla group to disband. Kurds have long complained of discrimination at the hands of the state.

The PKK, branded a terrorist group by Ankara, Washington and the EU, launched an armed campaign in 1984 with the goal of creating an ethnic homeland for Kurds in Turkey's southeast.

The chairman of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP), which has long been accused of having links to the PKK, said the Turkish state needed a change of mentality.

"If the proposed solutions are serious, weapons can be laid down in three months," DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk said.

Opposition leader Deniz Baykal, who has said the reforms threaten to undermine Turkey's unity, accused Erdogan of preparing a "plan to destroy and split Turkey."

Erdogan then answered: "There are some people who want martyrs [dead Turkish soldiers] so they can exploit it better," prompting a walk-out by Baykal and his lawmakers.

Timothy Ash, emerging markets analyst at Royal Bank of Scotland, said Erdogan's Kurdish strategy was high risk.

"While pushing the Kurdish reform agenda might win it votes amongst Kurds and in southeast Turkey, it also threatens to lose it votes amongst its own core Turkish vote, and more generally amongst secular voters," Ash wrote in a research note.

This story has been viewed 496 times.

LE FIGARO

17 novembre 2009

Fructueuses retrouvailles franco-irakiennes à Paris

La visite d'État du président Jalal Talabani sera marquée par la signature de plusieurs contrats.

ALAIN BARLUET

MOYEN-ORIENT C'est une visite inédite à forte portée symbolique. Paris a réservé au président irakien Jalal Talabani les fastes républicains, avec garde républicaine à cheval et Champs-Élysées pavoisés, pour marquer les grandes retrouvailles avec Bagdad. La première visite d'État jamais effectuée en France par un président irakien tourne la page ouverte en 2003 avec l'opposition de Paris à l'intervention américaine contre Saddam Hussein. L'ancien raïs, exécuté en 2006, avait naguère ses entrées dans la capitale française, mais il n'y a fait que des visites officielles ou de travail. À ce grade du protocole, Jalal Talabani est déjà venu à deux reprises à Paris. Cette fois, il y séjournera durant quatre jours et devait avoir dès hier un premier entretien avec Nicolas Sarkozy suivi d'un

dîner d'État. Ce rapprochement intervient alors qu'à l'instigation des États-Unis, l'Irak engage progressivement sa reconstruction économique et sa normalisation politique, dans le contexte d'une amélioration relative de sa situation sécuritaire. Depuis le début de l'année, les contacts franco-irakiens à haut niveau se sont intensifiés : Nicolas Sarkozy était à Bagdad en février, François Fillon y est allé en juillet et Anne-Marie Idrac, en charge du Commerce extérieur, début novembre. La France demeure toutefois très éloignée de la position privilégiée qu'elle occupait en Irak dans les années 1970 et 1980. Les relations commerciales ont progressé en 2009 mais restent à un niveau modeste (164 millions d'euros d'exportations et 315 millions d'importations au premier semestre 2009). Les investissements français sont encore rares : on y distingue Lafarge (qui produit 60 % du ciment irakien) et l'aménagement du port d'Oum-Qasr par CMA-CGM.

D'où les espoirs fondés sur la visite de Jalal Talabani pour concrétiser ou accélérer la négociation de plusieurs contrats, notamment dans les hydrocarbures, dont

l'écrasante domination anglo-saxonne. De 2 millions de barils par jour, l'Irak entend pousser sa production à 8 ou 10 mbj. Parmi les perspectives les plus notables, le groupe Total pourrait se voir octroyer en décembre l'exploitation de champs pétroliers de Nahr Ben Oumar et de Majnoun, après avoir été supplanté, notamment par Exxon et Shell, lors d'un premier appel d'offres. La France a déjà pu bénéficier de plusieurs contrats.

En matière de sécurité, la France a déjà bénéficié de quelques contrats, comme la vente de 24 hélicoptères produits par Eurocopter, filiale d'EADS. Le groupe Thales participera à l'établissement d'une carte d'identité numérisée pour les Irakiens. Aéroports de Paris international (ADPI) a remporté un contrat de 28 millions d'euros pour des études sur un futur aéroport desservant Kerbala et Nadjaf.

Hier soir, Nicolas Sarkozy a annoncé la signature de deux accords. Cette semaine, d'autres seront conclus dans les domaines de la défense, de la sécurité intérieure, de l'économie, du secteur aérien, culturel et agricole, a indiqué hier l'ambassadeur de France en Irak, Boris Boillon. Par ailleurs, deux accords économiques vont permettre « à l'Agence française de développement (AFD) de venir en Irak » et concerner aussi « la Coface (assureur-crédit français pour le commerce extérieur) qui permet de garantir les risques », a ajouté le diplomate.

Souffrant d'importantes pénuries d'électricité, l'Irak a entamé la reconstruction de ses centrales électriques détruites par la guerre. Mais le nucléaire civil, vers lequel Bagdad envisage de se tourner, sera également au menu des entretiens à Paris de Jalal Talabani. ■

Le FAIT du jour

Directoir N° 647 / Jeudi 19 novembre 2009

L'Irak et la France main dans la main

→ Le président irakien, Jalal Talabani, devait repartir de Paris cet après-midi, après quatre jours de visite d'État. Destinée à entériner la normalisation des relations entre les deux pays – Paris n'ayant pas réussi réellement à reprendre pied en Irak depuis son opposition à l'invasion américaine de 2003 – cette visite, placée sous le signe du prestige avec garde républicaine à cheval et pavoisement des rues aux couleurs du drapeau irakien, était une première dans l'histoire de l'Irak. D'une seule voix, MM. Talabani et Sarkozy ont déclaré vouloir approfondir les relations franco-irakiennes « dans les domaines politique, militaire, culturel, pétrolier, économique et commercial ». L'enjeu économique notamment n'est pas mince, le coût de la reconstruction du pays étant estimé à 600 milliards de dollars...



Jalal Talabani et Nicolas Sarkozy, lundi dernier à l'Élysée.

Le nucléaire civil sera également au menu des entretiens à Paris de Jalal Talabani

L'Irak est le troisième producteur au monde en terme de réserves prouvées. À Paris, on espère bénéficier d'une part des retombées de la reconstruction (coût estimé : 600 milliards de dollars), malgré



IRAK : UN DIFFÉREND SUR LA LOI ÉLECTORALE MENACE LA TENUE DU SCRUTIN

16 novembre. 2009 Shwan MOHAMMAD (AFP) -

SOULEIMANIYEH — Les élections législatives irakiennes, prévues en janvier, pourraient être compromises après la menace du Conseil présidentiel irakien de ne pas ratifier la loi électorale sans une meilleure représentation des minorités et des Irakiens de l'étranger.

"Nous demandons de relever le taux de 5 à 15% de sièges" attribués aux minorités et aux Irakiens vivant à l'étranger, a affirmé lundi à l'AFP le chef de l'Etat kurde, Jalal Talabani, avant de partir pour Paris.

Cette prise de position est intervenue au lendemain de la demande du Parlement kurde à M. Talabani de ne pas ratifier la loi.

"Nous lui avons demandé dans une lettre de ne pas ratifier la loi car le taux de sièges (aux minorités et aux Irakiens de l'étranger) n'est pas correct et nous demandons au Parlement irakien de réviser la loi", avait déclaré dimanche soir aux députés le président du Parlement kurde Kamal Kirkouki.

Le vice-président sunnite Tarek al-Hachemi a prévenu qu'il opposerait son "veto" à la loi si les députés ne modifiaient pas ce taux.

Une des responsables de la Commission électorale, Hamdiya al-Husseini, a indiqué à l'AFP que si les discussions sur la loi devaient se prolonger, la date des élections, prévues pour fin janvier, serait repoussée. "Si la loi est modifiée, cela affectera la date du scrutin", a-t-elle dit.

Le 8 novembre, les députés avaient accordé seulement 5%, soit 16 sièges, aux minorités, aux Irakiens de l'étranger et aux partis n'ayant pas réussi à obtenir suffisamment de votes au niveau régional mais dont le nombre cumulé de voix à l'échelle nationale est assez important pour qu'ils soient représentés.

Le Conseil présidentiel, composé du chef de l'Etat -kurde- et de ses deux vice-présidents -sunnite et chiite-, demande de revenir à un taux de 15% accordé lors des premières élections législatives de décembre 2005.

Le nombre de sièges qui était de 275 a été porté à 323 dans le nouveau Parlement pour tenir compte de la poussée démographique.

"Si nous voulons une véritable réconciliation nationale, il faut accorder une vraie représentation aux Irakiens qui vivent en exil. Beaucoup ont quitté le pays après 2003 et les conflits confessionnels", a affirmé à l'AFP le conseiller de M. Hachémi, Saïfaldin Abdul Rahman.

Lors du vote, il y a près de deux semaines, le député sunnite Saleh Moutlaq avait qualifié de "scandaleuse" la décision de réduire le nombre de sièges compensatoires.

Les listes sunnites ainsi que le Mouvement national irakien conduit par deux anciens baassistes, l'ex-Premier ministre Iyad Allaoui et Saleh Moutlaq, considèrent que la majorité des exilés ont fui le pays après la prise de pouvoir par les chiites et le bannissement des anciens partisans de Saddam Hussein, dans la foulée de l'invasion conduite par les Etats-Unis.

Avec un million et demi de votes de l'étranger, ils comptent sur ce réservoir de voix pour améliorer leur représentation.

Quant aux Kurdes, ils misent sur les minorités religieuses et ethniques, dont une grande partie réside sur leur territoire dans le nord du pays, pour également accroître leur influence au Parlement.

Selon la Constitution, une loi pour entrer en vigueur doit être ratifiée par le Conseil Présidentiel, qui prend ses décisions par consensus. Il a le droit d'opposer deux refus. La troisième fois, le Parlement peut passer outre si la loi est approuvée par trois cinquièmes des députés.

Le président du Parlement sunnite Iyad al-Samarai a informé les 70 députés présents lundi de la requête de M. Hachémi mais aucune décision n'a été prise et la question n'a pas été pour le moment inscrite à l'ordre du jour, a affirmé une source parlementaire.



Une voiture piégée fait six morts à Kirkouk

16 NOVEMBRE 2009 (Reuters/

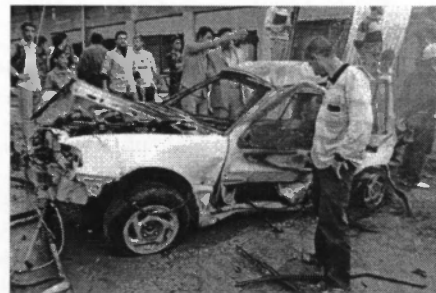
KIRKOUK, Irak - L'explosion d'une voiture piégée sur un marché de Kirkouk, dans le nord de l'Irak, a fait six morts et six blessés lundi, apprend-on de sources policières et médicales.

"De nombreux véhicules ont brûlé et de nombreuses échoppes ont été endommagées, car l'explosion a été très puissante", a déclaré le général

Torhan Abdoul-Rahma, chef-adjoint de la police de la ville.

Kirkouk est au coeur des tensions entre les kurdes et les communautés arabes et turkmènes de la ville.

Les kurdes, majoritaires dans la région, souhaitent intégrer Kirkouk et ses environs à l'ensemble de la province semi-autonome, un projet auquel s'opposent arabes et turkmènes.



IRAK: TALABANI À TÉHÉRAN POUR SAUVER LA VIE DE DEUX KURDES CONDAMNÉS À MORT

SOULEIMANIYEH (Irak), 22 nov 2009 (AFP)

LE PRÉSIDENT irakien Jalal Talabani s'est rendu dimanche matin à Téhéran pour tenter de sauver la vie de Kurdes iraniens condamnés à mort, a affirmé dimanche le site internet du journal Awina.

"Le président Talabani effectue dimanche une visite secrète à Téhéran pour demander au président Mahmoud Ahmadinejad d'intervenir auprès du chef du pouvoir judiciaire, Sadeq Larjani, pour éviter l'exécution de Kurdes iraniens", affirme le journal.

Il n'a pas été possible de confirmer cette visite auprès de la présidence de la République à Bagdad. M. Talabani est kurde.

Des députés de la minorité kurde d'Iran ont demandé la semaine dernière l'abolition de la peine de mort pour les membres de leur communauté, disant craindre une rupture entre la population kurde et le régime.

Selon l'agence Inna mardi, des députés kurdes ont adressé une lettre en ce sens au chef du pouvoir judiciaire, Sadeq Larjani, après l'exécution du Kurde Ehsan Fatahian malgré une intervention de parlementaires selon qui ce dernier avait été dans un premier temps condamné à 10 ans de prison.

"Plusieurs jeunes kurdes ont été récemment condamnés à mort, cela inquiète la province du Kurdistan d'Iran, affirme la lettre. "Le gouvernement ne devrait pas agir de manière à créer une distance entre le peuple kurde et le régime. Ainsi, nous demandons sérieusement au pouvoir judiciaire de reconsidérer (sa position sur) de tels verdicts".

La province occidentale du Kurdistan, frontalière de l'Irak, est peuplée en majorité de sunnites dans un pays à majorité chiite. Elle est régulièrement le théâtre d'actions armées, notamment du Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), actif en Turquie.

Les Kurdes représentent environ 7% de la population en Iran qui compte 70 millions d'habitants.

le nouveau
Observateur

17 NOVEMBRE 2009

Associated Press

Incertitude sur les élections irakiennes. Les dirigeants kurdes ont menacé mardi de boycotter le scrutin prévu en janvier, à moins que les régions kurdes n'obtiennent plus de sièges.

Cette menace intervient juste après la surenchère d'un des vice-présidents sunnites du pays, qui a lui menacé de mettre son veto à la loi électorale adoptée la semaine dernière, après de longues tractations. Il réclame pour sa part plus de sièges pour les Irakiens de l'étranger.

Les Kurdes avaient quant à eux voté en faveur de la loi électorale. Mais ils disent avoir découvert au cours du week-end que les provinces

kurdes n'ont pas autant de sièges qu'il devrait leur en revenir et dénoncent une injustice.

Le nombre de sièges au Parlement a été augmenté, passant de 275 à 323 pour refléter la croissance démographique. Mais seuls trois nouveaux sièges ont été alloués aux provinces kurdes, pour un total de 38, selon le site Web de la Commission électorale.

D'autres régions sont bien mieux servies: la province de Ninive, en lisière du Kurdistan, et considérée comme l'un des derniers bastions de l'insurrection, passe de 19 à 31 sièges. Celle de Bassorah (sud) passe elle de 16 à 24 sièges. Le Kurdistan d'Irak (nord) compte lui trois provinces.

"A moins que cette répartition des sièges ne soit réétudiée de manière équitable, le Kurdistan sera obligé de boycotter l'élection", déclare un communiqué du président régional Massoud

Barzani sur son site Web.

Mahmoud Othman, député kurde du parlement national irakien, lui a fait écho, affirmant que les Kurdes s'attendaient à environ 17 sièges supplémentaires. "S'il n'y a pas de modifications sur ce sujet, nous ne participerons pas aux élections", a-t-il lui aussi menacé.

De son côté, le vice-président Tariq al-Hashemi a menacé d'opposer son veto à la loi si les Irakiens de l'étranger n'ont pas plus de sièges. La plupart de ces exilés seraient sunnites.

La loi électorale avait été adoptée le 8 novembre, au grand soulagement de tous ceux qui craignent que les élections de janvier ne puissent pas avoir lieu.

Mais ces nouvelles exigences font remonter l'inquiétude, alors que Washington a lié le début de son retrait à cette élection. Le repli devrait commencer 60 jours après. AP

AFP

LA TURQUIE TRANSFÈRE CINQ DÉTENUS POUR TENIR COMPAGNIE À ÖCALAN EN PRISON

ANKARA, 17 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LA TURQUIE a transféré mardi cinq détenus à l'île prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest) pour tenir compagnie au chef des rebelles kurdes Abdullah Öcalan, unique détenu de l'établissement de haute sécurité depuis son incarcération en 1999, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

La décision a été prise en réponse aux critiques du Conseil de l'Europe, qui reproche à Ankara de violer les droits du chef du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) en le maintenant dans l'isolement sur l'île-prison.

Contacté par l'AFP, le ministère de la Justice s'est abstenu de tout commentaire.

Les cinq détenus transférés ont été condamnés pour appartenance au PKK, a rapporté la presse.

Selon le droit turc, Öcalan, 61 ans, pourra désormais communiquer avec eux dans les zones communes d'activités à raison de 10 heures par semaine.

Au terme de plusieurs visites à Imrali, le Comité du Conseil de l'Europe pour la prévention de la torture et des traitements inhumains ou dégradants a considéré que les conditions de détention d'Öcalan étaient satisfaisantes mais a critiqué Ankara pour l'isolement dans lequel le détenu a été placé.

Fondateur et chef du PKK, Öcalan a été condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme en 1999 après sa capture au Kenya.

La condamnation a été commuée en 2001 en une peine de prison à vie en raison de l'abolition de la peine de mort en Turquie.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux pays, a pris les armes en 1984 pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes, avant de réduire ses revendications à une forme d'autonomie régionale.

AFP

IRAN: APPELS À LA JUSTICE POUR ABOLIR LA PEINE DE MORT CONTRE LES KURDES

TEHERAN, 17 novembre 2009 (AFP)

Des députés de la minorité kurde d'Iran ont demandé l'abolition de la peine de mort pour les membres de leur communauté, disant craindre une rupture entre la population kurde et le régime.

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"Plusieurs jeunes kurdes ont été récemment condamnés à mort, cela inquiète la province du Kurdistan" d'Iran, affirme la lettre. "Le gouvernement ne devrait pas agir de manière à créer une distance entre le peuple kurde et le régime. Ainsi, nous demandons sérieusement au pouvoir judiciaire de reconsidérer (sa position sur) de tels verdicts".

La semaine dernière, le site internet réformiste Mowjcamp, proche du leader de l'opposition Mir Hossein Moussavi, a indiqué qu'un Kurde, Shirkouh

Moarefi, 24 ans, était dans le couloir de la mort après avoir été reconnu coupable d'être un "mohareb (ennemi de Dieu)", crime passible de la peine de mort.

Amnesty International avait demandé aux autorités iraniennes d'annuler sa peine de mort.

La province occidentale du Kurdistan, frontalière de l'Irak, est peuplée en majorité de sunnites dans un pays à majorité chiite. Elle est régulièrement le théâtre d'actions armées, notamment du Pejak, un mouvement séparatiste lié au Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), actif en Turquie.

Les Kurdes représentent environ 7% de la population en Iran qui compte 70 millions d'habitants.

Depuis début 2009, 251 personnes ont été exécutées en Iran, selon un décompte de l'AFP établi à partir d'informations diffusées par les médias locaux. En 2008, 246 personnes ont été exécutées dans le pays.

Le meurtre, le viol, le vol à main armée, le trafic de drogue, l'adultère et l'action armée contre le pouvoir sont passibles de la peine de mort en Iran.

Barzani, seigneur du Kurdistan



Pétrole. L'omnipotent chef kurde veut construire son «Dubai de l'Irak».

DE NOTRE ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL **GUILLAUME PERRIER (À ERBIL ET SULEYMANIEH)**

La route qui monte d'Erbil vers Salahaddin brille comme un ruban de lumière dans la pénombre. Des panneaux solaires flambant neufs, installés tous les 10 mètres, illuminent cette voie rapide impeccablement goudronnée qui relie en une demi-heure la capitale de la région kurde au fief du président Massoud Barzani. Rien n'est trop beau pour Salahaddin. C'est depuis ce nid d'aigle que Massoud, 63 ans, fils de Moustafa Barzani, le père historique de la révolution kurde, règne sur le Kurdistan d'Irak. Il se déplace entouré d'un aréopage de courtisans en 4 x 4 qui ont installé leur domicile

La saga Barzani

Années 30: Moustafa Barzani participe aux premières révoltes kurdes en Irak.

1945: il prend part à la création de l'éphémère République kurde de Mahabad, en Iran.

1946: il fonde le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK). Chassé de la région, il s'exile en URSS.

1958: il rentre en Irak, lance la révolution kurde et réclame l'autonomie. Nouvelle guerre.

1979: mort de Moustafa Barzani. Son fils Massoud lui succède.

1991: guerre du Golfe. Création d'une région kurde autonome.

2009: Massoud Barzani est réélu président de la région autonome kurde.



Source: M. R. Izady - 2008/CIA

autour de la résidence présidentielle. Là où se trouvent aussi, au plus proche du pouvoir, les sièges des grandes entreprises locales. Ce qui était le village des Barzani est devenu une seconde capitale, le refuge de la nouvelle aristocratie kurde, qui y étale sa réussite. Des lotissements de villas de luxe construites sur quatre étages, en surplomb de la vallée, hébergeront dans quelques mois des dignitaires locaux. Et le Roj Center, immense centre commercial et d'affaires, ouvrira bientôt ses portes.

