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KURDS IN TURKEY

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Abbreviations

AKP (tur.) Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi,

(PL) Partia Sprawiedliwości i Rozwoju,

(ENG) Justice and Development Party

AZADI – (kurd.) Civata Azadiya Kurd lub Civata Xweseriya Kurd,

(PL) Kurdyjski Ruch Islamski – Inicjatywa Wolność,

(ENG) Society for Kurdish Freedom

BDP – (kurd.) Partiya Aştî û Demokrasiyê, (tur.) Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi,

(PL) Partia Pokoju i Demokracji,

(ENG) Peace and Democracy Party

CHP – (tur.) Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi,

(PL) Republikańska Partia Ludowa,

(ENG) Republican People's Party

DEHAP – (tur.) Demokratik Halk Partisi,

(PL) Demokratyczna Partia Ludowa,

(ENG) Democratic People Party

DHF – (tur.) Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu,

(PL) Federacja Praw Demokratycznych,

(ENG) Federation of Democratic Rights

DIHA – (tur.) Dicle Haber Ajansı,

(PL) Agencja Informacyjna Dicle,

(ENG) Dicle News Agency

DTK – (kurd.) Kongreya Civaka Demokratik, (tur.) Demokratik Toplum Kongresi,

(PL) Kongres Społeczeństwa Demokratycznego,

(ENG) Democratic Society Congress

DTP – (kurd.) Partiya Civaka Demokratîk, (tur.) Demokratik Toplum Partisi,

(PL) Demokratyczna Partia Społeczna,

(ENG) Democratic Society Party

DYP – (tur.) Doğru Yol Partisi,

(PL) Partia Słusznej Drogi,

(ENG) True Path Party

EKS – (kurd.) Enstîtuya Kurdî Ya Stenbolê, (tur.) İstanbul Kürt Enstitüsü,

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(PL) Instytut Kurdyjski w Stambule,

(ENG) Kurdish Institute of Istanbul

FETÖ – (tur.) Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü,

(PL) Organizacja Terrorystyczna Fethullaha,

(ENG) Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation

GAP – (tur.) Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi,

(PL) Projekt Południowo-wschodniej Anatolii,

(ENG) Southeastern Anatolia Project

HADEP – (tur.) Halkın Demokrasi Partisi,

(PL) Partia Ludowej Demokracji,

(ENG) People's Democracy Party

HAK-PAR – (kurd.) Partiya Maf û Azadiyan, (tur.) Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi,

(PL) Partia Praw i Wolności,

(ENG) Rights and Freedoms Party

HDK – (tur.) Halkların Demokratik Kongresi,

(PL) Kongres Ludowo-Demokratyczny,

(ENG) Peoples' Democratic Congress

HDP – (kurd.) Partiya Demokratîk a Gelan, (tur.) Halkların Demokratik Partisi,

(PL) Ludowa Partia Demokratyczna,

(ENG) Peoples' Democratic Party

HEP – (tur.) Halkın Emek Partisi,

(PL) Ludowa Partia Pracy,

(ENG) People's Labour Party

HPG – (kurd.) Hêzên Parastina Gel,

(PL) Ludowe Siły Obrony,

(ENG) People's Defence Forces

HUDA/HEZBOLLAH – (kurd.) Hizbullahî Kurdî, (tur.) Türk Hizbullahı,

(PL) Turecki Hezbollah,

(ENG) Turkish Hezbollah

HÛDA PAR – (kurd.) Partiya Doza Azadî, (tur.) Hür Dava Partisi,

(PL) Partia Boga,

(ENG) Free Cause Party

IBV – (tur.) İsmail Beşikci Vakfı,

(PL) Fundacja Ismaila Beşikçi,

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(ENG) Ismail Beşikçi Foundation

IHD – (tur.) İnsan Hakları Derneği,

(PL) Tureckie Stowarzyszenie Praw Człowieka,

(ENG) Human Rights Association

IYI – (tur.) IYI Parti,

(PL) Dobra Partia),

(ENG) Good Party

JINHA – (tur.) Jin Haber Ajansı,

(PL) Agencja Informacyjna JINHA,

(ENG) JINHA Women's News Agency

KADEP – (tur.) Katılımcı Demokrasi Partisi,

(PL) Partycypacyjna Partia Demokracji,

(ENG) Participatory Democracy Party

KCK – (kurd.) Koma Civakên Kurdistan,

(PL) Unia Wspólnot Kurdystanu,

(ENG) Kurdistan Communities Union

KKP – (kurd.) Partiya Komunistê Kurdystanu, (tur.) Kurdistan Komünist Partisi,

(PL) Komunistyczna Partia Kurdystanu,

(ENG) Communist Party of Kurdistan

KONGRA-GEL – (tur.) Halk Kongresi,

(PL) Kurdyjski Kongres Ludowy,

(ENG) Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress

MED-ZEHRA – (ENG) Kurdish Islamist Group Med-Zehra

MHP – (tur.) Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi,

(PL) Partia Narodowego Działania,

(ENG) Nationalist Movement Party

MIT – (tur.) Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı,

(PL) Turecka Narodowa Organizacja Wywiadowcza,

(ENG) Turkish National Intelligence Organization

NÇM – (kurd.) Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya,

(PL) Centrum Kulturalne Mezopotamii

(ENG) The Mesopotamia Cultural Centre

OHAL – (tur.) Olağanüstü Hâl Bölge Valiliği,

(PL) Zarząd Regionu w Stanie Wyjątkowym,

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(ENG) Governorship of Region in State of Emergency

ÖSP – (tur.) Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Partisi,

(PL) Partia Wolności i Socjalizmu),

(ENG) Freedom and Socialism Party

PAK – (kurd.) Partîya Azadîya Kurdistanê (tur.) Kürdistan Özgürlük Partisi,

(PL) Kurdyjska Partia Wolności,

(ENG) Kurdistan Freedom Party

PKK – (kurd.) Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê,

(PL) Partia Pracujących Kurdystanu,

(ENG) Kurdistan Workers' Party

PŞK – (kurd.) Partiya Şoreşa Kurdistan, (tur.) Kürdistan Devrim Partisi,

(PL) Kurdyjska Partia Socjalistyczna,

(ENG) Revolutionary Party of Kurdistan

PUK – (kurd.) Yekîtiya Nîştimanî ya Kurdistanê,

(PL) Patriotyczna Unia Kurdystanu,

(ENG) Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

RP – (tur.) Refah Partisi,

(PL) Partia Dobrobytu,

(ENG) Welfare Party

SHP – (tur.) Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi,

(PL) Socjaldemokratyczna Partia Ludowa,

(ENG) Social Democratic People's Party

SZARE WILKI – (tur.) Bozkurtlar lub Ülkü Ocakları,

(PL) Szare Wilki,

(ENG) Grey Wolves

T-KDP – (kurd.) Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistan/Bakur, (tur.) Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi/Kuzey,

(PL) Kurdyjska Partia Demokratyczna/Północ,

(ENG) Kurdistan Democratic Party/North

TAK – (kurd.) Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan, (PL) Sokoły Wolności Kurdystanu, (ENG) Kurdistan Freedom Hawks

TDHS - (ENG) Turkey Demographic and Health Survey

YDG-H – (kurd.) Tevera Ciwanen Welatparêzên Şoreşger, (tur.) Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareket,

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(PL) Ruch Patriotycznej Młodzieży Rewolucyjnej,

(ENG) Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement

YJA-STAR – (kurd.) Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star,

(PL) Jednostki Wolnych Kobiet,

(ENG) Free Women's Units

YPS – (kurd.) Yekîneyên Parastina Sivîl,

(PL) Jednostki Obrony Cywilnej,

(ENG) Civil Protection Units

YPS-Jin – (kurd.) Yekîneyên Parastina Sivîl a Jin,

(PL) Kobiety Jednostki Obrony Cywilnej,

(ENG) Civil Protection Units-Women

Part I Basic demographics

KURDISH ETHNIC IDENTITY IN TURKEY

Estimates of the Kurdish population in Turkey are hindered for several reasons. First of all, this is due to the different approach of people of Kurdish origin to their own ethnic and national identity. This results primarily from the intense and planned Turkification ordered after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and in particular after the laws on forced assimilation were adopted by the Turkish Parliament in 1934. The laws divided Turkey into three areas, depending on the intensity of the Turkish ethnic factor, and forced resettlement to blend in the non-Turkish ethnic element (in particular the Kurdish element) in an area dominated by ethnic Turks. As a result of this process, some people who are aware of their Kurdish origin have little or no sense of Kurdish national identity. The division between people of Kurdish origin who identify as Kurds and those who do not is quite fluid, as the degree of national identity is often an individual issue that changes over time and depends on external factors. Some assimilated Kurds may feel an increasing sense of identity with the Kurdish people and their struggle for their rights and interests in the context of Kurdish national revival in Turkey and/or liberalisation of the legal conditions associated with it. Such a phenomenon was observed in the first decade after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, following the lifting of a number of bans on the expression of Kurdish identity imposed by the Kemalists, for example the ban on the use of the Kurdish language in public places, which led to a limited media coverage and permission to teach the Kurdish language. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Kurdish national identity, in the modern meaning of the term, did not begin to take shape until the end of the 19th century. Of course, this does not mean that before that time the Kurds did not constitute a culturally separate group, but rather that the awareness of this distinctness did not determine their sense of national identity and the related political agenda. In the Ottoman Empire, the society was divided in accordance with religious criteria (millet), and the religious supra-ethnic Muslim community was based on the Quran (ummah). However, under the rule of the Ottoman sultans, the Kurds were able to maintain their traditions, which

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determined their distinctiveness, and used the Kurdish language without any problems. There were also Kurdish emirates, where rebellions against the sultan started already in the 19th century. However, the uprising of Sheikh Ubeydullah of 1880 is recognised as the first national uprising.

Nonetheless, the efforts by Ataturk to create the Turkish nation state changed this situation, forcing the Kurds to defend their identity, which accelerated the development of the Kurdish identity as a national identity. The Kurds were very much aware that they were not Turks, but in the 20th century Turkey began to promote pseudo-scientific theories that the Kurds were 'Mountain Turks' who had been denationalised as a result of Persian influence, and that the Kurdish dialects were in fact the Turkish language polluted by Persian, which justified the prohibition on their use.

Since the new Turkish identity was built as a political nation's identity, the opposing structure had to be based on a similar foundation. The process was not completed in the 1920s, as evidenced by the first Kurdish uprising against the new Turkish state, which broke out under Sheikh Said in 1925, and was more reactionary, religious and pro-Ottoman than national or Kurdish. It should also be remembered that during the Turkish War of Independence, most Kurds took the Turkish side, guided by religious motivation and the belief that the new state would be of a Turkish-Kurdish nature. Rapid secularisation and elimination of ethnic differences only began after 1923. The subsequent uprising, which led to the creation of the short-lived Republic of Ararat in 1927, and the rebellion of the Zaza Kurds in Dersim in 1937 already had a national background.

KURDS IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The second difficulty in assessing the number of the Kurds in Turkey is the lack of ethnic identity categories in the censuses and official statistics. Until 1965, the census included the native language category. It was also partly included in the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) in 1993 and 2003. However, there is no doubt that the Kurdish population is much larger than the number of people declaring their knowledge of the Kurdish language (before and at the time of the census of 1965 and

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now). Certain pressure was exerted during the census to facilitate assimilation, which undoubtedly resulted in a significant part of the Kurdish population not declaring the Kurdish language as native. After radical Turkification, a large percentage of nationally aware Kurds stopped speaking the Kurdish language. This resembles the widespread use of English by the Irish at the beginning of the 20th century. Many Kurdish leaders in Turkey are native Turkish speakers, for example Selahattin Demirtas and Abdullah Ocalan. Many (nationally aware) Kurdish families deliberately avoided using Kurdish so that poor knowledge of Turkish or even a Kurdish accent would not hinder children's educational path and career.

The third difficulty is related to the high level of migration of the Kurds within Turkey. In several provinces of south-eastern Turkey, which are part of the historical Kurdish area in Turkey, the number of non-Kurdish inhabitants is negligible. Attempts by Turkey to colonise these areas by resettling the ethnic Turkish population there ended in failure due to the economic backwardness of these areas among other things. A geographical criterion for assessing the size of the Kurdish population in Turkey can therefore also be adopted, assuming that, in principle, any person who lives in or has emigrated from certain provinces is of Kurdish origin. Still, this assumption does not apply to the border provinces of the Turkish and Kurdish ethnic area where the Turkification was much stronger.

TURKISH KURDISTAN – GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECT

The historical area of Kurdistan in Turkey comprises 22 Turkish provinces: Hakkari, Sirnak, Van, Bitlis, Siirt, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Batman, Mus, Agri, Tunceli, Bingol, Sanliurfa, Adiyaman, Igdır, Kars, Erzurum, Elazığ, Erzincan, Ardahan, Malatya and Gaziantep (the latter province has been Turkified and is not currently included in the ethnic area of Turkish Kurdistan). The area partly overlaps with the historical territory of Western Armenia but due to the ethnic cleansing carried out at the beginning of the 20th century

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this is not relevant today. The geographical criterion¹ can be applied to 12 provinces,² with a total population of 7,093,256 people,³ i.e. 8.6% of the Turkish population. In contrast, in 6 other provinces, i.e. Elaziğ, Sanliurfa, Adiyaman, Igdir, Kars and Erzincan, the Kurds constitute a majority, but the geographical criterion can no longer be used due to the significant presence of the Turkish ethnic element and assimilated Kurds. These provinces are home to a total of 3,978,328 people, or 4.8% of the Turkish population. In the 4 remaining provinces, i.e. Erzurum, Malatia, Ardahan and Gaziantep, with a total population of 3,632,354 (4.4% of the Turkish population), nationally aware Kurds are in the minority, with a Kurdish internal diaspora in Gaziantep.⁴ In summary, 22 provinces in the area of historic Turkish Kurdistan are therefore home to 17.8 % of the Turkish population and the majority of them are Kurds. However, it is difficult to assess the specific percentage without referring to other indicators. Moreover, this figure does not include the entire Kurdish population in Turkey, as it does not take account of the internal diaspora, i.e. Kurds living in Turkey but outside Kurdistan.

ESTIMATES OF THE SIZE AND GROWTH OF THE KURDISH AND KURDISH-SPEAKING POPULATION IN TURKEY

In scientific and press publications, the figures for the total Kurdish population in Turkey vary considerably. Denise Natali states that at the beginning of the Turkish Republic the Kurds constituted 20% of the population, occupying 30% of the territory. David McDowell estimated that in 1985 the Kurds represented 19% of the then Turkish population (8.5 million). In his 1996 article, Sevret Mutlu argued that during that time estimates of the number of the Kurds in Turkey ranged from 7 to 15 million, although

¹ That is to say, the recognition that the overwhelming majority of the population is made up of nationally aware Kurds, which of course has only statistical significance and does not exclude the possibility that specific people from a given province may not be Kurdish.

² Some of these provinces are also home to other national minorities, such as the Mardin Arabs and Assyrians.

³ Data from 2018, Turkstat, Population of Province by Years, <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist> (access: 12.11.2019)

⁴ An internal diaspora is understood here as Turkish citizens of Kurdish nationality who, as a result of migration within Turkey, have left the territory of Kurdistan but have remained in Turkey.

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there were also extreme opinions reporting 3 million and 20 million Kurds. At that time, Turkey's population was around 59 million, which means that the estimated percentage ranged from 12% to 25% (in the extreme version from 5% to 34%). Mutlu stresses that these estimates are usually not supported by a proper research methodology and depend on the political and national sympathies of the authors.

In 2013, the Turkish Konda Institute estimated the number of the Kurds at 13.4 million (17.7%) but this figure seems understated. The Kurdish website ekurd.net, on the other hand, presented its own calculations based on the analysis of population censuses, which showed that in 1927 the percentage of the Kurds was 17%, 18.5% in 1990 and as many as 30% in 2012. Such a high growth between 1990 and 2012 may come as a shock, but there are several factors that should be taken into account that may make it at least partly plausible.

