

Turkish army kills Kurdish civilians in north Iraq

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According to reports from various groups, on August 15 and 17 the Turkish airforce carried out a number of sorties in the north east province of Erbil in the north of Iraq resulting in a high tally of either dead or wounded civilians, mainly women and children.

According to the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) 38 people died in the attacks, 11 were wounded and 4 have been listed as missing. On August 18 the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) reported an air attack on the villages of Lulan and Khazina in the north east of the province Erbil. According to this report a total of 12 bombs were dropped with 41 civilians, mainly women and children, killed and 57 wounded.

A speaker for the “Kurdish National Congress” (KNC) named the place where the bombing took place as Kendeko. Upon being questioned, he was unable to account for the contradiction between his report and that of the ICP regarding the target of the bombings, but did not rule out that the villages named neighboured one another. Kendeko is also situated in the north east of the province. According to the KNC information the raid on August 15 and a somewhat less serious raid on August 17 left 44 dead and over 70 wounded. It has been alleged in the course of the raids that chemical weapons and napalm bombs were also used. The victims were members of a semi-nomadic tribe of shepherds.

After initial denials Turkey finally admitted to having carried out a bombing raid on August 15. According to the official line the bombings in north Iraq were exclusively directed at the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and not against civilians. For some time the PKK has used north Iraq as a base to which the organisation has retreated, especially since its official decision a year ago to end its hostilities with Turkey and withdraw all its fighters. According to witnesses

who survived the attacks and the KDP, the victims had no connection with the PKK.

The incident is extremely embarrassing for the KDP itself. For years the organisation has operated practically as a mercenary force for Ankara actively supporting the Turkish army in its interventions against the PKK in north Iraq. This collaboration proved extremely profitable for the KDP. The Iraqi government partially circumvented the western economic embargo by smuggling cheap diesel oil to Turkey through regions controlled by the KDP. The latter is reported to have earned an estimated 300 to 400 million dollar annually in “transit charges”, its main source of income. In light of these facts the leader of the KDP Masud Barzani immediately sought to cover for Turkey: the massacre was a regrettable “oversight”, for which the PKK itself was ultimately responsible! Presumably by its mere existence.

Equally revealing was the reaction of the USA. The bombing raids took place precisely in that region which the US in 1991 declared a “no-fly zone” for the Iraqi airforce. This was expressly implemented on the grounds of “protection for the Kurdish civilian population in the north of Iraq”.

Upon being questioned about the massacre last week by Kurdish journalists, a speaker for the American embassy in Ankara refused to condemn the crime or even utter a word of regret.: “This was an incident realized by Turkish soldiers. Reports on this subject have reached us. There is information in the reports concerning the use of chemical weapons. But I will not appraise the incident or give detailed information.”

The USA has given the Turkish state an effective license to kill in the “protection zone”: “This incident is not one which binds the US. The one to address is the Turkish government. I can only tell you this much.”

The embassy speaker made the very general comment: “We are always in favor of limiting assaults and wounding incidents. Undoubtedly, these types of operations must target ‘terrorist focal points.’” He emphasized however: “The US in general defends the rights of the Turkish government against ‘PKK terrorists’ in northern Iraq.”

Just at the end of July the Clinton government gave the Bell company the green light to deliver 145 “King Cobra” combat helicopters to Turkey. Should the transaction take place, then the entire deal has an estimated value of 3.5 billion dollars.

For its part the German government gave its agreement to a contract signed on August 23. Under the terms of the deal the German company Fritz Werner will deliver a factory for the production of arms worth 90 million DM to Turkey. In addition Turkey is expected to buy 1000 German Leopard II tanks at a cost of several billion DM. Last year a test tank was delivered — in the meantime the tests are thought to have been concluded. Because of the record of brutal repression on the part of the Turkish state there was considerable opposition in Germany to the delivery of tanks—an opposition which extended into the ranks of the German government itself. This is why up until now the German government has always put off a final decision on the sale.



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