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Greece is emboldened by Israel against Turkey

The Greek website «Greek City Times» noted that the Israeli foreign ministry spokesman revealed Tel Aviv's full support for Greece in the East Mediterranean against the unilateral actions by Ankara. «Israel follows with concern recent developments in the East Mediterranean», Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Lior Haiat said in a tweet, adding: «Certain unilateral actions taken by Turkey may escalate and pose a threat to fragile stability in the region».

The spokesman stressed that «Israel reiterates its full support and strong solidarity with Greece in its maritime zone and its opposition to any attempt to violate these rights». While the Greek website noted that in recent months the tripartite relations between Greece, Cyprus and Israel have been significantly strengthened, especially as Ankara continues to threaten the East Mediterranean region.



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (L) shakes hands with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu

Guterres: Our primary mission now is to save humanity.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that the organization's primary mission now is to «promote human dignity, protect human rights, respect international law and save humanity from the scourge of war.» In his message on the occasion of UN Day, the UN secretary-general added that the 75th anniversary of the International Organization coincides with the corona pandemic this time, stressing the importance of further efforts to end the human suffering caused by poverty, inequality, hunger and hatred, and to fight discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender or any other factor, saying that the pandemic has witnessed «a horrific rise in violence against women and girls».

The Secretary-General referred to his call for a global ceasefire, which he announced at the start of the pandemic, saying that today we face «one common enemy: Covid-19».

U.S Sanctions against Tehran's ambassador to Baghdad.

The U.S. Treasury Department announced imposing new sanctions against Iran, which affected Tehran's ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi and several Iranian entities accused by Washington

of interfering in the elections. The U.S. Treasury accused the Iranian ambassador, in a statement, of «using his position» to support «Iraqi militias» which Washington says are responsible for attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq.

Washington also accused him of working to pass hidden money transfers to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's «Quds Force», which the U.S. had included on the terrorism list earlier.



Iraj Masjedi

Soleimani's assassination breaks Iran's arrogance

Iran claims that it is not hostile to any of its surrounding countries, particularly in the Arabian Gulf. It always tries to reassure to the Arabs that it is just against their governments not against them, but it is easy to deduct the truth from the superior and racist behavior of Tehran's authorities with the minorities that live in their historic land. The Ahwaz region is a good example of this since it involves a high density of Arab population, or other minorities.

Hollow threats to America

Although, the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist supporters repeat the slogans "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" all the time, these slogans remain merely words. Since the beginning of this year, Tehran has failed to prove its ability to respond to the slap hit by America through the assassination of Qasem Soleimani. The hollow threats and slogans were all that it has to blur the eyes of its followers and to prevent them from seeing the reality of its inability to confront Washington or even Israel.

It can be included in these series of threats the claim of the Iranian revolutionary guard on the nineteenth of the last September that it had put a plan to take hold of the US army bases in the region and it will be implemented if the war breaks out. On the other hand, the commander of the "revolutionary guard", called Hussain Salami, gave out his threats assuming that in any possible coming war, all the American bases in the region will be under the watch and bullets of Iran. He added that Tehran has "thousands of military brigades on the ground, capable of occupying and burning all the places of the American interests and its bases in the region".

Salami continued saying that the missile strikes launched by Tehran on the US army's "Ain Al-Assad"

base in Iraq last January didn't come with the aim of revenging for the US assassination of the leader of "Al-Quods corps" Qasem Soleimani, but rather to prove that Tehran is a "not afraid of America" country (as he said). He warned that the revenge for Soleimani will be on a large range and "the American political system should pay the price".

The Iranian octopus and its Tentacles

Because the Tehran's arms has become like the octopus Tentacles, it was necessary for it to transfer its violent experiences to anywhere the arms can reach. Thus, was clear in the speech of the Iranian force's spokesman, Abi Al-Fadel Shikarji, on the twenty second of September when he said that Iran has transferred its defense technology to Yemen so that Yemenis could manufacture missiles and drones on their own.

Shakirji admitted this saying "we are not sending missiles to Yemen but they are making them by themselves to be fired at the heads of their enemies". Of course, he doesn't send his technology to all Yemenis but to Al-Houthi militia and the enemy is not an external enemy rather he meant by its Al-Riyadh which shares borders, history, geography and affiliation with Yemen with an exception of those who made up their affiliation to Wilayat Al-Faqih.

Since Soleimani's assassination, Iran main concern has been raising the morals of its militias at home and abroad through successive announcements of new types and varieties of weapons. An example of this is the declaration of the revolutionary guard on September 23 that its naval forces got 188 homemade drones. The commander of the revolutionary guard, Hussain Salami, said at that time, "the navy in the revolutionary guard are equipped

with drones capable of carrying and launching missiles We will not stop enhancing our military capabilities, increasing the range of our weapons and the depth of our navigations in the Gulf waters.

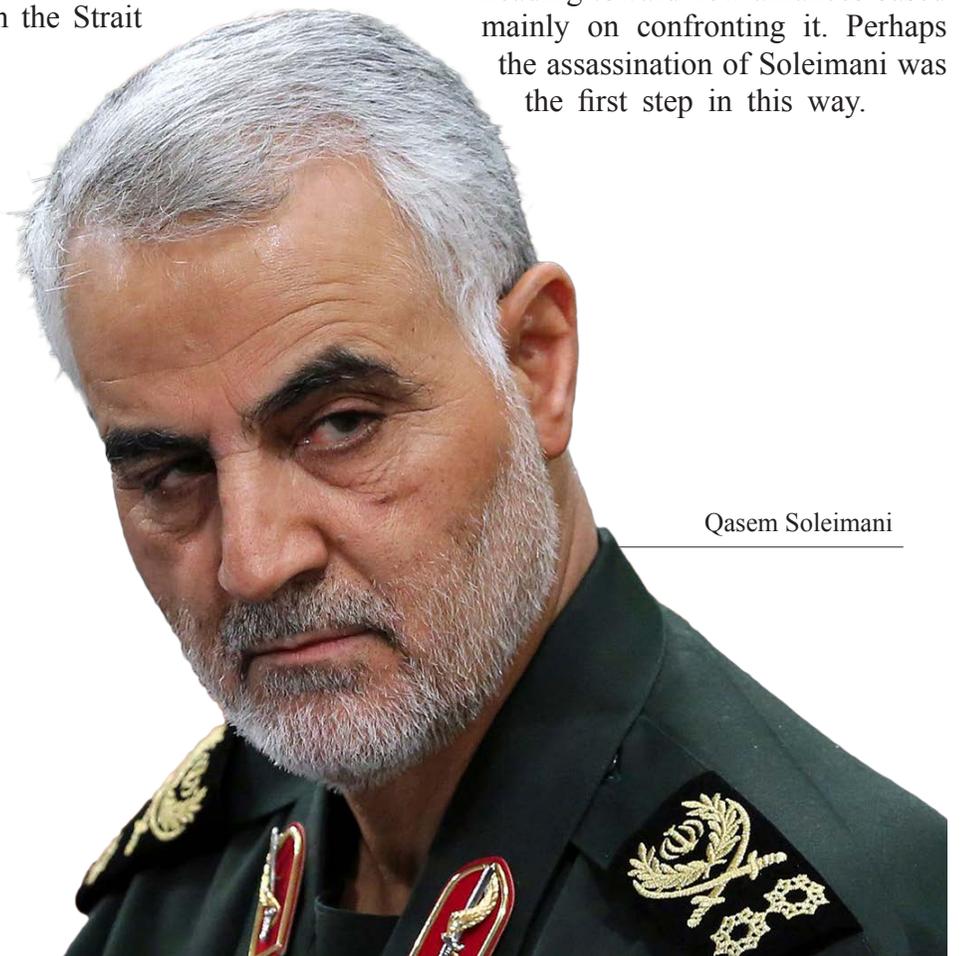
Military arsenal to repel any possible attack