Firstly, at the end of the 1980s, the rate of population growth in Turkey collapsed, except for the Kurdish-speaking population. The birth rate in Turkey had been declining since the 1950s, it fell from 2.54% to 2.24% between 1955 and 1985, and in 1990 it was only 1.88%, while at the beginning of the 21st century the fertility rate was at the limit of generational replacement (2.10-2.15). However, the total population of Turkey increased from 60.7 million to 75.6 million between 1995 and 2012 and to 82 million in 2018, i.e. by 24.5% and 35% respectively (1995-2018), while the population of the 12 provinces constituting the core of ethnic Kurdistan increased from 5 million in 1995 to 7 million in 2018, i.e. by 40%, despite significant migration from these areas and the formation of an internal diaspora in the ethnic Turkish territories. It is worth noting, however, that in six other Kurdish majority provinces the population increased by only 31% between 1995 and 2018, i.e. from 3,035,000 to 3,978,000, and in three other partly Kurdish provinces (excluding Gaziantep) the population decreased by almost 7%, i.e. from 1,719,000 to 1,604,000. The first group, however, contains Diyarbakir, the largest metropolitan area in Kurdistan, and two smaller metropolitan areas, of Van and Mardin; in the second group, there is only one metropolitan area, i.e. Sanliurfa; although Malatya and Erzurum are considered to be metropolitan areas within the third group, they are half the size of Diyarbakir, and they are not ethnically Kurdish. Meanwhile, migration outside the Kurdish ethnic area was also accompanied by migration within the Kurdish ethnic territory from rural areas to large cities such as Diyarbakir, Van, Mardin, Sanliurfa and Batman.

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In Diyarbakir province alone the population increased from 1176,000 to 1732,000, i.e. by 47%. However, an even higher population growth was recorded in the small provinces of Hakkari (53%) and Siirt (51%). While in the case of Diyarbakir the reason was migration from rural areas to the metropolis (in Gaziantep the population growth at that time was almost 45% too), it is noteworthy that Hakkari and Siirt are at the same time the two provinces with the highest percentage of Kurdish speakers.

Secondly, the liberalisation forced by accession negotiations, which began in the late 1990s but gained momentum between 2002 and 2015, after the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power and partly lifted the restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language and the ethnic expression of Kurdish identity, resulted in a revival of national consciousness and increased willingness to declare it.

Nevertheless, in his publication 'Egzystencjalny wymiar migracji dla narodu kurdyjskiego i jego terytorium' [The existential dimension of migration for the Kurdish people and their territory],⁵ the author of this study estimated the Kurdish population in Turkey in 2016 at 18 million, i.e. 22.5% (in 2018, with a conservative application of the general population growth rate for Turkey, this would mean an increase to 18.5 million), 7 million of whom were the internal diaspora. The latter figure was based on calculations by Fuad Jomma, who in 2001 estimated the number of the Kurds in Turkey outside Kurdistan at 5 million. Under this assumption, the Kurdish population of Turkish Kurdistan would represent 42% of the total Kurdish population of Kurdistan (the entire ethnic area divided between the four countries), while the Kurds in Turkey (including the internal diaspora) would represent 52% of the Kurdish population of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

⁵ Witold Repetowicz, *Egzystencjalny wymiar migracji dla narodu kurdyjskiego i jego terytorium*, *Humaniora*, nr 1 (17)/2017, p. 165-195, http://humaniora.amu.edu.pl/sites/default/files/humaniora/Humaniora%2017/Repetowicz_Hum_1_17_S.pdf (access: 12.11.2019)

INTERNAL DIASPORA

The assessment of the size of the internal diaspora is particularly difficult because Turkification in relation to language (linguicide) is in this case much more intense and is not always accompanied by the Turkification of national consciousness (although it is certainly also a significant phenomenon). Furthermore, mixed marriages are much more common in the internal diaspora, which contributes to a dispersed sense of national identity of the children. The analysis of TDHS data shows that mixed marriages rarely occur between individuals declaring Kurdish and Turkish as their native language. As many as 98% of Turkish-speaking women marry Turkish-speaking men, while 92% of Kurdish-speaking women marry Kurdish-speaking men. The 'Kurdish-speaking' category, however, must not be unquestioningly associated with Kurdish ethnicity, as the internal diaspora and a significant proportion of Turkish Kurds with a higher social status are Turkish-speaking, so that both the categories of 'Turkish-speaking women' and 'Turkish-speaking men' also include Kurds, leading to the conclusion that it is not possible to assess the actual number of mixed marriages (in ethnic terms) in this language group.

The assessment of the size of the internal diaspora must therefore be based primarily on data on migration and place of birth. The migration was partly voluntary/economically motivated and partly forced. Two waves of deportation carried out as part of repressions took place in the thirties and forties, and in the eighties and nineties. Fuad Jomma estimates that in the former case they covered about 400,000-450,000 people, while in the latter case the estimates range from 0.4 to 1.2 million, with the majority of the displaced people living in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions. In addition, another wave of around 200,000 left Turkish Kurdistan in 2015-2016 during the pacification of urban guerrillas by the Turkish army (initially, this number ranged, according to various estimates, from around 350,000 to 500,000, but some returned after the military action ceased).

The growing number of the internal diaspora is indicated by some data on the growth of the Kurdish-speaking population. For example, Servet Mutlu stipulated that in 1990 as many as 35% of the Kurdish-speaking population lived outside Turkish Kurdistan, while in 1965 it was only 18% and 11% in 1945. While between 1965 and 1990 the population of Turkey as a whole increased by 80%, the Kurdish-speaking population

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increased by 125% (although the proportion of Kurds using the Kurdish language decreased, which proves a much higher increase in the proportion of the Kurdish population determined by population growth), and at the same time the Kurdish-speaking population increased by only 84% in the Kurdish territories (as a result of migrations). The trend did not change in the next quarter of a century.

In 2012, as many as 47% of people born in the 21 Kurdish provinces (the above-mentioned provinces of historic Kurdistan with the exception of Gaziantep) lived outside their territory,⁶ while in 2007 the percentage was 44%. Istanbul, which has in fact become the largest Kurdish city, had about 3.6 million inhabitants in 2012, representing 26% of the city's population. In Izmir, the Kurds make up about 20% of the city's population and they are almost as numerous (800,000) as in the informal capital of Turkish Kurdistan, Diyarbakir. In 2012, the total number of migrants from Turkish Kurdistan living in other parts of Turkey was 9.3 million – more than 12% of the then population of Turkey.

Even if one assumes that the Kurds constituted only half of this number (an assumption based on Mutlu's calculations, according to which in 1990 Kurdish-speaking people accounted for 51% in these 21 provinces), this would be due to the fact that in 2012 the internal diaspora included at least 4.7 million people. However, this figure takes into account only the first generation of the migrants, without adding the children born in the internal diaspora. Moreover, since the Kurdish population is significantly larger than the Kurdish-speaking population, the percentage of the Kurdish population among migrants is also higher.

THE KURDISH LANGUAGE IN TURKEY AND THE PROBLEM OF LINGUICIDE

The assessment of the size of the Kurdish-speaking population in Turkey is problematic for the reasons mentioned above but also because such information has

⁶ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/kurds-still-migrating-to-western-turkish-cities.aspx?pageID=238&nID=46198&NewsCatID=344> (access: 26.11.2019)

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ceased to be included in the censuses after 1965. Although a related question was included in individual TDHS surveys in 1993 and 2003, the nature of those surveys does not allow the size of the Kurdish-speaking population to be assessed without reference to the related analytical articles. The Kurds in Turkey use two dialects: the majority use the Kurmanji dialect, and the minority use Zaza. The Zaza dialect is sometimes classified as a separate language due to the considerable differences between this variety and Kurmanji.⁷ This has also caused controversy over whether the speakers of the Zaza language/dialect are Kurds or a separate ethnic group. However, the dominant view is that the Zaza are Kurds, and one of the most famous politicians from this ethno-linguistic group is Selahattin Demirtas, a prominent Kurdish politician in Turkey. Most probably, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the Tunceli-born leader of the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), whose father took part in the Dersim uprising and was one of the victims of the Kemalist ethnic cleansing against the Zaza community, also comes from a Zaza family. However, Kilicdaroglu claims that he is not of Kurdish but of Turkmen origin.

Based on censuses, Mutlu estimated the percentage of the Kurdish-speaking population at 9% in 1935, at 10% in 1965 and at 12.6% in 1990.⁸ Interestingly, according to Zeyneloglu, Sirkeci and Civelek,⁹ the Kurdish-speaking population in Turkey declined slightly between 1935 and 1945, although the overall population of Turkey at that time increased by 16%. This means that repressions and deportations were the cause of a progressive process of linguistic enrichment, but the high birth rate among the Kurds quickly halted and then reversed the trend. Mutlu verified the census data using a coefficient resulting from the methodology he adopted. However, he equated the obtained amount with the Kurdish population, which, as shown by Zeyneloglu, Sirkeci, and Civelek, was a mistake, taking into account the scale of the linguicide. They stress that Turkey's policy of language genocide (linguicide) led to a weakening of the relationship between knowledge of the mother tongue and a sense of national identity. The process of linguistic assimilation was particularly strong in the ethnic Turkish territories, where the 20th century Kurdish migration (including forced migration)

⁷ Kurmanji and Zaza speakers do not understand each other. On the other hand, the Kurdish-speaking Turkish state television channel TRT6 broadcasts programs in the Zaza dialect.

⁸ Servet Mutlu, *Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A demographic study*, Int. J. Middle East Stud. (28), 1996, pp. 517-541 <http://www.academicroom.com/article/ethnic-kurds-turkey-demographic-study>, 12.11.2019

⁹ Sinan Zeyneloğlu, Ibrahim Sirkeci, Yaprak Civelek, *Language shift among Kurds in Turkey: A spatial and demographic analysis*, Kurdish Studies, Volume 4, No 1, May 2016, pp. 25-50

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created an internal Kurdish diaspora. Many Kurds also felt pressure from the interviewers to select Turkish as their mother tongue or did so out of fear of repression. Language assimilation was also often the result of a conscious decision by parents to raise their children using Turkish in order to avoid discrimination in school or later on the labour market.

The census of 1965 showed that out of the 31 million inhabitants of Turkey, 2.2 million recognised Kurmanji as their mother tongue, while 150,000 selected Zaza (in total, this would mean 7.5% of the Turkish population, but according to the calculations by Mutlu, which took the results of the more reliable 1935 census as the base amount, this percentage was in fact 10% at the time). In 10 of today's provinces¹⁰ the population recognising Kurdish (Kurmanji and Zaza combined) as their mother tongue was in the majority, with the highest percentages recorded in the provinces of Hakkari 86%, Siirt 68% and Mardin 67% (the figures were 89.5, 79 and 75 respectively as stated by Mutlu), although the latter two also included today's Batman and Sirnak provinces. In these provinces almost all (more than 99%) Kurdish-speaking people used the Kurmanji dialect. On the other hand, the largest concentrations of the Zaza dialect speakers were recorded in Diyarbakir (58,000), Elazig (31,000) and Bingol (31,000) provinces. Another significant fact is that in the Tunceli province, originally called Dersim in Kurdish, only 2370 out of 154,000 inhabitants declared that Zaza was their mother tongue, while 33,400 picked Kurmanji. Between 1937 and 1938, the province was a site of massacres which, according to the Kurds, constituted a genocide. Mutlu's calculations proved that Kurdish speakers were also the majority in Tuncela (55.8%) and Mus (67.6%). Only slightly more than 10% of those who declared that Kurdish was their mother tongue at the time lived outside of the ethnic Kurdistan.

As stated by ethnologue.com, whose data was imprecisely quoted by the Turkish daily Hurriyet,¹¹ in 2014 more than 8.1 million people spoke Kurmanji in Turkey and 1.3 million people spoke Zaza, i.e. a total of 12.2% of the Turkish population.

¹⁰ These are the 12 provinces indicated previously as uniformly Kurdish, with the exception of Musa and Tunceli, which were particularly affected by deportations and repressions in the 1930s and 40s.

¹¹ Hurriyet reported, among other things, that Kurmanji was used by 15 million people without adding that ethnologue.com referred to the estimated number of people speaking Kurmanji not only in Turkey but also in other countries. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/thirty-six-languages-spoken-in-turkey-but-data-needs-update-specialist-says-56469>

BIRTH RATE AMONG KURDS IN TURKEY

Since the 1960s, the birth rate in the Kurdish territories has been much higher than the Turkish average, which means that the process of resettlement, migration and depopulation was only partly effective, i.e. the percentage of the Kurds in Turkey is growing more slowly but is not decreasing. Moreover, there is also a clear trend suggesting that while the birth rate in the provinces of south-eastern Turkey is higher than that of the Turkish-speaking population, the birth rate of the Kurdish-speaking population within this region is also higher than that of the Turkish-speaking population (this is not a question of fluctuations in the proportion of the population that speaks the language, as this also depends on other factors, but only on the number of children). This trend has led many Turks to make alarming statements suggesting that within a generation the Kurds could become the majority in Turkey. This is the view expressed for instance by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This conviction is the core of actions taken against the national emancipation of the Kurds.

Koc, Cavlin and Hancioglu¹² state (based on TDHS data from 1993 and 2003) that the fertility rate of the Turkish-speaking population as a whole was 2.25 in 1993 and 1.88 in 2003 (the fertility rate for the whole Turkish population in 1993 was above 3.0, while in 2003 it was only 2.09 and by 2018 it had fallen to 1.99¹³), while for the Kurdish-speaking population it was 4.57 and 4.07 respectively. In addition, in eastern Turkey (24 provinces, including 21 Kurdish ones, as well as Gaziantep, Bayburt and Kilis) the ratio was 3.65 in 2003, 2.84 in 1993 and 2.28 in 2003 for the Turkish-speaking population and 5.27 and 4.72 for the Kurdish-speaking population respectively. At the same time, it must be taken into consideration that the Turkish-speaking population also includes people of Kurdish nationality. These results therefore indicate that the fertility rate in Turkey has fallen dramatically, especially for the Turkish-speaking

¹² Koc, Cavlin, Hancioglu, *Demographic differentials and demographic integration of Turkish and Kurdish populations in Turkey*, Population Research and Policy Review 27 (4), pp. 447-457, 2008 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5153769_Demographic_Differentials_and_Demographic_Integration_of_Turkish_and_Kurdish_Populations_in_Turkey (access: 12.11.2019)

¹³ The data of the Turkish Statistical Office – slightly different from the TDHS data. The TDHS gives slightly higher values.

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population in ethnic Turkish areas, while for the Kurdish-speaking population in ethnic Kurdish areas the decline was relatively small. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the fertility gap in the east between the Kurdish-speaking and the Turkish-speaking population reflects not only a higher fertility rate of the Kurdish population as compared to the Turkish population but also of the Kurdish-speaking population of Kurdish origin compared to the Turkish-speaking population of Kurdish origin, with the latter still being higher than that of the Turkish population (as shown by the higher birth rate in Kurdish-dominated provinces).

The 2013 TDHS report does not provide any information on the fertility rate in relation to the Kurdish or Turkish language. On the other hand, the data provided on the regional fertility rate difference indicate that the pre-existing difference had prevailed despite a slight reversal of the trend. The total fertility rate for Turkey as a whole increased slightly to 2.11 (by 0.02) according to Turkstat but decreased in the eastern region (according to TDHS data) from 3.65 to 3.41. Still, it remained significantly higher than in other regions (the highest in the southern region – 2.48).

According to the UN's demographic projections, population growth in Turkey is expected to slow down even further and fall to less than 1% per year after 2020, and in 2050 it should reach 0.26%. The data suggest that the fertility rate will remain at the current level and the total population will increase to 97 million in 2050, i.e. by 18%, which is quite moderate.

Turkstat claims that by 2023 the population will increase to almost 87 million, i.e. by 6% compared to 2018, while in the 12 purely Kurdish provinces this increase will be more moderate: from 7,093,000 to 7,280,000, i.e. by only 2.6%. This will be due not so much to a lower birth rate as to higher migration. In the other 9 partly Kurdish provinces the population will increase from 5,582,000 to 5,890,000, i.e. by 5.5%. Within this region, the highest population growth is forecast in the provinces of Sanliurfa (over 11%), Batman, Diyarbakir and Sirnak, as well as Gaziantep (less than 11%).

