

Murder In Shengal against Yazidis: Turkey, the KDP & the United States

by Marcel Cartier - 20/08/2018 13:36



The old adage that history repeats itself seems particularly apt at this moment.

Four years ago, the world watched the heroic resistance of the guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as they came to the defence of the Yazidi population that was under siege by the so-called Islamic State in the Shengal (Sinjar) region of northern Iraq.

This intervention by the revolutionary Kurdish forces came as Daesh (the Arabic acronym for Islamic State) engaged in an attempted annihilation of the Yazidi population in their heartland, the 74th such genocide in the history of this people. The PKK's participation in the battle to save their Yazidi sisters and brothers was an epoch shaking example of selflessness and sacrifice in the fight against fascism.

On August 3, Shengal marked the fourth anniversary of the beginning of Daesh's genocide that claimed thousands of lives and has to this day left countless women in the hands of their captors as sex slaves. The PKK departed the region last year after

training new self-defence forces under the control of the Yazidi community that strived to develop and advance the grassroots, participatory democracy that the party advocates.

As the anniversary was marked, the Turkish government was preparing to step into the abandoned shoes of Daesh by facilitating a campaign of terror against the inhabitants of Shengal. The worst fears of the Yazidi people were confirmed in recent days when Turkey bombed the region in a targeted assassination that killed Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council Member Zeki Ažengali. A lifelong revolutionary, Ažengali had been among the leaders of the resistance to Daesh four years ago when he arrived in the area.

Turkey Steps Into the Shoes of Daesh

Turkey's assassination of a leading anti-fascist political figure shows the extent to which NATO's second largest army is willing to go to continue the work of Daesh. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has shown itself eager on numerous occasions to fill the vacuum created by the degradation of this Salafist organisation which has failed to exist as anything other than the shell of its former self since the end of 2017 when Mosul and Raqqa were liberated.

A repackaged variant of Daesh and other Salafist Islamist groups was deployed by the Turkish state earlier this year as a branch of the 'Free Syrian Army' when Turkey launched its ill-named Operation Olive Branch in Afrin. The policies of ethnic cleansing that have engulfed Afrin since its capture by the Turkish-backed FSA show the common threads that link Erdogan's state to the proponents of terror that had previously swept the region.

Turkey's actions and ambitions continue to pose a massive threat to the democratic project that has been bringing the concept of liberation to the region under the leadership of the Kurdish Freedom Movement in recent years. Erdogan has promised that after the occupation of Afrin, the Turkish state would clear what they call the 'terror corridor' in northern Syria, pushing into Manbij and then on to cities such as Qamishlo. Although a 'roadmap' for Manbij has been agreed in tandem with the United States, as of now the future of the city appears unclear.

In the meantime, Turkey has doubled down on its efforts against the PKK in northern Iraq. This is a campaign that would have been impossible for Erdogan unless he had some 'comprador' friends in Iraqi Kurdistan who were willing to betray the idea of national unity between Kurdish parties and factions for the sake of friendly relations with the Turkish state.

The Complicity of the Comprador-Feudal KDP

In its statement on the Turkish attack that killed Zeki Āžengali, the KCK said of the possible responsibility of the Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) that administers part of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), “The public and the Yazidis are expecting a statement from Iraqi authorities. If the Iraqi government and the KDP have no ties to this massacre, they must announce that to the public and condemn this attack. Yazidis everywhere are up in arms. As they express their protest of the Turkish state, they expect an explanation from Iraqi government officials and the KDP.”

It isn't exactly beyond the stretch of the imagination to believe that the KDP of Masoud Barzani would be at the very least passive onlookers – or possibly active perpetrators -- as Turkey commits atrocities against their supposed ‘brothers’ of the Kurdish Freedom Movement in the KCK and PKK.

KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani attended the swearing-in ceremony of President Erdogan after his victory in the Turkish elections in late June, deepening the bond between the two governments. Barzani also went as far as to call the PKK ‘invaders’ in northern Iraq as Turkey launched the military operation against the Qandil headquarters of the organization. Saying that he felt that “the PKK uses KRG land it occupies as a base to attack Turkey” and that “we never accept the use of our land to attack Turkey and Iran”, Barzani essentially gave the green light for the Turkish invasion, and turned reality on its head.