On the twenty fourth of September, the revolutionary guard announced the establishment of a new naval military base in the east of the strait of Hormuz and called it "the base of the martyr Majid Rahbar" in the province of Sirik within the eastern side of the strait of Hormuz. He said that it occupies an area of 31 hectares. The commander of the revolutionary guard, Major general Husain Salami, claimed that "the base will contribute in strengthening and raising the level of Iranian naval operations in fields of defense, attack and monitoring in the Gulf region". He added that its aim is to "oversee the entry and exit of vessels that is coming from outside the region in the Strait

of Hormuz, the Gulf and the Sea of Oman".

The aerospace force of the Iranian revolutionary guard also displayed a launch pad for two "Raad 500" missiles. The Iranian force indicated that "the missile is powered by solid fuel, manufactured locally with highly developed technologies and used carbon fiber for its casing in addition to the new Zuhair engine with a structure of non-metallic composite materials. It claimed that this "reduces the radar's ability to detect it, and makes it able to get through missile defense system easily.

At last, we can't see all the successive Iranian announcement about weapons and military arsenal more than an attempt by it to get back its prestige and power which were broken by the murder of Soleimani. Since the man is not a normal person but a symbol of the strength of Wilayat Al-Faqih. In reality, the Iranian loss will not be recovered easily. As the region is heading toward new alliances based mainly on confronting it. Perhaps the assassination of Soleimani was the first step in this way.



Qasem Soleimani

Human Rights Organization: Turkey Displaced 300,000 People to Northern Syria



Human rights organization in Afrin accused in a report Turkey of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and displacing more than 300,000 civilians after occupying the cities of Serê Kaniyê & Girê Spî.

According to the organization report, the numbers and documents which were documented by the local and international organizations confirm that Turkey, during and after attacking Serê Kaniyê & Girê Spî, committed war crimes and crimes against humanity like using internationally-prohibited weapons, lynching, deliberate displacement and demographic change.

The report pointed to the numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Turkish occupation and its Syrian armed groups since attacking Serê Kaniyê & Girê Spî on 9 October 2019, until now. It noted that: «Since Turkey attacked Serê Kaniyê, Girê Spî and Afrin, activists and human rights organizations documented hundreds of abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law like killing & kidnapping based on identity card, confiscation of the private and public property and many other abuses which are described as «war crimes and crimes against humanity».

Killing, Abducting and Displacing the Civilians

Human rights organization in Afrin documented 2130 people killed, more than five thousand injured, the number of detainees reached 6660

since the beginning of the Turkish attacks, about four thousand released while the fate of the rest is still unknown in the occupied regions in northern and northeastern Syria.

Ninety-four people were under torture, 89 families were asked for ransom according to the organization report which considered that «the Turkish attack caused physical disabilities for 198 people, 43 of them are civilians. The explosions in Serê Kaniyê & Girê Spî caused physical disabilities for 54 people. It noted that «96 people had physical disabilities because of the unexploded mines; among them are 35 children and 32 women.»

The committee explained that its report is based on information from the fact-finding committee for the United Nations supervision mission in Syria which indirectly held the Turkish occupation accountable for all the crimes committed by its armed groups and yet there were no International reactions on the ground against all these. It made clear that these are the most notable crimes committed by Turkey and its armed groups according to the documentation of the human rights organizations.

Attacks Using Internationally-Banned Weapons

The report stated that Turkey used in the attacks the remnants of the ISIS mercenaries, Nusra front and gunmen from the Syrian National Army who downloaded a video on social media at the beginning of attacks about a gunman saying in

Arabic: «We came to behead the disbelievers & the apostates.»

The Kurdish Red Crescent documented Turkey's use of chemical weapons. The kid Muhammad Hameed was injured and admitted to hospital in the Kurdistan Region and later to France. Many reports that documented the chemical attack were submitted to the UN and International courts but these files had never been dealt with so far and what happened is denied according to the report.

Although there were civilians, Turkey used white phosphorus when attacking Serê Kaniyê & Ayn Issa between 10-13 October. Dr. Abbas Mansouran, the epidemiologist, bacteriologist, immunologist and the research director in the Sweden institute PEAS for scientific research, saw thirty burned victims; most of them are civilians and among them is the child Muhammad Hameed in Al-Hasakah hospital. In a report, he confirmed Turkey's use of internationally-prohibited chemical weapons upon bombarding the civilians.

Targeting Medical Facilities

The report of human rights organization in Afrin remarked that the Turkish occupation deliberately targets medical facilities & staff and prevents rescuing the injured. The gunmen of the Syrian armed groups, backed by Turkey, kidnapped three members of the Red Kurdish Crescent in the countryside of Serê Kaniyê and lynched Medya Khalil Isa & Muhammad Buzan Sidi while

the last one's fate is still unknown.

The report clarified that even after the agreement on ceasefire between US & Turkey on the one hand and Russia & Turkey on the other hand, Turkey continued attacking the area and targeting the medical facilities. It pointed out that the international law states that the forcibly-displaced people during the conflict must come back home unconditionally as soon as possible. In case the Turkish military forces have security concerns, they have to make individual assessments for the people and impose temporary & limited restrictions and not imposing a total or an indefinite ban to prevent them from coming back.

The report explained that the occupiers are prohibited to move people from their houses for non-security reasons and replace them with people from other places. In this context, a report from the Amnesty International in 18 October 2019, said: «The Turkish military forces and the Syrian armed groups they back committed blatant violations and war crimes including willful killing and the unlawful attacks which killed and injured civilians in the last attack on northeastern Syria.»

The report concluded that: «The Turkish occupation attacks & crimes in Serê Kaniyê & Girê Spî caused displacing more than 300 thousand civilians and resettling instead of them the families of the gunmen of the so-called Syrian National Army, backed by Turkey, and a demographic change after the displacement.

How did the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Use Zebari's Announcements to Break Sinjar Deal?

The Iraqi PM supporters burst in the headquarter of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Masoud Barzani, in downtown Baghdad and had destroyed its content before setting it on fire in spite of the big spread of the police. The demonstrators waved the PM flags and the photos of the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani and the deputy chief of the PM committee Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis who were killed in an American raid earlier this year. This aggression took place after Hoshyar Zebari, the party's first executive official, invited the Iraqi government to clear the Green Zone from the Popular Mobilization militias and considering that some of its factions has turned into a lawless power.