Part II

Socio-cultural and legal status of the Kurds in Turkey

THE ETHNOGENESIS OF THE KURDS

The ethnogenesis of the Kurds and the Turks is completely different, as the Kurds are related to Iranian peoples such as the Persians in this respect. They originate from the ancient Medes and the Karda people. The Medes, close relatives of the Persians, established a short-lived empire in the seventh century BC which included Upper Mesopotamia – today's Turkish Kurdistan. Shortly afterwards it was conquered by the much more long-lasting Persian Empire. Although the theory of the Median origin of the Kurds has not been explicitly confirmed (or rejected), the kinship of Kurds and Persians is indicated by common mythology and pre-Islamic culture. The Persians and the Medes practised Zoroastrianism and even though in the present times there are no followers of this religion among the Turkish Kurds (small groups are found in other parts of Kurdistan), its elements have survived in national myths, culture, traditions and literature. This concerns particularly the figure of blacksmith Kaveh, the Persian epic 'Shahnameh' by Ferdusi and the Nowruz holiday. Kaveh was a mythical progenitor of the Kurds who challenged the evil King Zahak. Zahak was possessed by Satan, represented by Ahriman in the original Avestan (Zoroastrian) version, and by the Islamic Iblis in the version described by Ferdusi. Black snakes that fed on children's brains grew from the king's shoulders. When Kaveh was ordered to sacrifice the youngest of his 17 children, he decided to fool the king by giving him the brain of a sheep and hid the child in the mountains instead. Other citizens followed suit until finally Kaveh created an army, captured Zahak's castle and killed the evil king, and people started bonfires to celebrate the liberation. Ferdusi's version, created at the beginning of the 11th century, differs slightly but the author does mention that the Kurds are the descendants of those rescued children who wandered around the mountains and waited for bonfires to announce the death of the evil king. In some

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interpretations Zahak is the king of the Semitic Assyria, which sets the story in a historical context. In the 7th century BC Cyaxares, the king of the Iranian (i.e. originating from the prehistoric Aryans) Medes, conquered Assyria, to which he was previously dependent. The story of declaring Zahak's death by fires is referred to in the tradition of lighting bonfires after dark on the eve of Nowruz, i.e. the Kurdish (and generally Iranian) New Year. It is celebrated on the day of the spring equinox on March 20 or 21 and is the most important non-religious Kurdish holiday.

Some researchers believe that the first material evidence of the use of the ethnonym 'Kurd' can be found on Sumerian cuneiform tablets dating as far back as the third millennium BC which mention a people named Karda living in regions south of Lake Van, which is today's Turkish Kurdistan. This is linked to information provided by Xenophon, who mentions a people called Karduch, living south of Lake Van, in his work entitled *Anabasis* written around 370 BC. This name probably comes from the Old Arabian 'qardu' which means 'strong' or 'hero' and was used in later Greek and Roman sources to describe mercenaries from Upper Mesopotamia. This also corresponds to the name of the Beth Qard tribe, which, according to Arabic and Syrian sources, is said to have inhabited the area between Jabal Judi (referred to as Qard in Aramaic even today) and the Tigris. In the present times, this area belongs to the Kurdish province of Hakkari in Turkey.

Later Aramaic, Greek and Roman sources repeatedly mention the Kingdom of Corduene (there are various versions of the record) located in Upper Mesopotamia and covering most of the territory of present-day Turkish Kurdistan. In the second century BC, the kingdom enjoyed independence, and was later the subject of a Roman-Persian conflict.

KURDISH STATEHOOD UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY

The contemporary form of the word 'Kurd' appeared for the first time in the anonymous work titled 'Kar-Namag i Ardasir i Papakan', created in the 3rd or 4th century. It describes the battle of Ardasir, the founder of the Persian Sassanid dynasty, against a Kurdish king named Madig (c. 230 AD). After the Arab conquest of the Saxon Empire,

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a growing number of references to the Kurds in Arabic sources is observed. For example, in 640 it was recorded that a tax was paid by the Kurdish ruler al-Zawzan, who ruled over a territory identical to the Kingdom of Corduene. The area inhabited by the Kurds at that time was largely the same as the area of the modern 'Greater Kurdistan'.

In the 9th century AD, during the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate, several Kurdish emirates were formed, which also included the territory of today's Kurdish provinces in Turkey. This concerns particularly the Marwanid state, which encompassed the present-day Diyarbakir, Nusaybin, Cizre, Mardin and Sirnak. In the middle of the 11th century, however, they were destroyed by the Seljuk Turks' invasion. Pseudo-scientific theories propagated in Turkey in the twentieth century, on the other hand, claimed that the Turkish Kurds came to present-day Turkey with the Seljuks, and were later Iranised under the influence of Persian invasions. There are no studies to confirm this. Several Kurdish dynasties appeared again after the fall of the Seljuk Empire. Among them were the Ayyubid dynasty founded by Saladin. His state can nonetheless hardly be considered Kurdish, considering his Islamic universality. There was, however, a Kurdish emirate established in the state created by one of the Ayyubid branches, with a seat in Hasankeyf (now Batman province, Turkey). It existed from the 12th to the middle of the 15th century and then was seized by the Turkish Aq Qoyunlu dynasty. In the meantime, several other Kurdish emirates such as Badinan, Bitlis, Botan and Hakkari were established on the territory of today's Turkish Kurdistan and survived until the mid-19th century. During the First Ottoman-Persian War, Kurdish rulers in Upper Mesopotamia supported Sultan Selim I against the Persian shah Ismail I. This was partly due to the fact that they were Sunnites like Selim, while Ismail imposed Shia Islam on territories within his allegiance. In addition, the Sultan guaranteed the special status of Kurdish emirates who did not pay taxes or provide sipahi for the Sultan's army but who went to war at the Sultan's call with their own army. This state of affairs lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the centralisation reform known as the Tanzimat was introduced. Thanks to the loyalty of the Kurdish emirates, in 1514 Selim I defeated Ismail I in the Battle of Chaldiran and most of the Kurdish lands fell to Turkey. Some Alevi Kurds who were members of the Shia Order of Qizilbash which supported the Persian ruler opposed Selim I, and, consequently, Ottoman rulers persecuted the Alevis, treating them as heretics and Persian agents.

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An emir of Bitlisi, Sharaf Beg Bedlisi who lived in the 16th century, wrote Sharafnama, a work that is highly important for Kurdish culture. Although it was written in Persian, it described the history of medieval Kurdish emirates. The frequently occurring thesis that the Kurds never had a state of their own is therefore very imprecise, although it is certain that the Kurdish emirates were not nation states, as such a concept did not exist at the time. What is crucial, however, is that no one in the Ottoman Empire fought against the Kurdish language and traditions or tried to Turkify the Kurds. That happened only after the creation of the Turkish Republic.

RELIGION OF THE KURDS IN TURKEY

In religious terms, the vast majority of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims. Unlike ethnic Turks, who generally choose the Hanafi school of Islamic law, most Kurds belong to the Shafi'i school.¹⁴ According to a 2006 study by the Konda Institute, 89% of ethnic Turks are Hanafis and only 3.5% are Shafi'is, while among the Kurds the Hanafis represent 29% and the Shafi'is 57.5%.¹⁵ The Turkish Kurdish community is also much less secularised than the Turks and the most religious (Islamic) provinces include Bingol, Erzurum, Adiyaman (including in particular Menzil, which has produced many Turkish members of the Islamic State). In these provinces there is also strong Kurdish opposition to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) motivated by Islamic radicalism. Nevertheless, despite its left-wing nature, the PKK, which referred to Marxism at the beginning of its existence, never declared hostility against Islam and most of its members come from religious families. During the city fights in the years 2015-2016, the funerals of the members of the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) militant youth wing were accompanied by religious ceremonies (unless the bodies of those killed had been confiscated by the Turkish army).

¹⁴ Latife Kinay Kilic claims that the Shafi'i Kurds are more inclined to vote for the HDP, while the Hanafi for the AKP. Kilic, *Religious divisions and ethnic voting: the case of sunni Kurds in Turkey*, Department of Political Science and Public Administration Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University Ankara 2018

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Sufism is also very popular among Turkish Kurds and Sufi brotherhoods such as Naqshbandi are actively operating, and the Kurdish theologian Said Nursi, who lived between 1877 and 1960, is an important figure. Although his teachings are also popular among ethnic Turks, there are organisations in Turkish Kurdistan which refer to the teachings of Said Neuri and at the same time promote Kurdish culture, identity and language. Nursi himself was not a separatist, although he was persecuted by the Kemalist regime (the reason, however, was his religious and not national activity). A distinction must be made at this point between separatism and opposition to the Kemalist policy of forced assimilation of the Kurds (Turkification), which provoked resistance of the whole religious branch in the new Turkish state.

The most important Kurdish organisations related to the teaching of Said Nursi are Nubihar and Med Zehra. Although Nubihar is a religious organisation, it is mainly engaged in publishing Kurdish books, promoting Kurdish culture and teaching the Kurdish language. Since Nubihar not only has no ties to the PKK but is even critical of the pro-Ocalan movement (i.e. not only the PKK but also the HDP), it enjoys relative freedom in its pro-Kurdish activities. Med Zehra, founded in 1973, is, on the other hand, more focused on the religious teachings of Nursi while strongly promoting Kurdish nationalism and referring to the figure of Sheikh Said, the leader of the first serious Kurdish uprising after the Turkish Republic. Sheikh Said, hanged in 1925, was Zaza and belonged to the Sunni Sufi brotherhood of Naqshbandi. The name is a reference to Medresetu'z Zehra, the university that Nursi was planning to open. The teaching was to be provided in Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic. The group believes that Nursi was also a Kurdish nationalist and this was one of the reasons for his persecution by the Kemalist regime. In 1991, the Zehra Foundation for Education and Culture was founded by the younger generation of Zehra activists, headed by Izettin Yildiri. Med-Zehra was persecuted until the AKP party came to power. Nowadays, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also often refers to Nursi's teachings, but the Turkish and Kurdish view of this figure remains different. While the Kurds see him as a Kurdish nationalist, the Turks believe was as a promoter of Islamic universalism supporting the Kurdish-Turkish community.

The movement of Fethullah Gulen, which started out in the Kurdish territories, also originated from the Nursi movement. Gulen had a negative attitude towards Kurdish national emancipation, and in particular towards any negotiations with the PKK. He took advantage of the poor level of public schools and the shortcomings of the

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educational system, in which students without special further training courses had practically no chance of getting into university. Gulen set up a network of schools called darschana, where teaching was free of charge. In this way he also gained some influence in Turkish Kurdistan. Nationally conscious Kurds, especially those who supported the PKK, had a negative attitude towards the Gulen ideology but some people did send their children to the schools run by the movement. Assimilated and strongly religious Kurds were more open to Gulen education. After the Turkish authorities recognised Gulenists as a terrorist organisation and started mass arrests, the Gulen education system in Kurdistan collapsed. In the diaspora, on the other hand, Gulenists (after the start of the persecution in Turkey) tried to get closer to Kurdish circles, including those connected with the HDP or the PKK (who nonetheless remained sceptical).

ALEVISM AMONG THE KURDS

About 20-25% of the Kurds, including the majority of Zaza, follow Alevism (other sources mention 5%),¹⁶ a syncretic gnostic religion very loosely linked to Islam. Alevism is not and never has been recognised as a separate religion in Turkey, and its followers experienced numerous persecutions both during the Ottoman period and after the creation of the Turkish Republic. The Alevi population are officially classified as Muslims (Shiites), despite the fact that this has very little to do with reality. Even though they regard the Quran as their holy book and worship Muhammad as a prophet, their attitude towards him and the first Shia Imam Ali is completely different from that of Islam. Moreover, Alevis do not observe Ramadan, the order to pray five times a day or the requirement to make a pilgrimage to Mecca as well as many other Muslim practices. The Kurdish Alevism shows some differences from the Turkish Alevism, which is more saturated with Tengrism (the pre-Islamic religion of the Turks). The Kurdish Alevism has more in common with Yazdaism and Zoroastrianism – ancient

¹⁶ Ibid. This percentage is very difficult to estimate due to the lack of any official data. According to a study by the Konda Institute in 2006 12% of the Kurds, including the Zaza, are Alevis, and additionally 0.25% are Shiites.

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Kurdish-Iranian religions. Additionally, Kurdish Alevis differ in appearance from their Turkish counterparts (they often wear long hair, curled moustache and beards).¹⁷

Kurdish Alevis have a sense of distinctiveness from their Turkish counterparts, and despite the persecution they suffered under Kemalist rule, a significant proportion of them vote for the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), but there are also some HDP supporters. Alevi temples usually feature portraits of Ataturk, despite the fact that he was responsible for the massacre of Kurdish Alevis in Dersim, a crime considered as genocide by some. Kurdish Alevis are also often referred to as Qizilbash, which is a reference to the Shiite order supporting Persian Safavids during their wars with the Ottoman Turkey, and is a rather pejorative term. Alevis are also much more liberal than Sunni Muslims in terms of morality, which manifests itself in the recognition of full equality between men and women or the consumption of alcohol.

Orthodox Sunni Muslims perceive Alevis as heretics, and this certainly affects the group's fears of Turkish Islamisation, prompting them to vote for the CHP. The persecution during Ataturk's dictatorship was connected with reluctance on the part of the creator of the Turkish state to any diversity, be it ethnic or religious, which he saw as an obstacle to building a modern nation state.

Alevis do not go to mosques but have their own temples called cemevi, which have not received the status of places of worship in Turkey. Individual Alevi communities are headed by leaders called dede.

RELIGION AND CULTURE OF THE KURDS – OTHER ASPECTS

There is also a very small Yazidi community in Turkey (some estimate it at several hundred people) but there are no Yazidi temples. Some members of this community,

¹⁷ Aksoy, *A comparative study of the identity definition and psychological traumas through Kurdish Alevi Community in the Great Britain*, https://www.academia.edu/37966692/A_Comparative_Study_of_the_Identity_Definition_and_Psychological_Traumata_through_Kurdish_Alevi_Community_in_the_Great_Britain_Dissertation_submit_version_4_.docx-Sharing_folder.docx?auto=download (access: 29.11.2019)

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i.e. Feleknas Uca and Ali Atalan (both born in Germany to families of Turkish emigrants), have joined the parliamentary representation of the HDP.

Kurdish religious customs in Turkey are no different from those of the general population, so the key celebrations in this respect are Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Mawlid, Mohammed's birthday (the latter is not an official holiday). Nowruz, the Kurdish New Year, is another highly important holiday. It is not an official holiday in Turkey, but in recent years the authorities did not ignore it, and President Erdogan has started to present his New Year's wishes. In practice, however, the police and security services sometimes disrupt the celebration of Nowruz.

The Kurds have a rich folklore, including folk tales, often relating to historical events, dances (shayi), music and costumes. Dengbejs, Kurdish bards who sing folk songs, play an important part in this context. Interestingly, there are works of written literature in the Kurdish language dating back as early as the 15th century. The first piece in the Kurdish language (Kurmanji) was written in the 15th century (a poem by Ali Hariri from the Hakkari region), while Ahmad-i Khani, who was born in the 17th century in Hakkari and died in Dogubayazit, is seen as the father of Kurdish literature. Khani wrote the first Kurdish-Arabic dictionary for children entitled 'Nubihara Bicukan'. Back then Kurmanji used the Arabic alphabet. The currently used Kurdish alphabet, based on the Latin alphabet, was created around 1932 by Celadet Bedir Khan, born to the family of emirs of the Emirate of Bohtan. Bedirchan was already in exile in Syria at that time, but he was born in 1893 in Istanbul and left Turkey in 1923, after Ataturk proclaimed the foundation of the Turkish Republic and started a systematic fight against Kurdish identity.

