

# Turkey's US-backed War On Terror: A Cause For Concern?

## Desmond Fernandes

With the US government stating its aim to vigorously assist the Turkish state in hunting down and eradicating the so-called "rebel" Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), many human rights organisations, Kurdish and Turkish civilians, peace campaigners and public interest groups fear a return to the genocidal practices and chilling psychological warfare that went on in the region during the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> It is important to appreciate why there is concern over a resurgence of intensive US-backed support for the Turkish state's *War on Terror*. During the 1990s, when such support was last provided, Noam Chomsky observes: "there was no 'looking away' in the case of Turkey and the Kurds: Washington 'looked right there', as did its allies, saw what was happening, and acted decisively to intensify the atrocities, particularly during the Clinton years. The US did not 'fail to protect the Kurds' or 'tolerate' the abuses they suffered any more than Russia 'fails to protect' the people of Grozny or 'tolerates' their suffering. The new generation [of western leaders] drew the line by consciously putting as many guns as possible into the hands of the killers and torturers [...] sometimes in secret, because arms were sent in violation of congressional legislation. At no point was there any defensive purpose, nor any relation to the Cold War [...] In the case of the Kurds, helping them would interfere with US power interests. Accordingly, we cannot help them but must rather join in perpetrating atrocities against them".<sup>3</sup>

### US-backed Counter-Terrorism/Counter-Guerrilla Offensive of the 1990s

During the major US-backed Turkish counter-terrorism/counter-guerrilla offensive, supposedly directed only against the "terrorist" PKK and its members, thousands of Kurdish civilians were tortured and extra-judicially executed by state-linked paramilitary forces. Many women were raped by Turkish state linked forces. "Turkish counter-guerrillas would commit crimes and blame them on opposition groups"<sup>4</sup> in what are known as "false flag" operations. "Often, they disguised themselves as PKK guerrillas and went to villages to torment and kill people, burning houses, crops and animals, then blaming it on the PKK".<sup>5</sup> False flag operations were all in keeping with advice imparted by US training manuals which had been supplied to the Turkish state for years: "On some 140 pages the manual offers, in non-euphemistic clear-cut language, advice for activities in the fields of sabotage, bombing, killing, torture, terror and fake elections. As maybe its most sensitive advice, FM 30-31 instructs [...] secret soldiers to carry out acts of violence in times of peace and then blame them on the Communist enemy in order to create a situation of fear and alertness".<sup>6</sup>

Reports in *The Turkish Daily News* (13 July 1994) confirmed that Turkish military officials, commanders and chiefs of staff were being briefed and advised by US Pentagon staff,<sup>7</sup> high-ranking members of the US armed forces and psychological warfare organisations such as Special Operations Command. They were even being pinned with Legion of Merit medals. Between 3 and 5 million Kurds were forcibly displaced, Kurdish forests were set alight and between 3500 and 4000 villages and hamlets were evacuated and bombed in the Kurdish south east by Turkish state forces, creating devastation on a horrific scale. Atrocities were also committed by the Turkish state against Kurdish civilians during anti-PKK incursions into what was supposed to be a US- and UK-protected safe haven in northern Iraq during this period, without formal complaints being issued by the US or UK governments. Indeed, President Clinton is known to have given permission for a major Turkish incursion into northern Iraq in 1995. Hartung confirms that, with Clinton's clearance for the 1995 incursion, "Turkish troops did plenty of things in Northern Iraq, including a number of documented cases of killings and displacement of Kurdish civilians".<sup>8</sup> And as John Deere noted: "Were this Kosovo, we would be hearing words like 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing.' You see, to kill Kurds all you need is the proper hunting license. In this case that license is a perk of NATO membership".<sup>9</sup>

According to Chalmers Johnson, we need to be aware

of the effect of a law passed by congress in 1991 which authorised the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) programme. "This allowed the Department of Defence to send special operations forces on overseas exercises with military units of other countries. The various special forces interpreted this law as an informal invitation to train foreign military forces in numerous lethal skills [...] Stripped of its euphemistic language [it] amount[ed] to little more than instruction in state terrorism".<sup>10</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter has revealed that, as part of this programme, "in 1997, the US European Command's special operations branch conducted joint training exercises with Turkey's mountain commandos, a unit whose principal mission is to eliminate Kurdish guerrillas. That unit had been responsible for atrocities against Kurdish civilians and the razing of Kurdish villages".<sup>11</sup>

Ward Churchill has concluded that, "both US and British pilots [were] assigned to provide air support to Turkish military forces conducting a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign in northern Iraq against Kurdish guerrillas seeking to establish an independent state. With regard to air support missions flown in support of the Turks, violations of the 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Combat, the 1949 Geneva Convention IV and Additional Protocol 1, UNGA Res. 2444, and the 1978 Red Cross Fundamental Rules of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts are apparent. In view of the non-self-governing status accorded the Kurds by both Turkey and Iraq, violation of UNGA Res. 1514 (XV) – the 1960 Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples – is also at issue".<sup>12</sup>