The Iraqi council of representatives suspended last Wednesday session until further notice after a shouting match between Shiite & Kurdish members because Hasan Al-Kaabi, the Fatah Alliance member and the first deputy speaker, asked Zebari to give an apology to the Popular Mobilization (PM) for his recent announcements. Al-Kaabi's demand was met with an outright rejection by many Kurdish representatives who considered Zebari's announcements no offensive to the MP. In what seems like a direct threatening message in response to Zebari's announcements, tens demonstrated against Zebari's announcements heading for the fifth branch of the KDP in downtown Baghdad while other demonstrators set the headquarter on fire.

Burning the KDP.. What are the Messages?

Rebwar Babkaye, the chairman of the foreign affairs committee of Kurdistan Region Parliament, in an exclusive announcement to Levant News, condemned the attack by the PM on the headquarter of the KDP: 'I strongly condemn the cowardly criminal act by a lawless group when

they burst into the headquarter of the KDP and burnt the flag of Kurdistan, a symbol for the Kurdish people. I can describe it as a serious development when those fuel sectarianism & discrimination at the expense of the citizenship, constitution, components of the Iraqi people and their peaceful coexistence. This act threatens the social peace & security and the political pluralism safety in Iraq. Concerning Zebari's announcements which were used as a pretext by some PM supporters to burn the party headquarter, the political analyst Imad Bajalan confirms to Levant News: «Mr. Zebari didn't mean to escalate, and what he said was an answer to the TV host's question about bombarding Erbil and the coalition base in it. All what Mr. Zebari said was true, and burning the KDP headquarter proves this. He didn't insult the PM, he said there are lawless factions of the PM operating in the name of the PM and the best evidence is that the motorcycles, on which those who burnt the KDP rode, were mounted with the PM flags & slogans and the rockets that bombarded Erbil were fired from the PM 30th Brigade.

Will Iran's Militias Declare War against Sinjar Deal?

Rebwar Babkaye, the parliament member in Kurdistan region, says: 'I think Sinjar deal is a reason among many or it might be the main reason behind burning the KDP headquarter and the Kurdistan flag because everyone knows that this agreement will give Sinjar back the legitimacy & official authority, return the displaced people therefore rebuild the city which was destroyed completely by ISIS and other armed groups. In Sinjar, there are lawless groups disobeying the decisions of the federal government.' 'Those who burnt the KDP headquarter were aiming for the KDP or wants to send a message



Hoshyar Zebari

to the KDP that it can't be possible to implement the agreement.' He added.

Imad Bajalan sees that the reactions and the inflammatory statements of Fatah alliance, which stirred people's anger on the pretext of insulting the PM, are hidden reactions against Sinjar deal which was a shock to them especially that the two governments have convergent views and they don't want this convergence to end disagreements. 'Those groups are sending a message to Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, the Iraqi prime minister, that they are the state or they are a state within a state through bombarding the embassies & US forces and that they control the big decisions in Iraq.' He added

The Convergence between the Federal Government & Kurdistan Government won't be Affected

In return, Kurdistan's leaderships condemned the aggression against the KDP 30th Brigade in Baghdad and burning it along with Kurdistan flag. Massoud Barzani, the Kurdish leader said: 'we wait for the federal government to take actions against those aggressors. At the same time, we confirm that those who want to attack the KDP and insulting the

Kurdish people's symbols will pay the price eventually.» Observers see that the militias supported by Iran try to renew the tension between the federal government in Baghdad and Kurdistan government in Erbil especially after the convergence during the past weeks.

Imad Bajalan says about the attempts to fail the convergence between the two governments: 'the government of the Kurdistan region makes sure it has a balanced relationship with the federal government, all the neighbouring countries and the political blocs. Masoud Barzani, the KDP leader, always tries to bring viewpoints closer together between all sides and what happened yesterday in Baghdad can't ruin this convergence.'

'All these attempts will fail because the will of the two governments is a constitutional will, it is the citizen's will, it is the will of the sovereignty & the peaceful policy.' Rebwar Babkaye confirms. 'Our policy is not with the axis policy and we won't be a side in the International & regional conflict between US & Iran and we won't be with a side against another. The KDP has a clear position about the removal of the foreign forces but we are not with throwing Iraq with this conflict which is in fact not an Iraqi conflict.'

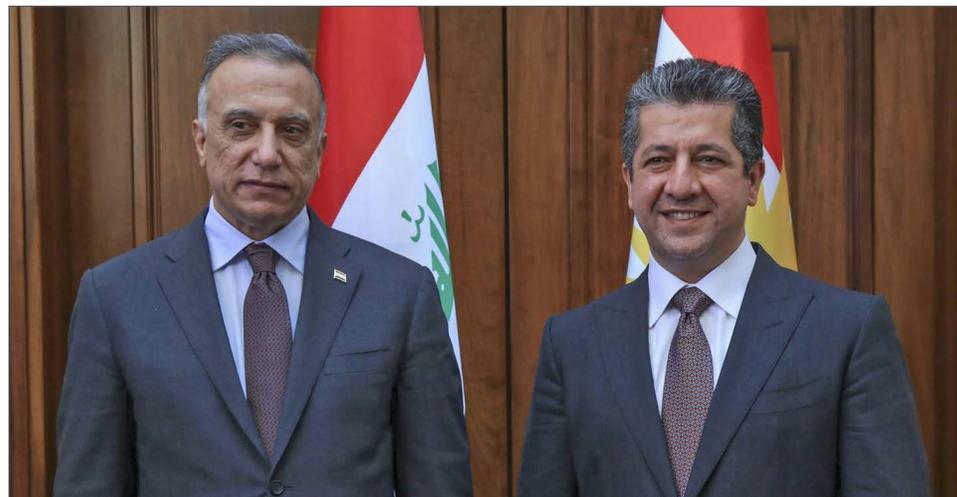
Sinjar Deal between Kurdistan & Baghdad... Defeat to Iran's Militias!

After signing Sinjar deal between the federal government of Iraq and the Kurdistan region, considerable disagreements between the proponents and opponents of the agreement surfaced. Despite being called «The historic deal» by the sponsors and the signers, after years of disagreements that prevents the return of tens of thousands of those who have been displaced by ISIS in 2014, it doesn't show necessarily the whole picture of the local and regional conflicts in Iraq which has turned into a politically-complicated region, where the regional and international interests conflicts at the expense of the local interests.

This agreement was welcomed by the UN, Washington, the Iraqi federal government, Erbil government and its allies from the Yazidis and others. The objecting parties, the Popular Mobilization (PM) Forces, the Arabs of Mosul, some of the Yazidis and the groups associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, see that there is still a long way to go to solve the problem of «Sinjar» and the case is still quite complicated, in spite of all what is said about the agreement, especially the issues regarding the search for the kidnapped Yazidi women, the return of the displaced and the construction of the infrastructure. Apparently, not all Yazidis have a common opinion about the agreement and therefore they had no representation in the agreement committee. Most Yazidis are probably not satisfied with the agreement supported by the groups related to Kurdish Democratic Party.