STATUS OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE – MEDIA AND EDUCATION

There are no legal provisions in Turkish law relating to the Kurds as a national minority. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne recognised only non-Muslims as minorities in Turkey: i.e. Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The non-Turkish ethnic Muslim groups therefore had

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no status. Until the AKP came to power in 2002, the Kurdish language was banned in Turkey and severe penalties were imposed even for listening to Kurdish songs or speaking Kurdish in the streets. The 2012 decision by the Turkish authorities to introduce optional Kurdish lessons in schools from the fifth grade at the request of parents was of vital importance. In 2012, 2,000 students and in 2013 as many as 15,000 chose to take the course.¹⁸ Earlier, in 2010, the Institute of Spoken Languages was opened at the University of Mardin with a view to educating teachers of Kurdish, among other things. Professor Kadri Yildirim, associated with Nubihar, was Head of the Institute. The AKP hoped that by educating teachers it would control the Kurdish teaching process and gain an advantage over the HDP in promoting its ideology among Kurdish children. Meanwhile, Kadri Yildirim failed to meet the AKP's expectations and was dismissed in 2015 and later became an HDP deputy. However, many graduates of the Institute could not find a job, and in 2015 mass lay-offs of people suspected of having links with the HDP or Gulen began. From 2015 onwards, the atmosphere around learning Kurdish also started to change and increasing harassment (hindering the opening of Kurdish classes, dismissal of teachers, etc.) resulted in a decrease in the number of children learning the language. Some Turkish universities still have institutes for the research and teaching of Kurdish culture and language.

The Kurdish language is also present in public spaces in Kurdish provinces in Turkey (e.g. in advertising). There are also Kurdish-speaking media, including the special Turkish state television channel TRT 6 opened in 2009 (which is used, however, for propaganda and indoctrination). TRT 6 broadcasts mainly in Kurmanji, but there are also some shows in Zaza. After 2016, the Turkish authorities closed almost all private Kurdish-speaking television stations. The only exception is Zarok TV, which broadcasts children's programmes both in Kurmanji and in Zaza. However, the station is constantly being attacked by the Turkish authorities. For example, it was shut down from September to December 2016, and in July 2018 it was punished for spreading 'terrorist propaganda' by broadcasting two popular folk songs: 'My rose is Cizira Botan' and 'Kurdistan is very pleasant'. Following the 2016 coup d'état, the Turkish authorities

¹⁸ This is especially true of Kurmanji. It is possible to learn Zaza too, but the dialect is much less standardised and still consists of many subdialects, which hampers this process.

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also closed most Kurdish-speaking newspapers and news agencies, including the Azadiya Welat newspaper, DIHA agencies and the women's news agency JINHA.

Many cities in Turkish Kurdistan have Kurdish names in addition to official Turkish names but they do not appear in any documents or on road signs. This applies both to large cities and provincial administrative centres such as Diyarbakir (Kurdish: Amed), Sanliurfa (Kurdish: Riha), Gaziantep (Kurdish: Dilok), Tunceli (Kurdish: Dersim) as well as smaller ones such as Silvan (Kurdish: Farqin) or Guroymak (Kurdish: Nurshin).

KURDISH CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN TURKEY

The Kurdish-speaking music scene was legalised in Turkey in 2002, but this did not prevent many Kurdish-speaking performers in Turkey from being accused of spreading 'terrorist propaganda', as, for example, Rojda Aykoc was sentenced in 2010 for performing the song 'Heval Kamuran' at the 2009 Diyarbakir Festival of Cultures and Arts. In 2013, the most popular Kurdish bard, Sivan Perwer, performed before Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which stirred up considerable controversy. PKK supporters accused the singer of treason. Perwer, who emigrated from Turkey in 1976, was never on good terms with the PKK, but he maintains a good relationship with Fethullah Gulen. Perwer also strongly criticised the Turkish invasions on Afrin and Serekaniye, which ultimately ended his attempt to get closer to the current Turkish authorities. In contrast, another well-known Kurdish-speaking singer, Ibrahim Tatlis, who has a mixed Kurdish-Arabic background, is closely associated with Erdogan.

There are many Kurdish cultural and scientific organisations in Turkey, but they also experience harassment and administrative difficulties.¹⁹ The most important organisations include Navenda Canda Mesopotamya (NCM) related to the local

¹⁹ Kurpiewska-Korbut, *The Socio-Political Role of Modern Kurdish Cultural Institutions*, in: *Rediscovering Kurdistan's Cultures and Identities: The call of the Cricket*, p. 120, Palgrave Macmillan 2018

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government of Diyarbakir, Sentera Cande ya Dicle-Firate, or Enstituya Kurdi ya Stanbole (EKS), as well as the previously mentioned Nubihar. The PKK exerts ideological influence on some cultural organisations but classifying all institutions associated with the HDP and the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) as PKK agendas would be an overstatement. In recent years, cultural local government institutions associated with the HDP have been cooperating more and more closely with the religious anti-PKK Nubihar. Other cultural organisations completely independent of PKK influence are Weqfa Candi u Lekolini ya Kurdi (Kurdish Cultural and Research Foundation) and Gruba Hebateya Vateyi. The Ismail Besikci Foundation (IBV), whose founder, imprisoned many times in Turkey, pioneered research in Kurdish studies, also plays a significant role. The IBV is a left-wing organisation but is critical of the PKK.

KURDISH SEPARATISM IN TURKEY

The issue of Kurdish separatism in Turkey often causes misunderstandings and abuse. Within the basic meaning of the word, understood as a desire to separate a certain territory from Turkey and create an independent Kurdish state, one might conclude that the Kurds do not currently show strong separatist tendencies. In his 2019 book titled 'The Kurds and the politics of Turkey: agency, territory and religion', Deniz Cifci claims, citing a study by Suç Araştırmaları ve Kriminoloji Araştırma Merkezi (SAMER) conducted in 11 provinces in the heart of Turkish Kurdistan, that only 19.3% of the local population are in favour of independence, while 41.2% are in favour of democratic autonomy, 11.7% are in favour of federalism and 9.3% are in favour of administrative autonomy, while only 9.1% believe that Kurdish territories should not have any special status in Turkey.

However, Turkish propaganda attempts to present any aspirations for the political emancipation of the Kurds in Turkey as separatism, which is supposed to justify the use of radical military and criminal measures. In 2015, Erdogan rejected a draft solution to the Kurdish problem, the so-called Dolmabahçe Agreement, claiming that there is no Kurdish problem in Turkey. This was to be demonstrated by the fact that the AKP government had already lifted prohibitions on the use of the Kurdish language

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and introduced optional Kurdish courses in schools and launched a 24/7 Kurdish-speaking state television channel. The key to understand the problem is to distinguish between individual and collective national rights of the Kurds. Before 2002, demanding any rights, and even uttering the words 'Kurd' or 'Kurdistan', was regarded as separatism, even if this did not involve any pursuit of secession (although such movements also existed) and was not backed by a political agenda. The AKP government changed the approach but continued to reduce the national rights of the Kurds to individual rights (i.e. they recognised that the Kurds existed and that they had the right to their language and traditions), stigmatising any desire for collective rights as separatism (i.e. they refused to admit that there was a Kurdish territory of Kurdistan and a Kurdish community who have certain national rights).

In the 20th century there were separatist tendencies among the Kurds, but today no serious Kurdish political force, in particular neither the PKK nor the HDP/BDP, nor any other entity of the Ocalan movement is planning a secession or the establishment of a Kurdish state. Dreams and wishes are a separate question. Most Kurds admit that they would like to see the so-called Greater Kurdistan, a state created from the combination of all four parts of Kurdistan, including Turkish Kurdistan. This is nevertheless not a political plan and it does not translate into any action. The Turkish authorities regard any publication of 'Greater Kurdistan' maps (even in an illustrative or scientific capacity) and usually also the very use of the word 'Kurdistan' as separatism and 'terrorist propaganda'. In the latter case, however, there is a certain lack of consistency. The name 'Kurdistan' has been used by Erdogan himself, for example during a meeting with Barzani in Diyarbakir in 2013 (in relation to the region in Turkey), and by Binali Yildirim in Diyarbakir when he was running for the votes of the Kurds living in Istanbul during the 2019 mayoral election. On the other hand, the use of this word by HDP deputies in the Turkish Parliament has provoked a sharp reaction from AKP deputies, the nationalist MHP and the leadership of the parliament, for example in January 2017, when HDP Deputy Sibel Yigitalp mentioned Kurdistan, and the chairman of the meeting stated in response that this was a 'non-existent place' that should not be discussed. In March 2019, Erdogan said that if HDP politicians

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wanted to talk about Kurdistan, they should move to Kurdistan in Northern Iraq because there was no such region in Turkey.²⁰

SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS IN THE PAST

As far as Kurdish separatist tendencies in Turkey are concerned, the first such movements probably emerged in the second half of the 19th century, in connection with the centralised administrative reform of Tanzimat, which eliminated the separateness of Kurdish emirates in the Ottoman Empire, resulting in revolts and separatist conspiracies, for example the Sheikh Ubeydullah rebellion in 1880-1881. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan was founded in Istanbul, whose representatives participated in a peace conference. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres provided for the creation of Kurdistan, which would include Diyarbakir, Batman, Hakkari, and Cizre. However, a large part of the Kurds took the side of Ataturk in the so-called Turkish War of Independence. The reason for this was that until 1923 Ataturk assured that the new state he was creating would be of a Turkish-Kurdish nature, and he presented the war as a confrontation between indigenous Muslim nations and Christian invaders. Even during the war there was a brutally suppressed uprising of Kurdish Alevi from the Kocgiri tribe in the area between Sivas and Erzincan. A much more serious uprising broke out in 1925 under the leadership of Sheikh Said. All the same, it was not separatist but revisionist in nature – the goal was to restore the Ottoman caliphate and reject the nationalist, centralist reforms introduced by Ataturk (which were aimed at eradicating the Kurdish identity). In 1927, a nationalist and separatist Kurdish formation called Xoybun was formed, which aimed to create a Kurdish state through armed struggle. That same year Ihsan Nuri Pasha commanded an armed uprising and proclaimed the Kurdish Republic of Ararat. The rebellion was crushed in 1930 by the Turkish army. This was the only time the Kurdish state was proclaimed on the territory of the Turkish Republic. Yet another uprising, which broke out in Dersim in 1937, was not a separatist one, but

²⁰ <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/b0749981-a13c-47dc-b6c4-27bd4c355a06> (access: 29.11.2019)

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opposed the plan of mass displacement. The uprising was mainly manned by Zaza Alevis under the leadership of Seyid Riza (hanged after the suppression of the uprising). The rebellion ended with the biggest massacre of the Kurds in the history of modern Turkey. Around 40,000 civilians were killed and mass ethnic cleansing was carried out in the Dersim region.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PKK

Another major challenge for the Turkish state caused by the Kurdish movement was the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan. Until the early 1990s, the PKK combined Marxism with nationalism in order to create an independent, socialist Kurdish state. Just before the 1980 coup in Turkey, the leadership of the PKK, including Ocalan, left for Syria. Nevertheless, some activists were imprisoned and, consequently, protests were carried out in Turkish prisons in 1982, which ended in the deaths of many PKK activists, either as a result of a hunger strike or self-immolation. On 15 August 1984, after the partial restoration of democracy in Turkey, the PKK began military activity. The PKK received continuous support from the USSR until the end of the 1980s, while Turkey's NATO allies recognised it as a terrorist organisation at the beginning of the 21st century. In this initial period of the war between the Turkish state and the PKK, Turgut Ozal, who was partly of Kurdish origin, headed the government. Ozal played a major role on the Turkish political scene from 1983 to 1993 and created a system of village guards to fight the PKK. The Village Guards were recruited from the Kurdish, poorly educated rural population. After the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent creation of the semi-independent Kurdistan Region in Iraq, the PKK began to change its objectives. In 1993, Ocalan announced that the PKK was rejecting separatism and began secret negotiations with the government. Ozal planned to introduce a package of pro-Kurdish reforms but died in April 1993 and his successors returned to the policy of forceful solutions, refusing any political reforms. There are unconfirmed theories that Ozal was planning to annex Iraqi Kurdistan and transform the Turkish state into a Turkish-Kurdish federation. The theory that he was poisoned by the army, who were not

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interested in a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue, is also unconfirmed. Ozal's body was exhumed in 2012 due to the poisoning accusations and poisonous substances were found, but ultimately the findings of the cause of death report were ambiguous. Meanwhile, the PKK resumed its armed activity, but in the mid-1990s it began to promote the idea of democratic federalism instead of the earlier independent and socialist Kurdistan project.

The departure of the PKK from separatism did not change the attitude of the Turkish authorities and the majority of Turkish public opinion. This is to say that attitudes towards the PKK were negative but, apart from that, all emancipatory aspirations were regarded as separatism. This was illustrated for example by the violent reaction to the parliamentary oath taken by the Kurdish deputy Leyla Zana in 1991. Uproar and accusations of separatism were also triggered by Kurdish singer Ahmet Kaya at the 1999 Istanbul Musician of the Year ceremony, when he announced that he was planning to produce music in Kurdish. As a result, criminal proceedings were initiated against him and he had to go into exile.

The adoption of a new programme by the PKK led to the emergence of more nationalist competitors, who did not gain much support in the end. According to Deniz Cifci, the following Kurdish groups are in favour of the ethnic federalism model: the Med-Zehra, the Zehra, the Huda/Hezbollah, the Hak-Par, the Kadep, the T-KDP, the OSP and the PSK. While the right to independence is supported by the Azadi Initiative, the PAK, the KKH, the IBV and the DHF. During the negotiations between the PKK and the AKP government, which began in 2012, the leader of the Azadi Initiative (ideologically distant from the PKK), Sidki Zilan, stated that the PKK should not disarm but rather transform itself into a National Army of Northern Kurdistan, adding that this should involve abandoning the Ocalan ideology and convening a National Congress of Kurdistan which would hold control over the new Kurdish army.²¹

The peaceful process launched in 2012 failed completely in 2015 despite the fact that even in February everything seemed to be going according to the plan. On 28 February, government representatives and the HDP signed a declaration (later referred to as the Dolmabahce Agreement) that set out a plan to finally end the conflict and settle the Kurdish problem. Then, in March, President Erdogan completely rejected this

²¹ Irfan Aktan, *Kurdish organizations outside of PKK are displeased with the process*, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2015/03/26/kurdish-organizations-outside-pkk-are-displeased-process> (access: 29.11.2019)

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declaration as unnecessary and stated that there was no Kurdish issue in Turkey. The reason was that Erdogan noticed that the peaceful process strengthened the position of the HDP and Demirtas, not his own or the AKP's, among the Kurds. The parliamentary elections of June 2015 confirmed this suspicion and armed action resumed shortly afterwards. At the same time, in 2015, the AKP underwent an internal purge and became a leader-centred party, turning towards nationalism.

OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS IN TURKISH KURDISTAN

Apart from the Turkish population, the Kurdish ethnic territory is also home to Armenians and Arabs. The Assyrian community, numerous in the Ottoman period, has been reduced to only about 20,000-50,000 people. The Arab minority lives mainly in the provinces of Mardin and Sanliurfa, with a population of less than 1 million throughout Turkey. Part of the Arab-speaking population, especially in the Mardin region, belongs to the Mhallami tribal-ethnic group, linked to the Kurds by culture and history. In 2008, one of the leaders of this group, Mehmet Ali Aslan, founded the Mhallami Association, and in 2015 was elected to the Turkish Parliament as an HDP representative. An Assyrian deputy in the Turkish Parliament, Erol Dora, was also an HDP representative.

It is difficult to estimate the Armenian population due to the phenomenon of 'hidden Armenians', i.e. descendants of Armenians who adopted a new, Muslim (Turkish or Kurdish) identity in order to avoid genocide in 1915. The degree to which they maintain awareness of their true origin varies. At the beginning of the 21st century, many 'hidden Armenians' began to confess their true identity again. This was supported by the policy of HDP-controlled local governments. For example, the local Diyarbakir authorities advocated the reconstruction of the Armenian church of St. Giragos in the historical district of Sur, one of the most important Armenian temples in Turkey. The church was opened in 2011 but in 2016 it was destroyed by the Turkish army during the pacification of this district, as it was occupied by the YDG-H militant youth wing.