L'argent coule à flots. Les projets immobiliers pharaoniques fleurissent aussi à Erbil, la capitale administrative de la région: mosquées, palais des congrès et villages de pavillons à l'européenne sont sortis de terre. L'ambition des Barzani? Faire d'Erbil le «Dubai de l'Irak». Depuis quelques années, l'argent y coule à flots. Le Kurdistan reçoit 17% du budget national irakien et négocie, désormais, ses propres contrats pétroliers et gaziers. Epargnée par la violence qui fait rage dans sa partie sud – à Mossoul ou Kirkouk, notamment –, la région nord du Kurdistan fait figure de havre de paix en Irak. Dotée de deux aéroports internationaux depuis 2004, elle est devenue la porte ouverte du pays sur l'extérieur et attire les investisseurs étrangers. Symbole de cette transformation, les échoppes anarchiques du vieux bazar, au pied de la citadelle multimillénaire, ont été rasées et remplacées par un centre commercial d'acier et de verre aux trois quarts vide. «Ils ont vu trop grand, et les loyers sont tellement chers que personne ne veut y aller, ■■■



les bases du changement, mais c'est un mouvement plus large qui est en train de prendre son essor, estime-t-il. Ce pays est comme l'Union soviétique d'hier: ce sont les deux grands partis qui prennent toutes les décisions et interviennent dans la justice, les universités, la société civile ou l'économie. Si l'on n'est pas membre de l'un d'eux, on n'a aucun droit. Nous allons militer pour une justice indépendante, des médias libres et de réels services publics», promet-il. Le discours a fait mouche auprès d'une population fatiguée de la carence de l'Etat kurde. La jeunesse libérale et éduquée de Suleymanieh s'est prise à rêver d'une «révolution orange» et soutient sans retenue le projet de Goran.

«Fils de Saddam». «Notre pays s'est libéré de Saddam Hussein en 1991. Avec ces élections, c'est une seconde libération, s'enthousiasme Sako Shamirani, attablé dans un café branché de Suleymanieh où les étudiants viennent déguster des pizzas en surfant sur Internet. Nous n'avons que 10 ou 15 heures d'électricité par jour, des problèmes d'eau potable et, pour se faire soigner, ceux qui ont les moyens vont à l'étranger... Il est temps que nos politiciens se mettent au service des gens», dit-il. Son camarade Ranj Aso acquiesce: «Le Kurdistan est géré comme un royaume, cela a tourné à la dictature. Barzani est le fils de Saddam», clame-t-il, provocateur.

Le président Massoud Barzani assure avoir reçu le message. Une commission de lutte contre la corruption vient d'être formée. Mais le chemin sera encore long avant un début de transparence des comptes du pays. «Même les officiels admettent l'existence du problème de la corruption», souligne Noreldin Waisy, le rédacteur en chef du magazine local Rudaw. Beaucoup d'argent a disparu entre Bagdad et Erbil. C'est le cas, par exemple, des primes versées pour dédommager les victimes de Saddam: cet argent s'est envolé.» Soixante millions de dollars seraient également prélevés chaque mois sur le budget octroyé par Bagdad. Ils se retrouvent dans les caisses des deux principaux ■■■

■■■ rôle un vendeur de jeans. Mais le promoteur est proche des Barzani, alors que peut-on dire ?»

Le «miracle kurde» a ses détracteurs, de plus en plus nombreux. La corruption généralisée et le népotisme érigé en système politique par les grandes familles locales commencent à lasser une population en manque de démocratie. Politiquement autonome depuis 1991, le Kurdistan avance sous la coupe des deux grands partis kurdes, le PDK (Parti démocratique du Kurdistan) de Massoud Barzani et l'UPK (Union patriotique du Kurdistan) de Jalal Talabani, le président de la République irakienne, en visite cette semaine à Paris. Mais les élections régionales organisées fin juillet ont sonné comme un coup de semonce pour les deux hommes forts du pays. La liste menée par des dissidents de l'UPK et baptisée Goran (Change-ment) a raflé 23 % des votes et 25 sièges de députés, arrivant même en tête à Suleymanieh, le fief des Talabani. De quoi créer, pour la première fois, une véritable opposition. Avec son discours anticorruption, ses slogans chocs et ses concerts de hip-hop, le mouvement Changement a secoué le paysage politique et rallié une bonne partie de la jeunesse kurde.

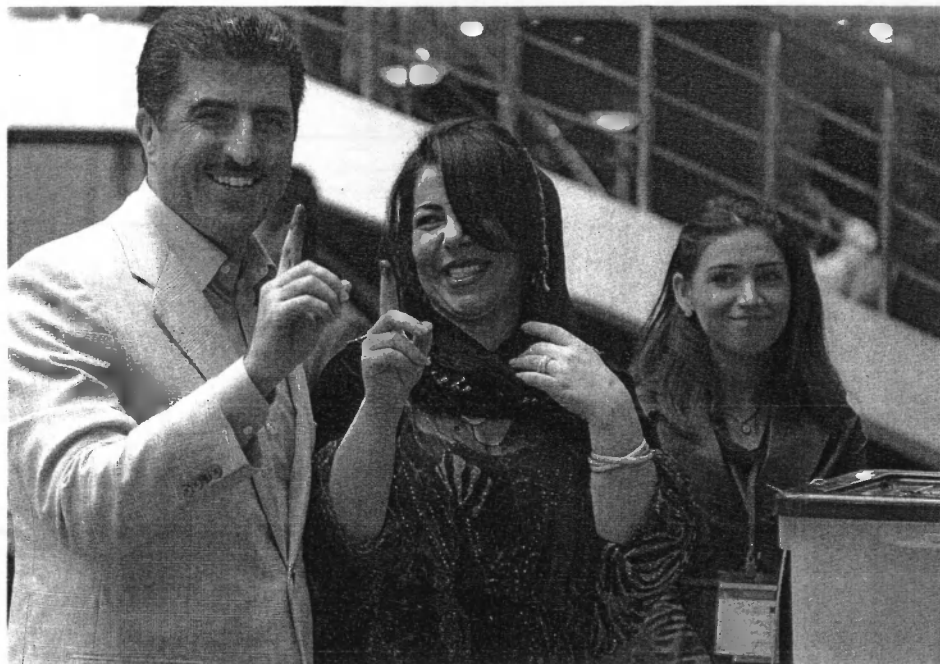
Ouverture ? La jeunesse kurde nourrit des espoirs de changement, incarné par Noshirwan Moustafa (en bas), le leader du mouvement d'opposition Goran.

«Goran a brisé des tabous et veut poursuivre le combat au Parlement. Cela suscite beaucoup d'espoirs chez les Kurdes. Le gouvernement doit désormais le prendre en compte. On va peut-être parvenir à un grand nettoyage des deux partis», espère Mohsen Omar, intellectuel et directeur du département de français à l'université d'Erbil.

Dans son QG ultramoderne perché sur une colline à la périphérie de Suleymanieh, le leader de Goran, Noshirwan Moustafa, reçoit en costume traditionnel de peshmerga, les guerriers kurdes: ce vieux rival de Jalal Talabani au sein de l'UPK veut croire à l'émergence d'une vague réformatrice dans la société. «Nous avons posé



ED KASHI/CORBIS - CHRISTOPHE PETIT-TESSON/MAXPPP



■■■ partis, selon les opposants de Goran. «*La corruption ? Allez-y ! Je nage dedans*», répond Niazzy Brahim en éclatant de rire. «*Si vous ne marchez pas avec les autorités, il est impossible de faire du business. Les grandes sociétés proches du pouvoir, comme Zagros, récupèrent tous les marchés*», affirme cet ingénieur et homme d'affaires d'Erbil qui réalise des équipements publics. Les commissions et dessous-de-table se sont banalisés et le montant des contrats est parfois doublé ou triplé. «*Toutes les compagnies qui investissent au Kurdistan versent des commissions d'au moins 15 ou 20 %, estime-t-il, y compris les sociétés étrangères. Les officiels ne font que se remplir les poches et croient pouvoir acheter les électeurs comme les entrepreneurs*», éructe Niazzy Brahim.

Les pourfendeurs de la corruption et du clientélisme sont rares à Erbil. Et pour cause. Le clan Barzani gouverne la société kurde à coups de dinars irakiens. Dans les provinces d'Erbil et de Dohuk sous son contrôle, des intellectuels et des artistes reçoivent un salaire mensuel du gouvernement. D'autres, un 4 x 4. Le rédacteur en chef d'un petit journal, jusqu'alors indépendant, s'est vu offrir deux villas dans le prestigieux «*English village*» juste avant les élections...

Dynastie. Si Nechirvan Barzani (ici, avec son épouse), le neveu et gendre du président, a cédé son poste de Premier ministre, il reste très influent.

La poudrière Kirkouk

Tout reste à régler à Kirkouk, la ville multiethnique entourée de champs de pétrole, à 250 kilomètres au nord de Bagdad. Objet d'un conflit entre le pouvoir central irakien et les Kurdes, qui réclament son rattachement à la région autonome du Kurdistan, Kirkouk est une poudrière. Les attentats et les enlèvements crapuleux sont fréquents. Le sort de la ville reste en suspens. Le recensement de la population et le référendum, prévus par la Constitution irakienne, n'ont jamais pu être organisés depuis 2003 ■ **G. P.**

Et le club de football d'Erbil, sponsorisé par le PDK, a racheté à grands frais plusieurs vedettes locales, priées d'enfiler les couleurs barzanistes. L'administration, plus que généreuse, a créé une véritable culture de l'assistanat : plus des deux tiers de la population active travaillent dans le secteur public ! Des emplois parfois fictifs. Dans l'immeuble du ministère des Sports, par exemple, des centaines de fonctionnaires «*boivent du thé toute la journée*», explique en souriant un observateur avisé de la politique kurde.

Il en faut plus pour déboulonner la dynastie des Barzani. Car elle est indissociable de l'histoire de l'émancipation du Kurdistan. Massoud a d'ailleurs été réélu sans coup férir en juillet président du Kurdistan d'Irak, avec 70 % des



Tandem. Talabani et Barzani, à la tête des deux grands partis kurdes.

voix. Son neveu et gendre, Nechirvan Barzani, a cédé le fauteuil de Premier ministre qu'il a occupé de 2006 à 2009. Mais ce quadra, amateur de costumes italiens, reste extrêmement influent : son réseau de relations dans les milieux économiques en fait un personnage incontournable pour les années à venir.

« Jérusalem kurde ». Quant au fils de Massoud, pressenti pour la succession, il est à la tête des puissants services de renseignement... «*Moustafa Barzani, le père, reste une légende. C'est le secret du succès de Massoud*», estime le rédacteur en chef de Rudaw. Il poursuit : «*L'actuel président de la région kurde conserve un prestige intact car il incarne la figure du libérateur. Les Kurdes veulent être dirigés par une personnalité charismatique et décisive dans les moments charnières.*» Alors, Massoud Barzani, le chef de guerre, sait revêtir quand il le faut le costume de peshmerga, symbole de ses années de lutte contre le régime de Saddam Hussein, qu'il fit exécuter 3 000 membres de la famille. Chaque fois que la souveraineté de la région kurde est en question, il monte au front : contre la Turquie lorsqu'elle intervient contre les rebelles du PKK réfugiés dans les montagnes situées à l'intérieur de ses frontières. Ou encore contre Bagdad, quand le gouvernement central de Nouri al-Maliki, un Arabe chiite, veut imposer sa loi. Pour les Kurdes, Barzani est aussi le dernier rempart dressé autour de Kirkouk, la grande ville pétrolière. Il est le seul capable de défendre cette «*Jérusalem kurde*» au statut incertain, convoitée par les Arabes depuis la création de l'Irak. Kirkouk, la ville disputée, est la «*lignée rouge*» à ne pas franchir, a-t-il averti à plusieurs reprises à l'adresse de Bagdad et des Irakiens arabes qui l'habitent. Chef de guerre historique, chef de clan et chef d'Etat, Massoud Barzani est tout à la fois. Les réformateurs de Goran l'ont bien compris et recherchent plutôt le compromis : rien au Kurdistan ne peut se faire sans Barzani, pas même la modernisation du système politique ■

CHRISTOPHE PETIT-TESSON/MAXPPP - SAËN HAWÊD/CORBIS

Liberate Iraq's economy

Iraq must cease being hostile to small business or face a growing army of jobless.

Frank R. Gunter

BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA After returning from the second of two tours in Iraq, I can attest to notable progress.

Iraqi civilian casualties have dropped sharply, the result of both the United States surge and negotiations with Sunni groups. There has been political progress as well. Provincial elections were held this year and national elections are scheduled for early 2010.

The future of the Iraqi economy, however, remains bleak: Without fundamental change, unemployment and the accompanying instability will rise while the widespread corruption will worsen. The political and security gains made at such great cost in Iraqi and American blood and treasure will be imperiled.

Iraq not only has a severe shortage of jobs, it also has a growing number of job-seekers. As much as 51 percent of the Iraqi labor force is either unemployed or underemployed; the number is even higher for young workers.

For three decades, the Iraqi government has been the primary source of employment. Almost half of the country's labor force is paid by the government from its revenues from petroleum exports. With the exception of agriculture, legitimate private-sector employment is small — by my calculations, about 6 percent of the labor force. Most of the remainder of the Iraqi labor force is either unemployed or working in the underground economy.

In 2008, the sharp rise in oil revenues and improved security led to an economic boom. The government created more than enough new public sector jobs to absorb the approximately 250,000 young people who enter the work force every year.

However, this economic surge was short-lived. After oil prices dropped by almost \$100 a barrel earlier this year, the government imposed a hiring freeze and unemployment began to rise.

Unfortunately, there is nowhere for these job-seekers to go. Iraq's private sector is unable to employ many of the jobless because the country has one of the most hostile business regulatory environments in the world. (Of the 183 countries ranked by the World Bank for "ease of doing business," Iraq is 153rd.)

In Iraq, it is hard to legally start a business, get credit or trade internationally. As a result, most private businesses either hide in the underground economy — with all of the associated inefficiencies — or accept the necessity of bribing an unending stream of government officials.

This is not sustainable. In 2010, the Iraqi government will hit the wall. A combination of low oil prices, ex-



KIMIMASA MAYAMA/REUTERS

hausted cash reserves and the expense of paying for a bloated government sector will prevent the creation of public sector jobs. And the private sector, as it continues to struggle with excessive regulation and corruption, is unlikely to create more than a fraction of the needed employment.

Rapid growth in the number of unemployed young men will likely follow — and these young men will be attractive recruits for political insurgents, fundamentalist terrorist groups and criminal gangs. Increased instability is almost certain.

There is another path. The potential for private sector job growth in Iraq is great. The country is blessed with a strong entrepreneurial tradition, a relatively well-educated labor force and a natural resource more valued in the Middle East than oil: water.

Only Iraq and Turkey have sufficient water for large-scale agribusiness, and Iraq is surrounded by wealthy countries that need to import food. But to exploit these advantages, Iraq needs to make important changes. And it should start by rationalizing its commercial code.

The chief problems in Iraq's commercial code are its incredible complexity, long delays in processing requests for licenses and high cost. For example, registering a new business in Iraq costs almost \$2,800 compared to \$139 in Delaware. (However, a group of Iraqi businessmen assured me that if \$600 in cash was given to the right person, a li-

cense would be available immediately and no further fees would be required.)

The country could simply throw out its current commercial code and adopt a less restrictive, regionally acceptable one, like Saudi Arabia's. Or, more realistically, it could make its code more user-friendly by, say, allowing business owners to work with one ministry, as opposed to a dozen.

The government could take other steps, too. With the exception of tax collection and international trade regulations, responsibility for regulating private businesses could be taken from the Baghdad ministries and delegated to the country's 18 provinces.

Encouraging the provinces to compete for private-sector jobs would lead to friendlier regulatory environments around the country — just as it has in the United States. But whatever is decided, the government of Iraq is running out of time. It must either end its hostility toward private businesses or accept that a sharply growing mass of unemployed will nullify the progress of the last three years.

FRANK R. GUNTER, an associate professor of economics at Lehigh University, was the senior civilian economics adviser to the Multinational Corps in Iraq 2008-2009.

Iran may be hiding atom sites, report says

WASHINGTON

Facility at Qum makes little sense without others to supply it, I.A.E.A. says

BY DAVID E. SANGER
AND WILLIAM J. BROAD

International inspectors who gained access to Iran's newly revealed underground nuclear enrichment plant raised questions in a report released Monday about whether the country may have also concealed other nuclear factories.

So far, Iran has denied that there are other hidden sites, in addition to the one built deep underground on a military base north of the holy city of Qum. The inspectors were given access to the half-built plant late last month, and reported that they found it was in "an advanced state" of construction, but that no centrifuges — the fast-spinning machines needed to make nuclear fuel — had yet been installed.

They confirmed American and European intelligence reports that the site was built to house about 3,000 centrifuges, enough to produce sufficient material for one or two nuclear weapons a year. But that is too small to be useful in producing fuel for civilian nuclear power, which is what Iran insists was the intended purpose of the site.

The plant's existence was revealed in September, as much as seven years after construction had begun.

Both I.A.E.A. officials and American and European diplomats and nuclear experts have argued that the existence of the hidden facility at Qom would make little sense unless there was a network of related facilities to feed it with raw nuclear fuel.

The report by the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors came just two days after President Barack Obama, expressing increasing impatience with Iran's responses in nuclear negotiations, indicated that he would begin to plan for far more stringent economic sanctions against Tehran.

He was joined during that announcement by President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia, but Mr. Medvedev was vague about whether Russia was now prepared to join in those sanctions.

Whether by coincidence or as part of a larger effort to increase pressure on Iran, Russia's energy minister said Monday that a Russian-built nuclear power plant in Iran that is a focal point in the ongoing dispute would not come online by the end of the year, as had been planned.

The launch of the plant at Bushehr in southern Iran has been plagued with setbacks since Russia began work on it

in the mid-1990s, with Russian officials often appearing to use the project for diplomatic leverage.

"We expect serious results by the end of the year, but the launch itself will not occur," Sergei Shmatko, the minister, said in Moscow, according to the Ria Novosti News Agency. He said that "technical issues," not politics, were behind the delay.

There was no immediate response from Iran's top leaders, but Mahmoud Ahmadi Bighash, a member of the Iranian Parliament, expressed a commonly held skepticism.

"If we wait another 200 years, the Russians will not complete the plant," he said, according to Iran's ISNA press agency. "It is naïve to believe that the Russians are cooperating with us."

Mr. Obama, in Beijing on a weeklong Asia tour, was expected to take up the Iranian issue on Tuesday with President Hu Jintao of China.

The I.A.E.A. report, referring to the Qum site, said that Iran's belated "declaration of the new facility reduces the level of confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities under construction, and gives rise to questions about whether there were any other nuclear facilities in Iran which had not been declared to the agency."

Iran, which has long insisted that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, denied that it has any other facilities that it had failed to disclose. But in a letter to the nuclear inspectors, parts of which were quoted in the report to the board of the I.A.E.A., Iranian officials said they were motivated to build the underground plant because of "the threats of military attacks against Iran," a reference to the assumption that Israel, the United States or other Western powers might take military action against its main plant for uranium enrichment, at Natanz.

"The Natanz enrichment plant was among the targets threatened with military attacks," the Iranian letter, dated Oct. 28, argued. It said that, as a result, Iran's Atomic Energy Organization went to a little-known military authority identified as the Passive Defense Organization and asked for a "contingency enrichment plant."

It was turned over to the nuclear authorities, they said, "in the second half of 2007," or roughly two years before Iran made its existence known.

The Obama administration has said that Iran made the news public only after it had determined that the secrecy around the new facility had been pierced.

The late 2007 date is significant because it was after Iran, earlier that year, had unilaterally renounced an agreement it had signed with the agency to report on planned nuclear facilities. The

agency says Iran is in violation of the agreement, which the agency contends is still in force.

In fact, it appears that the construction of the plant began much earlier; the inspectors' report noted that satellite imagery shows work began "between 2002 and 2004," or shortly after the revelations about the existence of Natanz, which was also built underground. That construction paused in 2004 — shortly after the Iraq war began — the report indicated, but "resumed in 2006."

In 2006, the Bush administration had indicated a greater willingness to negotiate with Iran, but only if it first complied with three United Nations Security Council resolutions to halt enrichment activity at Natanz. Iran refused, and the report indicated it now produced about 1,770 kilograms, or 3,900 pounds, of low-enriched uranium, enough for one to two weapons if it was further enriched.

Because Iran continued to produce fuel, President George W. Bush also authorized a covert program, focused on the Natanz site, that was intended to disrupt its enrichment activity, by attacking both the computer and electrical infrastructure around the plant. It is not clear that those actions succeeded. But the construction of an alternative plant, protected by the Iranian Revolu-

So far, Iran has denied that there are other hidden sites.

tionary Guard base adjacent to the plant, appeared to constitute an Iranian effort to have a back-up plan in case Iran lost use of the Natanz facility.

Iran revealed the existence of the new uranium enrichment plant Sept. 21 in a letter to the I.A.E.A. American officials charged that Tehran informed the agency only after discovering that Western intelligence agencies had pierced the project's veil of secrecy.

In late October, four inspectors, led by Herman Nackaerts, traveled from the agency's headquarters in Vienna to Iran to conduct the first inspection of the half-built plant.

The report Monday was the first public accounting of the inspectors' findings.

Herald ^{INTERNATIONAL} Tribune
NOVEMBER 18, 2009

Iraq insurgents reassert themselves in former stronghold

RAMADI, IRAQ

Government forces come under sustained attack from Sunnis in Anbar

BY MARC SANTORA

Maj. Gen. Tariq al-Youssef caught a fleeting glimpse of the man who wanted him dead.

As his armored sport utility vehicle pulled past the battered yellow taxi, General Youssef, the commander of the police in Anbar Province, recalled thinking that the driver looked like so many men in this impoverished territory — another poor peasant trying to eke out a living.

Then the taxi driver crashed his car into the general's, detonating his explosives.