The Historic Deal between Kurdistan & the Iraq Federal Government

ISIS overran Sinjar district in 2014 and perpetrated a massacre there before it was regained next year by the Peshmerga forces. Nevertheless, the Iraqi army, supported by the Popular Mobilization militias, overran the region owing to the



Kurdistan Regional Government Masrour Barzani (R) welcomes Iraqi Prime Mustafa al-Kadhimi

tension between the Kurdistan region and the federal government of Iraq against the backdrop of the independence referendum in 2017. According to the federal government, the meetings resulted in reaching an agreement to normalize the administrative, military and security situations in Sinjar in order to restore peace & stability to the disputed district between Baghdad & Erbil. The Sinjar deal includes many items respecting administration, security and service. The administration is agreed on with the Kurdistan region and Nineveh governorate taking into account the district people's demands. Security is within the authority of the federal government in coordination with the Kurdistan region government. The most important item of the agreement is concerned with the security arrangements which assign security to the local police under the supervision of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service in coordination with the Kurdistan region government. As well, it includes removing the official & non-official armed groups from the district, the thing that might infuriate the militias.

Yazidi Sides Reject the Agreement

Naif bin Dawood, Prince of Yazidis in Iraq & the world, complained that the central government and

the Kurdish region government have marginalized the Yazidis and have given Sinjar to Peshmerga. «The agreement between Baghdad & Erbil on returning Peshmerga to Sinjar is rejected and didn't include any side representing the Yazidis.» He confirmed. «Baghdad has marginalized the Yazidis who fought ISIS and has given Sinjar to Peshmerga. The people of Sinjar don't accept any external representation and any agreement relating to their self-determination must be taken with them being on the table.» He added.

Observers think that among the many reasons the Yazidis reject this agreement is that many of them join the Popular Mobilization formations and owe allegiance to the militias that pay their salary and give them the feeling of security, along with another Yazidi power that owes allegiance to Peshmerga. Therefore, between the two sides there are thousands who want to go back home and leave the refugee camps but the conflicts prevent them.

The Iraqi Militias Reject the Agreement ... Do They Stand against its Implementation?

This agreement would undoubtedly be rejected by the Popular Mobilization militias which control the region because it will put Iran's goals under threat. Appointing a

district governor from the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the agreement between the Kurdistan region & the federal government will deal a severe blow to Iran. To prevent the application of the agreement, it was expected that the PM forces would reject it in any shape or form even if it came to military movements that would might undermine the social security in Sinjar. It is known that the PM is the main power in the region, if it is not the de facto ruler, thus the appointment of any new administrative official will require their approval. It is hard to imagine that the PM would compromise on the gains achieved in the region. The PM maintains the link between Iran & Syria in what is known as the Shiite Crescent which includes Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Yemen, and western Afghanistan.

The militia of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq seemed displeased, more than the MP factions or other militias, from Sinjar deal which includes a clause concerning removing the armed groups from the district. Qais Al-Khazali, the leader of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, described the deal as «an electoral compliment» attacking Al-Kadhimi's government saying that it put the Yazidis' life in danger.

What probably irritates Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq is the loss of a large area of influence along the Syrian border which represents an operational depth for this militia. Losing this area means diminishing the militia's regional role in the Syrian conflict, which is controlled by Iran, and probably marginalizing its role for the sake of other militias like Kata'ib Hezbollah which still has influence where the PM factions exist along the border strip with Syria from Nineveh to Al-Qa'im in Anbar province. It is believed that each militia, in its own area of influence along the Syrian border strip, runs non-official border crossings to smuggle and transfer arms.

Amnesty International: Qatar is Failing the Abused Female Domestic Workers

Amnesty International pointed out in a report last year to the problem of female domestic workers in Qatar, saying that the Domestic Worker Law introduced in 2017 did not adequately protect both male and female domestic workers, because it fell short of international standards and was poorly applied. Male and female domestic workers spoke to the organization about the employers' abuses and poor working conditions as well as racial and national origin discrimination against workers. International organizations have touched on the violation file against workers in Qatar, especially after it was ambiguously awarded the right to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar has hired tens of thousands of workers to work in the construction of sports facilities and infrastructure, in very difficult circumstances, as noted in the report of the Human Rights Organization in 24 August this year and in another report from Amnesty International for 2019 mentioned earlier.

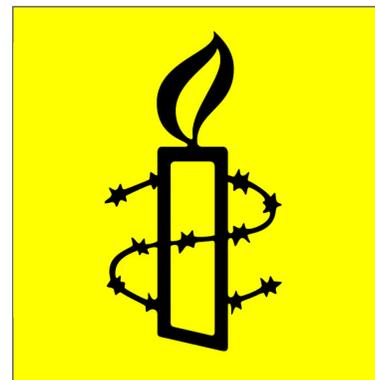
In a long report on its official website; the organization interviewed foreign workers who related their stories about poor working conditions in Qatar, injustice and mistreatment. Among the objections was the sponsorship system and linking the employees' visas to their employers. Another matter related to the fraudulent jobs where workers pay their employment fees. Qatar has considered that as a problem related to the workers' home country; while there is a collusion between the companies and the Qatari employment agents who share the profits.

Returning to the file of the female domestic workers, Human Rights Watch says in its report: "More than 174,000 migrant female domestic workers in Qatar remain highly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and forced

labour despite the passage of a law providing legal protection for female domestic workers in August 2017. Domestic workers are not covered by the protections provided by Labour Law therefore they are deprived of most of the reforms recently adopted in the labour sector, including the wage protection system and Labour Dispute Resolution Committees. Human Rights Watch documented loopholes in the Domestic Workers Law; which provides weaker protections than the Labour Law. Human Rights Watch spoke to 11 domestic workers between January and December 2019. Although each worker had her own problems with her employer, the most common complaints were related to low wages and delayed payment, the thing that proves that the «Wages Protection System» law becomes empty and does not deserve its name according to the organization. In addition, all workers told Human Rights Watch that they work around the clock, without receiving any overtime pay. Relevant reports have not stopped, a recently released report on 20 October by Amnesty International about the violations committed against foreign female domestic workers employed in Qatar, and how they have been pushed to breaking point by extreme overwork, lack

of rest, and abusive and degrading treatment and sexual assaults. In 2017 Qatar introduced the Domestic Workers Law, which stipulated limits on working hours, mandatory daily breaks, a weekly day off and paid holidays. Three years on, 90 of the 105 women contacted by Amnesty said they regularly worked more than 14 hours per day; 89 regularly worked seven days a week; and 87 had their passport confiscated by their employers. Half of the women worked more than 18 hours per day, and most had never had a single day off at all. Some also reported not being paid properly, while 40 women described being insulted, slapped or spat at. One woman said she was treated "like a dog". All names have been changed to protect identities. The Domestic Workers Law limits working hours to a maximum of ten hours a day, but allows for this to be extended if agreed by the worker. The inherent power imbalance arising from the dependency of domestic workers on their employers

leaves this loophole open to abuse. Many women said they felt scared to refuse their employers' endless requests, even when they needed to rest.



Qatar has utterly failed to hold abusive employers to account, which means there is little to deter future abuses such as passport confiscation and unpaid wages, which indicate forced

labour, are not being automatically investigated and rarely face consequences even when they refuse to hand passports over or pay dues.

Prior to 2018 domestic workers had no access to grievance mechanisms, but when Qatar established the Committees for the Settlement of Labour Disputes, they were finally allowed to submit complaints to these tribunals. However, the process remains slow, stressful and beset with delays and other issues.

