

Iran and the Middle East crises

By: Dr Saman Shali.

Now that the Turkish government and the Islamic Regime of Iran are on the same political wavelength, Turkey is increasing pressure for military action against the Kurds, targeting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Northern Kurdistan, and Party for Life and Freedom in Kurdistan (PJAK) in Eastern Kurdistan, and the Kurdish Regional Government in Southern Kurdistan. Turkey and Iran are weaving a game of deceit and manipulation that is becoming increasingly clear and posing yet another challenge to the already beleaguered Kurds.

When Turkey had a good economic and military relationship with Israel, Iran attacked the Turkish government's policies. However, after the Islamic party took power, a new, eerie friendship emerged between the two former enemies. Both saw an opportunity to further their own goals. Iran, for example, fully recognized that the United States would need the support of Turkey if it were to launch a war against Iran. A war against Iran is becoming a real possibility due to its continue defiance against the international community's increasingly agitated calls for an end to its nuclear ambitions and its negative interference in support of terrorist causes in Iraq and Lebanon. Iran wants to cement its relation with Turkey to preemptive US policy against Iran to continue its nuclear program and to further its ambitions of becoming the super power of the region. In addition, the U.S. needs the support of Turkey for the war in Lebanon against Hezbollah.

Turkey has been making rapid moves in this game, taking advantage of the situation and utilizing it to pressure the U.S. and the Kurdish Regional Government to attack the PKK base in Southern Kurdistan (North of Iraq). For the first time, Iran has openly expressed support for Turkey in its war against the PKK and PJAK.

The two countries are also playing a game of psychological manipulation by labeling the various Kurdish groups as terrorist organizations. In a day and age that everyone fears and loathes this strong term, it is indeed a threat to Kurds that they associate this term with Kurds in talking with the press. Kurds have always been known as a peaceful people who have suffered too many tragedies, so it is unlikely that this war of words that Turkey and Iran continue to employ will have so great of an impact as they wish. This is especially true since Kurdistan is increasingly being recognized as the sole beacon of hope, peace, and stability in war-ravaged Iraq.

The Turkish Army has conducted 53 operations in Iraqi Kurdistan since March 2006, allegedly against bases and assets of the PKK. The reality is a very different scenario: much of the activity commenced in order to build a network of capabilities based on the Turkmen of the region. Significantly, one of the Turkish operations against the PKK was conducted with Iranian forces, and the Iranians have themselves conducted eight operations against the PKK and PJAK during the same period.

Reports have stated that eyewitnesses from villages close to the Iraqi-Iranian border noted armed gunmen from the Ansar Al-Islam organization, a small fundamentalist, terrorist group with links to Alqaida, being stationed in those areas. The sources added that about 70 armed men were seen in south Bashmakh area; among them were Arabs, Kurds, Persians and Afghans. All of them were dressed in traditional Kurdish attire. These new activities are supported by the Iranian Government to further destabilize Iraq and especially Kurdistan of Iraq. It has been reported that any village guard who kills an PJAK guerrilla and hands in the body will be rewarded 6 million Rials from the Iranian administrations in the cities of Kamyaran and Kermanshah. [\$650 USD]. Every soldier serving compulsory in the Iranian army will be also rewarded, but with honorable discharge. Iran is amassing all of its resources to destabilize the area and create insurmountable problems for the U.S.

Turkey wants to destabilize the area further by starting a war against the Kurds and occupying Southern Kurdistan because the Turkish government feels threatened by the flourishing economy and stability that Kurds have fostered. They fear that these successes will incite the Kurds in Turkey to seek federalism too. Turkey is pressuring the U.S. to support its action against PKK and is accusing the U.S. of having a double standard policy with regard to the Kurdish issue. Turkey is drawing an analogy between the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which is supported by the U.S., and opposing action against PKK, which Turkey and Washington both consider to be a terrorist organization. The U.S. ambassador in Ankara Ross Wilson, has noted that the connection Turkey is attempting to draw is a falsehood and completely arbitrary. He stated: "These are two different cases, they should be judged from different perspectives,"

Meanwhile, Kurdish leaders have condemned terrorists and their unlawful acts. Kurds have joined the International community in fighting against terrorism everywhere. The Kurds made a wise move by not being drawn into the trap of war. Instead, the Kurdish leaderships in Iraq is calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and to grant the Kurds in these countries their rights, because war is the harbinger of destruction and despair. The solution to these issues must be through diplomacy and democratic process.

The U.S. has opposed Turkey's wish to send its military across the boarder because it would do nothing but further destabilize Iraq. In addition, such a move would most certainly put the U.S. at odds with its most trusted ally in the region and in the war in Iraq, the Kurds.

The only possible winner if Turkey launches its military operations against the Kurds is Iran. Turkey would lose its chance to become a member of the European Union, a goal it has been chasing for years but which has not come to fruition due to its history of heinous crimes against the Kurds and Armenians. In addition, Turkey would be in direct conflict with the U.S.. This would help Iran buy more time to proceed with its nuclear program and have more influence in the area especially with regard to Iraq and Lebanon.

Our fear is that this game will go one step further, and lead to devastation, as in the case with Lebanon. We fear that the Turkish government is waiting for an opportunity to arise

in which it could declare the kidnapping of its soldiers by the PKK or PJAK, giving way to a strike against the Kurds. They are looking for an excuse to beat the Kurdish nation down, as they have tried to do for years upon years.

It is apparent that the Turkish government is not interested in a just, lasting solution to the issues. The Turkish government has refused the mediation of the Kurdish Prime Minister Mr. Nechirvan Barzani between the Turkish Government and PKK. The Turkish government refused similar mediation offered by the deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. Barham Salih and the Iraqi foreign Minister Mr. Hoshyair Zebari. The President of Kurdish region and the Prime Minister did inform the Turkish government of their resistance to any military operation inside Kurdistan of Iraq.

We call on the Kurdish leaders to be prudent in their decision-making at this critical time. We urge them to do this by ceasing all military activity, and pursuing a diplomatic solution that will protect the rights of the Kurds and ensure a lasting peace. This is the only way. At a time when other nations are falling to the call of war, we will light the way to peace.

Date published: Sunday, August 13, 2006