

*TURKISH STATE TERROR IN KURDISTAN*  
Dr Ismail Besikci, Ph.D.

Abstract

The Kurdish guerilla movement has radically altered two things. Firstly, it has transformed itself into an informed, determined and persistent militant force. Secondly, it has rebuilt the moral and spiritual make up of the Kurdish people to see the movement as a side vis-a-vis the Turkish state apparatus.

Turkish state has no policy other than terror and brutal colonial measures. Guided by foreign "counter insurgency specialists", it is dramatically shifting away from fighting the guerillas to terrorising sympathisers. Turkish intelligentsia, press, universities and political parties operate as branches of secret police against the Kurds. But this policy is bankrupt and destined to fail in the face of insistent demands for democracy.

The "divide and rule" policy in classical colonies has become "divide, rule and destroy" policy in Kurdistan. What is being destroyed, subjected to genocide is of course the identity of the Kurds and Kurdistan. It is the Kurds' national values and make up. If in spite of state terror, oppression, repression and torture, there are still those who advocate Kurdish identity, the aim is to physically annihilate them.

The generation growing up in Kurdistan today has already witnessed how their parents and grandparents were shoved off, beaten up, belittled, insulted and abused by members of the armed forces, the police force and the gendarmerie. This generation has also experienced the torturing to death of their elder siblings, their uncles and aunties. This generation has seen how their mothers, elder sisters, and aunties were dragged by their hair and taken away to detention centres and prisons where they were abused, molested and assaulted and heard them called "outlaws", "criminals", "bandits" and "traitors".

It is impossible for these kids not to query, not to question all this in a short time. There is no possibility to forget all this. Aren't those who are waging a relentless guerilla war against the Turkish state the poverty stricken

children with swollen tummies, skin heads, crossed eyes, and dirty noses who witnessed and experienced the brutalities of the government's forces called "commandoes" in the 1960's? Didn't these kids see their fathers and grandfathers devastated by Turkish soldiers who tied ropes to their penises and forced them to walk around in front of their wives, daughters and all other villagers?

Turkish press and intellectuals were fascinated by the poverty and misery of these kids then and now are extremely hostile to their demands for freedom and equality.

From these one mustn't conclude that the guerilla movement is a mere reaction to oppression and bent on revenge. The oppression experienced does of course constitute the material and moral basis of the movement. But, the aim is not merely to react to oppressive measures. The aim is to do away with them altogether.

United Nations should play a vital role but pretends to be unaware of the issue. The same is true for the Islamic Conference which directs an intense campaign against Israel. It condemns Israel for its oppression of the Palestinians. It applies and advocates sanctions against Israel. But, it pretends not to

see the more heavy handed policies towards the Kurds by Islamic countries such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Such duplicity become the basis for institutions' ineffectiveness and demise.

The most visible policy Turkey is implementing in Kurdistan today is state terrorism. This is the only policy

Turkey has about the Kurdish

**"DEMOCRACY FIRST!" KURDS SHOUT**

issue. The Turkish authorities are guided by a mentality which says "Let's implement such repressive measures that no one can even utter the word Kurd, can even mention the Kurds national and democratic rights. Let us put into practice such punitive measures that those who mention the Kurdish question are fully aware that not only themselves but also their families, villagers and clan will be punished so that they will be afraid and stay away from this question...."

The colonial state is able to confiscate the Kurds' properties, lands and homes, produce, animals and feedstocks with a variety of pretexts. Soldiers who arrive in villages armed to the teeth are able to settle down in their homes and on their properties. They are able to force the villagers to sow and reap for them. Should a youth join the guerillas they are able to demand that his/her family find and surrender him/her to the authorities otherwise they can detain the whole family and subject the family members to torture. All these measures are implemented with the help of specialists, even foreign specialists. They are known as counter-guerilla measures.

The guerilla movement initiated by PKK on 14-15 August 1984 in [the Kurdish towns of-Ed] Eruh and Shemdinli has radically changed two things. Firstly, the movement changed itself. Overcoming fear, panic and resignation, it has transformed itself into an informed determined and persistent militant force. Its conscious, determined and persistent disposition in turn transformed it into a side and institutionalised it. Today, the guerilla movement is an important

side. The Kurdish people en masse view PKK as a side vis-a-vis the Turkish army, gendarmerie and the state.

Secondly, the guerilla movement has changed the people in the region. It altered their spiritual side. The people that were full of fear, panic, resignation, that

were diffident and cowed began to

rise and demand their rights. The guerilla movement, may not achieve the desired results in a short time. Nevertheless, having changed peoples' spiritual make up is an extremely significant development. It cannot be belittled. People will no longer be content with what is handed down to them. They will demand a good deal more. In some regions of Kurdistan, people have already begun to demand equality and democracy. "Democracy first" they shout. The Kurdish people have begun to compare their situation with that of other people in the Middle East and the rest of the world. They have therefore realised how worse off they are, and what terrible conditions they live in. All this has been the result of the tremendously persistent, determined and conscious guerilla efforts. One mustn't belittle the political and ideological education which is being carried out at the same time. This kind of work that is being carried out both inside and outside Turkey has made significant contributions to the aforementioned changes.