The US administration and intelligence agencies were also actively involved in facilitating the illegal capture and abduction of Abdullah Ocalan, chairman of the PKK, in Kenya in 1999.<sup>13</sup> It has also been established that Huseyin Kocadag, Chief of the Special Forces in Hakkari and Deputy Chief of Police in Diyarbakir, who has been identified as "one of the most bloody enemies of the people who organised the units of the 'head-hunters' in Kurdistan [...] was trained at a CIA school in the US".<sup>14</sup>

The Human Rights Watch Arms Project has additionally exposed the way in which, "US troops, aircraft and intelligence personnel [...] remained at their posts throughout Turkey, mingling with Turkish counterinsurgency troops and aircrews in southeastern bases such as Incirlik and Diyarbakir [...] throughout Turkey's wide-ranging scorched earth campaign" against Kurdish civilian settlements and PKK hideouts and encampments.<sup>15</sup> This campaign, in the view of many peoples and organisations, was clearly genocidal in nature: In 1997, the human rights campaigning group, Article 19, stated that it believed there was "ample evidence to indict the Turkish government of gross violations of human rights which constitute infringements of [...] the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, among other treaties to which Turkey is a party".<sup>16</sup> The UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group, after field visits to the region and detailed analyses concluded that, "the depopulation of the Kurdish region is, we believe, part of a deliberate strategy aimed not merely at eliminating a few thousand guerrillas, but to extinguish the separate identity of the Kurdish people".<sup>17</sup> In Britain, as elsewhere, the question of Turkish Kurdistan is often presented as one of a reasonably democratic government seeking to cope with an intractable problem of terrorism. We believe that the reality is one of military terrorists aiming to extinguish the identity of a people, and we were much alarmed by the parallel drawn with the Armenian holocaust of 1915-1916. The PKK, like some Armenians during the First World War, took to arms because they could see no prospect of gaining their legitimate political objectives by peaceful means. The response of the Turkish state, as in 1915 and earlier with the Armenians, was to use conciliatory language for external consumption, while unleashing huge military force against the virtually defenceless civilian population. To characterise the revolt of a subject people against their oppressors as 'terrorism' is a woeful misunderstanding which could only arise from ignorance of facts and history".<sup>18</sup>

1 Desmond Fernandes is the author of *The Kurdish Genocide in Turkey* (2007, Apoc Press, Stockholm, forthcoming), *Colonial Genocides in Turkey, Kenya and Goa* (2006, Apoc Press, Stockholm, forthcoming) and co-author of *US, UK, German and NATO 'Inspired' Psychological Warfare Operations Against The Kurdish 'Communist' Threat in Turkey and Northern Iraq* (2006, Apoc Press, Stockholm). He has written a number of articles on genocide, Turkish state terror, tourism and the 'Kurdish Question', and was a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at De Montfort University, Bedford (1994-2006). This article is dedicated to Iskender Ozden, Musa Anter, Ismail Besikci, Anthony Tingle, Ray Sibbald, E. Francis, Florence, Yasser Salihee and Ayse Nur Zarakolu.

2 For a detailed insight into the whole 'genocide' issue, and the applicability of the term to the Kurdish situation in Turkey (using definitions provided by the United Nations' 1948 Genocide Convention and other bodies and academics), refer to: Fernandes, D. (1998) 'The Kurdish Genocide in Turkey, 1924-98', *Armenian Forum*, Vol. 1 (4), p. 56-107; Fernandes, D. (2001) 'Postscriptum: A Propos De La "Petite Question" Du Genocide Kurde En Turquie, 1924-2001', *L'Appel du Kurdistan*, Number 28, October 2001, p. 45-60; Fernandes, D. (2006) *Colonial Genocides in Turkey, Kenya and Goa* (Apoc Press, Stockholm) and Fernandes, D. (2007) *The Kurdish Genocide in Turkey*. Apoc Press, Stockholm.

3 Chomsky, N. (2000) *A New Generation Draws The Line: Kosovo, East Timor and the Standards of the West*. Verso, London and New York, p. 12-14.

4 Hakki Hayri (2001) 'A Foot in Australia, Three Souls in Kurdistan: Interviews with Ayce Akturk, Hakki Hayri and Ahmed Tigran', in *Fire, Snow and Honey - Voices from Kurdistan*, edited by Gina Lennox. Halstead Press, New South Wales, Australia. p. 485.

5 Hakki Hayri (2001) 'A Foot in Australia, Three Souls in Kurdistan', p. 485.

6 Ganser, G. (2005) *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe*, Frank Cass, London and New York, p. 234-235.

7 The *Turkish Daily News* (13th July 1994 edition) reported that "Karadayi, Commander of the Turkish land forces [who was to become Turkey's Chief of Staff] was officially invited to receive the US Legion of Merit medal at a ceremony held at the Pentagon".