Cases of physical and sexual abuse are dealt with by criminal courts, but the fact that domestic workers are dependent on their employers for shelter and legal status, coupled with lack of trust in the system, is an obvious deterrent to reporting.

Consequently, serious crimes are going unpunished.

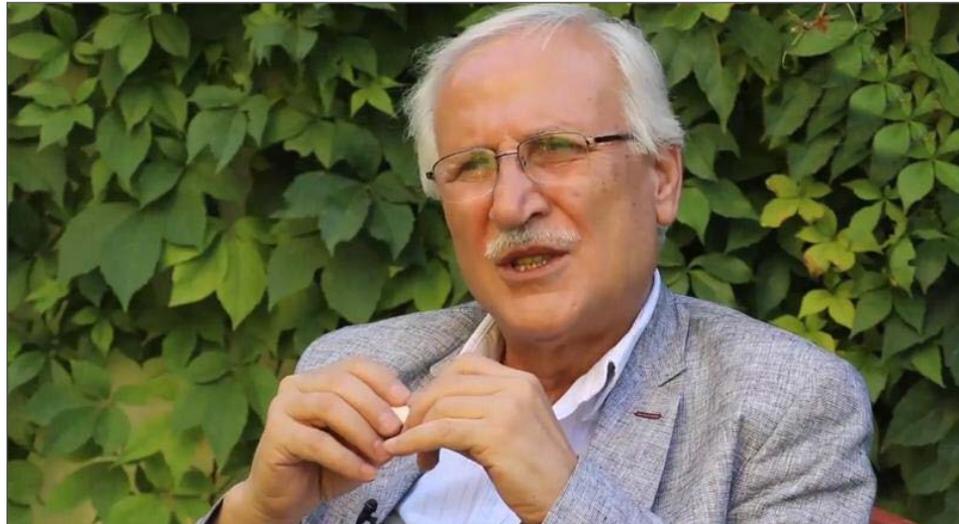
The isolation of many domestic workers and the restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement make it very difficult for them access support and flee abuse. While some businesses are beginning to set up workplace committees for other migrant workers, no equivalent initiative exists for domestic workers. Domestic workers, like other migrant workers in Qatar, are unable to form and join trade unions.



Sheikh Alî: Turkey Has Sectarian-Nationalistic Project in the Region

Mihyedeen Sheikh Alî, the general secretary of the Democratic Kurdish Union party in Syria confirmed in an exclusive interview with Levant News Journal office in Qamishli in northeast of Syria that they always adhere to the principles of dialogue blessing any positive step to defuse the tensions and stop angry arguments in the framework of the Kurdish political movement in Syria.

The following is the interview text that the team of the Levant journal office in Qamishli has made with Mihyedeen Sheikh Alî:



Mihyedeen Sheikh Alî

■ **The Turkish interventions and threats to the Kurdish regions is it still continuing, especially after the ineffective Russian role in Afrin and the American one in Serê Kaniyê. how do you estimate the situation in the light of those threats?**

There are bilateral agreements between Turkey & Russia on the one hand and Turkey & America on the other hand about the international border between Turkey and Syria specifically in northeastern Syria. These agreements were signed after Ras al-Ayn (Serê Kaniyê) and Tell Abyad (Girê Spî) being occupied by the Turkish side through its assistants (the Syrian National Army) and its political cover represented by the coalition of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition forces. These bilateral agreements were broken by the Turkish side and its assistants and the official discourse of Ankara government is indifferent to these agreements and highly disdains the international law. The Turkish threats to overrun this or that area repeat from time to time in northeastern Syria and Turkey strives to influence the public opinion against the Kurds, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) calling them separatists and terrorists not to mention the announcements of the

Turkish Ministry of External Affairs about the continuity of the Kurdish-Kurdish dialogue together with the irresponsible discourse of the official Syrian media which is eager as well to insult SDF and NES.

■ **Ten years after the Syrian revolution & crisis which has become more complicated along with the changes in the Syrian political scene. What do you think is the resolution of the Syrian crisis generally?**

About ten years after the outbreak of the central Syrian crisis, it becomes obvious to everyone that finding a settlement and a political solution is the best choice, if it is not the only one, especially that all the relative International decisions specifically the unanimous Security Council resolution 2245 explains this. Everyone must review everything and be oriented to a constructive Syrian-Syrian dialogue and stop trusting the non-Syrian. This is the irreplaceable way to begin finding a settlement for the crisis.

■ **Do you think that the Kurdish reference formed by an international or an American -to be precise- cover, will be able to solve all the deep disagreements among the Kurds?**

The existing Kurdish-Kurdish dialogue and the understandings it

reached wait for agreeing on all the rest causes and problems. Signing them is like a confirmed agreement for public announcement, initiated by Mr. Mazloum Abdi who receives help from some officials in the State Department. The most important factor in completing these influential dialogues is the credibility between the two dialogue sides and not holding the others the accountability of the success or failure of the dialogues. The Kurds must be their cause claimers in the first place and not trust an American or a Russian announcement.

■ **For a long time, the Syrian Kurds were a victim of divisions, the thing that affects painfully their everyday life. Was that phenomenon healthy and objective or was it harmful and created problems and repercussions on the Kurdish political scene?**

The organized Kurdish political movement which launched in June 1957, was healthy representation and a response to the Syrian Kurds' deprivation from their simplest legitimate national normal rights and there was no influence for any Kurdistan party outside Syria. The absence of a law to organize the way parties and organizations work in Syria for more than six decades, the adoption of the Syrian Central authorities for a policy of

a chauvinistic discriminative and nationalistic superiority against the Kurds and the resort to all kinds of suppression, Arabization and the national fusion with Arabs in addition to the underdevelopment and poor communication between the three Kurdish regions (Afrin, Kobani and the Syrian Upper Mesopotamia) are among the many reasons of dispersion and divisions in the overall framework of the Syrian Kurdish movement. In the last five decades, two factors were added: The non-positive interventions of some Kurdistan sides in Syrian Kurds' internal affairs and the desperate surveillance of the Turkish authorities for the conditions of the Kurdish political movement in Syria to deflect it from its Syrian patriotic pathway and its democratic orientations since its launch.

■ **How do you see in the future the appropriate solution of the Kurdish cause in Syria? Do you see it through federation, confederation, autonomous administration, political decentralization or the right to self-determination?**

The solution of Syrian Kurds' national cause remains within the regional safety and unity of Syria and complies with the international law for human rights and the relative treaties and International protocols. In the light of this, there must be a constitutional reform which recognizes the existence of the second largest ethnicity after Arabs in Syria with the full right to maintain its mother tongue and develop it through a constitutional text which includes Kurdish besides Arabic in the scholar curriculum and the state institutions in cities and regions where Kurds exist and put a limit to the state centralization by adopting decentralization in administering the state affairs on the basis of maintaining the foreign policy, defense and the wealth distribution within the central government powers.

Boris Johnson's multiple failures



Ian Black

Boris Johnson, the British prime minister, was quick to wish Donald Trump a speedy recovery when the US president let it be known – on Twitter, naturally – that he and his wife Melania were infected with coronavirus – like millions of other people round the world.