Kurdish-Armenian relations are good, despite the memory of the Kurdish participation in the Armenian genocide. This is partly possible because Armenians, who live in

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present-day Turkey regions considered by them as Western Armenia and as Northern Kurdistan by the Kurds, know that without Kurdish political autonomy Armenian cultural autonomy is unattainable in these regions. The Turks still show hostility towards the Armenians (as well as towards the Kurds) and both ethnic groups are aware of their common fate and common interests. Then again, the left-wing Kurdish movement, in particular the PKK and the HDP, has long recognised the Armenian genocide and accepted Kurdish responsibility for participating in it. The Kurds explain that the main responsibility lies with the Turkish state, which used the Kurdish-Armenian (and Kurdish-Assyrian) animosities of the time to attack the Armenians. The Turkish authorities still uphold this policy by stressing the Kurdish participation in the Armenian genocide whenever there is an opportunity, while negating the term 'genocide' and rejecting the responsibility of the Turkish state. Moreover, the word 'Armenian' is very often used as an insult. In particular, during the PKK fights, including the pacification of Kurdish cities in 2015-2016, the Turkish army often called the opposing Kurdish partisans 'Armenians'. The aim was also to antagonise the religious Kurds against Ocalan's supporters by presenting the fight against the PKK as a war of a religious nature, a clash between Muslims and enemies of Islam: Armenians, atheists and Zoroastrians. The latter insult was even used by Erdogan during his speech in June 2016 in Diyarbakir.

ECONOMIC HANDICAP OF KURDISH PROVINCES IN TURKEY

The Kurdish provinces are economically and socially handicapped. This is evidenced by all economic indicators. For example, in 2013 unemployment in Turkey as a whole was 9% whilst in the province of Batman it reached 23.4%, in Mardin 20.6%, in Siirt 20.5%, in Sirnak 20.1%, in Diyarbakir 18.7% and in Sanilurfa 16.3%. In 2018, unemployment in Batman, Mardin and Siirt rose to 25%. The 13 provinces with the lowest GDP per capita are all Kurdish provinces (including all the provinces in the heart of Kurdistan except for the small Tunceli), where the poorest Agri has a GDP per capita of less than USD 9,000 – five times lower than the richest Turkish province, Istanbul.

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Satisfaction with social services is also a negative distinguishing factor for the Kurdish provinces. While the average level of social service satisfaction in Turkey is 69.6%, the lowest level was recorded in Sirnak province 34.8%, with 47.2% in Siirt, 44.9% in Mus and 49.5% in Diyarbakir. The Kurdish provinces are also undeveloped in terms of sanitation. While 97.4% of households in Turkey have running water, only 65.7% of households in Igdirdir, 69.1% in Agri, 88.4% in Diyarbakir, 78% in Sanliurf, 80.6% in Van, and 83.5% in Mardin enjoy this comfort. As many as 92.5% of households have a toilet in the house in Turkey but in Igdirdir this is less than 52%, in Ardahan 59%, in Van 74%, in Sanliurfa 69%, in Mus 65%, in Mardin 64%, in Karma less than 50% and in Agri 56%.²²

²² Data from the Turkish Statistical Institute, www.turkstat.gov.tr

Part III

Kurdish organisations

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY (HDP) – SUPPORT IN ELECTIONS

The most important Kurdish political grouping in Turkey is the People's Democratic Party (HDP), which is part of the pro-Ocalan family that refers to Abdullah Ocalan's ideology and recognises him as a spiritual leader. Abdullah Ocalan has been imprisoned on the island of Imrali since 1999 and his influence on the politics and activities of any pro-Ocalan grouping is currently negligible.

However, the HDP was established in the autumn of 2012 and it did not replace the already existing Kurdish pro-Ocalan Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which continued to exist alongside the HDP. The HDP was supposed to adopt a broader formula, attracting not only the Kurds but also other national and religious minorities in Turkey.²³ The HDP advocates the introduction of democratic federalism in Turkey, i.e. far-reaching decentralisation, as well as political decomposition of the Turkish people. The modern Turkish state was established on the foundation of the Turkish nation understood as a political nation and, according to the Treaty of Lausanne, only three ethnic non-Muslim groups, i.e. Armenians, Greeks and Jews, were considered minorities. All three groups were, at least officially, small in number. In fact, the new political Turkish nation was combined from numerous ethnic groups which were planned to be erased by imposing a unified culture and language. In addition to the main ethnic groups, i.e. Kurds and Arabs, these included the Circassians and the Tatars, as well as Georgians, Assyrians, etc. Furthermore, there is also the phenomenon of the so-called 'hidden Armenians' of Turkey, i.e. descendants of

²³ The establishment of the HDP was preceded by the formation of a coalition called the Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK), which brought together a number of Turkish organisations and left-wing parties in addition to the BDP. The assumption was that the HDP would be a political wing of the HDK and would move away from the Kurd-centric policy and contradistinguishing the Kurdish and Turkish interests to promote a new concept of the Turkish state and inter-ethnic relations. In practice, however, the HDP remained mainly a Kurdish party.

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Armenians who adopted Islam and a false Turkish or Kurdish identity to save their lives during the 1915 genocide. Since around 2012, as a result of Turkey's democratisation, the departure from Kemalist nationalism and the resulting restrictions on ethnic identity, an increasing number of people have started to reveal their true ethnic identity. The Armenians' attitude towards the Kurdish aspirations for political and national emancipation was positive despite the memory of the Kurdish participation in Armenian massacres. The Ocalan movement has never rejected the responsibility and condemned the Kurdish participation, and many Armenians have joined the Kurdistan Workers' Party.²⁴ Nevertheless, the issue of 'hidden Armenians' and the Kurds' participation in the 1915 genocide remains a sensitive subject, especially among conservative Kurds. In addition, the HDP also sought to attract the votes of the Turkish left, including the radical left. The HDP programme contains a number of morally liberal issues, including the rights of sexual minorities. Yet, the Kurdish society is very conservative and in Kurdistan this topic remains taboo. It should be noted that the PKK also represents moral conservatism.

The first electoral outing of the HDP was in the local government election in 2014. However, the party only ran in ethnically non-Kurdish regions, while the BDP ran in the Kurdish regions. These parties therefore did not compete with each other and together they gained 6.06% of the votes, of which 1.89% went to the HDP. The HDP gained most support in large metropolitan areas with considerable Kurdish population centres, for example in Istanbul – almost 5%, as well as Izmir (3%) and Adana (7%), a figure comparable to the votes obtained by the BDP's predecessor, the DTP, in the 2009 elections (at the national level the DTP received 5.41% of the votes). This means that the HDP did not gain a significant number of new non-Kurdish voters in 2014.

The BDP won in 11 Kurdish provinces (in Mardin as independents), with an overwhelming victory in Hakkari and Sirnak, and an absolute majority in Mardin, Van, Diyarbakir and Batman. In all these provinces, with the exception of Tunceli and Igdir, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came second. The Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Turkish Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) were runners-ups in Tunceli and Igdir, respectively. In addition, the BDP came second in Sanliurfa (30%), Bingol (21.5%), Bitlis (38%) and Kars (25%). It also received significant support in Ardahan (16%). In all these provinces, with the exception of Karsu, the AKP took first

²⁴ Hadjian, *Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey*, p. 296, L.B. Tauris 2018

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place. The MHP won in Karsa. According to a survey conducted by the Konda Institute, 13% of all voters were of Kurdish nationality, with 42% voting for the AKP, 39% for the BDP/the HDP and 6% for the CHP. Other Kurdish parties, such as the Huda-Par, the Hak-Par and the Islamic Felicity Party, which enjoyed some popularity among conservative Kurds, also took part in these elections. Moreover, 98% of BDP voters declared Kurdish nationality (including Zaza). Sociological research in Turkey must, however, be approached with caution, not least because of the continuing risk of misstatements. In addition, the Turkish Kurdistan elections cannot be described as fair due to the police-state policy in these areas, which is conducive to irregularities and pressure.

The HDP and the BDP won a total of 2,740,000 votes in the local elections in March 2014 but only four months later HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas got as many as 3,958,000 votes in the presidential election. It was 9.8% of the votes cast. Demirtas won in 11 provinces: Sirnak (83%), Hakkari (82%), Diyarbakir (64%), Mardin (61%), Mus (61%), Agri (61%), Batman (60%), Van (55%), Siirt (54%), Tunceli (52%), Igdir (43%). In another 4 Kurdish provinces Demirtas took second place and the got following percentage of votes: Bitlis (44%), Kars (33%), Bingol (31%), Sanliurfa (26%). In Ardahan he came in third with 23% of the vote. Demirtas also gained significant support outside Kurdistan, in Mersin (13%), Adana (11%), Gaziantep (11%) Istanbul (9%), Izmir (8%) and Ayidid (7%).

Demirtas' success in the presidential election prompted the HDP to run in the June 2015 parliamentary elections. In the previous elections (in 2007 and 2011), neither the pro-Ocalan movement nor other Kurdish parties issued their own lists due to the 10% electoral threshold introduced in the 1980s. Instead, the representatives of this movement ran as independent candidates, obtaining 20 and 35 seats in 2007 and 2011, respectively. Earlier, in the 1992, 1999 and 2002 elections, the support for the Kurdish party HADEP ranged from 4-6%.

The June 2015 parliamentary election were the biggest success of the HDP. The party got over 6 million votes (13.12%), which was a 121% increase in comparison with the local elections 14 months earlier, and won 80 seats in the Parliament. This time, the HDP recorded a victory in 14 provinces, with an absolute majority in 12 of them (the 11 provinces where Demirtas had won previously and Bitlis; the other two were Ardahan and Kars). In addition, the HDP took second place in three provinces (behind

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AKP): Bingol 41%, Sanliurfa 38%, Adiyaman 23%, and was third in two others (behind AKP and MHP), Erzurum 18%, Elazig 15%. The HDP also got a satisfying result outside Kurdistan, in Mersin (18%), Adana (15%), Gaziantep (15%) Istanbul (13%), Izmir (11%) and Aydin (9%). This means an increase in votes in all these provinces compared to the presidential election. It is not known what percentage of this group were the votes of the Kurdish internal diaspora. The presumption is that non-ethnic Kurdish votes did not exceed 1-2%, which suggests that assuming that the percentage of Kurds in Turkey was 22.5%, just over half of this population voted for the HDP. With regard to the 12 provinces at the heart of Turkish Kurdistan, the proportions were as follows: the HDP – 73%, the AKP – 19%, others – 8%.

In the November 2015 general elections support for HDP fell from 13.12% to 10.76% and the party won in only 12 provinces but with almost 50% in Bitlis. In Kars, the AKP was slightly ahead of the HDP. The latter party kept second place in Sanliurf, Bingol and Adiyaman, while in Ardahan it was pushed to third place. Interestingly, it maintained relatively high support in the non-Kurdish areas, i.e. 15% in Mersin, 12% in Adana, 11% in Gaziantep, 10% in Istanbul, 9% in Izmir. The HDP secured 59 seats.²⁵ The next parliamentary election in June 2018 brought a slightly better result for the HDP, i.e. 11.7%, but the party won in only 11 provinces, losing to the AKP in Bitlis. Moreover, in all these provinces, the HDP recorded a decline in support but gained votes outside Kurdistan, i.e. 17% in Mersin, 13.5% in Adana, 12% in Gaziantep, 13% in Istanbul, 11.5% in Izmir, 11% in Hatay and 9.5% in Aydin. In the 12 provinces at the heart of Kurdistan, the HDP won 59.5% and the AKP 28.5%, while the other parties were left with 12%. On the other hand, the HDP did not record any losses compared to the November 2015 elections in other Kurdish and Kurdish-Turkish provinces, and even slightly improved its score in some of them (e.g. in Sanliurfa and Adiyaman). The party won 67 seats, 8 more than in the November 2015 elections, but 13 fewer than in June 2015, with 44 MPs elected from 15 Kurdish provinces and 23 from 9 non-Kurdish provinces (including 12 from Istanbul).

In the concurrent presidential election, the result of HDP candidate Selahattin Demirtas was worse and amounted to 8.4%. This was due to the fact that his campaign was significantly hampered by his imprisonment. The outcome of the parliamentary

²⁵ An analysis of the results suggests that support for the HDP increased in the Kurdish territories where military operations were taking place at that time, but decreased in the part of Turkish Kurdistan not affected by the fighting.

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election is therefore a much more authoritative criterion for political support for the HDP.

At the same time, it does not seem that the HDP improved its score among ethnic Turks. This change seems more likely to have resulted from successive migrations and an atmosphere of intimidation in the Kurdish territories, with greater control of elections and freedom of campaigning in non-Kurdish areas. The next election was a local election, but the results cannot be compared with presidential or parliamentary elections. The HDP got 4.24%, which is comparable to its result in the previous municipal election (in 2014). The Islamic Felicity Party also performed very well in some Kurdish provinces (e.g. in Bitlis, Adiyaman, Sanliurfa). The HDP won mayoral elections in 8 provincial capitals, including 3 metropolitan areas: Diyarbakir, Van and Mardin, and in 9 provinces.

In conclusion, the HDP is the largest Kurdish political force in Turkey and, despite the loss of some of the votes obtained in June 2015, it still enjoys the support of at least half of the Kurdish voters and the vast majority of nationally aware Kurds. The HDP's ideological leftism only partially deprives the party of the votes of conservative Kurds, especially since it also puts up conservative politicians in the Kurdish territories (e.g. Nimetullah Erdogan, a former Diyarbakir mufti, is a deputy). At the same time, Kurdish voters are aware of the lack of an alternative in parliamentary elections due to the high electoral threshold. Only a small part of the votes cast for the HDP came from ethnic Turks with strongly left-wing views. The high result in June 2015 was mainly due to the peace talks between the PKK and the Turkish authorities. The HDP became the main political beneficiary of this process. This prompted Erdogan to break off the talks and provoke armed confrontation, which reduced the HDP's political support and caused a swing to the AKP. The support for the AKP among the Kurds is partly due to opportunism. Some conservative Kurds also do not vote for the HDP due to its left-wing nature. The Islamist Felicity Party was an alternative to voting for the AKP for this part of the electorate in the last local election as a result of a turn in AKP politics that was unfavourable for the Kurds in mid-2015 (the Felicity Party invariably rejects Turkish nationalism). It should also be remembered that part of the votes cast in the Kurdish provinces are those of soldiers, police and military police who vote either for the AKP or nationalists from the MHP, but certainly not for the HDP. In contrast, the CHP enjoys support only among the Kurdish Alevis, who constitute the majority in the tiny province of Tunceli (only 88,000 inhabitants).

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The HDP has a system of two-person leadership (co-chairpersons) that always consists of a man and a woman. Although this is not formally regulated, one leader is an ethnic Kurd and the other an ethnic Turk. Selahattin Demirtas, who remains a key figure of the party, has served the longest term as HDP chairperson, although since February 2018 the HDP has been headed by Sezai Temelli (ethnic Turk) and Pervin Buldan (ethnic Kurd). Other key HDP politicians include the two-time Mayor of Mardin Ahmet Turk, the first Kurdish MP and Sakharov Prize winner Leyla Zana, the former German MEP Feleknas Uca and the former long-time Mayor of Diyarbakir Osman Baydemir. The system of two-person male/female leadership also applies to local government functions. Since Turkish law does not provide for such solutions, only one person remains officially the mayor and the other is unofficially the co-mayor. For example, following the March 2019 election, Sezade Kurt and Azim Yacan were co-mayors of Ipekyol District in Van, even though only Azim Yacan won the election.²⁶

Some deputies in the Turkish Parliament of Kurdish origin ran as candidates of other parties than the HDP, in particular the AKP. Of the 57 MPs elected from the 12 Kurdish provinces, 38 belonged to the HDP, 18 to the AKP and 1 to the CHP (from Tunceli). On the other hand, out of 45 MPs from the remaining 9 partly Kurdish provinces, 29 were elected from the AKP lists, 6 from the HDP, 5 from the CHP, 4 from the MHP and 1 from the nationalist Good Party (IYI). However, not all MPs elected in the Kurdish territories are ethnic Kurds, and the degree of national consciousness/assimilation varies. AKP deputies of Kurdish background include Mehmet Mehdi Eker (Minister for Agriculture), Ahmet Aydin (Deputy Speaker of Parliament), Cevdet Yilmaz (former Deputy Prime Minister, from the Zaza people).