"I was not sure if I was alive or dead," General Youssef recalled. "Parts of the suicide bomber were scattered all around me."

The attack in June, from which General Youssef walked away unscathed, marked the beginning of what Iraqi and American officials say has been a concerted effort by Sunni insurgents to reassert themselves in a part of the country that was once their stronghold.

Early on Monday morning, men dressed in Iraqi Army uniforms killed at least 13 people, including a local cleric. The victims were rousted from their homes in a village west of Baghdad. A doctor at Abu Ghraib Hospital, where the bodies were brought, said they all had gunshot wounds to the head.

On Monday night, a series of bombs in Falluja struck the house of a police officer and an Iraqi Army patrol, wounding at least seven people.

In recent weeks the targets of suicide bombers in Anbar have included a restaurant popular among the police in Falluja, where 16 people were killed; a police officer's funeral in Haditha, where 6 were killed; a water tanker in Ramadi that exploded, killing 7 police officers escorting the vehicle; and a national reconciliation meeting in Ramadi, where 26 were killed.

There also have been dozens of attacks on checkpoints and, in the last two months, assassinations of influential tribal leaders and the destruction of vital infrastructure.

"In the last few months you have had an attempt by A.Q.I. to regain a foothold here," said U.S. Brig. Gen. Stephen R. Lanza, using the military's term for Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a largely homegrown Sunni militant group thought to have foreign support.

Still, the level of violence is greatly re-



A security team assigned to Maj. Gen. Tariq al-Youssef, who escaped unscathed from a suicide bomber's attack in June that marked the beginning of the new wave of violence.

duced from that in 2005, when the local police force collapsed, or 2007, when an increase in American troops began and tribal leaders banded together to fight — or co-opt — the militants. But this is a delicate moment in a region where militants once controlled the streets and were able to direct attacks into Baghdad.

With American forces in a period of transition, Iraqi politicians positioning themselves for the national elections, basic services still in shambles and rampant unemployment, Iraqi security officials say that Al Qaeda and other militants would like to exploit the moment and derail the fragile security gains.

Anbar, the desert region west of Baghdad, has played a critical role since the American invasion.

It is where the insurgency first rose, where Al Qaeda established a base to stage spectacular attacks that ignited the sectarian bloodletting and also where the tide of the war began to shift in America's favor as tribal leaders and former insurgents turned against Al Qaeda.

Anbar borders Saudi Arabia and Jordan, as well as Syria, a country that the government accuses of aiding militants, and the province runs right up to the outskirts of Baghdad.

The fact that the attackers Monday wore army uniforms raised a number of troubling questions, including the prospect of infiltration of security forces or extrajudicial killings by soldiers.

"We no longer trust the army after this incident," said Abdul Rahman, who saw the abductions and knew some of the men later found dead. "If the army came to capture someone now, he would not go with them, fearing he would face the same destiny."

While Iraqi security forces work to thwart the militant networks, the American role here continues to evolve and diminish. Anbar is the first province in Iraq where American combat brigades have moved out completely.

At the peak of the surge in troops to Iraq in 2007, about 20,000 Marines were in Anbar, working out of 10 large bases. There are now 3,500 troops spread

across five bases, newly trained Americans whose role is to "advise and assist" Iraqi security forces. But the Iraqis now rarely ask for assistance.

When militants blew up a major bridge last month in Ramadi, close to an American base on the outskirts of the city, no U.S. forces responded. Iraqis asked for assistance only days later and only regarding complicated forensic and engineering work, according to U.S. officials.

American officials noted the vast difference in the level of violence from two years ago and the increasing capabilities of Iraqi security forces.

"These attacks are designed to threaten the police," General Lanza said. "But you do not see the institutions of the state falling apart."

Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha, one of Anbar's prominent leaders who helped mobilize a tribal rebellion against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia in 2007, said the chief aim of militants was not to reignite sectarian fighting.

"They want to attack for two main reasons," he said. "They target the police because the police have achieved a victory over them. And the second major reason is because they want to keep investors out."

The most dangerous areas in Anbar are those just outside Baghdad, including the area where the Monday attack took place.

One witness, who identified himself as Abu Ali, said he watched as some of the victims were taken from their homes.

"I saw men dressed in army uniforms going into houses and arresting people," he said.

There were conflicting reports as to whether some of those killed were former insurgents who had joined the effort to fight Al Qaeda or were still active members of a militant group known as the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades.

On Monday, the village was locked down, with dozens of Iraqi Army vehicles cordoning off the area. Witnesses saw U.S. military vehicles in the area as well.

Kurdish, Sunni demands may derail Iraqi elections

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's Kurds threatened on Tuesday to boycott national elections, days after the country's Sunni vice president threatened to veto the newly passed election law needed to hold the January vote.

Barely a week after the long-delayed legislation was passed, the hard-fought deal appears to be hitting a major roadblock, threatening to derail the country's nationwide parliamentary elections and possibly slow U.S. plans to withdraw combat troops from Iraq.

The Kurds and Sunnis are unsatisfied with the allocation of seats in the next parliament, and are demanding more spots for their respective constituencies.

The boycott and veto threat come after lawmakers haggled for weeks over the election legislation they finally passed on Nov. 8, much to the relief of Iraqi political leaders and the United States, which lobbied hard for the bill.

"We knew that the Sunnis were unhappy, they made that clear from the beginning," said Joost Hiltermann, Middle East director of

the Brussels-based International Crisis Group think tank.

"Nobody knew that the Kurds were unhappy, too."

The Kurds originally supported the election law, voting in favor of it last week in parliament. But they say it was only over the weekend that they found out that their three provinces in northern Iraq had received fewer seats than they believe they deserved.

Under a proposal to expand parliament from 275 to 323 seats to reflect population growth, only three new seats were allocated to the Kurdish provinces, giving them a total of 38, according to the Independent High Electoral Commission's Web site.

Other regions saw a far larger jump in their number of representatives. Ninevah province, for one, which borders the Kurdish region, grew from 19 to 31 seats. Basra province in the south grew from 16 to 24 seats.

The office of Kurdistan Regional President Massoud Barzani said the way seats are distributed under the new election law is unfair to Kurds.

"Unless this seat allocation formula is reconsidered in a just manner, the people of (the) Kurdistan Region will be compelled to boycott the elec-

tion," a statement posted on Barzani's Web site said.

Mahmoud Othman, a senior Kurdish member of Iraq's national parliament, said the Kurds had been expecting about 17 additional seats.

"The main point is the allocation of seats," Othman told The Associated Press. "If no changes are made on this matter then we will not participate in the elections."

Hiltermann, the analyst, said it's not clear what would be a realistic compromise.

"It's a matter of numbers, and numbers matter in any election anywhere in the world," he said.

The three northern provinces make up the Kurdish autonomous region, which has its own parliament as well as president. While Kurds have fought bitter battles among themselves in their regional politics, they have generally presented a strongly united front on the national political scene.

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh criticized the Kurdish threat to boycott the election.

"There is a chance to solve this problem and the call to boycott the elections is not appropriate and does not serve democracy and the new Iraq," he told al-Arabiya television.

The Kurdish demands follow Sunni Arab Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi's threat Sunday to veto the election law unless voters outside Iraq are guaranteed more seats. Most Iraqis living abroad are belie-

ved to be Sunni.

Dominant for decades under Saddam, Iraq's minority Sunni Arabs have felt politically marginalized since the former dictator's ouster in 2003, boycotting the first post-Saddam national elections in January 2005.

Hiltermann said al-Hashemi's demands stems from Sunni fears of being sidelined once again.

"They need to have a sense that they're not being cut out from power," he said.

Washington has linked its withdrawal of combat troops to the national vote. U.S. military officials have said they will begin to draw down forces about 60 days after the election, hoping for assurances by then that Iraq is on stable footing.

Under a plan by President Barack Obama, all U.S. combat personnel must be out of Iraq by the end of August 2010. The rest of the troops, such as trainers and support personnel, must leave by the end of 2011.

"You have an electoral law that generally the U.S. is desperate to get it through parliament, and so move heaven and Earth behind it," said Toby Dodge, an Iraq expert at Queen Mary college, University of London.

"So the law goes through, and then the big beasts of Baghdad politics start quibbling ... to try to get a better deal for their own sectarian interests."

PKK leader's jail isolation ends

Jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan is being joined by five inmates, ending his solitary confinement.

Turkey imprisoned Mr Ocalan in 1999 and sentenced him to death for treason, but this was commuted to a life sentence.

The Council of Europe had accused Turkey of violating his human rights by keeping him in isolation.

Five convicted members of his rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) will see him for up to 10 hours a week at the jail

on Imrali island.

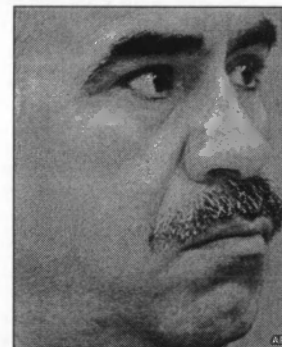
Reports say other inmates are expected to be transferred to the island at a later date.

Peace plan

The Council of Europe made its call for an end to Mr Ocalan's solitary confinement after a delegation from its Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment made several visits to the jail.

The committee criticised restrictions on contact with the outside world, but found the physical conditions in Mr Ocalan's cell satisfactory.

The move came only days after the Turkish government formally launched a much-anticipated peace plan to try to end the conflict in the mainly Kurdish south-east of the country.



Interior Minister Besir Atalay presented a reform package to parliament, including greater freedom to use the Kurdish language.

Some 40,000 people have been killed in the PKK's 25-year fight for Kurdish autonomy.

OPINION

HOW TURKEY MASSACRED THE KURDS OF DERSIM

Mustafa AKYOL

A great problem facing Turkey is that the country continues to idealize its authoritarian age and avoid facing its misdeeds. After five months on book leave, it is nice to be back in the Daily News.

I hope all has been well for everybody since June. As for Turkey, many new events and debates seem to have unfolded, but the scene is pretty much the same. Once again, one of the taboos of our not-so-democratic Republic is being hotly debated. (This time it is the "Kurdish question.")

Once again, our incumbent "Islamist" party, despite the reckless machismo of its leader, proves to be more liberal and reformist than its secularist opponents. And, once again, some pundits in Turkey, or Washington, are propagating the line that this "Islamist" government is pushing us into "darkness," by ending the good old days of the Kemalist quasi-dictatorship.

In fact, understanding the true nature of that Kemalist era is the key to realizing whether Turkey is heading toward "darkness," or actually moving away from it. And Onur Öymen, the second man of the secularist opposition, the Republican People's Party, or CHP, just gave us a good opportunity to reflect on that question a little bit.

Dersim? What Dersim?

Öymen's controversial remarks came last week, when he strongly opposed the reform initiative to broaden Kurdish rights and disarm the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Criticizing the governments' peacenik motto, "Let mothers cry no more," Öymen said that Turkey has fought many lethal enemies, both within and without, and never stopped doing so for such bleeding-heart concerns. "Did mothers not cry in the Dersim uprising," he asked. "No one stood up and said, 'Let mothers cry no more' and 'let's stop this struggle.'"

Protests then flared against Öymen, throughout the country, and even from some of the saner members of his party. "Dersim," they said, "cannot be justified."

But what was this Dersim thing all about?

Many Turks have no clue about the event because this nasty episode, like several others, is carefully excluded from "official history," the only history they know. Even some Western authorities, such as Bernard Lewis and Stanford J. Shaw, have not written a single word about it in their books on modern Turkish history. Yet the violent suppression of the Dersim Revolt of 1937-38 is too tragic to be forgotten, let alone be cheered for.

Here is the briefest story. Dersim, a town in eastern Anatolia, was a tribal area of Alevi Kurds, who were both religiously and ethnically unorthodox in the eyes of the Turkish Republic. In the mid-1930s, the Kemalist regime tried to subdue this anarchic region by imposing "law and order," and, of course, taxes. Some tribes



conceded defeat, others resisted.

One day in March 1937, a strategic wooden bridge was burned down and telephone lines were cut. The government saw this as the beginning of a big rebellion. The military soon launched a brutal campaign on the province, in order to kill the rebels, but also a great many number of civilians.

The accounts from the massacres come mainly from the survivors, such as Nuri Dersimi, who wrote a book 13 years later in Syria. He explains that when troops began hunting down the rebellious tribes, the men gave battle, and the women and children hid in deep caves.

"Thousands of these women and children perished because the army bricked up the entrances of the caves," Dersimi writes. "At the entrances of other caves, the military lit fires to cause those inside to suffocate. Those who tried to escape from the caves were finished off with bayonets."

It is safe to assume that Dersimi, a Kurdish nationalist, is biased. But other accounts confirm the terrible story. Martin van Bruinessen, a Dutch anthropologist and an expert on Kurdish history, says, "At several instances, the [official military] reports mention the arrest of women and children, but elsewhere we read of indiscriminate killing of humans and animals.

"With professional pride, reports list how many 'bandits' and dependents were 'annihilated,' and how many villages and fields were burned. Groups who were hiding in caves were entirely wiped out."

Overall, Bruinessen estimates "almost 10 percent of the entire population of Tunceli was killed."

You can wonder where Tunceli was. Well, it was Dersim's new title after the "pacification" of the province. Just like thousands of other Kurdish towns and villages, it was given an artificial Turkish name.

The 'historical context'

This is the unpleasant story of Dersim. One can say that it needs to be seen in its "historical context." That was a time when many other authoritarian governments, too, were terribly brutal toward civilian populations. Even Winston Churchill, as colonial secretary, was "strongly in favor of using poison gas against uncivilized tribes" in Iraq.

That contextualization certainly has a logic. What doesn't have one is the fact that Turkey continues to idealize its authoritarian age and avoids facing its misdeeds. That was so apparent in Öymen's defense of his own words. "I am just defending Atatürk's methods," he said. "Shall we deny him?"

Yes, we can deny, and criticize, even Atatürk. The regime that allows that is called liberal democracy. And we are getting closer to it day-by-day.

Main opposition CHP sees Alevi exodus after Öymen's remarks

Alevi members of the Republican People's Party (CHP) are increasingly leaving the party following CHP Deputy Chairman Onur Öymen's remarks about a 1937 rebellion in the Alevi town of Tunceli.

ERCAN YAVUZ

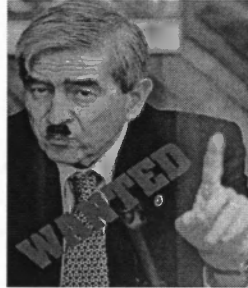
During a speech in Parliament on Tuesday criticizing the government's Kurdish initiative, which seeks to expand the rights of Kurds in Turkey to alleviate and ultimately end the separatist terrorism of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Öymen said: "Didn't mothers also cry at the time of the Sheikh Said Rebellion? Didn't mothers also cry at the time of the Dersim Rebellion" in response to the government's use of the phrase "Let no more mothers cry" as part of its efforts to end the PKK's campaign of terrorism. The rebellion took place in 1937 in Dersim, which had historically been a semi-autonomous region.

Dersim was renamed Tunceli after the rebellion. The rebellion was led by Seyyid Riza, the chief of a Zaza tribe in the region. The Turkish government, led by Ismet İnönü at the time, responded with air strikes against the rebels. Thousands were killed in the campaign.

In later remarks, Öymen did not apologize and referred to the Dersim deaths as "collateral damage." In addition, the party administration did not punish Öymen in any way, but rebuked CHP deputy Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, who called on Öymen to resign.

The remarks, topped with the CHP administration's reaction, have caused Alevis, who have historically voted for the secular CHP, to question their relationship with this party. The reaction from Alevi associations has yet to die down. Alevi members have been leaving the party in increasingly higher numbers. Observers believe Sisli Mayor Mustafa Sarigül, a former CHP member who became a CHP-reject when he attempted to challenge CHP leader Deniz Baykal at a party congress, can benefit greatly from the Alevi exodus.

Some observers believe what started with Öymen's remarks might turn into a healthy discussion of the relationship between the CHP and Alevis. Some assert that the Alevi community has seen its most difficult times in the republican period under CHP rule. When Alevis walk out on the CHP, the party – which already has no voter base in predominantly Kurdish eastern and southeastern provinces – will only have the votes of secular Turks that reside in Turkey's coastal strips.



Pictures depicting CHP's Onur Öymen as Hitler have popped up throughout Tunceli over the past few days.

Another call on Öymen to resign from the CHP came from the Federation of German-Alevi Unions (AABF). In a written statement released yesterday, AABF said: "We strongly condemn the speech Öymen delivered in Parliament. Öymen should apologize to the Alevi community, resign from his post and from Parliament in order to preserve his dignity."

The statement said the CHP was not a party of the people but of the state. It also accused all senior CHP members of being unyielding defenders of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. "We call on Alevis who are still active in the CHP: What do they feel about these developments? What is their reaction going to be? We would like to know the answer to that."

Reactions from artists also continued on Tuesday. Singer Ferhat Tunç criticized Öymen severely in a statement published on his Web site yesterday. He accused Öymen of deliberately reviving the pains of the past and making Tunceli Alevis live through them again for the sake of mere enjoyment. "This approach, one that seeks to legitimize the most barbaric massacre in the history of the Republic of Turkey, is extremely dangerous," Tunç said, noting that Öymen's expression should be prosecuted as it praised massacring a group of people as a solution to ethnic problems. Meanwhile, Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Türk also called for Öymen's resignation yesterday. "According to [his speech], local Alevis and Kurds are internal enemies. We have tried to prove that the CHP has been cut off from social democracy. It sees Kurds and Alevis as enemies. Can such a mentality continue to exist in the 21st century?" he asked.

Meanwhile, an e-card campaign started by



In a show of solidarity, CHP leader Baykal walks into a parliamentary group meeting together with Öymen, who grievously offended the country's Alevis in a speech last week.

the www.alevidunyasi.com Web site continued for a second day. So far 7,600 e-cards protesting Öymen's words have been sent to the CHP headquarters. The campaign will go on until the number of e-cards sent reaches 90,000, the estimated number of Alevis killed in the Dersim Rebellion.

Also yesterday, CHP leader Baykal showed solidarity with Öymen, as the two arrived together to the party's parliamentary group meeting, which Kılıçdaroglu did not attend. Another party member attending the meeting shouted at Baykal: "I'm an Alevi. Mr. Chairman, will you now say anything about Öymen's words?" Parliament security officials tried to silence the protestor, but Baykal said: "Let him talk. We have said all there was to be said about that. We have closed that subject." After this, several party members attacked the protestor. He was taken out of the room after a brief scuffle.

Another word of support for Öymen's words came from Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli, who accused Öymen's critics and the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) of condoning and even glorifying rebellions while showing suppressing them as cruelty.

Kurds to participate in elections on four different lists

By Hawjin Rashadaddin
The Kurdish Globe

Kurdistan Alliance list is only Kurdish alliance for elections.

Political observers emphasize acting as one voice in the next Parliament, citing the many issues that must unite the varying parties.

As the Iraqi elections near, the Independent Higher Electoral Commission (IHEC) reported that 14 alliances are formed in Iraq for the upcoming elections. In Kurdistan Region, four different lists are to separately participate in the elections that are Kurdistan Alliance List, Kurdistan Islamic Union List, the Change List and the Islamic Group List.

"These 14 alliances consist of 150 Iraqi entities. The biggest alliance is al-Maliki's State of Law [Dawlat al-Qanon] alliance, which includes 50 entities," said Faraj Haidari, IHEC head in Iraq.

The Kurdistan Region IHEC office reported that the Kurdistan Alliance list is the only alliance list in the region for the elections-embracing 13 Kurdish political entities. The list is led by both Kurdish major parties, KDP and PUK.

Imad Ahmed, a member in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) political bureau, reported to the media that Kurds should have prepared themselves to participate in the upcoming elections as one big list. "Kurdish lists still face the important challenge to unanimously act with one voice to deal with issues between Erbil and Baghdad," noted Ahmed.

The Kurdish goals are more easily targeted within the framework of the Iraqi Constitution, added Imad. "It is possible for Kurds to have various viewpoints in Kurdistan. Meanwhile, the more we unite in Iraq, the more we can accomplish our goals."

Ahmed highlighted that the Kurdistan Alliance List is pre-

pared to accept more entities until the deadline of holding the alliances in order to strengthen the Kurdish position in Baghdad.

"Although the election results decide the political acting of the Kurdistan Alliance list in the future, the Kurdish position will definitely be different in the next Iraqi Council of Representatives," said Ahmed, who said that holding an alliance to unanimously resolve the issues of Kirkuk, Article 140, Peshmarga, and federalism is extremely crucial.

"I don't think that Kurds can take the post of Iraqi presidency and some ministerial posts-they had in the past-once again because the Kurdish voice is divided into four lists for the upcoming election," said Hassan Osman, member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives from the Kurdistan Alliance list.

Osman clarified that the Kurdish lists will be able to unite after the elections. Most Parliament members were inactive in the Iraqi Parliament, and Kurds should change their former policy in Parliament for the future, Osman noted.

"As the critical situations are ahead, Kurds should have decided to participate in the next elections as one list instead of the available four lists. Meanwhile, due to having mutual national interests Kurds should act as one voice," said Khalil Ismail, a university professor.

Salahaddin Babakir, a member in the Kurdistan Islamic Union political bureau, reported that the election law leaves little room to hold an alliance. "Kurdistan Islamic Union agrees that all the Kurdish lists will have a unique stance in Baghdad in the next Parliament," said Babakir.