Of course, Boris – as is known across the UK, even by the many who dislike him – suffered from the illness himself in March, the first head of government to become ill, and lived to tell the tale. The stakes are far higher in the case of Trump, not least with regard to November's US presidential election and global repercussions it will have.

Back then Boris's own brush with Covid-19 served his interests by convincing some voters that his unpleasant personal experience would reinforce his dogged determination to defeat the pandemic. Just days before that Jeremy Hunt, a senior Conservative and a former health secretary, had declared – in reference to strict lockdowns in Italy and elsewhere in Europe – that it was “surprising and concerning that we're not doing any of it at all.” Boris, however, is still not doing well. The UK has the highest number of Covid-related victims in Europe with over 42,000 deaths, making it the fifth worst-affected country in the world, with a substantially smaller population than the countries ahead of it in the list – Mexico, India, Brazil, and the US. Like other leaders, he faces unenviably tough choices between managing health risks and the ruinous economic damage caused by dealing with them.

Seventeen million people – a quarter of the population of Britain – now face heightened local restrictions, short of a second national lockdown that the government desperately wants to avoid. The premier's boast



Boris Johnson

of a “world-beating” track and trace system has proved to be little more than the hot air and bluster for which he is notorious. In a rare admission, he conceded on October 4 that it was “not perfect.”

It is not just about tackling the pandemic, but the many other crises it has spawned. In the last week, when students returned to UK university campuses for the new term, corona spread like wildfire and some were told both to self-isolate and warned that they would not be allowed to go home for Christmas. And that was on top of the recent failure to tackle the educational effect of Covid, with a damaging row over how to handle university entrance applications when schools have been suspended for months of lockdown.

And Johnson attracted accusations of “gross incompetence” the other day when he was forced to apologise after misrepresenting the latest rules about social distancing. After admitting that the public would find the government's instructions “confusing,” he said he was relying on “the great common sense of this country.” And, then, adding insult to injury, just before the news broke about Trump, Boris blamed people for becoming “complacent” about

the virus.

The country's hospitality industry – pubs, bars and restaurants – is furious about a new rule that they have to close at 10pm – leading to a mass exodus of customers who pay little attention to distancing. Boris has also been accused of failing to use the summer lull to prepare for the imminent second wave.

In recent years – certainly since 2015 when the then Conservative prime minister David Cameron made the historic mistake of calling a referendum on the country's membership of the EU – the UK has been bitterly divided. Boris's catchy slogan of “get Brexit done” managed to secure an impressive victory in last December's election. He talked then of having a “great new oven-ready deal”.

But in recent weeks murmurings of Conservative backbenchers have become louder to the extent that one MP was quoted – albeit anonymously – as saying: “He genuinely doesn't give a flying fuck what the policy is... he's never done the homework, so he doesn't know anything. There really is no point in talking to the prime minister about policy at all.” Normally loyal supporters have turned against him. Fraser Nelson,

editor of the Spectator, the conservative magazine, complained about months of “disorder, debacle, rebellion, U-turn and confusion”, and asked: “What's happened to Boris? Where is the man we thought we voted for?” The magazine cover showed Johnson being tossed about on a raging ocean in a tiny boat without any oars.

Asked whether the shine has come off Johnson's premiership, one former cabinet minister replied: “If you drop something which is entirely ornamental into a corrosive acid bath, it tends to lose its appeal.” In March polls showed that 65% of voters surveyed backed the government's handling of Covid-19, but the latest poll suggested only 30% now approve. In addition only 20% think the government is doing enough to enforce its own lockdown measures.

There are other issues too. Time is running out for the conclusion of a crucial deal on future UK-EU trade relations, including difficult issues like finance, state aid and fishing. “Significant gaps” remain – according to a statement from both London and Brussels. The stakes for Britain are high, and getting higher, by the day. And for Boris to.

Russia's Five Years in Syria



James Denselow

Whilst Russia's historical relations with Syria go back decades its strategic partnership has been put in sharp focus by its decision to decisively intervene in Syria's Civil War 5 years ago. The addition of the Russian air force and a host of other weapon systems allowed the Assad Regime to stabilise and eventually reassert its control over much of the country. At present the Russians have conducted some 44,000 sorties in Syria – averaging perhaps 40-50 per day with peak times spiking to 100-130 as in early 2016 – delivering a staggering amount of firepower that has contributed to the largescale destruction of Syria's cities and infrastructure, much of which was originally built with Russian support. According to the Russian Minister of Defense, there were 342 supply trips by sea and 2,278 via air transport by 2018 to Syria meaning a total of 1.608 million tons of supplies and equipment had been delivered to the country.

Speaking at a recent event in London, the Head of the UK Defence Staff Sir Nick Carter described the Russians as using Syria as a 'laboratory' for the testing of weapons. In 2017, the Russian defence ministry said some 600 new weapons had been tested in military action in Syria. However, relatively few Russians have died in combat and the country's equipment losses include 7 aircraft and 12 helicopters, of which only one aircraft was lost in combat. Syria can almost be described as a training arena where Russian forces can test out the various arms of their military with a light touch, always reserving

the right to withdraw them and avoiding the same level of fixed assets in contested locations that cost the Americans so dearly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Politically the operations have been successful in keeping a ally in power in Damascus, indeed the success could be argued to be even more than that as that ally is so indebted to Moscow that he is more willing than ever to act in support of Russia's strategic interest. There has of course been a political cost. In defending the Assad Regime, Moscow has haemorrhaged political capital at a multilateral level having to frequently use the veto at the United Nations Security Council to prevent resolutions that impact on Damascus.

Importantly when it comes to assessing the scorecard of the Russian's five years in Syria, is a gentle reminder that the conflict hasn't yet reached any sustainable conclusion. Instead the Russian forces still find themselves propping up a Regime that hasn't converted the reacquisition

of territory into a sustainable peace. Indeed, the prospect of Russia benefitting economically from a global investment in the reconstruction of Syria post-conflict, feels like a distant dream rather than a practical reality.

In the northeast of the country Russia's presence grates against a small US contingent that could accidentally spiral into a more serious conflict, likewise in the northwest the deepening presence of Turkey again puts Russia at risk of accidentally entering into more serious foes than they have faced so far in the country. The threat of radical groups targeting the Russians remains very real. In August a senior Russian military adviser with the rank of major general was killed in an IED attack in Syria's eastern Deir ez-Zor province. The Russians have lost over 100 soldiers to fighting in Syria although their use of contractors and mercenaries clouds a potential larger cost to the country.

Whilst we look ahead to a future

Russian presence in Syria we must remind ourselves of their historical relationship. Since the 1950s, tens of thousands of Syrians have been educated in Russia, while Russian expertise has created much of Syria's infrastructure, with the Syrian ministry of economy estimating that the Russians are responsible for 90 industrial facilities and pieces of infrastructure, one-third of Syria's electrical power capability, one-third of its oil-producing facilities and a threefold expansion of land under irrigation – aided in part by assistance with building the massive Euphrates dam.

Few can doubt that Russia has been and will be in Syria for the long-term, however the marking of the fifth anniversary of operations in the country is also a reminder of how mission creep has turned what was originally the defence of a ally in Damascus against an internal threat, into a global conflict where Russian forces a now eyeball to eyeball with US and Turkish troops.