OTHER KURDISH PARTIES IN TURKEY

There are also smaller Kurdish parties in Turkey, which play virtually no role in the elections and often do not even put forward their candidates. The Islamic Huda-Par and the moderately nationalist Hak-Par are relatively the most important ones, as they

²⁶ Both are no longer in office as they were removed on 11 November 2019 and imprisoned. They have been replaced by a commissioner appointed by the ruling AKP party.

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were the only ones to issue party lists in recent years, but received marginal support. The Huda-Par, which received the highest support in the Batman province (5.5%) in the last election, has been antagonistic towards the Ocalan movement. The party was founded in 2012 and comes from the outlawed Turkish Hezbollah (not related with the Lebanese organisation of the same name). Hezbollah, founded in 1983, was an illegal terrorist organisation that formally fought an armed struggle against the secular Turkish state for the Islamisation of Turkey, at the same time employing a nationalist Kurdish agenda. In fact, the main enemy of Hezbollah was the PKK, and the Turkish army and special services supported, armed and trained the fighters of this organisation. In 2002, after the victory of the Islamist AKP, Hezbollah announced the end of the armed struggle but remained active both in Turkey and in the émigré communities, especially in Germany. Earlier, in 2000, the leader of Hezbollah Huseyin Velioglu was killed, and about 100 people associated with the organisation were brought to justice and many were sentenced to life imprisonment. Most of them were dismissed in 2018 and early 2019 and the trials were invalidated on procedural grounds. The HAK-PAR was founded in 2002 by Abdulmelik Firat, grandson of Sheikh Said hanged in 1925 as the leader of the anti-Kemalist pro-Ottoman Kurdish uprising. The HAK-PAR is left-wing but also nationalist. Other legal Kurdish parties include the Participatory Democracy Party (KADEP), founded in 2006 by former Minister of Public Works Serafettin Elci, the Democracy Party of Turkey and Kurdistan (T-KDP), led by the Barzani family in Iraq, the Freedom and Socialism Party (OSP), the Communist Party of Kurdistan (KKP), the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), the Revolutionary Party of Kurdistan (PSK) and the Kurdish Islamic Movement – the Azadi Initiative (Freedom). Although the latter is Islamic in nature, it puts Kurdish nationalism first, strongly emphasising the right of the Kurds in Turkey to self-determination in a geographical and political dimension. In addition, there is a representation of the Democracy Party of Kurdistan from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in Ankara, and there was also a representative office of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) until August 2017 (closed by the Turkish authorities). There is no representation of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

OTHER PRO-OCALAN STRUCTURES IN TURKEY

The pro-Ocalan movement in Turkey consists not only of the HDP and the BDP parties, but is a rather complex structure of legal and illegal organisations, the most prominent of which is of course the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It is worth emphasising that although the existence of general ideological links between the HDP and the BDP on the one hand and the PKK on the other is undeniable, there is without doubt no formal link between these structures. In fact, the PKK and the HDP differ even in terms of politics. The PKK was founded in 1978 and has been conducting military activity since 1984. Until 1999, absolute leadership in the PKK was held by Abdullah Ocalan, who is now at most a symbolic leader, if not simply an icon completely detached from the real person imprisoned on Imrali. Especially in the last few years the actual political role of Ocalan has been drastically marginalised. This was due to the complete isolation of the formal leader of the PKK, which lasted from 2011 to May 2019. The consent to resume contacts with his family and lawyers could have been linked to Ocalan's cracking and his willingness to cooperate with the Turkish authorities. This can be seen, in particular, in the Ocalan's appeal for neutrality before the repeated election of the Mayor of Istanbul, when the HDP supported the opposition candidate Ekrema Imamoglu. The conflict between Ocalan's family and the actual leadership of the PKK residing in Qandil is no secret either. In June 2019, Osman Ocalan, brother of Abdullah Ocalan, appeared on the Turkish state television TRT and accused the PKK of planning to murder the Ocalan family and suggested that neither the leadership of the PKK in Qandil nor the HDP was listening to Abdullah Ocalan. The actual leaders of the PKK are head of the HPG (military wing of the PKK) Murat Karayilan, currently residing in Qandil, and Camil Bayik, who is formally acting president of the PKK but is actually in charge, given Ocalan's fictitious leadership.

The marginalisation of the formal leader of the PKK was also brought about by the increasing importance of Selahattin Demirtas, the charismatic leader of the HDP in 2014-2018. He ran as the party's candidate for President of Turkey twice – in the 2014 and 2018 elections and was the father of HDP's electoral success in the 2015 parliamentary election. Demirtas has been in prison since November 2016 but, unlike Ocalan, called for the support of Ekrema Imamoglu in the Istanbul voting. Although he is no longer a member of the Turkish Parliament or (formally) the leader of the HDP

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since 2018, he is considered the undisputed leader of the legal political opposition of the Turkish Kurds.

After the imprisonment of Ocalan in 1999 and the departure of the PKK from Marxism, nationalism and separatism in favour of democratic confederalism, new structures of the pro-Ocalan movement were created: the Kongra-Gel (the People's Congress of Kurdistan) and the KCK (the Kurdistan Communities Union). The Kongra-Gel plays the role of a quasi-parliament, and the KCK is an executive body for all pro-Ocalan structures. However, the leadership of the KCK de facto overlaps with leadership of the PKK, and the leader of both structures is Camil Bayik, residing in Qandil. The PKK also has a separate military wing which consists of two organisations – a male HPG (People's Defence Forces) and a female YJA-Star (Free Women's Units). Another military formation is the YPS youth wing (Civil Protection Units) and its female counterpart YPS-Jin. The members of these organisations are mostly teenagers and they do not have a clear structure, hierarchy or command. They evolved from the urban partisan units of the YDG-H (Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement), which fought mainly at the end of 2015 and in 2016. Another Kurdish armed organisation is the Kurdish Freedom Hawks (TAK), whose relations with the PKK are a moot point. Both the PKK and the TAK itself claim that there are no such relations. Additionally, the TAK is a much more radical organisation. It was established in 2004 and opposed negotiations with the Turkish authorities and the ceasefire announced by the PKK in 2013. This organisation is mainly responsible for assaults in cities and, unlike the PKK, does not avoid civilian casualties. There have been no signs of TAK activity since the beginning of 2017.²⁷ Some believe that the TAK was created by the Turkish secret service (MIT) in order to discredit the PKK. TAK activity does not enjoy wider public support.

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK) also belongs to the structures of the pro-Ocalan movement in Turkey. It is a legal social organisation whose task is to organise cultural events and engage society in following the Ocalan ideology, i.e. democratic confederalism, promotion of ethnic and religious diversity and progressive social transformation. Despite its declared left-wing progressiveness, the HDP is much less

²⁷ The last attack organised by the TAK took place in Izmir on 5 January 2017. It was targeted at the local court and led to the death of one policeman, one civilian and two assailants. Moreover, on 10 November 2017, an armed TAK member, who was probably planning to carry out an attack, was killed in a shooting in Mardin.

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conservative than the PKK in terms of morality. This can be seen in particular in the approach to sexual issues related to the Kurdish concept of honour. For example, the topic of sexual minorities, although included in the HDP programme, remains a taboo subject in indigenous Kurdish areas in Turkey, while premarital sexual relations of women are seen as a disgrace to the family. Meanwhile, although the PKK promotes the socio-occupational emancipation of women, it has been trying not to break deeply rooted conservative moral norms from the beginning of its existence. That is why the HPG and YJA-Star divisions not only have full gender segregation but also a celibacy order.

Part IV

Violence and migration

CONTESTATION OF THE KURDISH IDENTITY AFTER THE CREATION OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

During the so-called Turkish War of Independence, Atatürk regularly spoke about two nations of the new state: Turks and Kurds, as opposed to the 'infidel invaders', i.e. the British, the French, the Armenians and the Greeks.²⁸ The Treaty of Lausanne, which ended the war in July 1923, and the proclamation of the new republic in 1923 provided Atatürk with new opportunities and his policy towards the Kurds changed by 180 degrees. As early as March 1924, the use of Kurdish was restricted in public places.²⁹ A new state mythology was created, according to which the territory of Turkey was eternally Turkish and the Kurds were Turks who had forgotten their mother tongue under Iranian influence. Commenting on one of Atatürk's speeches from 1932, Denise Natali states that he questioned the very existence of Kurdish territory 10 years after he advocated a federation of Kurdish states and a Kurdish-Turkish partnership.³⁰ The reforms in the new republic also hit traditional tribal and religious structures in Kurdistan. Therefore, the Sheikh Said uprising in 1925 was largely reactionary in nature, i.e. religious and pro-Ottoman, although at the same time pro-Kurdish. The fall of this rebellion was the beginning of a period of ruthlessness of the Turkish state towards the Kurds. David McDowall argues that regular deportations and obliteration of entire villages was a common penalty for any resistance against the state.³¹

Traditional means of repression, however, proved ineffective in denationalising the Kurds, even though they were the reason for the Kurdish migration from Turkey to Syria (since the mid-1920s), in particular to the north-eastern Syria, i.e. the southern, sparsely populated parts of the Ottoman vilayets of Urfa and Diyarbakir. The result is

28 David McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*, I.B. Tauris, New York 2007, p. 185 et seq.

29 Op. cit., pp. 191-192

30 Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the state*, Syracuse University Press, New York 2005, p. 78

31 David McDowall, op. cit., p. 198

a close kinship between the Kurds living in this part of Syria and the Kurds from Turkey.

DERSIM MASSACRE

The initial failed Turkification convinced Ataturk to start the planned deportations. In 1934, the Turkish Parliament adopted a law dividing Turkey into three zones (according to ethnic proportions), ordering mass movements to mix ethnic minorities with the Turkish population in order to speed up assimilation (Turkification). The rights of inhabitants were restricted in areas which 'did not belong to the Turkish culture'. This law hit the Kurds first and foremost and led to the largest massacre of Kurds in the history of the Turkish Republic. The deportations, which were a consequence of the adopted law, covered the provinces of Wan, Bitlis, Mus and Siirt, but above all Dersim. In the latter case, a separate law was adopted and the name of the province was changed to Turkish – Tunceli. In January 1937, under the leadership of Said Riza, the religious leader of Zaza Alevites, resistance to deportations began to increase, but initially it was not a military action. In March that year, a wooden bridge in the Harcik Valley was burnt down, and the authorities put the blame on local Kurdish tribes. This served as an excuse to start a military operation in Dersim. In September that year, Said Riza tried to start peace negotiations with the Turkish authorities, but instead he was arrested and hanged together with his 16-year-old son and several other Kurdish tribal leaders. The Turkish army began a bloody pacification of the uprising, which lasted until the end of 1938 and included raids on rebellious villages. An adopted daughter of Ataturk, Sabiha Gokcen, who gave her name to an Istanbul airport, was among the participants of the raids. From 11,000 to 40,000 civilians were killed and 13,000 were displaced as a result of the actions taken by the Turkish army. Fuad Jomma provides calculations which show that in 5 regions affected by repression (Elazig, Corox, Erzurum, Mus, Wan) the population decreased by almost 300,000 or 25% between 1935 and 1945, despite the fact that at the same time the overall population of Turkish Kurdistan increased by 10%.³² In 2011 Erdogan, who was then

32 Fuad Jomma, *Kurdowie i Kurdystan*, Wydawnictwo L&L i DJ, Gdańsk 2001, pp. 59-60

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prime minister, apologised for the massacre, motivated by the fact that the majority of voters in the province voted for the Kemalist CHP.

ORIGIN OF THE PKK MILITARY WING

Until the 1970s there were no major Kurdish rebellions in Turkey and no accompanying massacres or forced deportations. However, the economic handicap of the Kurdish provinces resulted in large-scale economic migration, both internally and to Europe, which began in the 1960s but intensified in the 1980s. As a result, the Kurdish diaspora in Europe grew from a few thousand in the early 1960s to half a million in the mid-1990s, of which 300,000-350,000 moved to Germany.³³ According to Fuad Jomma, the majority of Kurdish gastarbeiters came from families who had previously been forcibly displaced.³⁴ Jomma also gives an estimate made in 1991 by German political scientist Jochen Blaschke which suggests that the Kurds constituted one third of the 1.5 million migrants coming from Turkey.³⁵ German statistics never classified ethnic Turks and Kurds coming from Turkey into two separate groups.

Another chapter in the history of repression, murder and deportation of Kurds in Turkey began with the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) led by Abdullah Ocalan in 1978. The combination of nationalism and leftism resulted from the fact that in Kurdistan feudal-tribal structures based on the so-called 'aghas' (rich landowners) still existed at that time. This was convenient for the Turkish authorities, as the aghas mostly cooperated with them and the deep economic dependence of the rural population made it easier to maintain control over Kurdistan and to halt the pro-national movements. Kurdish feudalism also contributed to the impoverishment of the population and the socio-economic backwardness of the region, which was also beneficial from the point of view of the Turkification plans, as it encouraged people to migrate for work. In a foreign environment, Turkification was faster, which was the underlying concept of the resettlement laws adopted in the 1930s. The aghas tried to

³³ These figures are not limited to Kurds from Turkey, but they did constitute the overwhelming majority of the diaspora.

³⁴ Fuad Jomma, *op. cit.*, p. 122 et seq.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

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fight the PKK from the very beginning alongside Turkish nationalist militias (mainly the terrorist Grey Wolves) and the apparatus of repression of the Turkish state. The feudalism of Turkish Kurdistan made it easier for Prime Minister Turgut Ozal to create units of the so-called Village Guards, i.e. militias of Kurdish villagers paid and armed by the state, whose task was to combat the PKK and terrorise its supporters. At the same time, the attacks of nationalists on Alevis, especially the Kurds, intensified. They were supported by Turkish special services and the so-called 'deep state', i.e. secret structures incorporating the state, business, organised crime and terrorist organisations. On 17 April 1978, a pogrom of Alevis took place in Malatya, in which 12 people were killed and over 200 wounded. Nine hundred sixty shops and houses were destroyed. An even graver massacre, which involved the murder of 105 Alevis, was organised by the Grey Wolves and the MIT in Kahramanmaraş in December 1978.

The repressions intensified after the September putsch in 1980 and the takeover of power by Gen Kenan Evren. The new authorities became notorious for their cruelty and ruthlessness, especially towards the left-wing circles. The majority of the PKK leadership, led by Abdullah Ocalan, left just before the coup for Syria and Lebanon. However, many members of the PKK were imprisoned and the torture and terrible living conditions led several of them to take up a radical protest in 1982. Five prisoners self-immolated, and a PKK founder Kemal Pir and three other PKK members began a perpetual hunger strike in Diyarbakir prison on 14 July, which ended in their death. Two years later, a similar strike was carried out in the Istanbul prison, resulting in the death of four more PKK prisoners.

FIRST STAGE OF THE ARMED PKK-TURKISH CONFLICT

The PKK decided to start armed activity against the Turkish state only in 1984. The first operation involved the attacks of 15 August on military police stations in Eruh, Siirt province and in Semdinia, Hakkari province, which ended in the death of 2 military policemen and 1 soldier. The action was commanded by the first field commander of the PKK: Mahsum 'Egid' Korkmaz, killed 2 years later. The fifteenth of August is celebrated by PKK supporters as the beginning of the armed struggle for the rights of

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the Kurds in Turkey.

In 1987, Turkey created a special region called OHAL (Olağanüstü Hâl Bölge Valiliği, or the Governorship of Region in State of Emergency) which covered 13 Kurdish provinces and existed until 2002. The Governor of OHAL was granted extensive powers, including the right to order of collective deportations, ban and confiscate publications and to close printing houses. Moreover, the OHAL region was closed to the media.

ILLEGAL METHODS OF FIGHTING THE PKK IN THE 1990S

The sudden death of Turgut Ozal in April 1993 ruined the prospects for negotiations between the PKK and the government and opened a new chapter in the history of violence against the Kurdish population in Turkey. In May 1993, there was an attack on buses carrying unarmed recruits, in which 38 people were killed. This ended the truce announced a month before Ozal's death. The PKK did not take responsibility for this attack and it is one of many allegedly carried out by the so-called 'deep state'. It was most likely carried out in preparation for another coup, which did not take place (similarly to the alleged murder of Ozal). The 'deep state' is also said to have used the Turkish Hezbollah to attack PKK supporters.