The Complicity of the United States

At the moment, one may be mistaken for believing that Erdogan is developing into some kind of ‘anti-imperialist’ leader. As the United States beefs up its sanctions regime against Turkey, ostensibly over the continued incarceration of American pastor Andrew Brunson, Erdogan has vowed to pursue other options that the new multipolar world makes possible – in other words, turning east to Russia and China as the lira plummets. Thus, the aggressive actions of Trump have been met with a mixed response within foreign policy circles in Washington, as some fear a domino effect of events that could culminate in Turkey being pushed fully into the embrace of Moscow and Beijing.

However, one should be cautious about assuming that the U.S – and especially the

Pentagon – has turned firmly against Ankara. Although tensions between the two countries may be reaching unforeseen heights, and the U.S. still half-heartily supports the Kurdish militias in Syria that Turkey considers as offshoots of the PKK, Washington hardly wants to see Turkey exit NATO.

Therefore, the United States has been firm in offering its unswerving support to Erdogan's government in its 'anti-terror' fight against the PKK, even as it claims to support those with the same ideology who have been fighting Daesh in Syria under the flags of the YPG and YPJ.

To give an indication of how much the U.S. values the Kurdish revolutionaries, a spokesperson for U.S. coalition against the Islamic State said after the Turkish attack, "We are aware that Turkish aircraft carried out strikes in the Sinjar area. Turkey alerted the Coalition of their intentions to strike in the Sinjar area, but did not give any further targeting information."

This is all they had to say about the assassination of a Kurdish political figure who was supposedly aligned with U.S. objectives in Shengal in 2014 when the Obama administration authorized airstrikes that aided the PKK and allied forces who were defending the Yazidi population.

In July, U.S. Coordinator for Counterterrorism Nathan Sales made clear that the PKK was far from an ally, saying "Every opportunity I have, I raise with foreign counterparts the need not just to focus on ISIS [Daesh] and Al Qaeda but on the full spectrum of terrorist groups, including Iran-backed groups, Hezbollah and also the PKK."

Equating the PKK with Daesh or al-Qaeda is a grotesque statement that essentially spits in the face of humanity's fight against the forces of darkness, and reveals just how little the U.S. is interested in truly combating fascism and barbarism. Echoing the statements of Sales, Defence Secretary James Mattis said in March that "The PKK, as you know, is a designated terrorist organization by the United States. They have killed innocent Turks."

Yet, the murder and ethnic cleansing of Kurds and Yazidis don't seem to factor into the calculations of U.S. foreign policy officials, even as a brotherly squabble seems to be ongoing between Trump and Erdogan.

Resistance Is the Only Way Forward

Among those who became synonymous the Yazidi genocide of 2014 is Nadia Murad, who was sold into slavery by Daesh and has since become the first [Goodwill](#)

[Ambassador](#) for the Dignity of Survivors of [Human Trafficking](#) of the [United Nations](#).

On August 15, the day of Turkey's assassination strike on Shengal, she tweeted, "Today is the anniversary of the massacre committed against my village of Kocho. Today Turkey carried several air strikes in different locations in Sinjar. Sinjar continues to be a war zone. How can Yazidis recover from this genocide or go back home!" Murad also expressed her admiration for the martyred KCK figure Shengali, referring to him as "a fine human who came to the rescue of Yazidis. For this we are thankful."

Although the Turkish state is equipped with equipment that gives them the military superiority in their fight against the guerrillas of the PKK and the Yazidi movement that is allied with them, the ideological will of the Kurdish Freedom Movement should under no circumstances be underestimated.

In their statement on the recent attack, the KCK emphasized, "We stress once more that the Turkish state is bringing its own demise closer with the massacres and assassinations they commit. Our movement and our people will increase the struggle against this genocidal power and hold them to account for all the attacks."

In that same way that Daesh shouldn't have become dizzy with success in 2014-15, Turkey's fascist state should be wary of considering their victory against the Kurdish revolutionary movement as a foregone conclusion. As long as the sickening barbarism of far-right and colonialist politics rears its ugly head, there will be democratic, progressive forces to answer their aggression. With each new martyr, the Kurdish Freedom Movement only gathers its strength and develops its approach toward confronting their enemies.