About 20-30 years ago, in Diyarbakir, Bitlis or similar cities when the subject of Kurdish national and democratic rights were mentioned, Kurdish villagers would say "Sir, we are all Muslims. We are brothers. It is not important to speak Kurdish either. The state doesn't want to give the Kurds this right. And it won't either. because the Kurds are very weak and the state is very powerful. If we make demands we will be ruined, wiped out." And if you said, "Since the State doesn't want to give the Kurds

their legitimate rights through peaceful means, then waging a struggle becomes necessary. Because a human being's right to speak and write in his/her native language must be one of the most basic rights. And basic rights are worth fighting for.", the villagers' reaction would be much stronger. "Sir, a state is needed to wage a struggle against another state. We are a poor and ignorant people. The

#### BASIC RIGHTS ARE WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Turkish state on the other hand is big and powerful. It has a large army. It has jet fighters, tanks, cannons and guns. It has everything. What have we got? Nothing. A struggle in such circumstances cannot last. It is better to sit tight..." And if you pressed them further on the Kurds' national and democratic rights, they would say "Our cause is just very just, but we have no power, no friends and no supporters." This is the moral and spiritual make up that the guerilla movement has destroyed, [or at least -Ed] has initiated the process of its destruction.

Events such as the following are frequently seen in Kurdistan these days. When for example a village guard is killed, there aren't enough people willing to carry his body to the grave. No one goes to his house to offer their condolences. But the burial of a guerilla attracts huge crowds. There is no end to those who visit the family to offer their condolences. Those who die in clashes are called martyrs.

There is a haunting scene in Yilmaz Guney's film, "YOL". There is a fight between smugglers and gendarmerie. A large number of smugglers are killed. The corpses of the smugglers on a trailer are taken to the village. The commander of the gendarmerie unit gathers people around and asks the question: "Is there anyone among these that you recognise? Let everyone identify the one they recognise." No one says, "I recognise that one." They claim

they don't know any of the bodies on display. "They say we have never seen these faces before." In reality all those who had been shot dead by the gendarmerie for allegedly engaging in smuggling were from that same village and relatives of those villagers. But they all feel the need to behave this way for the fear of being stained with their crimes, for fear of being told "you are a relation of the smuggler, you too are a smuggler." That is how colonialism make people strange to themselves to their own identity.

In recent years, the situation has changed. People are now claiming corpses from the army and other security forces. In the face of accusations such as "outlaws" and "traitors", the families say their son or relative was a patriot. That the Kurdish people claim the corpses of guerillas, call them martyrs, set up martyrs' cemeteries in towns and villages are some of the most important social and political developments of recent years.

It is obvious that the Turkish state is very much annoyed by the popular support for the guerillas. And therefore the State is today in the midst of changing its tactics. More than PKK guerrillas the state is after those who support them, those who give them food, water and shelter. It is endeavouring to isolate the guerillas from the people. It is putting hundreds, sometimes thousands of people in detention centres for wholesale torture. Thus it is trying to diminish the influence and the prestige of the guerillas among villagers and shopkeepers. Moreover, it subjects the villagers to all sorts of brutal torture to frighten them. It puts people en masse in detention centres and prisons. It resorts to cruel and inhuman measures such as forcing the detainees to eat human excrement. The purpose of these measures is to destroy people's mental and spiritual well being, to throw them into a state of panic, to strip them of their

willpower to resist.

The village guards are being used as a powerful torture machine. They have extraordinary powers in pursuing the PKK supporters, sympathisers and shopkeepers. In addition to their salaries they collect huge financial rewards for killing people. They have been empowered to burn down the homes of suspected guerillas, of their supporters and sympathisers, destroy their belongings, kill their animals, burn their feedstock and kidnap their young girls. It should be noted that a significant number of the village guards were perpetrators of petty crimes on the run or in prisons. They

have been told that if they fight against PKK on behalf of the government they would be released from jail, charges against those on the run would be dropped, their files closed or removed altogether. In spite of all these measures guerilla activities go on on a wider scale and increasing intensity.

During the Algerian war of independence the thoughts, attitudes and the behaviour of the French intelligentsia is a credit to humanity. In frequent demonstrations, meetings, conferences, panels and open forums the French government's colonial policies and measures in Algeria were denounced. The positive attitude towards the national liberation movements is not restricted to the French. Israeli people is another example in this regard. The invasion of Lebanon and attacks on PLO elicited strong reactions from some segments of the Israeli public. Today, some Israelis advocate PLO's view and actions. It is a credit to Israel that these people are not seen as traitors, are not subjected to torture and are not sent to prison.

Turkish universities, intellectuals

press and political parties operate as branches of the national Intelligence Agency [Political police-Ed] when it comes to the Kurdish issue. For example, when village schools are used as torture centres the Turkish press makes no mention of it. It never mentions the fact that all villagers, children, men & women, young & old are shoved off into the village school and all are subjected to torture. But, should there be an attack on any one of these schools-cum-torture centres, should one of them be burned down, then the Turkish press will wreak havoc with headlines "PKK

SCHOOLS USED AS TORTURE CENTRES....

burned down a school again".

With respect to the human rights of the Kurds, the Human Rights Organisations in Turkey do not act differently. They view loyalty to the values espoused by the Turkish state as a great virtue. They do not show even a fraction of the concern they show for PLO or the Turks in Bulgaria.

The French intellectuals were aware that they had a colony and they were opposed to it and denounced their government's policies towards it. They sided with the liberation efforts because this meant that France, too, was being liberated in the process.

Perhaps it is time for the "Turkish intellectuals" who so often describe themselves as freedom & humanitarian addicts and lovers of culture to know that they, too, have a colony or something much lower in status than a colony under their sphere of influence. And every day crimes are being perpetrated, Kurds are being slaughtered in that colony with the pretext that the Turkish intellectuals, Turkish people, Turkish nation will be freer and the Turkish language and culture will develop there.

AUSTRALIAN KURDISH ASSOCIATION

PO Box 485 Granville NSW 2142

Suite 5 Second Floor The Mall 93-97 Main St Blacktown NSW 2148