After Ozal's death, the True Path Party (DYP) with Suleiman Demirel as president and Tansu Çiller as prime minister took over power in Turkey and implemented the Castle Plan (Kale Planı), which assumed the destruction of the PKK by all possible means of force, rejecting any negotiations. The aim was to make greater use of Hezbollah, the Grey Wolves and Village Guards in attacks on people suspected of having ties with the PKK and to organise assassinations and bombings against PKK supporters combined with mass deportations. One of the first massacres carried out under the new policy was the retaliation against the inhabitants of the city of Lice in Diyarbakir province in October 1993 in connection with the murder of the chief of the local military police. Although the PKK had not taken responsibility for this action, 30 civilians were killed in retaliatory actions of the Turkish army, over one hundred were wounded, 400 houses and almost 250 shops were destroyed and half of the inhabitants fled the city.

REPRESSION OF THE KURDISH POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The above events were accompanied by political repression of the legal Kurdish representation. The first party representing the interests of the Turkish Kurds, the People's Labour Party (HEP) was established in June 1990. It was joined by seven members of the Turkish Parliament elected from the left-wing Social Democratic Party (SHP). In the 1991 election, the party ran in a coalition with SHP and won 22 seats. However, in July 1993 the party was dissolved by the Constitutional Court for promoting Kurdish rights. It was replaced by the Democratic Party led by Leyla Zana, Ahmet Turk and Hatip Dicle. At that time, as part of the campaign of violence under the Castle Plan, about 50 members of the party (or its successor incarnations) were murdered, and in March 1994 its deputies were deprived of the right to immunity. The party was outlawed in June, and 6 deputies, including Ahmet Turk and Leila Zana, were arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Turk, who first became a deputy in 1973, was released in 1995 but Zana did not leave prison until 2005 (and this was not the end of repression against her). In 1995, Zana was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament. September 1993 was marked by the death of another Kurdish Democratic Party deputy, Mehmet Sincar. Other victims of political assassinations ordered by the Turkish 'deep state' included journalist Halit Gungen shot in February 1992 in Diyarbakir, Kurdish writer Musa Anter murdered in September 1992 in Diyarbakir, and trade unionist Zubeyir Akkoc killed in January 1993.

The dissolved Democratic Party was replaced by the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), which won 4% of the vote in the 1995 election and did not enter parliament because of the 10% electoral threshold introduced after the 1980 coup. Then, the HADEP stood in the 1999 election but did not enter parliament either, gaining only slightly more support. In 2002, in view of the expected ban on the HADEP (imposed a few months later), another mutation of this party, the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), ran in the election and won 6% of the vote. The DEHAP was also banned (in 2005) and was replaced by the Democratic Society Party (DTP). The DTP changed its tactics and in the 2007 elections it put forward its candidates as independents, thus winning 20 seats. However, in 2009 it was banned and replaced by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and (concurrently) by the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

DEPORTATIONS IN THE 1990S

The most severe repressions against the civilian population during the Kurdish-Turkish armed conflict of the 1990s were mass deportations and the annihilation of Kurdish villages suspected of sympathising with the PKK. At least 3,000 villages (over half of them in 1994) were destroyed and more than 2 million Kurds were displaced from the Kurdish territory. Most of the deportees moved to large Turkish agglomerations such as Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir, Adana, Gaziantep and the capital city of Ankara. The Village Guards were used to terrorise deported residents who wanted to come back later. Some of the displaced people moved from destroyed villages to urbanised areas in Kurdistan. In the province of Diyarbakir, for example, the urban population increased by 38.6% and the rural population decreased by 9% between 1990 and 1997. The displacements caused damage to the agricultural economy of Kurdish provinces. For example, between 1990 and 1995 agricultural production in Tunceli decreased by 25% and the sheep, goat and cattle population dropped by 58%, 67% and 51%, respectively. Similar decreases were observed in all districts of Kurdish provinces with strong support for the PKK. For example, in the Lice District of Diyarbakir province the sheep population decreased by 64%, the goat population by 68% and the cattle population by 56%. In regions with smaller support for the PKK, the decreases were far less noticeable.³⁶

The end of forced deportation did not stop the migration of the Kurds from the Kurdish territories but the migration started to become more economically-motivated. However, the pacification of Kurdish cities between 2015 and 2016 prompted another half a million people to migrate, some of whom came back after the fighting stopped. The scale of deportations and migrations is evidenced by statistics on the origin of the inhabitants of individual provinces and cities. The population of the 24 provinces comprising the three regions of Eastern Anatolia (most of these territories are Kurdistan but also include ethnic Turkish provinces) counted 23 million people or 30% of the Turkish population in 2014. And yet, the number of inhabitants of these regions was only 14 million, which suggests that 40% of people born in these regions emigrated to other provinces. On the other hand, 4 million of Istanbul's 14 million

³⁶ Gurses, *Environmental consequences of civil war: Evidence from the Kurdish conflict in Turkey*, *Civil Wars*, 14 (2), pp. 254-271

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population (28%) came from these three regions. In the Aegean region, including Izmir, the population from the Eastern Anatolian regions is over 13%, in the Eastern Marmara region it is almost 15% and in the Mediterranean region, including Antalya and Adana – over 15%.

The displacement was also accompanied by the destruction of the natural environment and cultural heritage. In the province of Tunceli, for example, between 7.5% and 25% of the forests were burned according to various estimates. In this case, too, deforestation took place in areas showing strong support for the PKK. Another activity that destroyed the environment as well as cultural heritage in Turkish Kurdistan was the construction of dams under the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), which also entailed forced displacement (with some compensation, which nevertheless did not cover the losses).

BALANCE OF THE VICTIMS BEFORE THE AKP CAME TO POWER

In December 1995, after the elections won by Necmettin Erbakan's Islamic Welfare Party (RP), there was a brief chance for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The party received generous support in some Kurdish provinces, for example in Bingol – over 51%, in Adiyaman – 35%, and about 30% in Agri, Mus and Bitlis. Erbakan became Prime Minister in June 2006 and tried to start negotiations with the PKK but the attempt was quickly torpedoed by the army and the coalition partner – the DYP, while in June 2007 the army forced Erbakan to resign. In August 1998, Ocalan announced another unilateral ceasefire, which ended after the capture of Ocalan in February 1999. However, the PKK field authorities announced a new ceasefire as early as September 1999 and this time it was in force until June 2004. However, any offer by the PKK to start peace negotiations was rejected by the authorities, even after the 2002 elections were won by the Islamist AKP, which was joined by many former RP members. The AKP, which, like the RP, enjoyed relatively large support in the Kurdish regions, started to liberalise Turkey's anti-Kurdish policy. In the first decade of its rule, the AKP also deconstructed a Kemalist system in which the military and the courts could once again

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outlaw both Islamic and Kurdish parties or stage a coup. Erdogan, with the help of Fethullah Gulen, also hit the 'deep state' with mass arrests as part of the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials. This was possible thanks to the functioning of the so-called 'parallel state', i.e. filling posts in the police or the judiciary with Gulen's people over several decades. As a result, the so-called 'solution process', i.e. peace negotiations between the government and the PKK, could begin in December 2012. Gulen, whose people in the prosecutor's offices and courts had previously taken part in the persecution of Kurdish activists accused of having connections with the PKK, was against them from the very beginning. At the end of 2013, Gulen and Erdogan finally went their separate ways and the persecution of Gulenists began. This intensified after the unsuccessful coup d'état in 2016 when the Gulenists were branded as terrorists and, ultimately, significantly changed their approach to the Kurds and the HDP. The 'solution process' was broken off by Erdogan in February 2015.

The balance of the victims of Turkey's conflict with the PKK between 1984 and 2013 is difficult to assess due to the tendency of the Turkish authorities not to recognise civilian victims of government operations, not to mention the victims of the 'deep state' and organisations of Turkish nationalists or Kurdish Islamists against PKK supporters. Turkey considers all victims of its actions as PKK terrorists, overestimating the number of PKK fighters actually killed (according to Turkish reports it was supposed to be almost 50,000). The PKK, on the other hand, rejects responsibility for attacks involving civilian victims, considering them as provocations by Turkey. Objective estimates mention about 30,000 civilian victims, of which about 1,000 were victims of PKK operations. It is also estimated that more than 8,000 Turkish soldiers, military policemen and regular policemen died in the fights against the PKK.

Part V

Discrimination in the 21st century and institutional assistance

VIOLENCE DURING THE 'SOLUTION PROCESS'

The 'solution process' reduced violence between the end of 2012 and February 2015 but did not completely eradicate it. According to the International Crisis Group, over 1,000 people were killed between June 2011 and July 2015, including 155 civilians. This figure covers in particular the 34 victims of the Roboski (Uludere) massacre and the 31 victims of the riots which broke out in Turkey in October 2014 following the attack on Kobane in Syrian Kurdistan by the Islamic State.

On 28 December 2011, the Turkish Air Force bombed a group of about 40 unarmed Kurds from the village of Roboski, mostly teenagers, who smuggled cigarettes and oil from Iraqi Kurdistan. The reason was that they were mistaken for a PKK unit. Petty smuggling in these areas has been present for many decades and is the result of widespread poverty. After an investigation, no one was held responsible for the action, while the families of the victims and Roboska residents who demanded justice were persecuted. The protests that broke out in October 2014 in connection with the IS attack on Kobane turned into riots and most of the victims were killed in clashes between demonstrators and local Turkish and Kurdish jihadist militias, including supporters of the Islamic State.

TRUCE VIOLATION AND ANTI-HDP TERRORIST ATTACKS

The period from February 2013 to July 2015 was one of the quietest in several decades. The situation turned around with the killing of two policemen in Ceylanpinar

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in Sanliurfa province on 22 July. Two days earlier a group of left-wing activists had been bombed in Suruc on their way to Kobane. Thirty-three people died in that attack. The Turkish authorities immediately accused the PKK of the killings in Ceylanpinar and declared the end of the truce, launching an operation against the PKK already on 24 July. Initially, reports claimed that the PKK admitted to this attack, justifying it as retaliation for the Suruc attack and suggesting that the dead had connections with the IS. In November 2015, however, the leader of the PKK, Camil Bayik, stated that the PKK had nothing to do with it, and later both the PKK and the HDP accused the MIT of using Ceylanpinar as a pretext for starting armed action. These accusations are partly confirmed by the fact that the 9 people arrested in this case, alleged PKK members, were cleared of charges and released in 2019. In addition, Ahmet Davutoglu, who was Prime Minister in 2015, said on 23 August 2019 that the disclosure of the files of counter-terrorist operations, especially those carried out between the parliamentary elections of 7 June 2015 and the snap election on 1 November 2015, would discredit many people in the Turkish authorities. His statement was commonly interpreted as a reference to the two terrorist attacks that took place at that time, i.e. the one in Suruc and the one in Ankara (10.10.2015).³⁷ Davutoglu himself was forced to give up his AKP membership soon afterwards.

The first attempted attack aimed at the HDP took place in Diyarbakir on 5 June, before the election of 7 June.³⁸ A bomb exploded during a rally ending the party's election campaign, attended by its leader Selahattin Demirtas (who was probably also the target of the attack). Five people died and over 100 were wounded. The perpetrator has been identified as Osman Gonder, a Kurd from Adiyaman, where he was recruited to the Islamic State. Although he was wanted, he got through to the rally in Diyarbakir without any problems.

After the elections of 7 June, the AKP was neither able to form a government on its own nor push through changes to the Constitution to introduce a presidential system, as Erdogan had been seeking. One of the main reasons for this was the huge electoral success of the HDP and the loss of AKP support among the Kurds. Therefore, a snap election was ordered and on 17 July Erdogan again rejected the Dolmabahce arrangements. On 20 July, the attack in Suruc was carried out by Seyh Abdurrahman

³⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/49459502> (access: 29.11.2019)

³⁸ This was not the first act of violence. During the election campaign there were many attacks on HDP members and the party's office.

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Alagoz, who, like Osman Gonder, was recruited by the Islamic State six months earlier in Adiyaman. Again, the police had previously had information about the threat – they received a report from the bomber's father that he and his older brother Yunus Emre Alagoz had probably joined the so-called Islamic State. Yunus Emre was one of two suicide bombers who attacked Ankara railway station during a left-wing demonstration (a protest against the military pacifications of Kurdish cities at the time), co-organised by the HDP. One hundred and nine people died and over 500 were wounded. During the court proceedings against the ISIS cell in Gaziantep involved in the preparation of the attack in November 2017, it was revealed that the police stopped monitoring Yunus Emre 11 days before his brother committed the attack in Suruc. Further proceedings also revealed that before the attack in Ankara the Nizip police had provided the Gaziantep Police Board with information that might have prevented the attack but was ignored. Doubts have also been raised about the fact that the ambulances arrived at the site of the attack after 44 minutes, while the police prevention units appeared after 14 minutes. Some of the defendants claimed directly that the police in Gaziantep knew the bombers and knew about the preparations for a terrorist attack. However, these allegations were rejected by the chief of police in Gaziantep. The ambiguities associated with these attacks and the lack of explanation for them so far have led to the authorities being accused of shared responsibility.³⁹

PACIFICATION OF KURDISH CITIES

According to the International Crisis Group, from the resumption of fighting in July 2015 to the beginning of November 2019 over 4,700 people were killed in Turkey as a result of the PKK-Turkey conflict, including 2,800 PKK fighters, 1,200 members of Turkish armed formations, almost 500 civilians, as well as over 200 people aged 16-35 who could have been either civilians or urban guerrillas. The combat was the most

³⁹ <https://ahvalnews.com/terrorism/ahval-reveals-top-secret-eu-report-akp-commissioned-isis-ankara-massacre> <https://ahvalnews.com/ankara-station-bombing/court-documents-reveal-police-knowledge-2015-ankara-bombing-suspect> (access: 29.11.2019)

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intense between July 2015 and December 2016, with more than 3,000 dead, including 388 civilians and 223 people of unknown status.

The majority of civilian victims were killed as a result of the pacification of Kurdish cities involved in the activity of the YDG-H urban militant youth wing. However, the Turkish authorities only reported the alleged neutralisation of PKK fighters, in most cases overestimating the numbers. Many Kurdish cities, such as Cizre (twice), Nusaybin, Silopi, Silvan or the Sur district of Diyarbakir, among others, were besieged by the Turkish army and came under artillery attack. The operations led to enormous damage and about 355,000 people had to leave their homes (most of them came back later). The first siege of Cizre, which took place from 4 to 12 September 2015, is one of the best-documented events of this period. Diyarbakir Bar Council Head Tahir Elci conducted his own investigation and on 21 September issued a report describing the killing of 25 civilians by the Turkish military as well as the death of five others (including a 35-day-old child) who had been refused access to medical assistance. There were no fatalities among the Turkish army. Elci also accused the army of committing crimes against humanity. More dramatic, though much less documented, events occurred during the second siege of Cizre, which lasted from December 2015 to February 2016. According to the findings of human rights organisations, over 100 people were burned alive in three buildings (178 unarmed civilians according to Kurdish sources) on 7 February 2016. This event was preceded by calls for help sent out for several days but completely ignored by international public opinion. HDP politicians tried to negotiate the evacuation of the wounded from the basements, but despite the initial agreement, the military finally prevented this from happening. The Turkish authorities later refused to allow any investigation to be carried out at the site and the army ravaged the three collapsed tragedy-stricken buildings and removed the bodies. The Human Rights Watch has stated that at least 66 victims of the second siege of Cizre were civilians, 11 of whom were children.⁴⁰ All attempts to initiate an investigation into this case have failed due to the rejection of complaints at the pre-litigation stage.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Turkey: State blocks probes of southeast killings*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/11/turkey-state-blocks-probes-southeast-killings> (access: 29.11.2019)

⁴¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/turkey-hundreds-arrested-in-crackdown-on-critics-of-military-offensive-in-syria/> (access: 01.12.2019)

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A total of 22 sieges took place, during which the population was deprived of electricity, access to medical care, internet, telephone connection, etc. According to the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD), more than 1.8 million people were temporarily unable to exercise their right to free movement due to the restrictions accompanying the sieges. After the pacification there were also partial expropriations, for example in the Sur district of Diyarbakir, known for its sympathy for the PKK. Erdogan's critics claimed the pacification was needed to intimidate the Kurdish population and get them to transfer their support from the HDP to his party, the AKP, and then support the amendment of the constitution in a referendum in April 2017. This goal was achieved to some extent since the support for the HDP fell in the elections of 1 November, but the party managed to enter the Parliament (otherwise the majority of the seats it won would have been taken over by the AKP). In a referendum, the majority of the Kurdish population of the province voted against amendments (e.g. 67.5% in Diyarbakir province, 57% in Van province, 59% in Mardin province, 63% in Batman province and almost 72% in Sirnak province). However, in Sanliurfa and Adiyaman provinces (the latter known for its large number of supporters of the so-called Islamic State), support for the amendment of the constitution reached about 70%.