"The way we were called to join in the Kurdistan Alliance list was via the media. There should have been negotiations in order to assign duties and rights for the alliance entities," noted Abdul-Sattar Majid, the

spokesperson of the Kurdistan Islamic Group. "The Kurdistan Islamic Group preferred to participate in the Iraqi next elections independently when we concluded that we were unable to make a joint Islamic list," explained Majid.

Muhammad Tofiq, an official from the Change list, noted that the Change list is ready to have a joint plan with all lists after the elections.

"The next elections will be difficult. In the meantime, the Kurdistan Alliance list wishes for good results. The Kurdistan Alliance list consists of most of Kurdistan political entities, and PUK-one of the main components of the Alliance list apart from KDP is now in good condition," said Ja'far Ibrahim, head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Election Foundation.

Due to the agreement among the entities within the Kurdistan Alliance list, every entity will have its own nominees and each entity will conduct the electoral campaign independently. Meanwhile, KDP and PUK will have 80 percent of the nominees from the alliance, and 25 percent of them are women.

The spokesperson of Kurdistan Alliance List in Iraqi Parliament, Firyad Rwandizi, reported to the media that the joint agreement among Kurdistan lists is going to be held after the election, explaining: "Any agreement depends on the ability and position of the political entities. The agreements may not be held until the election result is known."

"In case there is no agreement after elections, there could be cooperation among different lists and we should share the same political views in dealing with strategic issues," noted Rwandizi. "Different political viewpoints inside the Kurdistan Region should not negatively influence our stance in Baghdad."

"The Islamic Group is ready to have the agreement with all the lists in order to have one stance in Baghdad

concerning the issues between Kurdistan Region and the federal government. We agree to this suggestion either before the elections or after that to ensure the Kurdistan Region people that having different lists doesn't disadvantage the Kurdish national interests, but guarantees them," reported Muhammad Hakim, a member in Kurdistan Islamic Group political bureau.

Many issues unite the Kurdish different lists, like disputed areas, implementation of Article 140, budget, Kurdistan Region income, national resources, achieving key posts, and many others, added Hakim.

"The Kurdistan Islamic Union agrees to have such agreement among the lists in case the four lists participate in setting the concepts for the agreement," Babakir referred.

Spokesperson of the Wish Foundation-belonging to Change List Babakir Drayee, reported that the Change list accepts this kind of agreement.

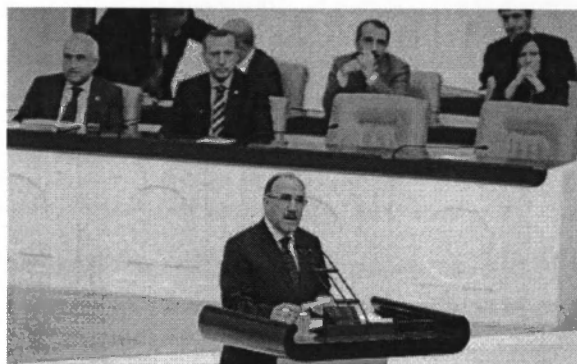
"We agree to this project to have cooperation among Kurdish political lists in a future Iraqi Parliament. Personally, I think such an agreement could be held after the elections, not before the elections," said Drayee. "We are ready to join in any agreement that brings about Kurdistan Region interests."

A member in the PUK political bureau, Sa'di Ahmed Pira, shed light on the nature of the Kurdistan Alliance list for the upcoming elections, explaining: "It is the time for Kurds to forget about the region's internal issues, and they have to have negotiations in order to reinforce the Kurdish position in Baghdad and stand against those political voices that create hindrances in front of Kurdish national projects. The political disputes inside Kurdistan should be sidelined and Kurds must show a new voice this time."

L'épineuse question kurde fait une première irruption au Parlement turc

Redonner leurs noms originaux aux villages kurdes ou autoriser leur langue dans la vie culturelle : Le gouvernement turc de Tayyip Erdogan adopte des mesures constituant un début de reconnaissance du fait national kurde.

Vendredi dernier, le premier ministre turc, Tayyip Erdogan, a défendu devant le Parlement un « projet d'ouverture démocratique » autorisant l'usage de la langue kurde dans la vie politique et culturelle via la diffusion de programmes à la radio et à la télévision. Mieux, les villes et villages kurdes qui ont été « turquifiés » pourront retrouver leurs noms originels. Les détenus kurdes seront désormais autorisés à parler leur langue lors de visites familiales. Enfin le gouvernement turc va créer des commissions indépendantes pour prévenir les discriminations et les actes de tortures. Reste que le gouvernement a rejeté le droit à l'éducation en langue kurde



tout en réaffirmant que la Turquie reste un État unitaire avec une seule langue, le turc, et ce, même dans le cas d'une révision constitutionnelle.

Ces précautions politico-constitutionnelles n'ont convaincu ni l'opposition kémaliste – le CHP (Parti républicain du peuple, membre de l'internationale socialiste) – ni l'opposition ultra-nationaliste – MHP (Parti de l'action nationaliste – tous deux présents au Parlement. Par la voix de son leader, Deniz Baykal, le CHP a accusé le gouvernement de vouloir « détruire et

démanteler la Turquie », tandis que Deviet Bahceli du MHP le suspecte ouvertement de négocier avec une bande de terroristes. Quant à l'armée, qui se définit comme la gardienne du dogme kémaliste et, pour qui, le PKK est un « mouvement terroriste », elle n'a pas encore réagi.

De son côté, le PKK, qui a rejeté l'initiative gouvernementale, la jugeant « superficielle », estime que « la question kurde ne peut pas trouver de solution sans la reconnaissance de la volonté du peuple kurde et sans dialogue avec ses

représentants », a-t-il indiqué dans un communiqué diffusé par l'agence pro-kurde Firat. Il exige la cessation des opérations militaires, que la reconnaissance de l'identité kurde soit inscrite dans la Constitution et que le kurde soit aussi une langue d'enseignement.

Bien que qualifiées d'insuffisantes par les Kurdes eux-mêmes, il n'en reste pas moins que dans un pays où le jacobinisme kémaliste a toujours fait l'impasse depuis plus de soixante ans sur l'existence d'une minorité représentant tout de même plus de 15 millions de personnes, les mesures annoncées par le gouvernement de Tayyip Erdogan constituent de fait un début de reconnaissance du fait culturel et national kurde. Elles ouvrent une brèche dans le mur du déni de l'identité et de la culture Kurde. Le débat ne fait que commencer.

Hassane Zerrouky

IRAK: MASSOUD BARZANI VEUT CRÉER UNE ARMÉE KURDE UNIFIÉE DANS LE NORD



ERBIL (Irak), 22 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LE PRÉSIDENT du Kurdistan irakien Massoud Barzani a annoncé sa volonté de mettre sur pied une armée kurde unifiée dans le nord du pays lors d'une rencontre avec une délégation militaire américaine, selon un communiqué de son bureau publié dimanche.

"Après les élections au Parlement (en juillet dernier) et à la suite d'un accord entre tous les partis, le Kurdistan a pris la décision d'établir une armée unifiée, dont le noyau sera composée des peshmergas (combattants kurdes)", a-t-il dit, d'après cette source.

"Cette démarche est une requête de notre peuple et c'est un de mes rêves de voir une armée unifiée du Kurdistan", a-t-il ajouté lors de cette rencontre samedi à Erbil.

Selon le Centre Jaffee d'études stratégiques de l'Université de Tel-Aviv, les peshmergas liés au Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK, de Massoud Barzani) compte 55.000 combattants (dont 30.000 de réserves) et ceux liés à l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, de Jalal Talabani) sont 18.000.

Ces deux principaux partis se sont livrés une guerre impitoyable de fin 1994 à 1998, qui a fait 3.000 morts, avant de se réconcilier sous les auspices de Washington. Depuis 2003, le rapprochement s'est accéléré et les deux gouvernements kurdes basés à Erbil et Souleimaniyeh ont fusionné.



"Nous avons besoin de l'aide américaine pour unifier l'armée du Kurdistan et cette union se fera selon des critères modernes et internationaux", a ajouté Massoud Barzani.

Pour la première fois, dans le gouvernement kurde dirigé par Barham Saleh, il n'existe plus qu'un seul ministre des peshmergas, cheikh Jafaar Cheikh Moustafa, qui appartient à l'UPK.

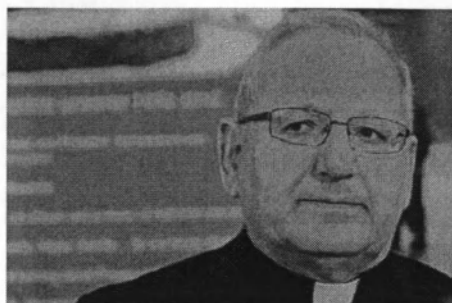
Mgr Sako : « En Irak, l'Église doit jouer un rôle majeur »

Agnès ROTIVEL

En route pour Marseille où il devait célébrer une messe pour les chrétiens d'Orient, Mgr Louis Sako, archevêque chaldéen de Kirkouk, était de passage à Paris et à Sarcelles pour y rencontrer les familles irakiennes en France

MGR LOUIS SAKO, archevêque chaldéen de Kirkouk, au nord de l'Irak, ne fait pas de triomphalisme à propos de la situation dans son pays. « Il y a encore des attentats et des enlèvements, mais moins qu'avant, souligne-t-il. L'économie aussi s'améliore, les salaires dans les villes sont en hausse, et la construction bat son plein. Dans la ville de Kirkouk d'où je viens, la plupart des gens ont un emploi et 90 % d'entre eux travaillent dans le secteur du pétrole. L'Irak est un pays riche. Certes, il y a encore de la corruption mais sur ce point aussi, la situation s'améliore. Reconstruire le pays demande du temps et beaucoup d'efforts, mais nous sommes sur la bonne voie ».

Politiquement, cependant, la situation reste compliquée. À l'heure où il était à Paris, l'adoption de la loi électorale était toujours bloquée par le vice-président sunnite Tarek al-Hachémi. Or de ce texte dépend la tenue des élections générales prévues par la Constitution entre le 18 et le 21 janvier. Pour lever son veto, Tarek al-Hachémi exige que le parlement attribue 15% des sièges de l'Assemblée nationale aux minorités (chrétiens, yézidis,



Shabaks, Turkmènes,...) et aux Irakiens de l'étranger, soit 48 sièges sur 323, contre les 5 % figurant dans le texte actuel.

« Si tous les chrétiens quittent le pays, ce sera la fin de la présence chrétienne en Irak »

« Politiquement, le pays change, insiste Mgr Sako. Il y a une lutte pour le pouvoir en Irak entre les différentes coalitions de partis. La perspective des élections engendre des tensions. Mais les politiciens ont acquis de l'expérience, ils débattent. C'est un signe plutôt sain. La liberté d'expression n'existait pas sous la dictature de Saddam Hussein. On peut parler d'un début de démocratie. Des ministres, des parlementaires accusés de corruption ont été mis en prison. Ça bouge même si les progrès sont encore trop lents »

Dans ce paysage politique en recomposition, « l'Église doit jouer un rôle majeur, insiste l'archevêque. Mais pour cela, elle doit avoir un seul discours et réunir les chrétiens sur une même liste au lieu d'être divisée. Nous avons trois députés au Parlement, si nous sommes unis aux prochaines élections, nous pourrions en avoir cinq ».

Comme à chacun de ses passages en Europe, l'archevêque chaldéen juge très sévèrement ceux qui, à l'étranger, encouragent les chrétiens d'Irak à s'exiler. « On peut comprendre que ceux qui sont menacés ou ceux qui ont leurs enfants en France, partent. Mais si tous les chrétiens quittent le pays, ce sera la fin de la présence chrétienne en Irak. On a des problèmes, mais ça n'est pas la fin du monde ».

« Il vaut mieux être chrétien en Irak, qu'émigré »

S'obstinant à convaincre les chrétiens d'éviter les départs définitifs, il leur propose une solution intermédiaire qui consiste à les inviter à s'installer momentanément au Kurdistan irakien, au lieu de partir en Syrie, en Jordanie ou en Europe, « où ils vivent dans la misère ». « Les villes kurdes de Duhok, Sulemanieh, Erbil, sont sûres, dit-il. Les chrétiens y sont bien accueillis et sur place, l'Église chaldéenne peut les aider matériellement. Au Kurdistan, il existe une pastorale, c'est la même liturgie que dans le reste de l'Irak et on y parle la même langue. Un père qui travaille à Bagdad, peut envoyer sa famille au Kurdistan et lui rendre visite régulièrement, ce n'est pas loin ».

Du 9 au 13 novembre, tous les évêques catholiques et la Réunion des œuvres d'aide aux Églises orientales, se sont réunis à Erbil, pour mettre au point l'aide à apporter aux chrétiens au Kurdistan. « Si on excepte la question de la sécurité, il vaut mieux être chrétien en Irak, qu'émigré, loin de son pays. Car chez nous, il y a encore une solidarité familiale et des valeurs très fortes », conclut l'évêque.



TURQUIE: LE LEADER KURDE ÖCALAN SE PLAINT DE SES NOUVELLES CONDITIONS CARCÉRALES

ANKARA, 27 nov 2009 (AFP)

LE CHEF REBELLE kurde Abdullah Öcalan, condamné à la prison à vie en Turquie, s'est plaint à ses avocats de ses nouvelles conditions carcérales, qui lui permettent notamment de côtoyer d'autres prisonniers, rapporte vendredi l'agence pro-kurde Firat News.

Le chef-fondateur du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), maintenu sur l'île-prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest) depuis sa condamnation en 1999, a été transféré le 17 novembre dans une plus petite cellule dans le même pénitencier.

Cinq détenus, des prisonniers condamnés pour appartenance au PKK, ont été transférés récemment dans cette prison afin de rompre l'isolement d'Öcalan comme le demandait le Comité antitorture (CPT) du Conseil de l'Europe.

"Je ne peux plus respirer ici en raison de la ventilation, je souffre de problèmes respiratoires. Mes conditions sont pires qu'avant", a dit Öcalan 61 ans, à ses défenseurs qui lui rendent régulièrement visite, selon l'agence.

"Je ne sais pas combien de temps je pourrais résister à ces conditions qui ont fait de moi un homme mi-mort, mi-vivant", a indiqué le chef rebelle qui a affirmé vivre dans un "fossé de la mort".



Des partisans du chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Öcalan brandissent son portrait lors d'une manifestation, le 19 octobre 2009 à Istanbul

Selon le droit turc, Öcalan, peut désormais communiquer avec ses co-détenus dans les zones communes d'activités à raison de 10 heures par semaine.

Au terme de plusieurs visites à Imrali, le CPT a considéré que les conditions de détention d'Öcalan étaient satisfaisantes mais a critiqué Ankara pour l'isolement dans lequel le détenu a été placé.

Le PKK, considéré comme une organisation terroriste par la Turquie et de nombreux pays, a pris les armes en 1984 pour obtenir l'indépendance du sud-est anatolien, peuplé en majorité de Kurdes.

Génocide arménien : les Kurdes entament un travail de mémoire

À Diyarbakir, les initiatives se multiplient pour raviver le souvenir de la communauté arménienne qui vivait dans la région.

LAURE MARCHAND
DIYARBAKIR

TURQUIE. Gérard Torikian a fait appel à la fantaisie et à la poésie pour tenter de dédramatiser une tragédie de l'histoire. Les personnages de sa pièce de théâtre, intitulée *Le Concert arménien ou le Proverbe turc*, ne mâchent pas leurs mots pour autant. « Il faut agir résolument, éliminer les éléments non turcs de la population, déclare par exemple l'un d'entre eux, un pacha ottoman. Plus tard, nous dirons que rien ne s'est passé. Celui qui dira le contraire, nous le ferons taire. »

Torikian, Français d'origine arménienne, a dû surmonter bien plus que le trac pour présenter sa pièce. Car la représentation a eu lieu en Turquie, au théâtre municipal de Diyarbakir, grande ville kurde dans le sud-est du pays.

C'était la première fois qu'un spectacle sur le génocide arménien de 1915 était joué en Turquie. La ville de Diyarbakir a été choisie à dessein, car, à l'époque de l'Empire ottoman, une importante communauté arménienne vivait dans cette région peuplée en majorité de Kurdes. Ces derniers commencent à reconnaître leur responsabilité dans les massacres alors que le reste du pays nie toujours la réalité du génocide. Selon Sezgin Tanrikulu, avocat à Diyarbakir, c'est parce que les Kurdes, victimes de la politique d'assimilation menée par Ankara, se sentent aujourd'hui proches des Arméniens.

En 1915, des milliers d'enfants arméniens furent enlevés par la population kurde, des jeunes filles furent mariées de force. Beaucoup d'Arméniens furent également sauvés par des Kurdes. Résultat, beaucoup de Kurdes ont un

ancêtre arménien et du même coup, dans cette partie de l'Anatolie, il a été plus difficile qu'ailleurs d'effacer les traces de la présence arménienne.

Réparation morale

Abdullah Demirbas, maire de la vieille ville de Diyarbakir, estime que faire revivre le patrimoine arménien constitue une réparation morale : « Notre peuple a fait du mal aux Arméniens. Nous devons l'assumer. » Demirbas a commencé par éditer des contes en arménien, puis il a entrepris de restaurer l'église Saint-Georges, qui date du XVI^e siècle et qui menace de s'écrouler. Le clocher a été détruit en 1915 à coups de canon parce qu'il dépassait les minarets alentour. « Je veux que les Arméniens reviennent, mais pas comme des touristes, assure Demirbas. Ils sont chez eux ici. » ■

Nucléaire : Téhéran exhibe ses capacités de défense

Des manœuvres « d'une ampleur sans précédent » ont été lancées pour protéger les sites nucléaires.

DELPHINE MINOUI
CORRESPONDANTE AU MOYEN-ORIENT

IRAN Alors que les négociations sur le nucléaire iranien sont dans l'impasse, Téhéran dit avoir lancé, hier, des manœuvres militaires « d'une ampleur sans précédent » pour exhiber ses capacités de défense en cas de frappe extérieure. « En raison des menaces qui pèsent sur nos sites nucléaires, il est de notre devoir de défendre les installations vitales de la nation », a déclaré, samedi, le général Ahmad Mighani, chef de la défense antiaérienne.

Selon lui, les différentes manœuvres, vont permettre d'utiliser et d'évaluer « des réseaux de missiles nouveaux et modernes, notamment des missiles S 300 perfectionnés, pour lesquels la capacité de production existe en Iran ». Les médias iraniens ont également rapporté que ces manœuvres impli-

quaient à la fois l'armée régulière et le corps d'élite des puissants gardiens de la révolution.

Ce n'est pas la première fois que la République islamique procède à des exercices militaires surnucléarisés. Cette fois-ci, l'annonce faite par Téhéran intervient au lendemain d'une réunion, à Bruxelles, du groupe des Six (France, Grande-Bretagne, Chine, Russie, États-Unis, Allemagne). Ces derniers y ont formulé leur « déception » face au non iranien à l'offre occidentale de retraiter l'uranium faiblement enrichi à l'étranger pour le réexpédier ultérieurement

vers la centrale de recherche de Téhéran. La proposition, présentée le mois dernier par l'Agence internationale de l'énergie atomique, visait à réinstaurer la confiance en minimisant les craintes de voir Téhéran détourner son uranium à des fins militaires.

L'Iran attend des « garanties »

Habitué à souffler le chaud et le froid, l'Iran s'obstine cependant à ne pas claquer complètement la porte des discussions. Dans une nouvelle déclaration faite hier à Vienne, le représentant iranien auprès de l'AIEA, Ali Asghar Solta-nieh, a fait savoir que l'Iran attendait certaines « garanties » pour la livraison du fameux combustible.

Un accord imminent étant, pour l'heure, largement compromis, la question d'une intervention militaire revient sur le devant de la scène. Par le passé, l'Amérique et Israël ont déjà évoqué à mots couverts la possibilité de frappes ponctuelles en cas d'échec de la diplomatie. Selon les experts en la matière, cette option serait dévastatrice pour la stabilité, déjà fragile, du Moyen-Orient. La République islamique dispose d'une importante capacité de nuisance, par activation de « leviers » régionaux. Elle

a également menacé, à plusieurs reprises, de riposter à une éventuelle attaque en visant les bases militaires américaines du Golfe. Reste une inconnue: la force réelle de l'arsenal militaire iranien.

Pour protéger ses installations, l'Iran compte, en effet, sur les fameux missi-

les S 300 que la Russie tarde à lui fournir. Ce mois-ci, un député iranien, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, s'est employé à minimiser l'impact de ce retard, en déclarant que son pays serait capable de fabriquer, lui-même, ce genre de missiles. Mais Téhéran en a-t-il vrai-

ment les moyens? Les experts en la matière n'ont pas oublié l'épisode des photos d'essais de missiles iraniens, retouchées, en juillet 2008, par l'agence de presse des gardiens de la révolution, pour surévaluer les capacités iraniennes. ■

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune
NOVEMBER 25, 2009

Iran wages 'soft war' in drive for more control

DAMASCUS

Re-education and media take on new importance in effort to quell dissent

BY ROBERT F. WORTH

After the disputed presidential election last summer, Iran's government relied largely on brute force — beatings, arrests and show trials — to stifle the country's embattled opposition movement.

Now, stung by the force and persistence of the protests, the government appears to be starting a far more ambitious effort to discredit its opponents and re-educate Iran's mostly young and restive population. In recent weeks, the government has announced a variety of new ideological offensives.

