

Iraqi, Kurdish governments blame Turkey for bombardment killing 9 civilians

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At least nine civilians, including two children, were killed and more than 20 others wounded on Wednesday in a bombardment on the tourist village of Perex, in the Zaxo district of Dohuk province in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) territory of Iraq. One of the children was reportedly a one-year-old baby.

Both the Iraqi central government and the KRG blamed Turkey for the artillery attack, though Ankara denied the allegation. Since April, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) have been conducting a military operation against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) forces in the vicinity of this tourist area near the Turkish border. After Iraq made its public charges against Ankara, protests against Turkey erupted in Baghdad and other cities.

Hassan Tahsin Ali, a man injured in the attack, called the attacks “indiscriminate.” Speaking to AFP in front of a hospital, he said: “Our young people are dead, our children are dead, who should we turn to?”

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi blamed Turkey, calling the attack a “blatant and flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty and the lives and security of Iraqi citizens.” He added that Baghdad reserves the “full right” to respond to such attacks. Iraq declared a period of national mourning for this horrific massacre.

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry is reportedly set to “prepare a file on the continuous Turkish attacks on Iraqi sovereignty and submit an urgent complaint to the UN Security Council.”

Iraq summoned Turkey’s ambassador to Baghdad to the foreign ministry and demanded that the Turkish army immediately withdraw all armed forces from the country. It also recalled the Iraqi chargé d’affaires from Ankara. However, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government has long ignored demands to end its illegal occupation of Iraqi territory.

Iraqi President Barham Salih also condemned the attack, saying, “the Turkish bombing of Duhok ... is condemned

and denounced, and represents a violation of the country’s sovereignty and a threat to Iraqi national security.”

The Kurdistan Regional Government also accused Turkey, stating that it “strongly condemns the shelling of the Parakhe resort near the Darkar border of the Zakho Autonomous Administration by Turkish forces.” It added, “Clashes between Turkish forces and PKK fighters in the border areas of the Kurdistan Region have become a constant threat to the lives and well-being of our citizens.”

According to *Rudaw* in Iraqi Kurdistan, top Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr denounced alleged Turkish bombardment, “suggesting Iraq to take measures against the repeated violation of its sovereignty by reducing diplomatic ties with Turkey, closing off air and land crossings, filing an official complaint to the UN, and annulling all security agreements with Ankara.”

It reported, “All victims of the deadly bombardment were tourists from central and southern Iraq and were part of a 200-person tourist group, according to Zakho mayor Muhsin Bashir.”

Ankara has flatly denied responsibility for civilian deaths, however. In a statement, the Turkish Foreign Ministry claimed: “Turkey is against all kinds of attacks targeting civilians. Turkey carries out its fight against terrorism in accordance with international law, with utmost sensitivity to the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure, historical and cultural property and the environment.”

Implicitly blaming the attack on the PKK, it continued: “such attacks which aim at innocent civilians and are assessed to be organized by the terrorist organization, target our country’s just and determined stance in the fight against terrorism.”

Ankara concluded the statement by pledging “to take all steps to reveal the truth,” inviting “Iraqi government

officials not to make statements under the influence of the rhetoric and propaganda of the treacherous terrorist organization and to cooperate in bringing the real perpetrators of this tragic incident into light.”

Speaking to state-owned TRT Haber media, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu repeated this statement, claiming: “The whole world knows that Turkey has never carried out an attack on civilians.”

Ankara’s claim that it “never carried out an attack on civilians” is not true. In one of the most infamous incidents, the Roboski massacre, 34 people were killed when the Turkish Air Force bombed Kurdish civilian smugglers walking into Turkey from Iraq on December 28, 2011.

According to *Rudaw*, the PKK blamed “Turkey for the deadly Zakho bombardment and den[ied] the presence of any PKK-affiliated forces at the attack site.”

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price also hypocritically condemned the attack, saying: “The killing of civilians is unacceptable, and all states must respect their obligations under international law, including the protection of civilians.” He added, “We maintain our strong support for Iraq’s sovereignty and its security, stability, and prosperity, including that of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.”

This statement comes from a country that illegally invaded and occupied Iraq in 2003, a criminal act backed by other imperialist countries or regional powers such as Turkey. This imperialist onslaught, based on lies about “weapons of mass destruction,” devastated an entire society, killing at least 1 million people, and wounding millions more. Millions of survivors had to flee their homes, facing devastating conditions in foreign countries or in Iraq itself, which was once one of the Arab world’s most developed countries.

Moreover, Washington continues to trample upon Iraqi sovereignty. After Washington assassinated Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in January 2020, the Iraqi parliament voted to demand US forces leave the country, but Washington rejected this out of hand.

While the armed conflict between Turkey and the PKK dates back to 1984, its expansion into northern Iraq is a consequence of US imperialist aggression against Iraq since 1991 and the Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the Soviet Union. Though it threatened to invade when the KRG held an independence referendum in 2017, Ankara now is allied with the KRG. It seeks to thereby prevent the emergence of a PKK-controlled enclave in Iraq.

The Turkish bourgeoisie, fearing the emergence of an independent Kurdish state on its borders, which might encourage millions of Kurds inside Turkey to move in the same direction, is pursuing a similar policy in Syria—trying to crush the US-backed and PKK-linked People’s Protection Units (YPG).

Erdoğan, who announced in May that his government was preparing a new military operation against the YPG in Syria, met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tehran on Tuesday. After the talks, he declared: “America has to leave east of the Euphrates now. ... Turkey expects this as well because it is America that feeds the terrorist groups there.”

Though Iran and Russia also want US forces to withdraw from Syria, Tehran and Moscow are also in serious conflict with Ankara, which supports NATO’s decade-long war for regime change against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and occupies parts of northern Syria. Due to this broader conflict, from Libya to the Caucasus to the war in Ukraine, Erdoğan did not get the support he wanted from Raisi and Putin at the Tehran summit.

According to recent reports, Syrian government troops and heavy weapons have been deployed in YPG-held areas with Russian and Iranian support. This underscores the danger of NATO member Turkey coming into direct conflict with not only Syrian, but also Iranian and Russian forces.

As NATO escalates its war against Russia in Ukraine, the danger that conflicts in the Middle East could escalate into wars directly between major powers points to the urgency of building a mass socialist movement against imperialist war in the international working class.



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