During this time there were also several acts of terrorism attributed by the Turkish authorities to the PKK. The organisation distanced itself from the attacks causing civilian deaths claimed by the Kurdish Freedom Hawks (TAK). This refers in particular to the attack on Kizilay in Ankara in March 2016, which killed 37 civilians. The HDP condemned the attack.

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, TORTURE AND OTHER ABUSE

Province governors still have the right to declare new states of emergency in cities for up to 15 days, during which time it is forbidden to enter or leave the city. The pacification of Kurdish cities was accompanied by extrajudicial executions, torture, beatings, political murders, and the destruction of cemeteries. The most loud and at the same time shocking political murder was the assassination of Tahir Elci, Head of Diyarbakir Bar Council. Although he was critical of the PKK, and in particular of moving

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the fights to the cities, and believed that the Kurds in Turkey identified themselves much more strongly with the Turkish state than, for example, the Kurds in Syria, he was accused of 'terrorist propaganda' in mid-2015 because he had stated in a TV programme that the PKK is not a terrorist organisation, but a national liberation movement that had stemmed from the injustice the Kurds had experienced in Turkey. On 28 November 2015, Elci organised a protest in the centre of Diyarbakir against the ongoing fighting, which was attended by armed undercover agents and numerous media. At some point there was an exchange of fire between the undercover agents and unidentified people who ran past the protest site. Elci was the only victim. The investigation ended with a conclusion that the circumstances of the event could not be established and the perpetrators could not be detected. Diyarbakir Bar Council, in turn, determined that Elci was most likely killed by a bullet fired by one of the undercover agents.

Extrajudicial executions and unexplained disappearances of persons accused of having links with the PKK took place mainly in the 1990s, before the AKP came to power. However, similar cases have been observed again since 2015. During the pacification of the YDG-H urban militant youth wing, the army was accused of executing the captured fighters. In one such case, in the city of Sirnak in October 2015, the army tied the body of the shot YDG-H fighter Hacı Lokman Birlik to a car and dragged him around the city to intimidate the residents. Birlik is said to have been captured by the army with a wound in the leg and then shot on the spot. On another occasion, Turkish soldiers cut off the heads of killed PKK fighters, which was recorded on video.⁴² Another video from 2016 showed the execution of two female PKK fighters captured by the army.⁴³

At that time, the Turkish authorities also blocked any investigations into disappearances and extrajudicial killings that took place before the AKP came to power. For example, in October 2018, the request by MP Abdullah Koc to the Turkish Parliament to investigate the extrajudicial killing of 11 Kurdish villagers in Diyarbakir

⁴² <https://turkeypurge.com/video-purportedly-shows-turkish-soldiers-mocking-beheaded-kurdish-militants> (access: 29.11.2019)

⁴³ <https://ahtribune.com/world/north-africa-south-west-asia/1298-video-turkish-kurdish-pkk.html> (access: 29.11.2019)

province in 1993 was rejected because the accusation of extrajudicial killing was considered 'vulgar' and inadmissible⁴⁴.

POLITICAL PERSECUTION

After the AKP came to power, the persecution of Kurdish party activists and politicians continued. It usually intensified during the election campaign period and involved arrests, beatings, attacks on offices, removals from offices and the withdrawal of the right to stand for election. Mass arrests of DTP activists took place in connection with the 2009 local election, in which the party won 5.4% of the vote, securing a victory in 8 Kurdish provinces and filling 51 mayoral posts. More than 1,000 people were detained and many of them were not charged but remained in custody for the next few years. Two members of the DTP, Ahmet Turk and Aysel Tugluk, were removed from Parliament and banned from political activity for five years together with 35 other DTP activists, including Sakharov Prize winner Leila Zana. The DTP was banned shortly afterwards, leading to riots.

Many political prisoners were released after the announcement of the 'solution process' in 2013 but then, before the June 2015 parliamentary election, there was a wave of violence against campaigning HDP activists, with attacks on the party's offices. In May 2015, Selahattin Demirtas reported that 41 HDP offices had been set on fire during the election campaign and bombs exploded in the offices in Adana and Mersin.⁴⁵ The situation deteriorated further in July 2015. At that time, some Kurdish cities began to declare political autonomy, resulting in the removal of their mayors, many of whom were subsequently arrested. The July and August detentions included mayors of Silvan, Hakkari and the Sur district of Diyarbakir, and by the end of 2016 at least 100 elected local government officials of the party had been arrested. Demirtas reported at a press conference after the November election that 258 supporters of the party, including 33 children, were killed and 500 activists were arrested during the inter-

⁴⁴ <https://ahvalnews.com/kurds-turkey/extrajudicial-killings-disturbing-term-says-turkish-parliamentary-speaker> (access: 29.11.2019)

⁴⁵ <http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/demirtas-bugune-kadar-41-hdp-secim-burosu-yakildi-1350368/> (access: 29.11.2019)

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election period. On just one day, 8 September 2015, 128 HDP offices (including the one in Ankara and all major cities outside Kurdistan) were attacked by nationalist militias. The repression intensified after the failed coup in Turkey in July 2015. Although the Kurds had nothing to do with it, the wave of purges was also used for mass arrests and removals of members and supporters of the HDP. On 4 November 2016, party leaders Selahattin Demirtas, Figen Yuksekdag and 10 other HDP deputies to the Turkish Parliament were arrested on charges of 'spreading terrorist propaganda' and had their parliamentary mandates revoked. The right to immunity of all HDP deputies had been waived earlier. Demirtas and Yuksekdag still remain in prison even though the court ordered their immediate release in September 2019, because soon afterwards (before their possible release) they were 're-arrested' by the court. Demirtas has already been sentenced in one of the pending cases to 4 years and 8 months, but is facing a total of 142 years in prison.

In December 2016, the HDP authorities reported that 1831 HDP members had been detained and 360 arrested within two months only. The total number of Kurdish activists associated with this party detained since 22 July 2015 amounted to 8,432 people at that time, while the number of arrested activists was 2,360, including over 250 local government officials.

Arrests, removal from the mayoral offices of Kurdish cities and the subsequent appointment of commissioners have become a method of nullifying the election results in the Kurdish areas. This formally means that Turkey remains a democracy where opposition candidates can take part in elections and even win but the problem is that they cannot perform their functions. In Diyarbakir, for example, the 2014 election was won by HDP candidate Gultan Kisanak, who was removed from office and arrested in October 2016 and then replaced by an AKP commissioner. In March 2019, in the next Diyarbakir mayoral election, HDP candidate Adnan Mizrakli won 63% of the vote but was removed from the post on 19 August, replaced by an AKP commissioner and arrested on 21 October. Ahmet Turk won the mayoral elections in Mardin both in 2014 and 2019 and was removed from office and replaced by an AKP commissioner twice: first in November 2016 (arrested for several months), and then in August 2019. Bekir Kaya was elected as mayor of Van for the first time in the 2009 election. He was dismissed and arrested in 2012 but reinstated after less than a year. In 2014, he won the election again and in January 2016 he was imprisoned and replaced by an AKP commissioner for the third time. The victory in the next election went to Bedia Ozgokce

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Ertan, also from the HDP, which, like Turk and Mizrakli, was removed in August – 5 months after the election (the announcement that they would be removed was made immediately after their election).

A report by the Human Rights Association Diyarbakir Branch published in early November 2019 indicates that 14 HDP mayoral candidates who won the March 2019 election did not receive any certificates of election at all, 15 were removed from office, 26 were detained and 13 were arrested. In addition, 80 other local government officials of the party have been removed from their posts or have not been issued an election certificate at all, and 51 have been arrested or detained.⁴⁶ A request was submitted to Parliament in October for the waiver of the immunity of 40 of the 67 HDP deputies. Excerpts from the investigation files on terrorism cases against 19 HDP deputies (including both co-chairpersons) were also submitted a little later. They will most likely be arrested as soon as their immunity is waived.

THE SITUATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, TORTURE

The police can now hold detainees for 14 days, while arrestants are often imprisoned for years without charge. They are sometimes released after a few months but without the right to leave the country. There are also cases where allegations are withdrawn or permission to leave the country is granted after paying a bribe. Challenging unjustified arrest or detention is in fact impossible in Turkey, as a person who decides to do so has to face another detention, arrest or other harassment.

Defendants cannot count on a fair trial not only because they have to wait long (often many years) for a trial and a verdict, but also because of the very broad nature of the notion of 'terrorist propaganda' and 'membership in a terrorist organisation'. 'Terrorist propaganda' is punishable by imprisonment ranging from 18 months to 3.5 years, while 'membership in a terrorist organisation' – from 6 years and 3 months to 12 years and 3 months. In practice, any criticism of the Turkish state's policy towards the Kurds,

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https://bianet.org/system/uploads/1/files/attachments/000/002/794/original/%C4%B0HD_kayy%C4%B1m_raporu.pdf?1572874552 (access: 29.11.2019)

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or the publication of any positive social media entry about the Syrian Kurdish troops fighting against the Islamic State, the publication of any photographs with emblems of organisations considered by Turkey as terrorists (including, for example, the Syrian Democratic Forces), the possession of illegal publications, etc., may be considered terrorist propaganda. The interpretation of 'membership in a terrorist organisation' is equally broad. Apart from people joining the partisan units there are no formal members of the PKK, let alone the so-called FETO connected with the Gulen movement. FETO as such does not exist – an organisation with such a name has never been established and the name was invented by the Turkish authorities. Although the problem of the persecution of Gulenists applies to the whole of Turkey and the attitude of Gulenists towards the Kurdish movement has been negative in the past, some Kurds have been found among the persecuted Gulenists. In the case of accusations of PKK membership, any pro-Kurdish activity that the Turkish authorities consider illegal may be used as evidence. For example: a Kurdish man living permanently in a European Union country was arrested and then sentenced to 6 years in prison for founding an association called 'Mala Gel' (folk house). It should be mentioned that this association was registered by a court in the said EU country and did not have the chance to start any activity. The key aspect was that the name refers to the direct democracy structures functioning in North-Eastern Syria (Rojava), i.e. in the areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces considered terrorist by Turkey. Evidence of 'membership in a terrorist organisation' can also be based on participation in demonstrations (both in Turkey and abroad). Arrests may relate to events from years ago, such as participation in the Kobane protests in 2014. Having PKK guerrillas in the telephone contact list (even if they are simply close relatives) as well as participating in meetings, cultural events, conferences, etc. at which emblems of organisations considered terrorist in Turkey have appeared can serve as evidence of membership in a terrorist organisation. Actual membership in the PKK (in guerrilla warfare) is punishable by up to 36 years in prison or life imprisonment. In Turkey, sentences for individual acts are added up, so in practice one can also get life imprisonment for 'terrorist propaganda'.

Any criticism of the Turkish invasion of the Kurdish region of Afrin in Syria (January 2018) or North-Eastern Syria (since October 2019) is considered 'terrorist propaganda'. By the end of February 2018, over 800 people had been arrested in Turkey for criticising the invasion of Afrin and disseminating information about the crimes and looting

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committed there.⁴⁷ Several hundred people were also arrested in connection with the criticism of the invasion of North-Eastern Syria which began in October 2019. Additionally, the Turkish authorities have announced that the media criticising the operation will be severely punished for 'terrorist propaganda'. The Birgun newspaper and the Diken portal have been accused of 'spreading hate' for publishing information about possible civilian victims of the Turkish invasion.⁴⁸

There have been numerous reports of beatings, abuse and torture of detainees and arrestees. According to the Turkish Human Rights Association, more than 2,500 cases of torture, beatings or other physical abuse were reported in 2018 alone.⁴⁹ Torture is also used against minors. For example, according to testimony given in court by one of the 17 minors arrested in 2016 after clashes between the Turkish army and the YDG-H in Nusaybin, the prisoners were made to 'run the gauntlet' (the detainee is forced to run between two rows of soldiers with bludgeons). Another of the accused minors testified that when he complained to the prosecutor's office, the prosecutor replied that he should be happy to be alive. The interrogators were accused of sexual violence and other forms of violence.⁵⁰

OTHER REPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST THE DIASPORA

The policy on teaching the Kurdish language and the Kurdish studies in Turkey changed in 2015. Nothing has changed from the formal point of view but there have been mass redundancies of teachers and academics at universities and schools. There has also been an increase in attacks on Kurdish cultural and educational centres, including Kurdish language learning facilities. For example, in 2016 the

⁴⁷ <https://turkeypurge.com/845-people-detained-turkey-opposing-afrin-operation-far-data> (access: 01.12.2019)

⁴⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/turkey-hundreds-arrested-in-crackdown-on-critics-of-military-offensive-in-syria/> (access: 01.12.2019)

⁴⁹ <https://ihd.org.tr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2018-IHD-Violations-Report.pdf> (access: 01.12.2019)

⁵⁰ <https://stockholmcf.org/jailed-kurdish-children-speak-of-torture-by-turkish-security-forces-in-nusaybin/> (access: 01.12.2019)

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community centre in Guroymak, where Kurdish language courses were held, was burnt down. Violence against Kurdish speakers also occurs in Turkish ethnic areas. For example, in August 2019 19-year-old Sirin Tosun, a seasonal worker from Diyarbakir, was fatally beaten in Sakarya province for talking to a friend in Kurdish.

The Kurds in Turkey also accuse the authorities of repeated destruction of historic monuments in Turkish Kurdistan. This concerns, for example, the demolition of part of the Diyarbakir city walls. This procedure was partly halted when the ancient walls were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, which, unfortunately, took place as late as 2015. The historic buildings of Diyarbakir are the only UNESCO-listed site in Turkish Kurdistan. Despite the efforts of the activists, the rock town of Hasankeyf and the castle of the Kurdish Ayyubid dynasty located there are not on the reserve list. The Kurds consider this place to be one of the most important and beautiful monuments related to the history of Kurdish emirates in today's Turkey and accuse the Turkish authorities of wanting to destroy this site because it is a testimony to the pre-Turkish history of Kurdistan in Turkey. The Hasankeyf monuments are about to be flooded with the opening of the Ilisu dam.

The Turkish authorities are closely monitoring the activity of Kurds with Turkish citizenship living in European Union countries, including Poland. This applies in particular to participation in legal pro-Kurdish demonstrations in Poland and social media posts. Any such activity, regardless of its legal nature in EU countries, could put the Kurds at risk of detention and long-term imprisonment in Turkey. During the last several months there have been several arrests of Kurds who have the right of permanent or temporary residence in Poland due to their legal activity in Poland. The detainees have been in custody for months, and some of them have already been sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The only means of institutional defence of human rights available to the Kurds in Turkey is filing a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights. On the other hand, people who file it while in Turkey may face persecution.

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The office of the Turkish Ombudsman is absolutely unreliable. Since December 2016, it has been held by Seref Malkoc, a former AKP activist and advisor to President Erdogan.

One of the key institutions monitoring human rights violations and providing support to victims are regional bar associations such as the Diyarbakir Bar Association (Diyarbakir Barosu). Because of its operations, the institution is under threat of attacks by the authorities. For example, in December 2018, the public prosecutor's office initiated criminal proceedings against the Diyarbakir Bar Association for 'insulting Turkishness'.⁵¹

There are other independent human rights organisations monitoring violations in Turkey, including violations against the Kurds, such as the Human Rights Association (IHD).

⁵¹ <https://www.turkishminute.com/2018/12/28/diyarbakir-bar-association-investigated-for-insult-to-turkishness/> (access: 1.12.2019)

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