It is putting 6,000 Basij militia centers in elementary schools across Iran to promote the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, and it has created a new police unit to sweep the Internet for dissident voices. A company affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards acquired a majority share in the nation's telecommunications monopoly this year, giving the Guards de facto control of Iran's land lines, Internet providers and two cellphone companies. And in the spring, the Revolutionary Guards plan to open a press agency with print, photo and television elements.

The government calls it "soft war," and Iran's leaders often seem to take it more seriously than a real military confrontation. It is rooted in an old accusation: that Iran's domestic ills are the result of Western cultural subversion and call for an equally vigorous response. The extent of the new campaign underscores just how badly Iran's clerical and military elite were shaken by the protests, which set off the worst internal dissent since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been using the phrase "soft war" regularly since September, when he warned a group of artists and teachers that they were living in an "atmosphere of sedition" in which all cultural phenomena must be seen in the context of a vast battle between Iran and the West. He and other officials have since invoked the phrase in de-

scribing new efforts to re-Islamize the educational system, purge secular influences and professors, and purify the media of subversive ideas.

The new emphasis on cultural warfare may also reflect the rising influence of the Revolutionary Guards, whose leader, Mohammad Ali Jafari, has long been one of the main proponents of a "soft war" strategy, analysts say.

In October, Masud Jazayeri, a leading ideologue within the military's Joint Forces Command, published a letter in the conservative newspaper Kayhan in which he called for a more aggressive campaign of countersubversion. "If we had a better understanding of the enemy, and if we had sufficient determination and motivation to define the defensive lines," he wrote, "we would never have allowed the enemy to penetrate our Islamic society."

There have been periodic earlier campaigns to reinforce the government's Islamist message throughout society. Some analysts say that the new efforts are unlikely to be any more effective than those in the past and may even backfire.

"By trying to gain more control of the media, to re-Islamize schools, they think they can make a comeback," said Mehrzad Boroujerdi, an Iran specialist and professor at Syracuse University. "But the enemy here is Iran's demographics. The Iranian population is overwhelmingly literate and young, and previous efforts to reinstall orthodoxy have only exacerbated cleavages between citizens and the state."

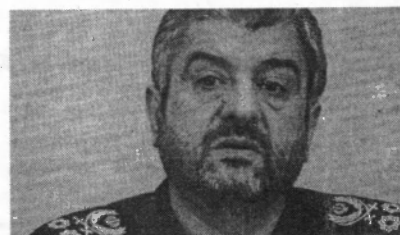
Still, the idea has returned with new force in the months since the disputed June presidential election, which brought millions of Iranians into the streets to denounce President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's landslide victory as a fraud. In the weeks that followed, the government's aura of sacred authority seemed to erode further, with many protesters denouncing Iran's supreme leader as a dictator for the first time.

Iran's military and clerical leaders made clear soon afterward that they saw in those attacks the signature of a foreign plot, and perhaps a more subtle and insidious one than those of the past. It was, in a sense, the only way for the Iranian leadership to reconcile the internal challenges they were facing with

mild calls for reconciliation and engagement from President Barack Obama.

In early September, Brig. Gen. Muhammad Bagher-Zolghadr, the former deputy chief of the Revolutionary Guards, outlined the "soft war" concept in a speech: "In a hard war, the line between you and the enemy is clear, but in a soft war there is nothing so solid. The enemy is everywhere." General Zolghadr said that a soft war was fought in large part through the media, and that the West was "better equipped" to fight it than Iran.

Soon after his speech, the authorities unrolled a series of measures seemingly aimed at redressing that imbalance. This month, Brig. Gen. Mohammad



MEHDI GHASEMI/ISNA, VIA REUTERS
General Jafari of the Revolutionary Guards.

Reza Naqdi, the head of the Basij militia, announced a new era of "super media power" cooperation between the media and the Revolutionary Guards, according to the state-owned official press.

The Revolutionary Guards plan to start a press agency called Atlas in the spring, modeled on services like the BBC and The Associated Press, according to semiofficial Iranian news sites.

The Revolutionary Guards already largely control the Fars News Agency, which reflects views of Iran's hard-line camp. Two weeks ago Iran formed a 12-person unit to monitor the Internet for "insults and the spreading of lies," a phrase used to describe opposition activities, the semiofficial media reported.

The authorities have also cracked down on dissent within the educational system, hinting that professors who do not toe the official line will be purged. A number of hard-line clerics have called for the university humanities curriculums to be Islamized further.

Kirkuk: the heartland of Kurdistan

By Salah Bayaziddi

The Kurdish Globe

The ancient city of Kirkuk is one of the oldest sites of continuous occupation in the region

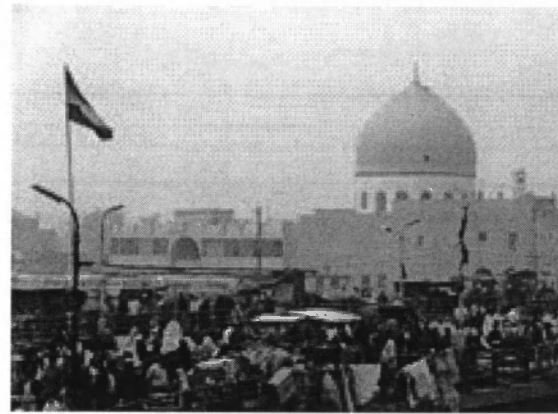
It sits on archaeological remains that are 5,000 years old. Because of the strategic and geographic location of the city, Kirkuk had been the battleground of various empires, including the Mede Empire (the Kurdish ancestors) who controlled the city around the 7th or the 6th century BC. In the medieval era, Kirkuk was part of the ancient Wilayah of Sharazor, which had significant importance to Kurdistan's economy. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the colonial powers divided Kurdistan, and then the Wilayah of Mosul (which the region of Kirkuk was a part) came under the British protectorate. At the beginning, the British had a plan to create a Kurdish state under their mandate and control all its natural resources. In 1921, the British estimated the population of Kirkuk to be 75,000 Kurds, 35,000 Turkmen, 10,000 Arabs, 1,400 Jews, and 600 Chaldeans. A Committee of the League of Nations, which visited the Wilayah of Mosul in 1925 to determine its future, estimated that the Kurds in Kirkuk made up 63% of the population, the Turkmen 19%, and the Arabs 18%. The British colonial power that hid the potential of the region for its oil exploration from the French was completely aware of the economic importance of Kirkuk and surrounding areas. Finally, the artificial state of Iraq was created from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and parts of the Kurdish region including Kirkuk were forcefully annexed to that in 1921. The discovery in 1927 of vast quantities of oil by the British explorers in Kirkuk marked the turning point in the modern history of the Kurds.

Since the creation of modern state of Iraq, the Kirkuk region, rich in its oil fields and farms, has been one of the principal obstacles in finding a peac-

eful solution to the Kurdish question. All the Iraqi governments without any exception have tried to deny the historical and legal rights of the Kurds over their ancient city. For more than 80 years the oil fields of Kirkuk have been brought into use by the Iraqi regimes; these fields used to produce almost half of all Iraqi oil exports. In order to make sure it would stay like this, since the early stages of the new state of Iraq and particularly from 1963 onward, there have been continuous attempts by various Iraqi governments to transform the ethnic make-up of Kirkuk and its surrounding regions.

There is no doubt that the vast amount of wealth from the oil fields of Kirkuk and surrounding areas has brought upon the Kurds nothing except misery, displacement, and genocide. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Iraqi governments--while aiming to grab more land from the Kurds--destroyed over 4,000 Kurdish villages. As Denis Natali, on page 58 of her book "The Kurds and the states: evolving the national identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran," pointed out: "As the Iraqi state petrolized, the political elite started to ethnicize essential oil-rich Kurdish territories. Iraqi officials constructed a series of homes called the Arab Circle around the Kurdish regions in Kirkuk, deported Kurds from their homes, granted land deeds only to Arabs, and gave Kurdish localities Arabic names." During the 1960s, the money from the oil gave the central government a new type of power never before realized, and it was the early stages of full-scale state repression against the Kurds in the years to come. Indeed, the growing oil industry brought with it not only economic developments by a rapidly growing enterprise, but also the need for the state to secure the resource from any possible regional or internal threat.

For the wider Middle Eastern region, the future of Kirkuk and indeed other disputed Kurdish territories in Iraq is of crucial importance. During all



Citizens shop at a market in central Kirkuk, on Tuesday, Oct 3, 2009. AP Photo/Yahya Ahmed

these years, the Iraqi governments have claimed their willingness to recognize the legitimacy of Kurdish national aspirations, but they have never kept their promises. The Autonomy Agreement of March 11, 1979, recognized the Kurdish political and cultural rights; however, it came short when it came to the judgment on the territorial extent of Kurdistan, especially the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding oilfields. The Ba'ath Regime claimed that a new census would determine the status of Kirkuk and other oil-rich Kurdish territories. Kurds were sure that such a census would have proven a Kurdish majority in all of these areas that the regime had denied to recognize as a part of future autonomous Kurdistan. But such a census never was held, and the legendary Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani, insisted on the inclusion of the Kirkuk oilfields to any autonomous agreement. In line with this argument, the author of an article named "Factual Accuracy Is Disputed" said that "Baghdad interpreted this as a virtual declaration of war, and, in March 1974, unilaterally decreed an autonomy statute. The new statute was a far cry from the 1970 Manifesto, and its definition of the Kurdish autonomous area explicitly excluded the oil-rich areas of Kirkuk, Khanaqin, and Shingal. In tandem with the 1970-74 autonomy process, the Iraqi regime carried out a comprehensive administrative reform in which the country's 16 provinces, or governorates, were renamed, and in some cases had their boundaries altered. The old pro-

vince of Kirkuk was split in half. The area around the city itself was named Al-Ta'mim (nationalization), and its boundaries were redrawn to give an Arab majority." From then on, securing the oilfields of Kirkuk and surrounding areas continued behind policies of Arabizing, and every subsequent Iraqi government followed that pattern, including the mass deportation of the Kurdish people from their ancestors' lands that was ordered by Saddam's regime from the late 1970s on.

By the mid-1970s, the brutal «Arabization» campaigns of the Ba'ath Regime that seized power in 1968 embarked on a plan to alter the demographic makeup of the Kurdish city of Kirkuk and surrounding areas. This inhumane process was based on a concerted campaign that involved one of the most massive relocations of hundreds of thousands of Kurdish families from the oil-rich regions of Kirkuk and other areas, transforming them to purpose-built resettlement camps. Meanwhile, the Iraqi regime resettled thousands of Arab families (Shia Arabs from the south, and some Sunni populations from the center) in the Kurds' place in an attempt either to create the security buffer zone from the northern governorates or to simply increase Arab presence in certain areas. During the late 1980s, the Ba'ath government used chemical weapons against the Kurds and then started the brutal Anfal (genocide of the Kurdish people) campaigns, which was the final attempt to finish once and for all the Kurdish people from the

Kirkuk region and the surrounding areas. These forced displacement policies of the Kurdish families continued during most of the 1990s until the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003. According to Human Right Watch, from the 1991 Gulf War until 2003, the former Iraqi government systematically expelled an estimated 120,000 Kurds and some Turkmen and Assyrians from Kirkuk and other towns and villages in this oil-rich region.

After the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, thousands of displaced Kurdish families and others returned to Kirkuk and other Arabicized regions to reclaim their homes and lands, which were and are occupied by Arabs from central and southern Iraq. While the Kurds have all legal and historical claims on Kirkuk as their ancestral homeland, they patiently have avoided

taking back the city through violence and extreme measures. However, the Kurds have made clear to everyone that Kirkuk is everything to them. Therefore, as one of the main victims of Saddam Hussein's Arabization efforts, Kirkuk has come to symbolize the injustice the Kurds suffered at his hands and its annexation to the KRG is the only way to remedy it. Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law, which was considered the Constitution of Iraq that dissolved the Iraqi Governing Council, states in part: "The Iraqi Transitional Government shall act expeditious measures to remedy the injustice caused by the previous regime's practice in the demographic character of certain regions, including Kirkuk, by deporting and expelling from their place of residence and forcing migration in and out of the

region." (This is from the same article mentioned above, "Factual Accuracy Is Disputed.")

The Kurds patiently witnessed that Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law was replaced with Iraq's 2005 Constitution, including a provision, Article 140, to resolve these competing claims. Article 140 consists of three steps: 1) Normalization: the return of Kurds and other residents of Kirkuk displaced by the Arabization campaigns; 2) census to determine the make-up of the province's population; 3) a referendum to determine Kirkuk's status. This process was supposed to have been completed by the end of 2007, but neither a census nor a referendum has been completed because of unresolved disputes between Iraq's Arabs and Kurds. Rather, the government postponed the deadline by six months to June

2008, and then the United Nations attempted to broker a solution outside the Article 140 framework, but the final result hasn't been disclosed yet.

Today, the dispute over Kirkuk has spilled over into every corner of national politics, and it seems that it is getting worse day by day. The new electoral law for new elections, which will be held in January of next year, took weeks of debate among lawmakers, and it was only after U.S., UN, and regional power pressure that the way was paved by Parliament for the new law to be passed. By upholding the implementation of Article 140, the future of Iraq is moving toward an uncertain future- and no doubt that those who are resisting to accept the new Iraq and power-sharing with the Kurds are the main factors in breaking up this country.

San Francisco Chronicle november 23, 2009

Iraq leader's campaign divides Sunnis, Shiites

Hamza Hendawi, Associated Press

Baghdad --A stepped-up campaign by Iraq's prime minister against Saddam Hussein loyalists is alienating Sunni Muslims and stoking tensions between them and the majority Shiites ahead of key national elections.

In its latest anti-Baathist attack, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite-dominated government put three men on state television Sunday to confess their alleged role in planning suicide attacks in Baghdad last month. The three, all in detention and dressed in orange prison jumpsuits, said the bombings were ordered by Hussein's Baath Party.

Al-Maliki's intensified rhetoric worsens one of Iraq's most dangerous sectarian fault lines - one which the United States has long struggled to calm.

Reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites has been an elusive goal, seen as critical for Iraq's stability - and it takes on added urgency with American forces now scheduled to leave Iraq by the end of 2011. Many fear that without U.S. troops, sectarian and ethnic rifts could re-ignite into violence.

Al-Maliki and his fellow Shiite politicians have repeatedly warned in recent weeks against what they contend is a plot by members of the Baath Party to return to power, with what some suggest is the



Nouri al-Maliki, File / AP

help of Sunni-ruled Arab nations.

He has vowed to do everything in his power to stop Baath Party loyalists from running in the upcoming parliamentary election. He has also insisted that Baathists, a term widely taken to mean Sunni Arabs, worked with al Qaeda to carry out massive suicide bombings targeting government buildings in Baghdad that killed at least 255 people in August and October.

The Baath Party and Hussein's regime were dominated by Sunnis, who have lost their political prominence to the majority Shiites since Hussein's 2003 fall. Election law bars Iraqis who held senior Baath Party positions or were involved in past crimes from running for office. But Sunnis fear the ban could be expanded to others.

The talk against Baathists raises alarm bells among Sunnis, who fear it hints at a

broader move to force their candidates out of the election. The election for a new, 323-seat parliament is slated for January, but may be delayed by a dispute over the country's election law and a Kurdish threat to boycott the vote.

"I think the law and the judiciary, not political agendas, should decide the issue of the Baathists," said Sunni lawmaker Hashem al-Taie. "If there is no transparency and fairness, the criterion will be used selectively against candidates."

But such rifts also make useful political tools in an election campaign, and al-Maliki may be pressing on Baathists in an attempt to shore up his Shiite base.

Al-Maliki has become more vulnerable since he was dumped by some of his Shiite allies, who formed a separate coalition to run in the election. He has failed to persuade significant Sunni groups to join his "State of Law" alliance, losing much of his claim to cross-sectarian leadership. The recent bombings also hurt his credentials as the leader who oversaw a vast improvement in security over the past two years.

Mustapha al-Ani, a Dubai-based Iraq analyst, said fears of a return to power by the Baath are groundless.

"This is a carefully planned campaign to scare Shiites away from voting for anyone but traditional religious Shiite parties," he said.

'Kurdish initiative should continue despite opposition'

SELÇUK KAPUCU/TANJU ÖZKAYA

Political observers say that even though the Kurdish initiative has caused harsh reactions from the opposition today, it will bring democratic developments to the country.

One of those observers is former Kurdish politician Hasim Hasimi, a former deputy who was once the mayor of Cizre, a district in southeastern Sînak. Hasimi said he is hopeful that the democratization process in Turkey will succeed despite the opposition's stance because the government's initiative will find support from the public.

"The opposition does not support the government, and its initiative, and constantly slanders it. This is not constructive politics," he said in reference to the initiative of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) to give more citizenship rights to the country's Kurdish population as part of a democratic initiative to provide more freedoms in general. The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) criticize the government for it, saying that the initiative threatens the unity of the country.

Hasimi said that even though Kurds have faced many injustices, they are loyal citizens of Turkey.

"They feel part of Turkey. And having democracy is their most natural desire," he said.

Castigating the opposition for its stance, Hasimi said the way they criticize the government is unacceptable because it is just criticism, without any constructive suggestions to solve the problems.

"In order to make the democratic initiative come to fruition, all state institutions should support it. But the opposition only produces problems, not answers," he said. According to Hasimi, this destructive way of politics is not supported by the general public. He also said that it is not so easy to achieve democratic standards, as "change is painful."

"But we will reach democracy at the end of the road," he said and added that civil society organizations have a lot to do in the process. "Turkey will pass through these times as long as there are no people or institutions blocking the government's way." Another observer who supports the democratic initiative is former deputy and member of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) Mahmut Alınak.

Alınak has been critical of the DTP's stance in the process and said the DTP deputies could do more. "They have not provided many constructive policies in this process. They still act using an old style of politics, like having protests. This is not the way to do politics today," Alınak said.

According to Alınak, the AK Party will increase its votes in the coming elections if it continues with the initiative. In regards to claims from the opposition that the initiative is focused on governance by outside powers like the United States, Alınak said this is not the case at all.

"The owner of the project is the state, and it is executed by the government," he said, adding that the government and the state are working hand-in-hand in the process. He was referring to the military's support for the government's project.



Hasim Hasimi (L), Mahmut Alınak (R)

He also said the DTP could be the key to the success of the project.

"Unfortunately, the DTP hasn't been able to provide a positive contribution to this process. And I don't see that it will," he said. "It is the government which puts its hand under the stone. There are some public polls which show that AK Party is losing votes, but I don't find them credible."

On the contrary, he said, the government has gained the sympathy of the larger public.

"The public is now more aware of the fact that the country has not consumed its resources in this conflict. Both sides paid big dues," he said in regards to Turkey's fight with terrorism in which millions of dollars were spent. Alınak also recalled his 1991 speech at Parliament, where he attempted to talk about the Kurdish problem but was interrupted because he was referring to the pain of both Kurdish and Turkish mothers who lost their sons in the conflict.

"If I made that speech today, I would be applauded. I am so upset because I was taken away from the podium before finishing my speech. I was just going to tell my peers how the problem could be solved without shedding blood."

A top leader of opposition is freed on bail in Iran

TEHRAN

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A former vice president has been released on bail in the mass trial of opposition figures accused of fomenting unrest after the disputed presidential election in June, the official IRNA news agency reported Sunday.

According to IRNA, a Tehran prosecutor, Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi, said that former Vice President Mohammad Ali Abtahi had been released on \$700,000 bail after the verdict was delivered. The re-

port did not say what his sentence was.

Earlier on Sunday, the defendant's lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, said a court had sentenced Mr. Abtahi to six years in jail for fomenting the post-election unrest.

Mr. Abtahi, who served as a vice president during former President Mohammad Khatami's two terms, from 1997 to 2005, is the most senior former official among the more than 100 people on trial since August.

Mr. Khatami is now one of the leading figures in the reformist movement in Iran.

Last week, state television reported that 5 defendants in the mass trial had been sentenced to death and that 81 had received prison terms ranging from 6 months to 15 years.

After his arrest, Mr. Abtahi made televised confessions in which he admitted to provoking people to riot. But his family and other opposition figures said the statements were coerced, and similar claims have been made about other defendants' confessions during the trial.

Rights groups and opposition figures in Iran have criticized the court pro-

ceedings as a show trial.

In the weeks after the June 12 election, the opposition led street protests that drew hundreds of thousands of people, and supporters clashed with security forces. They claimed fraud after the authorities declared President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad the winner of a second term, and the protests were the most serious internal unrest in Iran in the 30 years since the Islamic Revolution.

The clergy-led establishment in Iran accused the protesters of trying to stage a "velvet revolution," and a harsh crackdown ended the demonstrations. A security sweep went far beyond rounding up just protesters on the streets; rights activists and journalists, as well as reformist politicians, were also arrested.

The government has stopped short of indicting the most visible opposition leaders — the presidential candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karubi — but there have been signs in recent weeks that this could change. The opposition says Mr. Mousavi is the rightful winner of the election.

TODAYS ZAMAN

November 24, 2009

Alevi-CHP rift continues to grow after Öymen remarks

TODAY'S ZAMAN

More Alevis have been leaving the Republican People's Party (CHP) following a Nov. 10 speech by its deputy chairman, Onur Öymen, who implied that a 1937 rebellion of Alevis in the city of Tunceli, then known as Dersim, was a terrorist revolt.