Russian air strikes on Syrian targets

Erdogan's new Janissaries... Systematic rules of racism and murder



Shiyar Khaleal

The “new Ottoman Sultan”, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is attracting Syrian and foreign mercenaries from around the world to fight within his army against neighbouring countries he conquers, trying to deepen the idea of the new Janissaries to implement his political, military and geopolitical agendas in the region, and to avoid using Turks in those wars.

History books remind us of the Ottomans' experience, during their wars in past centuries, in making an army of mercenaries, called the Janissaries. They are a group of mercenaries and foundlings who fight in order to raise the banner of the Sultan through killing, burning and demographic change in the areas they conquer.

However, the new Syrian Janissaries and those tied to them, have abandoned their country, and given up fighting those who kill their people, in exchange for small sums paid by the Ottoman Sultan to fight and create more destruction in Libya, Azerbaijan, and perhaps later in Africa or the Maghreb region, serving the agendas of political Islam and its master the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

There is a difference between the new and old Janissaries. The Ottoman Janissary Army was a military division of the Ottoman army itself, and was the strongest and most powerful and influential Ottoman army division, who killed and tortured those whom the sultan wanted, in exchange for their access to money, power and women in the Ottoman Empire, up to their mutiny against the sultans at the time. It is completely contrary to what is planned to the new Syrian Janissaries, with whom Erdogan implements his agendas in neighbouring countries,



A group of men with a giant poster for the Turkish president

and throws them into their doom, to get rid of them, and their heavy burden in northern Syria or Turkey.

Despite all of this, Erdogan tries to promote that his country has no political ambitions in any country, and that Turkey today has become the hope of millions of oppressed people, from Armenia to Libya, ignoring the river of blood flowing in Afrin, Serê Kaniyê, Libya and Armenia.

The new Janissaries, who feed on blood and chaos, and fight other religions and nationalities in the name of Islam, are fighting proxy wars, turning Libya and Armenia into a regional arena of conflict, promoting the agendas of political Islam and the new Ottomans, against Arab nationalists and minorities. In addition to shuffle the cards and political interests related to oil and gas on one hand, and political ideology on the other.

Erdogan's attempts to occupy are among the most dangerous files being carried out in the region, in conjunction with the shiitization project of Iran in the country. The difference is that Erdogan exploited the Syrian Sunnis and others in his war to eliminate rightful Syrian

causes and fight the Kurds on the Syrian-Turkish border strip, to show his dominance in fighting terrorism (incubator of terrorist ideology).

It has become obvious to all that the hordes of new Janissaries heading from Syria to Libya, Azerbaijan and Yemen, are backed by the Muslim Brotherhood organization, and its logistical facilitation, to deepen the ethnic-political gaps in the region, and draw a map of blood that cannot be erased for hundreds of years from the minds of those who reject the Turkish invasions of their countries. Consequently, it created a hate speech and a national and religious mutiny that establishes new poles in support of the MB, which seeks to raise the banner of the organization in a number of countries.

Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party depend in their scheme on the new Janissaries, as Turkey, the member state of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), knows well that these mercenaries only want money, so it offers them good sums in relation to the Syrian or Turkish Lira/currency, while promoting some religious slogans in order to bring them to fight in battles in which they have

nothing to do with. Hence, Erdogan won foreign battles without any domestic political cost to the Turkish government.

According to sources from many sides, the Syrian mercenaries work with Turkey only because they get paid for it. It means that ideology or religious principles have no role in volunteering to fight with the Turkish side in Libya or Azerbaijan. They gain their experiences from security companies, such as “SADAT”, which provides all kinds of logistical, financial and military support. In addition to training, in special camps on the Turkish side, on killing, extremism and torture against women and children in places they invade or occupy, as happened in Afrin, northern Syria, or some Libyan cities.

Erdogan seeks through his political and military plans in the region, and inside Turkey, to restore the glories of the Ottoman Empire, using the new Janissaries of mercenaries “politicians, soldiers, artists” as his tools. It has become clear, to him and to the whole world, that the results of these external political and military ramifications will backfire into the inside of Turkey—sooner or later.

Does Erdogan seek a Syria-style deal in Nagorno-Karabakh?



Zara Saleh

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the dispute region of Nagorno-Karabakh was frozen for a three decades in which it remained in Armenia's hands. The deal has been reached by the international body "the OSCE Minsk Group", that has been co-chaired by Russia, France, and the United States and was founding in 1992. Since September, when the fighting was broken out between Azerbaijan and Armenia where consequently the conflict has emerged again.

Evidently, Azerbaijan has been supported by Turkey as they both share ethnic and linguistic ties despite the Azeris are Shia whereas Turkey is Sunna, as one of the reasons for its intervention. Moreover, Turkey considers Armenia as "historical enemy" due to Armenian massacres that committed by Turkey in 1915 which Armenia had accused Turkey since that.

Added to that, following its Ottoman's ambition, Erdogan is aiming to achieve new goals in the

Caucasus, and planning to play vital role as a mediator when it comes to conflict resolution initiatives after it has been ignored by Minsk Group from the beginning of the conflict. Not only that, Ankara had a plan since July to broke out the fight in the disputed territories of Nagorno-Karabakh. Then, Turkey has sent Syrian mercenaries to support Azerbaijan and Turkish-made drones are now spearheading Azerbaijan's attacks against Armenia in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, that internationally recognised as a part of Azerbaijan, despite the Armenian control.

That is why the Erdogan's manoeuvres, and Turkey's military and logistic support for Azerbaijan have sent an alarm to Moscow about Ankara's explicit involvement in the conflict in favor of Azerbaijan aiming to be an important factor in South Caucasus.

Simultaneously with that, Erdogan had mentioned, for several times of its occasions, about the crisis of Crimea and the Russian occupation in the Black Sea as a threat message to the Kremlin that could appear at any time.

Arguably, Erdogan's aspirations that driven by the nostalgia to pan-

Turkism and seeking Caliphate project to take control under the so-called Ottoman lands. However, the Russia-Turkey's relations cannot be, today, compared with that context in 1923-1929.

At that time, during the Soviet Union administrative 1923, in today's Nagorno-Karabakh region, the Red Kurdistan Republic was established by Lenin, but it was abolished later in 1929 by President Stalin's decision under the Ataturk influence. Consequently, the Kurdish population were forced and displaced to central Asian Republics and Siberia and were subject of assimilation.

At the same time, Erdogan is trying to copy the Syria-style in Nagorno-Karabakh which seems to be difficult and even unacceptable for Russia. Furthermore, when Turkey has joined Astana's talks about Syria, it was a tactical choice that allows Turkey to gain some benefits such as the occupation of the Kurdish areas in northern Syria. Whereas, in fact, Astana's negotiation was Putin's strategic plan to retake control under more than 70% of Syria's territories with Assad regime. However, in Nagorno-Karabakh, there are common Russia-West views and

interests that in contrast to Turkey's ambitions.

