

Iraqi Kurds have to accept that PKK is also their problem

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Iraqi Kurdish leaders have to take the PKK threat against Turkey seriously and should help Ankara eliminate this. As long as the PKK exists in the Kurdish mountains it remains a common problem for Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds.

We waited for four days before we commented on the ongoing Turkish cross border ground offensive against the PKK in northern Iraq.

Turkey has used the element of surprise to launch the land operations against the PKK and has been successful. The PKK and its supporters never expected the Turkish forces would launch such an offensive in these harsh winter conditions.

Iraqi Kurdish leaders are saying the PKK is a problem for Turkey and not for them. They say it is an internal problem for Turkey.

However, this is not true. As long as the PKK is holed up in northern Iraq and as long as PKK militants can easily move around in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq unhindered the issue becomes a serious problem for the Iraqi Kurdish leadership which they have to address.

For nearly two years the PKK militants felt at home in the Kurdish region. They benefited from Kurdish hospitality and exploited this situation to train their militants in guerrilla warfare. They obtained explosives in the region, slipped through the border killed in Turkey and returned back to the safety of northern Iraq.

Was this a sustainable situation? Of course not. The Kurdish leaders should have taken repeated Turkish warnings more seriously and try to do something about the PKK. However, an interview last week by an American newspaper group just before the Turkish land operations started showed the naked truth about the PKK presence in the Kandil region of northern Iraq.

On February 21, 2008 Leila Fadel of the McClatchy Newspapers declared Kurdish militants still control Iraqi mountain redoubts

She went up to Kandil and declared "No Iraqi troops patrol here. PKK men in uniform check the IDs of those who seek to visit. The image of the PKK's leader is emblazoned on a mountain slope, and a sign openly proclaims PKK headquarters. The peshmerga troops of the Kurdistan Regional Government, which officially rules northern Iraq, make no effort to enter. Indeed, there's little evidence in this tiny village inside what the PKK calls the Medya Defense Area that the Kurdistan Regional Government has made any effort to cut off the group's supply lines. The regional government paves the roads and buses in teachers from nearby towns. Residents openly watch PKK television, with the sound up loud. The only people who seem to be challenged as they come and go are journalists, whose entry into PKK territory is forbidden. But once inside, after sneaking past the last Kurdistan Regional Government checkpoint with a PKK-affiliated escort, one finds PKK officials openly proud of what they've built. The escort called the area the safest place in Iraq."

Sooner or later Turkey's patience was bound to run out and it did. That is why the United States has shown

so much understanding over the Turkish incursion and has given the green light.

The Iraqi Kurdish parliament has to loon into these facts before condemning Turkey.

What have Iraqi Kurdish legislators done to end the PKK presence in northern Iraq which has caused so much suffering in Turkey?

We feel Ankara has to take the Kurdistan Regional Government of Nechirvan Barzani and the Iraqi Kurdish parliament seriously. But this also means the Iraqi Kurds should approach Turkey's problems with more sensitivity and attention.

Sources

Source : « The New Anatolian », 26 février 2008.