Öymen did not apologize for his remarks, and the party administration has stood by him, resulting in growing anger from Alevi communities at home as well as Alevi groups who have migrated to European countries. About a hundred people in Tunceli resigned from the CHP yesterday. Three CHP mayors, two district administrators and executive board members, and former CHP deputy Hasan Göyüldar yesterday announced their resignations. These resignations follow a series of earlier resignations by Alevis from party membership both in Tunceli and other cities. Alevis have traditionally voted for the CHP, but the ever growing reaction to Öymen's faux pas seems to hint that this might be changing.

Those who have announced their resignations include former deputy Göyüldar, Pülümür Mayor Mesut Coskun, Ovacık Mayor Mustafa Sarıgül, former independent mayor of Nazimiye who later joined the CHP Cafer Kırmızıçiçek, CHP Pülümür district president Hayri Kesik, Nazimiye president Abdullah Kırmızıda? and members of the district board as well as members of municipal councils.

The resigning members announced their decision yesterday as a group in a press statement. Ovacık Mayor Sarıgül, who spoke for the group, said, "The wound of the people of Dersim has been reopened with the speech made by CHP Deputy Chairman Onur Öymen on Nov. 10."

He said Öymen's speech clearly indicated that he was pro-violence in addressing questions and not pro-solution. "The people of Dersim, with their culture, beliefs and lifestyle, are members of a society committed to secularism and democracy, who serve peace and brotherhood in this country and who want every individual to live as equal and free people; and they have paid a high price for these values."

Sarıgül said it was a shame for humanity to view Dersim, considered the home of real Alevism, and the people of Dersim, as an enemy. He said it was impossible for him and the others who are resigning to be part of a party that attempts to legitimize the massacre

of tens of thousands innocent people in the incidents of 1937 and 1938.

Kılıçdaroglu in Europe

Another CHP deputy chairman, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, who was born in Tunceli, has been having an extremely hard time this week visiting European Alevi organizations. On Saturday, he could barely finish a speech he was delivering in Munich as the guest of an Alevi organization. On Sunday, he was actually forced to leave the stage during another speech he gave in Vienna at a meeting of the Alevi unions and had to step down from the stage due to intense booing and loud protests. The organizers had to call the police when they found it hard to subdue the protesters, who shouted out "Fascist CHP" in the hall.

The incident follows a similar protest in Germany on Saturday. Speaking at a forum titled "Transformation in Politics" organized jointly by the Alevi Culture Center and the Turkish-German Friendship Association, Kılıçdaroglu said, "Mr. Öymen did not mean to offend Dersim residents with his words, but his words reopened a scabbed-over wound." However, his words caused anger in the hall, and he was interrupted by Mehmet Akgül, a member of the Europe Alevi Federation administration. Akgül said: "We strongly condemn Öymen's statements. It is unprincipled to ignore remarks that praise the Dersim massacre. It is unprincipled for people who define themselves as Alevi, revolutionary and democratic to stay in the CHP. We are protesting this, and we are leaving this convention." The group walked out of the conference hall.

Alevi associations in Turkey and Europe have reacted angrily to Öymen's remarks about a 1937 rebellion in the Alevi town of Tunceli, formerly known as Dersim, depicting a massacre in which 90,000 were killed as an anti-terror campaign.

Kılıçdaroglu was initially silent but then called on Öymen to resign a few days after the incident. However, he backpedaled later when CHP leader Deniz Baykal indicated that he was going to stand by Öymen, and did not repeat his call for resignation.

There have been protests in various cities almost every day since the statement was made, nearly three weeks ago. Following Öymen's remarks, residents of Tunceli put up posters throughout the city showing Öymen with a Hitler-like toothbrush moustache to protest the remarks.

Meanwhile, CHP member and former Tunceli deputy Sinan Yerikaya also expres-



In the aftermath of controversial remarks by one of his fellow party members, CHP Deputy Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroglu was booed off stage in Vienna at a meeting of Alevi unions. Kemal Kılıçdaroglu (small picture)

sed the opinion yesterday that Öymen should have resigned. He said Öymen's refusal to resign was putting all CHP members in a difficult position.

"If he had resigned, the party wouldn't be in such a difficult situation. Because of his words both Deniz Baykal and the rest of us are in a difficult position. Kılıçdaroglu also called on him to resign, but he didn't get any results," Yerikaya said.

Yerikaya also said his father's family was burnt to death when the rebellion was being suppressed. He said the wounds caused by the campaign were still too fresh.

In a speech on Sunday Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan also criticized the CHP's Öymen. He said he hoped the country's Alevis, who have traditionally always voted for the CHP, will finally see the CHP for what it really is. He said he had no doubt that Öymen's words were not a slip of the tongue or a mistake, but rather a conscious and deliberate reflection of the CHP's true mentality. He also criticized Kılıçdaroglu in his speech.

The New York Times November 24, 2009

EDITORIAL

Turkey and the Kurds

In a show of courage and good sense, Turkey's government has announced a plan to grant long-denied rights to its Kurdish minority, and, it is hoped, finally end an insurgency that has cost more than 40,000 lives.

Kurds compose as much as 20 percent of Turkey's population, yet for decades the government banned their political parties and denied them the most basic cultural rights, including the right to use their own language. This mistreatment helped fuel Kurdish demands for independence and two decades of bloody attacks by the Kurdistan Workers Party, or P.K.K.

Although some 12,000 militants are still hiding in northern Iraq along the Turkish border, the P.K.K. has been steadily losing popular support. The new initiative is designed as further pressure and incentive for the group to disband. Last year, Parliament legalized private Kurdish language courses and created the first public television channel in Kurdish. New regulation lets Kurdish prisoners speak to visitors in their native language.

Parliament is now debating an initiative that would allow

the Kurdish language to be used in all broadcast media and political campaigns. It would restore Kurdish names to thousands of towns that were given Turkish ones. And it would establish an independent committee to fight discrimination and investigate torture allegations.

There are other trends that are very worrisome, including Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's attempts to shut down independent news media. But Mr. Erdogan has shown sound leadership with his plan for the Kurds, despite fierce opposition from nationalist politicians. For Turkey to fulfill its potential as a secular Muslim democracy, he will have to keep battling the nationalists and others to make additional political and economic reforms, without sacrificing free political debate.

The United States and other Western countries that have long pushed Turkey to become more democratic should encourage Mr. Erdogan to keep pressing ahead. Most important, Europe must finally make clear that if Turkey bolsters its democracy and respects the rights of its minorities, it will be welcome in the European Union.

San Francisco Chronicle

November 24, 2009

Veto looms again for Iraq election law; election panel says vote delay certain

Qassim Abdul-Zahra, Associated Press

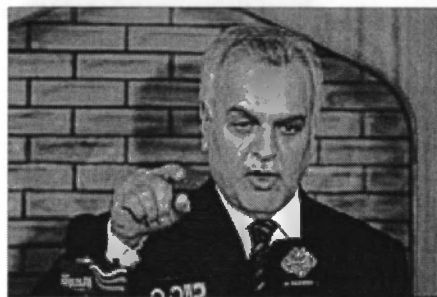
Baghdad --Iraq's parliament failed Monday to produce an election law that pleased minority Sunni Arabs, prompting U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to say that nationwide balloting scheduled for January "might slip" to a later date.

The United States has linked the pace of its military drawdown to the elections, though the top U.S. commander in Iraq has said the schedule is on track for now. U.S. combat troops are supposed to be out of Iraq by August, and the rest of the forces are scheduled to leave by the end of 2011.

The dispute over an elections law highlights the ethnic and sectarian divisions in Iraq. While more secure than in past years of war, the country has yet to achieve the political reconciliation vital to long-term stability.

Both Sunnis and Kurds have criticized earlier versions of the legislation. The parliament amended the law Monday with a version that pleased the Kurds but failed to appease Sunnis, triggering a likely second veto by the Sunni vice president and a delay in the elections.

Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, a Sunni, initially vetoed the law because he wanted more seats for Iraqis living abroad,



Karim Kadim / AP

most of whom are Sunnis. The minority, dominant under Saddam Hussein, has seen its privileged status evaporate since the ouster of the dictator and the election of a government led by the Shiite majority.

After days of intense negotiations by political blocs, lawmakers voted Monday to change the basis for distributing seats, most likely giving more seats to the powerful Kurdish bloc rather than to the Sunnis.

The number of seats in parliament will be expanded from 275 to about 320 under the amended law to reflect population growth.

The pre-vote deal making appeared to focus mostly on efforts to address complaints about the electoral system from the Kurds in order to win their support for the law, causing dozens of Sunni lawmakers to

walk out.

Al-Hashimi is likely to veto the amended law now that it returns to the three-member presidential council, but parliament can override a second veto with a three-fifths majority. Shiite and Kurdish political blocs have enough votes for an override.

"We will wait for the answer from the presidential council before deciding future moves," said Faraj al-Haidari, chief of the election commission. "I think that it is very difficult to hold the elections in January. Most probably, it might be moved to February."

In Washington, Clinton said the dispute might delay the Iraqi election date, but she expressed confidence that the voting eventually will be held.

"We believe on balance that there will be elections," Clinton said. "They might slip by some period of time until this is worked out, because at some point the law has to be in place for the planning to begin, and so there necessarily needs to be a period of time in which the planning can occur."

Clinton told reporters at the State Department that U.S. officials were trying to help Iraqi politicians sort out differences over the law.



Kurdish Sanctuary for Christian Refugees

Christians fleeing violence in Baghdad and Mosul flock to bustling suburb of Kurdish capital.

By Abeer Mohammed and Neil Arun in Ankawa

(ICR No. 313, 24-Nov-09)

A sharply-dressed Iraqi Christian man stands on the threshold of his new shop, dangling a struggling rooster by its feet.

Omar Farooq Jerjis came to Ankawa for the quiet life. The 28-year-old says he fled Baghdad three years ago because insurgents kept trying to kill him for working with the United States military.

His new venture is a beauty salon. The rooster he holds upside-down is about to be sacrificed for good luck. The bird flaps its wings and arches its neck, trying to right itself, as Jerjis recalls what drew him to Ankawa.

"I decided to move when I heard my cousin say this place was just like Baghdad in the 1980s," he said. "Baghdad is my home but this neighbourhood has given me a future I could not have there."

Ankawa is a largely Christian town of concrete villas and bustling small businesses on the outskirts of Erbil, capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous and relatively secure Kurdistan region. Since 2003, its population and its perimeter have expanded dramatically with the influx of refugees fleeing violence in Baghdad and Mosul.

Always diverse, Ankawa has become a vivid microcosm of the Christian dialects and denominations that once thrived across Iraq. Though the newcomers placed an inevitable strain on resources, officials and older residents acknowledge that they have also invested heavily in the local economy.

"The displaced Christians revived Ankawa," said Jerjis. "It used to be a village of mud houses. Now it is a civilized neighbourhood."

Holding down the rooster on the threshold of his shop, he severs its head with a sweep of a knife. Blood spurts across the floor. Following Arab custom, Jerjis dips a hand in the blood and places a crimson print by the doorway. Above the palm-print, he uses a bloodstained finger to paint a cross – the symbol of his faith.

"Living in Ankawa does not mean I have forgotten my roots as an Iraqi Arab," he said.

Christians have inhabited Iraq for more than two millennia. There were an estimated 800,000 to one million followers of the faith prior to 2003.

In the turmoil that followed the US-led invasion, the Christian population has dwindled substantially. Under attack from criminals and hard-line Islamist militias, tens of thousands fled to neighbouring countries such as Syria.

Ankawa is an anomaly – one of very few places in Iraq where the Christian community has expanded over the last six years.

Security is the main reason for this, according to the town's mayor, Fahmy Maty. A suave former lawyer with a constantly ringing cellphone, Maty credited the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, with accommodating the Christians' growing needs.

In the last six years, he said, three new neighbourhoods had been built around Ankawa, and land for some 4,000 new homes had been set aside. The town's population had nearly doubled, from 10,000 in 2003 to nearly 20,000 at the latest count.

Despite the rapid expansion, he said friction with Ankawa's older Christian residents and the Muslims of Erbil had been avoided, "The

Christians behave compassionately towards the refugees.... We also have no problems with our Muslim brothers."

As in the rest of Iraq, Chaldean Catholics are the largest sect in Ankawa, followed by groups such as Assyrians, Syriac Christians and Armenians.

Between them, they speak a range of dialects and languages, from Syriac and Aramaic to Kurdish and Arabic. Some Christians regard themselves as ethnically distinct from other denominations, others do not.

The degree to which they identify with nearby Muslim communities – be they Kurdish or Arab – also varies sharply. According to Maty, the displaced Christians from Mosul and Baghdad generally speak fluent Arabic, with little or no Kurdish. Ankawa's older Christian families, meanwhile, speak fluent Kurdish and little Arabic.

"The displaced people are unlike us," said Habib Shmoon, a 64-year-old Christian carpenter in the traditional Kurdish garb of baggy one-piece suit and cummerbund. "We are Kurds but they are Arabs," he said, helping himself to hot beans from a roadside vendor.

At a school for Assyrian Christians in Ankawa, 17-year-old Raabil Shiemkho said he took most of his lessons in the Syriac language. "The displaced Christians do not study here," he said. "They study at their own schools, in Arabic."

Lubna Khalil, an 11-year-old Assyrian schoolgirl, said in halting Arabic that the newcomers spoke a "different Christian language and did not know Kurdish".

Um Marina, a Christian refugee from Baghdad, said she was not overly troubled by the language gap – her young daughter had already picked up the Ankawa dialect.

Far more upsetting for her was the relatively high price of living and the chilly reception from some locals.

"My neighbour was Christian but she never greeted us for the first few months that we lived here," she said. Um Marina said she had taken up work as manager of a local store, selling wedding dresses, because her husband had been unable to find a well-paid job.

Sami, a building contractor who refused to give his last name, said he considered Ankawa his new home. Originally from a Muslim neighbourhood in the violent city of Mosul, he said he fled after his neighbourhood of 20 years began threatening him.

"At first I suffered here but now I make good money from my business," he said. "I will not consider leaving Ankawa. Let's say it in sectarian terms – this is where I can be with my people, the Christians."

Mayor Maty said the high rents in Ankawa were partly the result of soaring demand, created by the new refugees. He added that he expected Ankawa's economy to continue booming, fuelled by the foreign organisations that had set up base there.

The US has a heavily guarded consulate in Ankawa, and several aid agencies and oil firms also rent large villas in the area. Cranes and cement mixers toil on construction sites along the perimeter. Among the many buildings going up, one structure has recently been torn down – a police cabin on the road into town.

"The police are everywhere – we don't need checkpoints," said a grey-haired American man shopping at a local store. Behind him, burly foreign men with shaven heads and sunglasses inspected bottles of liquor.

Outside the new beauty salon, Jerjis was tidying up. He said he planned to give the slaughtered rooster to an employee who was too poor to afford meat. From a window, a woman called out, "Make sure you clean the pavement."

"All done," Jerjis replied, splashing water over the bloodstains.

Izmir attack an organized lynching attempt, say DTP officials

TODAY'S ZAMAN

Deputy Chairmen of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) Selahattin Demirtas and Gültaş Kışanak released a statement yesterday regarding an attack on Sunday in Izmir against a DTP convoy, saying the attack was a "continuation of organized lynched attempts directed at the DTP and Kurds."

A convoy carrying DTP members was stoned by residents in Turkey's western city of Izmir, one of the cities with the highest number of migrants from the Kurdish-dominated cities of the East on Sunday.

The statement also criticized an Anatolia news agency report covering the incident, which referred to the attackers as "a group of citizens." Saying the attack was organized earlier and not a group reaction that arose momentarily, they also accused the police of not intervening when the DTP convoy was being attacked.

On Sunday, a DTP convoy of 2,000 vehicles driving back to party headquarters from the Adnan Menderes Airport, where they greeted DTP leader Ahmet Türk, who paid a surprise visit, was stoned by a group of people. The attackers, a group of residents holding Turkish flags as well as sticks and stones, blocked the convoy when it reached the Üçyol crossroad and harassed the drivers whom they believed were also Kurdish. Some witnesses claimed that the group attacked when vehicles on the DTP convoy opened flags of the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). However, some have expressed that the violent protest might have been planned ahead as the attack occurred along a road where the Nationalist Movement Party's (MHP) Izmir office is located. MHP members and members of the Idealist

Hearths, an MHP-affiliated youth group, flocked to the scene. Most of the vehicle's windows were shattered during the protester's attack.

Meanwhile, the police opened fire into the air to disperse the crowd. However, DTP members have complained that the police were late in their intervention. They also stated that small-sized gas tanks and other heavy items were defenestrated from nearby buildings. The group did not disperse after the convoy passed through, and they blocked traffic singing the National Anthem.

Meanwhile, residents of nearby buildings hung Turkish flags from their windows, observers noted.

A crowd including a large number of women took to the streets. There was later a smaller march in the same street where the earlier protests occurred.

Speaking to his party's members, DTP leader Türk said he was sorry about the incident. "Today, a group of fascists attacked our convoy as I arrived in Izmir. I invite the police and the governor of the state to do their jobs. Our struggle has always been about freedom and the brotherhood of peoples. However, those who attack us will most certainly be given an apt reply. Our struggle is tantamount to the liberation of the Turkish people as well. However, some are trying to play the peoples of this country against each other."

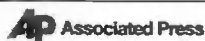
In his speech, he also talked about the government's democratic initiative project, which seeks to expand rights given to Kurds to stop terror attacks. "The PKK has said they are ready to contribute for the process to work and that they are ready to lay down arms," Türk said.

Incidentally, in an analysis of nationalism in Izmir Star columnist Ergun Babahan wrote about the reasons why city residents are not welcoming newcomers who are often Kurds



A convoy carrying DTP members was stoned by residents in Turkey's western city of Izmir, one of the cities with the highest number of migrants from the Kurdish-dominated cities of the East, on Sunday.

or who wear headscarves on Sunday, in the morning of the day the attacks occurred. According to Babahan, Izmir "started harboring anger toward those who are different, just like old aristocrats who think they are still important." He said Izmir was losing its importance with industry-based agriculture and losing importance in the economy. "Izmir is trying to make the Kurds and religious conservatives pay for its losses," he wrote.



Former UN diplomat defends Kurdistan oil interests

November 15, 2009 The Associated Press

A former U.S. ambassador who served as a private advisor to Kurdish leaders in Iraq defended his financial stake in oil fields in the country's north, insisting yesterday there was no conflict of interest.

"I had no affiliation, no association, received no assistance from the U.S. government at the time these activities took place," Peter Galbraith said.

The Kurds have been locked in dispute with Iraq's central government over control of oil and some territory in parts of northern Iraq, particularly in the city of Kirkuk. The region gained autonomy after rising up against former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in 1991.

Mr. Galbraith is a former U.S. ambassador to Croatia who served recently as the top-ranking American in the U.N. mission in Kabul.

He was fired in September after claiming that Kai Eide -- the top U.N.

official there -- was not aggressive enough in preventing fraud in Afghanistan's first-round presidential vote.

At issue now is Mr. Galbraith's interest in oil fields in Kurdistan, which The New York Times reported Thursday stood to net him more than \$100 million. The newspaper said he was paid by Norwegian oil company DNO to negotiate a drilling contract with the Kurds in 2004.

In 2005, Mr. Galbraith served as an adviser to the Kurdish regional government and drafted a part of the Iraq Constitution that gives Kurds control over internal affairs that could result in their control over new oil finds in northern Iraq.

He called it "absurd" to suggest that he influenced the Kurds on the oil issue, and said U.S. and Iraqi government officials knew he was involved with DNO.

Of the \$100 million figure, he said: "Oh, I wish."

Nechirvan Barzani: Turkey must talk with the PKK

Erbil – The outgoing Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told Kurdistan TV that the Kurdish initiative of the AKP must be continued. “But unfortunately there are not any practical steps taken to give Kurds more rights, the process is very important and should be widened,” Nechirvan Barzani said on the eve of the anniversary of the PKK’s existence.

The prominent Kurdish politician said that the Turkish president and premier are serious to solve the Kurdish question, but Nechirvan Barzani said in a reference, to the Turkish opposition parties, that some Turkish parties do not understand how important it is to solve the Kurdish question.

“You cannot solve a problem of 80 years in 8 days. The Turkish state had a mentality against the Kurdish population of: You don’t exist, you don’t have any culture and not any political or other rights and this created

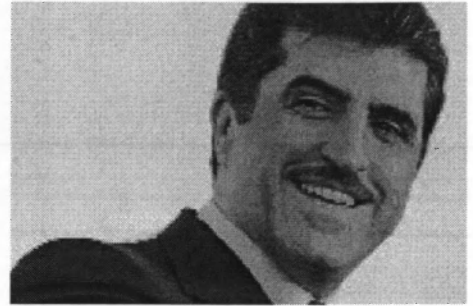
serious problems.”

Although the Turkish government refuses to talk with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), because it sees it as a terrorist organization, Nechirvan Barzani said Turkey should talk with the PKK. “Turkey is not ready yet to talk with the PKK. Turkey must take this process seriously, the PKK exists and has a serious amount of support. If they don’t see the PKK as a dialogue partner, this process will not bring any results.”

Earlier this week, Nechirvan Barzani met with Turkish journalists of Zaman, Turkiye newspaper, and Newsweek Turkey. Also in this interview he gave his support to the Kurdish initiative. “Turkey is acting courageous in trying solve a problem, that had lasted for the last 80 years.” Also he praised the Turkish prime minister Erdogan. He also said there are people both in the PKK as in the Turkey, that want to damage the process.