Evidently, Russia is controlling the security of the South Caucasus countries and have a balanced relationship with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Moscow has military bases in Armenia and considers as the main ally of Armenia despite the new Armenian Prime Minister Nicol Pashinyan has some preference for the US and West. At the same time, Russia has strengthened its economic ties with Azerbaijan as well as Moscow considered as the main military supply for it.

Based on the fact that, in the Caucasus and in the Middle East, Moscow seems to be ready for any cooperation with Turkey to achieve its interests but, it is unlikely to let Turkey cross its border and fields. That makes it difficult for Turkey to reach another deal with Russia in terms of its intervention in Nagorno-Karabakh's conflict by supporting Azerbaijan.

Of course, the less American presence recently due to the presidential election and last year's military withdrawal from Syria has made gaps and allow Russia and Turkey to intervene in different areas such as Libya and Syria as they want.



An Armenian soldier stands at the front line during the ongoing fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Iran's Hostile Messages to Kurdistan Region



Offensive Missiles of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran



Jwan Dibo

Unlike Turkey that fights Kurds directly and by itself, inside and outside, Iran fights Kurds outside its territory, indirectly and via its followers. On 17 October, supporters of Iran-backed, Hashd al-Shaabi, an Iraqi Shi'ite militias group, set fire to the offices of the fifth headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Baghdad. These groups were the same pro-Iranian militias that invaded and occupied the city of Kirkuk in October 2017 at the behest of Iran, following the independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan. The declared reason behind the attack of the pro-Iranian Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) against KDP's offices was a statement said by a senior KDP official. Former Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, said earlier this month that "the government should clean up the Green Zone in Baghdad of the presence of the PMF militia". He

explained that expelling them is an essential task because they operate outside the law. He also accused those militias of being the ones that targeted Erbil International Airport with missiles at the end of last month.

However, the underlying cause of this barbaric attack is divided into two parts: direct and indirect. The immediate factor lies about Iran's discontent with the recent agreement between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) earlier this month regarding Sinjar.

The agreement stipulated an end to the armed presence of PKK and PMF in Sinjar and the assumption of security duties there by Baghdad and Erbil together. Especially, since the agreement followed a visit by Iraqi Prime Minister to Washington in late August. The visit during which the U.S. President urged Iraqi Prime Minister to expedite the settlement of Sinjar issue in a manner that satisfies both Baghdad and Erbil.

For Iran, the importance of

Sinjar stems from its geopolitical position and what it constitutes in the context of the Shiite Crescent project that links Iran to Lebanon through Iraq and Syria. Since the location of Kurdistan region and its moderate policies constitute an impenetrable barrier in the face of the Iranian plan, therefore, Iran will not hesitate to harm Kurdistan region by various means. What exacerbates the Iranian regime's anger against KRG is that the latter coordinates with Washington and Baghdad for the rule of law and ending the control of the Iranian-backed Shiite militias.

Iranian hostility against Kurdistan region, especially KDP in Erbil, has intensified since the independence referendum in September 2017. This was evident when Iran instructed PMF to foray and conquer the city of Kirkuk in October in the wake of the Kurdish independence referendum. Also, through the periodic bombing of the sites of Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran in Iraqi Kurdistan. The systematic Iranian hostility includes the Syrian Kurds and the U.S-backed Syrian

Democratic Forces (SDF), which constitute Syria's local force in the face of the Iranian plot.

Iran's goal behind the burning of the offices of KDP in Baghdad by its affiliated militias is to deliver a message to Washington, Erbil, and Baghdad together. The message was a pre-emptive offensive move by Iran and its Iraqi allies to undermine the recent agreement reached between Baghdad and Erbil regarding Sinjar. Similarly, to disturbing the relations between Baghdad and Erbil and to delay reaching a solution to the disputed territories issue, based on Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution. Day after day it becomes clear that Iran was and still is the main obstacle to the stability and prosperity of Iraq and the entire Middle East. Here, Iranian agendas intersect with Turkish efforts in opposing the legitimate aspirations of Kurdistan region for independence. The burning of the offices of KDP by the armed gangs affiliated with Iran, undeniably demonstrates the validity of the independence choice adopted by the people and leadership of Kurdistan.

Turkey vs. Russia and Iran in Caucasasia

Dalia Ziada

After long three months of over-heated summer in the eastern Mediterranean, the conflict between Turkey and Greece came to a point of cautious calm. The Hellenic Navy Forces retreated to Salamis Base, a few days after Turkey withdrew its Oruç Reis research ship and escorting frigates back to Antalya, in mid-September. Yet, the Turkish military, hardly, had a chance to breathe before it finds itself involved in the renewed war on the Caucasus Mountains.

On September 27th, the world woke up to the disturbing news of there-eruption of the decades-long conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, over the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region. In August, Armenia launched an attack on the Azerbaijani border city of Tovuz, which led to the killing of 12 Azerbaijani soldiers and one civilian. Because of the intense mobilization of Syrian mercenaries, by both parties, the current episode

of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is expected to be the deadliest; even worse than the 1990s conflicts, which left behind tens of thousands of dead, from both sides. Turkey is backing Azerbaijan, due to several historical, cultural and political reasons. Azerbaijani people are Turkic by ethnicity. The Turkish military is the de fact parent organization of the Azerbaijani military. In 1990s, the two countries signed bilateral agreements on defense cooperation and strategic partnership. According to these agreements, the two countries should provide “military support” to each other “upon demanding the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.” In that capacity, the Turkish military works closely with Azerbaijani military, through providing technical military consultations and personnel training in Turkish military institutions. In addition, Turkey and Azerbaijan armed forces are constantly executing joint military drills in Azerbaijan.

On the most recent meeting between

Azerbaijani President, Ilham Aliyev, and Turkish Minister of Defense, Hulusi Akar, in August; Aliyev said that his country aims to use the “powerful military-industrial potential” of Turkey, and thus, “Turkey will become Azerbaijan’s number one partner in the field of military-technical cooperation.” Russia, which is currently Azerbaijan’s top military exporter, felt threatened. The Russian officials and media, last month, warned against Turkey’s plans to establish a military base in Azerbaijan. If true, the proposed Turkish Military Base shall counterbalance the intensive and extensive Russian military presence in Armenia.

Armenia is politically, economically, and militarily controlled by Russia. In Armenia, Russia plays the traditional role of the protector state of Orthodox Christians. Russia controls Armenian economy, culture, and politics. There is a strong long-term military presence of Russia, including militia deployment and training, inside Armenia. Russia has a military base in Armenia, which

serves Russia and its ally Iran, more than it serves Armenia. In that sense, the hardline Islamist regime in Iran, is supporting the Orthodox Christian Armenia against the Muslim Azerbaijan. Although it might sound counterintuitive, but it is just another proof on how Armenia is merely seen as a province of Russia, rather than an independent state.

Long story short, this new episode of war in Caucasasia is much bigger in size and influence than Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is a war between old frenemies: Turkey on one side versus its closest allies/competitors, Iran and Russia, on the other side. For the international community, Turkey is doing the world a favor by confronting America’s top enemy (Iran) and Europe’s and NATO’s top enemy (Russia). For the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean, this war shall give the region a chance to breathe and work quietly on finding political solutions to chronic crises, particularly in Syria and Libya, free from the pressure of Turkish political and military intervention.

The Levant CARICATURE

