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NEWS

'Masrour Barzani secretly visited Turkey'

According to a report by SpeeMedia **(of which I saw summaries on Twitter) the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KRI), Masrour Barzani, paid a 'secret visit' to Turkey, where he met with Turkey's chief spy, Hakan Fidan and with other government and intelligence officials. Reportedly the fight against the PKK was discussed as well as the financial crisis of the KRI.**

The Kurdistan Regional Government has not reacted to the news. No other source has mentioned the visit. If it is true, it sheds an interesting light on the tensions that emerged last month between the KDP – the party of the Barzani family – and the PKK, which surfaced after the KDP built a military post in the mountains close to the headquarters of the PKK close to the Iranian border. The PKK had already stated that they considered the building of the outpost an act of war, and accused the KDP of playing a dirty game with Turkey as the real culprit.

The tensions seem to have faded. Expert Kurdistan learned that the outpost is no longer just manned by KDP peshmerga but now resorts under the bi-partisan Ministry of Peshmerga. The PKK couldn't act on its heated language. What it boils down to, is that the situation de-escalated due to the awareness of all those involved that the people of Kurdistan don't accept any fighting between different Kurdish factions. Turkey's efforts to poke up tensions seem to have failed – for now.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I was tired of the pain of lying on the bed.
One time I tried to walk a little, but after a
couple of steps I fell to the ground."

Mohammad Hamid Mohammed (12) about the aftermath of the burns he suffered
all over his body in a Turkish attack on Kurdistan in Syria, in this
piece by Amberin Zaman on Al-Monitor.

ANALYSIS

Black and Kurdish lives are connected

"Many, many thanks to the global Kurdish community for the strong words of love and support for our people in this moment", the Twitter account of the Black Socialists of America **tweeted this weekend. "Black and Kurdish peoples have so much to learn from one another in our struggle for liberation. Let's continue to speak truth to power and fight together." It was a reaction to a tweet by** Kurdish activist Delal Bakur**, who said on behalf of the Community of Kurdistan women: "The murder of George Floyd in the USA should not be dismissed as a single act. Racism and nationalism have a system and are an extremely efficient ideological instrument of state, power and rule."**

The solidarity that the Black socialists in the US and the Kurdish movement in Turkey (and Syria) show for one another is not surprising at all. Not only are both Black people in the States and Kurds in Turkey victims of decades long, extremely violent oppression by the states in which they live, both movements also make the same analysis when it comes to explaining the situation they are in and finding a way out towards liberation.

Charge the cops

Listen to activist Tamika Mallory. Her speech is deeply impressive and I want to highlight one part. Mallory said: "Young people are in rage. And there's an easy way to stop it: arrest the cops. Charge the cops. Charge all the cops." Kurds in Turkey have been saying the same for a long time: for the Kurdish issue to be solved, the state must face its crimes against the Kurds and be brought to justice.

Sounds not too difficult, right? But for the state, it is close to impossible. For the US, for Turkey, and for every state that is build on the supremacy of one group over other groups – any nation-state, that is. They don't even manage to hold trials and lock up army commanders, police officers and members of state sanctioned murder squads, let alone that they would be truly committed to preventing future murders and massacres by starting to dismantle the system in which all this oppression is rooted.

True, radical equality

That system has a few components that are intrinsically tied to each other: nationalism, capitalism, patriarchy. They can't exist without each other. Those pulling the strings within this system, those with power and wealth, will fight

with everything they have against the dismantling of this system. The stronger Black, Kurdish or any other resistance becomes, the more those in power will step up their violence to protect what they consider to be theirs. This is the violence you see against Black people in the US, against Kurds in Turkey and against so many marginalized groups in nation-states around the world. It is violence against a demand for true, radical equality.

In this perspective, demanding justice is much, much more than the demand to bring the perpetrators of the day to trial. The impact of such trials will remain bleak without a society in which people are truly equal. That is what the struggle is for. That is what 'Black lives matter' means. That is where the Black movement and the Kurdish movement meet.

Also this week…

… five kolbars (border traders, see picture above) have been killed and nine others injured after being shot at by Iranian and Turkish border guards, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network reported.
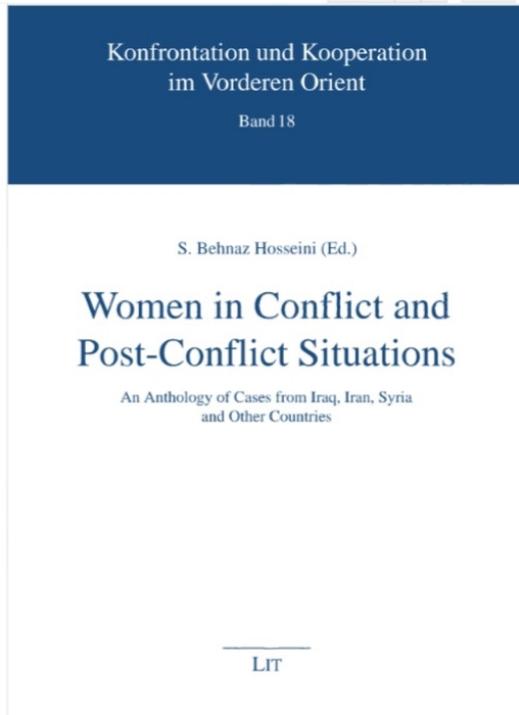
… two civilians, Celal Nuredîn Mihyedîn and his son Ehmed Celal, were killed in a Turkish bombing on the Behdînan region in South-Kurdistan (in Iraq), RojNews reported.

… the PKK killed one infantry soldier and one sergeant of the Turkish army in an attack in Hakkari province, the Ministry of Defence stated. One soldier was wounded.

… there was a hearing in the trial against veteran Kurdish politician Gültan Kışanak, former co-mayor of Diyarbakır, former co-leader of and MP for the BDP (the predecessor of the HDP). The lawyer's request to release her, was rejected. She remains in jail, where visits from family are still banned due to the coronacrisis outbreak. If the state was sincere with its measures against the virus, they would have released political prisoners just as they released almost ten thousand criminals in the amnesty of a couple of weeks ago. The next hearing in the trial against Kışanak is on 3 July.

… there were nine new Covid-19 cases in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. In Sulaymanya, one person died of Covid-19. There have been 575 (registered) cases of coronavirus in the Kurdistan Region, according to the health ministry. Five people have reportedly died from the virus.

… the Semalka border crossing between the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and Syria has opened again for some specific groups, after a closure of three months due to the coronavirus outbreak. Residents of the autonomously governed Northeast Syria who entered the Kurdistan region for humanitarian or medical reasons, are now allowed to return home. Also, starting today (31 May), the authorities of Northeast Syria have opened the crossings of Atayha (Manbij area) and Tabqa (Raqqa area) with the Syrian government to facilitate travellers between the two territories. These two borders will remain open until Thursday 4 June.

New publication: Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, by S. Behnaz Hosseini. This collected volume focuses on women's suffering and the conditions of their societies during conflict and post-conflict situations in Iraq, Iran, Syria and other countries.

The Western Sydney Shorts festival has turned to streaming its short films online. Also 'Being Kurd' by filmmaker Dee Dogan is available on youtube! Read a story about the film here.

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