Still Barzani added that the Kurdistan Regional Government respects the Turkish borders and do not support the PKK. “But the PKK was formed in Turkey and was formed as a result of the policies of Turkey. This problem has only one solution and that’s a peaceful and political one.”

One Turkish journalist asked him if the Qandil mountains, which are the main base of the



PKK, could become a tourist resort. “Those areas are lovely and green, maybe you could build a summer house there,” a Turkish journalist asked. But Barzani said this was too optimistic. “You are too hopeful that one day, something like this can happen. The Turkish steps are very heartening and our aims are the same and we want to solve the issue like you, but I don’t know if this place can become a tourist place, because it’s a rough area and I haven’t been there.”

The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) released a statement on the eve of the 31st anniversary of the foundation of the PKK on Thursday, urging Turkey to start a dialogue with the PKK and to talk with the imprisoned PKK-leader Ocalan for a solution of the conflict reports Hurriyet (Photo: Rudaw).

THE SORRY STATE OF IRAQI POLITICS

As political squabbling looks set to delay January’s poll again, Iraqis will start to ask if more sinister plots lie behind this fiasco



Ranj Alaaldin

IRAQ’S long-debated new election law that was for months deliberated upon, delayed and then finally passed two weeks ago was hailed at the time as a monumental moment. Its approval by parliament was seen as critical for stability and the withdrawal of US troops.

But not so fast. Just days after its passing, the law was brought back to the drawing board after Iraqi vice-president Tariq al-Hashimi used his veto. Hashimi, one of three members of Iraq’s presidency council with the right to veto bills, wanted more parliamentary seats for Iraqis who have left the country. The law originally guaranteed 5% of seats devoted to them but Hashimi wanted 15%.

Yesterday, parliament convened again and the law was amended and passed so that exiled Iraqis will be treated like their domestic counterparts and will, instead of having seats reserved for them, have their votes counted in their home province. Parliamentary seats will be allotted in accordance with the 2005 trade ministry population statistics (used in that year’s national elections), plus 2.8% annual growth.

The law in its earlier form used the 2009, not 2005, trade ministry figures for the purposes of allotting seats, but the figures showed a peculiarly disproportionate population increase in Arab-dominated areas and little or no increases in Kurdish ones. It was thus met with opposition by the Kurdistan regional government (KRG), which threatened to boycott the elections in response.

The concerns were not misplaced. Without a credible census in Iraq it is hard to accept the trade ministry figures at face value. Iraq was supposed to have a census back in October but, like all things in the country, it has been postponed. This is not, in any case, just a KRG or Kurdish concern. The move by parliament was a progressive and equitable one overall that had the support of the vast majority of Kurds and Shias.

However, the newly approved mechanism for allocating seats means that Sunni-dominated areas will have fewer seats than they originally did, particularly in areas such as Ninewa, which continues to be a seat of Arab-Kurd tensions. The Kurds will have more seats, while Shia-dominated areas will be less represented, though they will still constitute the majority of seats.

Sunni MPs walked out in protest. Hashimi will be under even greater pressure than before to use his power of veto. Should he take this course, then parliament can override it in the event it can muster a three-fifths majority.

Pressing ahead despite the protests from parliament’s Sunni Arabs, who are not looking too good in front of their followers, could taint the elections, depending on what action they take in response. It is unlikely that they will be reckless enough to make the same mistake twice by boycotting the elections (though Hashimi did take part in the 2005 elections despite the nationwide boycott by his fellow Sunni Arabs – a move seen by many as

reflecting a desire for power and opportunism).

What these developments highlight is the sheer incompetence of some of Iraq's politicians. Figures relating to the distribution of seats, at the heart of it all, were available and could have been consulted during parliamentary sessions long before the law was passed. Iraqis will now start questioning whether more sinister plots are behind the electoral fiasco – and who could blame them?

It is now unlikely elections will go ahead in January, but this does not seem to be bothering Iraq's politicians much. Still, while deliberating over the election law they did achieve one result: the passing of a new law that grants them a substantial salary increase and lavish perks.

FINANCIAL TIMES November 26, 2009

Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan: Links growing beyond aid and smuggling

By Alex Barker

ERBIL — Pass a big construction site in Erbil, Sulaimaniyah or Duhok – the booming cities of Iraqi Kurdistan – and it is most likely that the workers will be toiling away for a Turkish company.

In good times and bad, merchants from Turkey have beaten a path over the long, mountainous and disputed border with Iraq, looking to sell their wares or tap the region's great and largely unrealised commercial potential.

From oil to construction, Turkish entrepreneurs have amassed some of the political clout and business hardiness necessary to cope with the Kurdish region's rocky regulatory terrain – turning them into valued partners for others.

When European or US companies are contemplating a move into Iraqi Kurdistan, their first port of call is often Istanbul. "It is simple logic for everybody to turn to Turkey for support," says Ercüment Aksoy, head of the Turkish-Iraqi business council. "We are the pioneers."

It marks the maturing of a cross-border business relationship that has long survived in spite of politics, from the oppression of Saddam Hussein to the peaks of Kurdish separatist violence in Turkey.

For many years, the flow across the border mainly amounted to food (often aid), Turkish troops, units of the rebel Kurdish Workers party insurgents and hidden loads of "mazout" – illegal smuggled fuel.

Now Turkey is preparing to

open two more border gates and a consulate in Erbil – an unthinkable political step five or 10 years ago. International oil companies are working in tandem with Turkish groups to legitimately pump oil across the border. There is even talk of reviving the great Ottoman dream of a railway linking Baghdad and Berlin via Istanbul.

Ahmet Davutoglu sealed this diplomatic progress in October by making the first ever visit by a Turkish foreign minister to the Kurdish region, flanked by dozens of businessmen. Mr Aksoy says the visit was "important for business".

"To have a consulate and the presence of the government will make it easier in all our areas of work," he says. "Diplomatically, rather than standing back to back, we're now hand in hand. This is a great opportunity."

To date construction has been the dominant business area. Big public infrastructure contracts – from airports and universities to roads and new housing developments – have invariably gone to Turkish groups able to draw on a skilled, www.ekurd.net often ethnically Kurdish workforce that are willing to tolerate a tough and sometimes dangerous working environment. A further \$180m road-building contract was awarded to Yüksel İnsaat last month, a group with experience in construction projects from Kabul to Qatar.

But those seeking their fortune in northern Iraq tend to be firmly focused on the region's abundance of oil. Development is still severely hampered by the lack of export routes, legal uncertainty and wrangling between Erbil and

Baghdad over sharing oil revenue.

Two Turkish companies – Genel Enerji and Petoil – were again among the first to attempt to overcome these obstacles, taking pole positions in key concessions. Both are also now examples of Turkish groups acting as a bridgehead for international investors – a rough model of co-operation that could apply to many other sectors as the region's economy develops.

Genel Enerji, owned by the powerful Cukurova group, is in partnership with Heritage Oil of the UK and has plans to merge, should the deal be given a green light by regulators and the Kurdish authorities. Meanwhile Petoil, which secured licence agreements in northern Iraq a few months before the US invasion, is now working with Prime Natural Resources of the US and Oil Search of Australia to develop fields.

Yet the problems faced by these energy groups underline how difficult and unpredictable business can be in northern Iraq. Genel in recent months has been forced to halt production from its Taq Taq field following a dispute between the Kurds and Baghdad over payment mechanisms, dealing a serious blow to its cashflow.

There is evidence of similar problems in areas such as construction. İlnur Çevik, a former newspaper proprietor and businessman who worked in northern Iraq, says the risks of working in such a fledgling economy are often unbearable.

"There was no proper planning, no proper supervision, everything was arbitrary, and you

have to deal with corruption," he said. "On paper it looks very nice. But the reality is sometimes very different."

But Joost Hilterman of the International Crisis Group argues such cases are the expected commercial casualties of a tricky working environment. "Business and Turkish investment is booming. There are of course cases where the relationship has soured on an individual basis," he says "The Kurdish region does not have a banking system or a regulatory system. Investors are not the majors [international companies], they are smaller companies that are the big risk-takers. Considering that, the situation is not bad at all."

Meanwhile Kurdish authorities are looking to court more established companies, meeting with dozens of big hitters in Turkey's business community.

Safeen Dizayee, spokesman for the Kurdish Democratic party, says the relationship must move beyond "flooding our markets with Turkish goods" and building infrastructure to more inward investment and outward exports. "We had lots of cowboys coming in, not finishing projects, disappearing with advance payments. Now we're looking more at serious companies," he says.

Sensing a message in Iran's busy gallows

CAIRO

Rights groups say a surge of executions is meant to intimidate the opposition

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

A flurry of executions and death sentences in Iran has raised concern that the government is using judicially sanctioned killing to intimidate the political opposition and quell pockets of ethnic unrest around the nation, according to human rights groups and Iran experts.

In Iran, where there is precedent of executions surging after a crisis, human rights groups said there was mounting evidence that the trend had emerged in response to the political tumult that followed the June presidential election. This month, a fifth person connected to the protests was sentenced to death.

In at least one instance, a Kurdish activist was hanged after the government added a new charge, raising concern that cases with political overtones were drawing more serious penalties.

In the short period between the disputed June election and the inauguration of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August, 115 people were executed, according to statistics compiled by human rights groups and Iranian news agencies. Though the executions mostly involved violent criminals and drug dealers, the number and pace of the killings appeared aimed at sending a message to the opposition, said human rights groups and Iran experts.

"The regime never expected to see people demonstrate so openly since the elections," said Hossein Askari, a professor of international affairs at George Washington University. "The executions are intended to frighten them."

The executions have taken place amid rising criticism of Iran's post-election human rights record. Former officials, intellectuals and journalists have received long prison sentences after brief televised trials, and some prisoners have said they were tortured, raped and sodomized by the prison authorities.

Muhammad Ali Abtahi, a former vice president, was sentenced last week to six years in prison "for crimes against internal national security, propaganda against the Islamic Republic, insulting the president and creating public disorder by his presence at illegal protests," a Web site on Iran reported. He was released on bail, pending appeal.

The United Nations passed a draft resolution last week criticizing Iran for human rights abuses; the final resolution is expected to pass the General Assembly. "The recent spike in executions, particularly of political prisoners, is an attempt to sow fear and spread terror through the population, to persuade them that the powers that be are determined to use all means necessary to put down dissent and that participating in the opposition movement can be highly costly," said Hadi Ghaemi, a former physics professor who runs the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran.

In recent years, Iran has had the highest rate of executions of any nation except China. That reputation was solidified under Mr. Ahmadinejad, who has presided over a quadrupling in executions, to 346 in 2008 from 86 in 2005, the year he took office, according to Amnesty International.

Iran does not issue statistics on executions, so it is impossible to compare monthly or annual rates. But in recent days, there has been a flood of reports from around the country of executions, most involving convicted drug dealers or criminals. On Friday, news reports said that over the previous 10 days, 16 people had been executed in cities including Kerman, Isfahan and Ahwaz.

In mid-October, Behnood Shojaee, who was on death row for committing a murder four years ago at the age of 17, was executed despite international calls for his sentence to be commuted because he was a minor at the time of the crime.

Drewery Dyke, a researcher with Amnesty International, said it was not unusual for Iranian officials to step up executions after a political crisis. In 1988, after Iran agreed to a cease-fire with Iraq, the government executed thousands of political prisoners.

"There does seem to be a greater willingness across the spectrum for the authorities to deploy force in every way, from the police through to the administration of justice," he said.

According to Amnesty International, there were 196 executions in Iran in the first half of 2009. Between the June 12 election and the president's inauguration on Aug. 5, executions surged to an average of two a day, the group said. So

Only China executes more people each year than Iran.

far this year, there have been 359 executions, though an exact tally is hard to come by because the group compiles the data based on reports from government-affiliated news sources.

Since the post-election surge in executions, the government has moved aggressively to impose the death penalty on people linked to separatist insurgent groups, even when they have not been convicted of violent activities themselves, human rights groups said.

Concern about executions with political overtones increased with the case of Ehsan Fattahian, 28, who was convicted of belonging to an armed Kurdish group, rights groups said. He was originally sentenced to 10 years in prison, but then the government added the charge of being mohareb, or an enemy of God, and hanged him on Nov. 11.

His parents were not allowed to see his body, and the authorities did not permit a public mourning service, opposition Web sites reported.

According to pro-Kurdish rights groups, a special execution team has been sent to the western province of Kordestan, where the groups said 12 Kurdish prisoners were awaiting the death penalty.

After Mr. Fattahian's execution, a group of Kurdish members of Parliament wrote a letter asking the head of the judiciary to drop death sentences against other Kurdish prisoners, Iranian news agencies reported.

A spokesman at the Iranian mission to the United Nations in New York did not respond to e-mail messages requesting comment on the use of the death penalty.

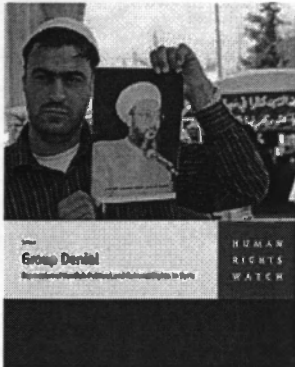
Since the election crisis, Iran has not allowed foreign reporters to work in the country. But Iranian officials have defended the death penalty in the past.

"We have laws," Mr. Ahmadinejad said at an appearance at Columbia University in 2007. "People who violate the public rights of the people by using guns, killing people, creating insecurity, sell drugs, distribute drugs at a high level, are sentenced to execution in Iran."

But Mr. Ghaemi of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran said that often death sentences were issued to those who had not been given a proper chance to defend themselves.

SYRIA: END PERSECUTION OF KURDS

Arrests of Activists, Suppression of Political and Cultural Expression Intensify



(New York) - Syrian authorities should end their unlawful and unjustified practices of attacking peaceful Kurdish gatherings and detaining Kurdish political and cultural activists, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today.

The 63-page report, "Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria," documents the Syrian authorities' efforts to ban and disperse gatherings calling for Kurdish minority rights or celebrating Kurdish culture, as well as the detention of leading Kurdish political activists and their

ill-treatment in custody. The repression of Kurds in Syria has greatly intensified following large-scale Kurdish demonstrations in March 2004. The report is based on interviews with 30 Kurdish activists recently released from prison, as well as 15 relatives of Kurdish activists still in jail. The Syrian government refused to reply to requests for information or meetings with Human Rights Watch.

"At a time when other countries in the region, from Iraq to Turkey, are improving the treatment of their Kurdish minority, Syria remains resistant to change," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "In fact, Syria has been especially hostile to any Kurdish political or cultural expression."

Kurds, an estimated 10 percent of Syria's population of 20 million, live primarily in the country's northern and eastern regions. Human Rights Watch found that since 2005, Syrian security forces have repressed at least 14 Kurdish political and cultural public gatherings, overwhelmingly peaceful, and often resorted to violence to disperse the crowds. Not only have the security forces prevented political meetings in support of Kurds' minority rights, but also gatherings to celebrate Nowruz (the Kurdish new year) and other cultural celebrations. In at least two instances, the security services fired on the crowds and caused deaths.

"The Syrian government sees threats everywhere, even in village new year celebrations," Whitson said. "If the government wants better relations with its Kurdish minority, it should address their legitimate grievances instead of trying to silence them."

Syria has obligations under several international treaties to uphold freedom of expression and association, and the associated right to freedom of assembly. In addition, international law requires Syria to protect the identity of minorities and to guarantee them the right to participate actively in public and cultural life, including practicing their language and celebrating their culture in private and public.

Human Rights Watch also documented the arrests and trials of at least 15 prominent Syrian Kurdish political leaders since 2005. Since there is no political parties law in Syria, none of the political parties - let alone the Kurdish ones - are licensed. Accordingly, any member of a party, including all of the Kurdish parties, is vulnerable to arrest for membership in an unlicensed organization, a crime under Syria's penal code. Most recently, on November 15, 2009, the Damascus Criminal Court sentenced three leading members of the Kurdish Azadi Party, which advocates an end to discrimination against the Kurdish minority, to three years in jail for "weakening national sentiment" and "inciting sectarian or racial strife or provoking conflict between sects and various members of the nation."

Of the 30 former Kurdish detainees interviewed by Human Rights Watch, 12 said that security forces tortured them. Most of those detained are referred to military courts, where they can be convicted of vaguely defined, overbroad "security charges," most typically the charge of "spreading false or exaggerated information that weakens national sentiment" or committing an act or speech that advocates "cutting off part of Syrian land to join it to another country."

A Kurdish political activist detained in October 2008 for three months at the Palestine Branch of Military Intelligence described the way the investigators treated him:

If the investigator was not convinced by what I said, the guards would take me to the "torture square," where they would make me stand on my feet for long days with my hands tied behind my back and my eyes covered with a black cloth. I was made to stand for 11 days with only brief periods of rest for 10 minutes to eat. If I would fall due to lack of sleep...they would throw cold water on me and beat me with cables. I developed many illnesses because of this torture. Tests I had done

after my release showed that I had inflamed joints as well as infections in the stomach, kidneys, and chest.

Harassment of these activists continues even after their release; security forces continue to call them in for interrogation and frequently bar them from traveling outside the country.

The European Union and the United States have been eager to engage with Syria recently. Human Rights Watch urged these governments to communicate their strong disapproval of Syria's treatment of its Kurdish minority and to emphasize that further progress in their relations with Syria will depend on concrete improvements in Syria's human rights situation.

"Ignoring the treatment of Kurds in Syria will not make the problem go away," Whitson said. "The international community has played an important role in improving the treatment of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey and it needs to do the same for Syria's Kurds."

Human Rights Watch called on the Syrian government to:

- Free people being detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association, or assembly;
- Amend or abolish the vague security provisions under the Syrian penal code that unlawfully restrict free speech;
- Investigate officials alleged to have tortured or mistreated detainees;
- Enact a law recognizing the right of political parties to organize, and establish an independent electoral commission to register new political parties; and
- Form a commission to address the grievances of the Kurdish minority in Syria.

Accounts from "Group Denial":

A participant in a musical event to celebrate women's role in society organized on March 9, 2009 by a Kurdish party in the town of Qamishli described how the security forces dispersed the crowd:

Fifteen minutes after the celebrations had started, the security forces circled the room. They were carrying guns and sticks, and they scared the women and children. They quickly confiscated the [sound system] speakers and the chairs.

An activist who was at a private home attending a talk on the history of the Kurds described the arrest of participants by Military Intelligence on January 29, 2007:

We were 12 people gathered at Yasha's house to attend a cultural talk on Kurds. Suddenly, members of Aleppo's Military Intelligence came in and took all of us to their branch. They kept us for 10 days in Aleppo, and then they transferred us to the Palestine Branch [of Military Intelligence] in Damascus. They released seven of us and kept five in detention. The five had confessed that they were members in the Yekiti Party.

A member of the Kurdish Future Movement, a political party, described his arrest while he was waiting to board a bus:

The civilian police detained me in the town of Amuda and immediately transferred me to Political Security in al-Hasakeh. They charged me with belonging to the Kurdish Future Movement. They interrogated me for 12 days. During the investigation I was deprived of everything. Their questions focused on the political program of the party, its internal rules, my role in the party, especially after they had kidnapped Mr. Mesh'al Temmo, the official spokesperson for the party. After the interrogation they referred me on September 1 to a military judge in Qamishli, who ordered my detention for belonging to an unlicensed political party and inciting sectarian strife.

A member of the PYD party, a Kurdish political party, described the torture he endured while detained by Political Security in Ain Arab in May 2006:

They tortured me physically and emotionally. The physical torture began from the moment I arrived at the branch. The officer who heads the branch beat me personally. His men tied my legs to a Russian rifle, and the officer beat me on my feet with a whip. The beating covered various parts of my body. He would insult and threaten me and insult the Kurds. He found a notebook in my pocket where I had written the name of the town by its Kurdish name, Kobani, which the regime had changed to Ain Arab, so he hit me with more than 100 lashes saying, "Damn you and damn Kobani. Why don't you write Ain Arab?" The torture lasted for almost six hours of on-off beatings.

REUTERS

JOINT DRILLS HELP IRAQ KURD, ARAB POLICE THAW TIES

November 26, 2009 - By Mohammed Abbas (Reuters)

BAGHDAD - Amid the simulated gunfire, rioting and panicked cries of a NATO training programme, Kurdish and Arab policemen are taking slow steps toward ending an enmity that threatens to tip Iraq into civil war.

Bitter disputes over land and oil between Kurds and Arabs have led to tense standoffs between their respective security forces, leaving a security vacuum in parts of northern Iraq that has been exploited by insurgents such as al Qaeda.

At a training building in Baghdad -- dubbed "kill house" -- Italian carabinieri police on Wednesday showcased their mission to train Iraqi police from both sides, which Lieutenant Mustafa Hajar, a Kurd, said was helping to break down barriers.

"Of course when we first came here we didn't think they would treat us as well as they did," he said, as teams made up of Iraq's minority Kurds and majority Arabs kicked down doors, fired blank rounds and took down men acting as armed robbers.

"This is the main reason why many Kurds did not want to come ... Now I'm ready to work with our Arab brothers, especially in the disputed areas," he added.

The struggle between Kurds, who occupy a largely autonomous northern enclave, and Arabs over disputed territories, oil and wealth, 6-1/2 years after the U.S. invasion could represent the next great threat to the country's stability.

The disagreements over regions bordering the enclave and the oil-producing northern city of Kirkuk, which Kurds see as their ancestral home, has led to a lack of cooperation between Kurd and Arab security forces that many blame for allowing al Qaeda and other insurgents to operate in Iraq's north.

Bombings and shootings are reported in the region almost daily, even as violence has fallen sharply elsewhere in Iraq.

HUNDREDS MORE TO ATTEND?

Only 40 of the hundreds of Iraqi police on the Italian programme were Kurdish, but Hajar said their positive experience meant hundreds more were likely to be sent on the course.

An Arab police officer, declining to be named because he was not allowed to speak to reporters, said in a statement sent by an Italian liaison that they would be welcome.

"Since they arrived the relationship between us has improved and we learned how to get along well together," he said.

The paramilitary carabinieri, whose responsibilities and skills include both police and military elements, said their methods were particularly suited to Iraq, which is trying to develop a federal police force with similar dual capabilities.

The U.S. military in August said it will also try to foster greater Kurd-Arab cooperation, by setting up tripartite U.S., Arab and Kurd patrols and checkpoints in northern Iraq, but the plan has not yet been finalised.

IRAQ ELECTION CHAOS EXPOSES SECTARIAN DIVIDE

REUTERS

November 25, 2009 — By Michael Christie (Reuters)

- * *Deep sectarian faultlines on display*
- * *Sign of high stakes as country reinvents itself*
- * *Oil majors likely know what they are getting into*

BAGHDAD- The political battle over Iraq's election law has shown that the deep sectarian faultlines which led to years of bloodshed could once again provoke conflict.

Bitter disagreement over the allocation of seats among majority Shi'ites, minority Kurds and once dominant Sunnis is a sign of how much is at stake in the election due in January. The vote will decide who is in charge of Iraq as U.S. forces leave.

A decision by Shi'ite and Kurdish lawmakers to turn on Sunnis by passing a law that reduces Sunni voting clout -- seen by some as retaliation for Sunni Arab Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi's veto of the original election law -- may have long-term consequences, analysts said.

"To be sure, the election law chaos reveals a large number of potentially ominous signs with regards to Iraq's political condition," said analyst Gala Riani of IHS Global Insight.

"It has once again shown the degree of factionalism and the depth of divisions between the sectarian, religious and ethno-national groups which in turn are rooted in deep historical mistrust." The general election, which is expected to be delayed, is a milestone moment for Iraq as it emerges from the worst of the sectarian violence unleashed by the 2003 U.S. invasion and seeks to entice international investors, especially oil companies.

Overall violence has fallen to levels not seen since the invasion, even though often devastating bomb attacks by Sunni Islamist insurgents and other violent groups continue.

Growing security has allowed the U.S. military to plan to end combat operations next August, ahead of a full withdrawal by Dec. 31, 2011.

It has also helped the current Shi'ite-led government to persuade global oil firms, like Britain's BP Plc (B.P.L.), to sign multibillion-dollar deals to develop Iraq's massive oilfields.

But any hint that the fragile security gains are unravelling and that widespread conflict could return may harm those deals.

Ominously, the debate over the election law in parliament may have deepened lingering sectarian mistrust that could possibly threaten the tense peace between Sunnis and Shi'ites.

Hashemi vetoed the election law on concerns that Iraqi voters abroad, including many Sunnis, were under-represented.

On Monday, lawmakers from the Shi'ite majority and Kurdish minority communities joined together to pass an amended law which would reduce Sunni voting power, a move some politicians said was a poke in the eye for Hashemi.

"That's a very short-sighted move," said Iraqi-born academic Sami Zubaida of Birkbeck College in London.

"That's not good (for reconciliation). And of course there are also Sunni elements that don't want reconciliation to succeed and this will give them encouragement to keep fighting."



LES DÉSACCORDS AUTOUR DE LA LOI ÉLECTORALE ENTRAÎNENT LE REPORT DES LÉGISLATIVES

BAGDAD, 23 novembre 2009 (AFP)

LES LÉGISLATIVES vont être reportées en Irak, après l'adoption lundi d'une nouvelle version de la loi électorale proposée par les chiïtes et les kurdes mais contestée par les sunnites qui demandent à leur vice-président Tarek al-Hachémi d'opposer une nouvelle fois son veto.

"Je vais vous donner une importante information: Tarek al-Hachémi va de nouveau opposer son veto sur cette nouvelle loi mais il n'aura pas la possibilité de le faire une troisième fois", a affirmé le président de la commission des Lois, le chiïte Bahaa al-Araji, après le vote.

La Constitution autorise le Conseil présidentiel composé du chef de l'Etat (kurde) et des deux vice-présidents chiïte et sunnite d'opposer à deux reprises son veto. Si le Parlement vote une troisième fois en faveur de la loi à hauteur de trois cinquièmes des députés, celle-ci est automatiquement adoptée.

Les chiïtes et les Kurdes possèdent les trois cinquièmes de sièges au Parlement.

"Je veux dire à tous les Irakiens que les élections auront lieu bientôt mais vont être retardées de quelques jours pour des raisons techniques. Tous les Irakiens de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur voteront pour les candidats en lice dans leur province d'origine", a encore affirmé M. Araji.

Comme le Parlement ne reprend ses travaux que le 8 décembre en raison de la fête musulmane de l'Aïd al-Adha, et qu'il faut au moins 60 jours pour préparer le scrutin, les élections ne devraient avoir lieu au plus tôt qu'à la mi-février.

L'article incriminé "contredit la Constitution et tente de dérober des sièges aux provinces de Ninive, Kirkouk et Salaheddine pour les donner aux provinces (kurdes) du nord. C'est illégal", a protesté Oussama al-Nijaiïfi, un député sun-



Le vice-président irakien sunnite Tarek al-Hachém, lors d'une conférence de presse, le 25 juillet 2007 à Bagdad

nite.

"Nous allons chercher à opposer un nouveau veto à la loi", a-t-il ajouté.

Lundi, les députés ont décidé de modifier la répartition des sièges en ne tenant pas compte du réel accroissement de la population depuis les dernières élections de 2005, mais en fixant une augmentation annuelle de 2,8% pour chaque province.

Ce système favorise largement les Kurdes dont la fécondité est plus faible que les chiïtes et les sunnites.

Ainsi, selon les calculs de l'AFP, la province kurde de Souleimaniyeh aura droit à 17 sièges alors que, dans la répartition précédente, elle avait 15 sièges, comme en 2005.

Les sunnites de la province d'Anbar se répartiront 10 sièges contre 14 dans la répartition précédente, soit seulement un siège de plus qu'en 2005. Les chiïtes perdent aussi des sièges mais restent largement majoritaires.

Le vice-président Tarek al-Hachémi a déjà opposé son veto car il exigeait l'attribution de 15% des sièges de l'Assemblée, notamment aux minorités et aux Irakiens de l'étranger, soit 48 sièges sur 323, contre les 5% figurant dans le premier texte.



TURQUIE: 11 BLESSÉS DANS DES HEURTS AU COURS D'UNE MANIFESTATION PRO-KURDE

ANKARA, 22 nov 2009 (AFP)

Onze personnes, dont quatre policiers, ont été blessées dimanche dans des heurts qui ont éclaté au cours d'une manifestation pro-kurde à Izmir (ouest), a rapporté l'agence Anatolie.

Des partisans du Parti pour une société démocratique (DTP), formation pro-kurde, ont été pris à partie par des habitants d'Izmir en colère lorsque les manifestants, qui progressaient dans les rues de la ville, ont déployé des bannières des rebelles séparatistes kurdes.

Les affrontements ont éclaté lorsqu'un véhicule du DTP a heurté un passant. Les forces de sécurité ont tiré des coups de feu en l'air lorsque la foule a commencé à lancer des pierres sur les manifestants du DTP, selon Anatolie.

Une personne, atteinte par une pierre, a été hospitalisée, et les autres ont été légèrement blessées, a déclaré à Anatolie le gouverneur d'Izmir, Cahit Kirac.

Le port d'Izmir abrite une importante communauté kurde originaire du sud-ouest de la Turquie.



LES PANNEAUX DE CIRCULATION BILINGUES TURC-KURDE FONT LEUR APPARITION EN TURQUIE

DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 26 nov 2009 (AFP)

LES PREMIERS panneaux de circulation bilingues turc-kurde ont fait leur apparition dans le sud-est de la Turquie à l'initiative de la mairie de Diyarbakir, réagissant aux annonces du gouvernement en faveur des droits des Kurdes, a constaté jeudi un correspondant de l'AFP.

Les panneaux indiquent désormais la direction des villages dépendant de la municipalité de Diyarbakir, principale ville du sud-est anatolien peuplé en majorité de Kurdes, en turc mais aussi dans leur nom d'origine kurde.

Selon une source municipale, 82 villages sont concernés par la réforme, mais les panneaux continuent de désigner la ville de Diyarbakir par son seul nom turc.

Des travaux préliminaires étaient déjà en cours depuis un mois, mais les récentes déclarations du ministre de l'Intérieur Besir Atalay ont accéléré la

mise en oeuvre du projet, a indiqué cette source, insistant sur le fait que les habitants utilisaient de toutes façons les noms kurdes des villages dans leur vie quotidienne.

M. Atalay a dévoilé le 13 novembre les grandes lignes d'un plan de réformes visant à améliorer les droits de la population kurde. Parmi elles figure la possibilité pour les communes "turquisées" de retrouver leur nom originel kurde. Cependant, aucun projet de loi n'a encore été transmis au Parlement.

Le retour pour certains villages -comme Yesildalli/Heware Xas, Kabahidir/Qubaxidir par exemple- à leur nom d'origine kurde brise en outre le



tabou qui pesait sur l'usage des lettres x, q et w, longtemps prohibées en Turquie car n'appartenant pas à l'alphabet turc.

L'emploi du kurde est encore officiellement proscrit dans les administrations et la vie politique, même si le projet dévoilé par M. Atalay envisage d'autoriser l'utilisation de cette langue par les partis politiques.

Le gouvernement turc, issu de la mouvance islamiste, mène depuis plusieurs années des réformes pour accroître les droits des Kurdes et tarir leur soutien aux rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), en lutte depuis 1984 contre Ankara.



HRW EXHORTE LA SYRIE À METTRE FIN À LA "RÉPRESSION" DES KURDES

NEW YORK, 26 nov 2009 (AFP)

L'ORGANISATION de défense des droits de l'Homme Human Rights Watch (HRW) a appelé les autorités syriennes à mettre fin à leur "répression" de la communauté kurde en Syrie, dans un rapport diffusé jeudi.

Le rapport dénonce "la détention de dirigeants kurdes et les mauvais traitements dont ils font l'objet" ou encore "l'interdiction par les autorités syriennes de réunions pour parler des droits de la minorité kurde ou pour célébrer la culture kurde".

"Alors que d'autres pays de la région, comme la Turquie et l'Irak, sont en train d'améliorer leur comportement vis-à-vis de leurs minorités kurdes, la Syrie reste réfractaire à tout changement", dénonce la directrice de HRW pour le Moyen-Orient, Sarah Leah Whitson.

"La Syrie est hostile à toute expression politique et culturelle kurde", ajoute-t-elle.

Le rapport fait état de l'arrestation et de la condamnation de 15 dirigeants kurdes depuis 2005 et déplore l'absence de loi sur la création de partis politiques en Syrie.

Le 15 novembre dernier, trois membres du parti kurde Azadi, une formation interdite qui prône la fin des discriminations envers les Kurdes, ont été condamnés à trois ans de prison pour "affaiblissement du sentiment national" et "incitation à des dissensions raciales ou provocation de conflits au sein de la nation".

Sur 30 ex-détenus kurdes interviewés par HRW, 12 ont affirmé avoir été torturés par les forces de sécurité, indique le rapport.

La plupart d'entre eux avaient été condamnés par des tribunaux militaires pour des accusations vagues comme la "propagation de fausses informations qui affaiblissent le sentiment national" ou pour des actes et propos qui visent à "amputer une partie du territoire syrien pour l'annexer à un autre Etat".

Le harcèlement des militants kurdes se poursuit après leur libération, les services de sécurité continuant à les convoquer pour des interrogatoires, dénonce HRW.

L'ONG dénonce par ailleurs l'interdiction, depuis 2005, d'"au moins une quinzaine de réunions politiques et culturelles pacifiques, en recourant souvent à la violence pour disperser la foule".

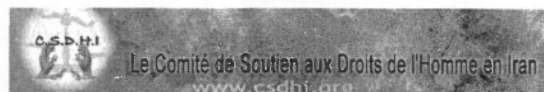
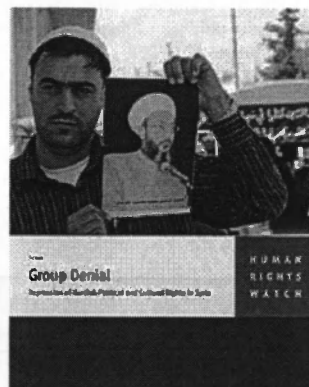
"Le gouvernement syrien voit des menaces partout, même lors des célébrations du Nouvel an kurde (Nowruz). Si le gouvernement souhaite établir de meilleures relations avec la minorité kurde, il devrait comprendre les griefs légitimes des Kurdes au lieu de tenter de les faire taire", commente Mme Whitson.

Estimés à plus de 1,5 million de personnes, les Kurdes représentent environ 9% de la population syrienne. Ils réclament la reconnaissance de leur langue, de leur culture et de leurs droits politiques.

Installés essentiellement dans le Nord, à la frontière avec la Turquie et l'Irak, les Kurdes syriens se défendent de toutes visées sécessionnistes.

HRW, une organisation basée à New York, exhorte le gouvernement syrien à "libérer les détenus, à mener des enquêtes sur les cas de torture et mauvais traitements et à voter une loi sur les partis politiques".

HRW demande par ailleurs à l'Union européenne et aux Etats-Unis d'"exprimer leur réprobation du comportement de la Syrie à l'égard de sa minorité kurde et lier le développement de leurs relations avec ce pays à une véritable amélioration de la situation des droits de l'Homme en Syrie", indique le rapport.



29 NOVEMBRE 2009

Iran: Une vidéo troublant: l'exécution de cinq étudiants kurdes

UN DOCUMENT VIDÉO montrant l'exécution de cinq étudiant kurde par le régime iranien a été transmis à l'extérieur du pays. Cette scène d'exécution survenue dans la ville de Kermanschah a été filmée au mois de juin dernier.

Selon le Kurdistan United News Agency les victimes étaient accusées d'activités politiques contre le régime. « L'un des victimes était âgé de 16 ans, » selon l'agence kurde, qui ajoute que le régime aurait ensuite demandé aux familles des étudiants de « payer une somme pour les charges encourues durant la prison et l'exécution de leurs enfants. »

Par ailleurs, le régime des mollahs a condamné à mort une prisonnière politique kurde, Zeinab Jalalian, l'accusant de guerre contre Dieu, a annoncé la Résistance iranienne (CNRI). Ce jugement, prononcé dans un procès de quelques minutes sans avocat ni déroulement équitable, a également été approuvé par la cour suprême du régime.



Zeinab, 27 ans, originaire de Makou (Azerbaïdjan de l'ouest), a été internée pendant huit mois sous la torture dans les prisons des services de renseignement, le Vevak. Elle se trouve désormais à la prison de Sanandaj, sur le point d'être exécutée. La torture a gravement altéré sa santé mais le régime lui refuse des soins et s'oppose toujours aux visites de sa famille. Ces deux dernières années, la dictature religieuse a condamné à mort 13 prisonniers kurdes, politiques et de droit commun.

Voir vidéo : <http://www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-274670>

AFP

LE RÉGIME TURC MULTIPLIE LES SIGNES D'OUVERTURE À L'ÉGARD DES COMMUNAUTÉS

ISTANBUL, 28 novembre 2009 (AFP)

INITIATIVE en faveur des Kurdes, main tendue à l'Arménie, hommage aux Alévis: chaque semaine témoigne en Turquie des efforts d'"ouverture" aux communautés que mène le régime islamo-conservateur, mais cette politique est diversement analysée par les commentateurs.

Dernier signal: l'apparition, dans le sud-est à majorité kurde, des premiers panneaux de signalisation en deux langues, turc et kurde.

Certes l'initiative revient à la mairie de Diyarbakir, qui est contrôlée par le parti pro-kurde DTP, mais le gouvernement n'a rien fait pour l'empêcher.

Comme il a volontairement laissé en liberté, fin octobre, un groupe de rebelles du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), rentrés en Turquie de leur base irakienne.

Le 3 octobre, devant son parti, l'AKP (Parti de la justice et du développement), le Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan prononçait un discours considéré depuis comme fondateur.

Il citait 13 noms qui, selon lui, ont contribué à faire la Turquie. Or plusieurs de ces figures ont été, par le passé, considérées comme des ennemis de l'Etat, notamment par les chefs militaires tout puissants du siècle dernier, ou sont mortes en exil.

Ainsi du chanteur d'extrême-gauche Cem Karaca, ou du poète communiste Nazim Hikmet.

De surcroît, la liste compte deux poètes kurdes (Ahmet Kaya et Ahmed Khani), un musicien arménien (Tatyos Efendi), et trois Alévis, dont Pir Sultan Abdal et Haci Bektaş Veli, grandes figures de cette communauté musulmane distincte des sunnites majoritaires en Turquie.

"Il y a peu, tout cela était tabou", explique l'analyste Mehmet Ali Birand.

Et de rappeler qu'il y a moins de trois ans (le 29 avril 2007), l'armée turque, coutumière des coups d'Etat, se rappelait au bon souvenir de la classe politique, dénonçant une menace islamiste et prévenant qu'elle défendrait la

République léguée par Atatürk.

Aujourd'hui, c'est sur plusieurs fronts qu'avance M. Erdogan.

En dépit du tabou arménien - Ankara refuse de considérer les massacres d'Arméniens en Turquie comme un génocide - le gouvernement a signé le 10 octobre un accord de normalisation avec l'Arménie.

Il a annoncé aussi une "ouverture démocratique" en faveur des 12 millions de Kurdes de Turquie (sur 71 millions d'habitants), qui concerne dans un premier temps l'utilisation du kurde et la prévention des actes de torture.

Et il met en place des tables rondes pour étudier les demandes des Alévis, et plus tard celles des Roms.

Pour la première fois depuis 1990, un président turc s'est rendu, le 5 novembre, dans la province de Tunceli (est), peuplée en majorité d'Alévis.

Toutes ces initiatives sont critiquées par l'opposition, pour qui l'unité nationale est en péril, et par ceux qui n'y voient au contraire que des mots, destinés à séduire l'Union européenne, à laquelle la Turquie veut adhérer.

Faux, répond l'analyste Hugh Pope.

"Car le fait que les leaders de l'AKP aient choisi cette année pour aller de l'avant - au moment où des pays clés de l'UE s'opposent de manière cynique, décourageante et mal inspirée aux efforts de la Turquie vers l'Europe, prouve que l'AKP et la Turquie font des efforts sincères vers les valeurs, les libertés et les droits universels", juge-t-il.

Pour M. Birand au contraire, ces initiatives à la tonalité communautariste permettent au gouvernement de défendre son propre projet, vers plus d'expression religieuse.

"En citant des noms très divers, en reconnaissant les droits des autres communautés (Alévis, etc.) le gouvernement se met en position de force pour défendre ses propres revendications, par exemple la levée de l'interdiction de porter le voile à l'université", explique-t-il.

AFP

TURQUIE: MANIFESTATIONS À L'OCCASION DE L'ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA CRÉATION DU PKK

ISTANBUL, 30 novembre 2009 (AFP)

DES MANIFESTATIONS et des incidents, qui ont fait un blessé grave, ont eu lieu dimanche en Turquie à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la fondation du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, illégal), il y a 31 ans, ont rapporté lundi les médias.

Les incidents les plus graves se sont produits dimanche soir à Mersin, ville du littoral méditerranéen (sud) qui abrite une importante communauté kurde, selon la chaîne d'information NTV.

Quelque 300 manifestants ont attaqué à coups de pierre et au cocktail molotov un commissariat de police de la ville et incendié des magasins.

Un adolescent de 16 ans a été blessé à la poitrine par une arme à feu, selon les chaînes de télévision.

Dans la nuit, des manifestants ont mis le feu à un bus municipal dans le quartier populaire de Sultanbeyli, sur la rive européenne d'Istanbul, sans faire de blessés, a rapporté l'agence de presse Anatolie.

Une autre manifestation de jeunes Kurdes a été dispersée par la police dans le quartier d'Okmeydani, dans le centre-ville d'Istanbul, selon l'agence.

Des incidents similaires se sont aussi produits à Sanliurfa et Hakkari, deux villes du sud-est, peuplées majoritairement de Kurdes, selon Anatolie.

Lundi, la police anti-émeutes a fait usage de gaz lacrymogène et de canon à eau pour disperser des manifestants à Yüksekova, petite localité à la frontière



irakienne.

Douze manifestants ont été interpellés par ailleurs à Siirt, autre ville du sud-est, où des groupes ont tenu des manifestations "illégalles", ajoute Anatolie.

Le PKK a été fondé en 1978 par Abdullah Öcalan, qui purge depuis 1999 une peine de prison à vie en Turquie pour séparatisme et trahison.

Ankara a récemment annoncé des mesures visant à améliorer les droits des Kurdes dans l'espoir d'éroder le soutien de la population envers le PKK.

Le PKK a lancé en 1984 une insurrection visant à l'indépendance du sud-est de l'Anatolie. Cette revendication s'est progressivement muée en une demande d'autonomie régionale et de renforcement des droits culturels des Kurdes.