8 Hartung, W. (1995) *Arms Trade Resource Center Reports - Weapons at War*. A World Policy Institute Issue Brief (<http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/wawrep.html#weapons>)

9 Deere, J. (2000) 'A License to kill Kurds', *Antiwar.com*, 28 August 2000 (<http://www.antiwar.com/orig/deere1.html>).

10 Johnson, C. (2000) *The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, p. 72-74.

11 Carpenter, T. G. (1999) 'U.S. Policy toward Turkey: A Study in Double Standards', *The HR-Net Forum*, January 1999 (<http://www.hri.org/forum/intpol/carpenter.html>). Carpenter cites the following as his source: Dana Priest, 'Free of Oversight, U.S. Military Trains Foreign Troops', *Washington Post*, July 12, 1998, p. A1. See also: Human Rights Watch Arms Project (1995) *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey*. New York, Human Rights Watch, and 'Turkey and the Charge of Genocide - A Submission to the Independent Commission for International War Crimes Tribunal', *Fashion Institute of Technology*, New York, July 31, 1999 (as reproduced in: <http://www.kurdistanica.com/english/humright/articles/hum-article-01.html>).

12 Churchill, W. (2003) 'A Government of Laws?', in *On The Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections On The Consequences of US Imperial Arrogance and Criminality*. AK Press, Oakland and Edinburgh, p. 209-210.

13 Refer to Fernandes and Ozden, US, UK, German and NATO 'Inspired' Psychological Warfare Operations Against The Kurdish 'Communist' Threat in Turkey and Northern Iraq and Clark, W. 'Byzantine Politics: The abduction and trial of Abdullah Ocalan', *Variant*, No. 8 ([www.ndirect.co.uk/~variant](http://www.ndirect.co.uk/~variant)).

14 Devrimci Sol (1997) 'Who Are Guilty?', *Devrimci Sol*, January 1997, p. 31.

15 Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey*, p. 4.

16 Article 19 (1997) *Letter to the Secretary General, The Council of Europe*, dated 8th September 1997, p. 1.

17 UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group (1994) *The Kurdish Region in Turkey: The Most Destructive Conflict in the Northern Hemisphere*. Kurdistan Solidarity Committee/ Kurdistan Information Centre, London, p. 10.

18 UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group (1993) *A Desolation Called Peace: Report by the Parliamentary*

- Human Rights Group On A Mission To Turkish Kurdistan, 12-17 October 1993. Kurdish Information Centre, London, November 1993, p. 28.
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- 20 As interviewed by Temel Demirer in 'Impression', Kurdistan Report, No. 25, p. 11.
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- To Fevzi Veznedaroglu, chairperson of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) in Diyarbakir, "especially since 1991, the counter-insurgency forces targeted the leaders of the democratic struggle. The aim [was] to target a wider group of people. [It was] not only Kurdish intellectuals and leaders [who were] targeted, but villagers, women and students have been murdered. These human rights violations [were] not just aimed at fundamental rights, at the right to life [but were] aimed at reducing the Kurdish people to refugees in their country. The torture chambers [were] kept busy [in] a dirty war against the whole population".<sup>19</sup> A disturbing testimony from a death squad killer named Murat Ipek, if true, further suggests that US forces were directly implicated in the training and co-ordination of the genocidal death squads: "An American [...] controlled and instructed the contra-teams".<sup>20</sup>
- ### The Nature of the US-backed War on Terror in Turkey, Post-9/11 – A Cause for Concern?
- There has been no attempt by the US government to take responsibility for its past actions or to guarantee that there will be no repeat of such criminal and deeply unethical behaviour. Indeed, there are now suggestions that the US government, in the name of the ongoing post-9/11 *War on Terror*, is increasingly supporting the Turkish state once again in its offensive against Kurdish civilians, human rights activists, peace campaigners and PKK militants in the region.
- US special forces and intelligence agencies, it needs to be recognised, are extensively liaising with their Turkish counterparts in publicly unaccountable anti-PKK targeting and "internal defence" actions that deploy covert psychological warfare methods. The Turkish state in recent months appears to have been re-issued with the hunting licence that seemingly enables it to intensify its violence against suspected Kurdish terrorists and target civilian communities in northern Iraq (south Kurdistan) and south east Turkey (north west Kurdistan), now that the PKK and Ocalan have been compared by US administration officials to Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Post 9/11, a US administration official in September 2005 stated the absurdity that she viewed the PKK threat as being as grave as that of al-Qaeda: "Nancy McEldowley, representing the US embassy at an 11th September commemoration service in Ankara, said in a speech that there was no difference between al-Qaeda and the PKK or between Abdullah Ocalan and Osama Bin Laden."<sup>21</sup>
- But as the Socialist Party of Kurdistan has noted with alarm, in the post-9/11 period, "what is clear is that Turkish politicians and the Turkish media don't just mean the PKK when they speak of 'terrorists' but all Kurdish organisations, Kurdish associations and even the Kurds themselves".<sup>22</sup> The following examples of who is targeted as supposed terrorists makes for disturbing reading:
- At Adana, on May 28th 2004, "Siyar Perincek [...] who is the Human Rights Association's (IHD's) representative for eastern and southeastern Anatolia, was killed in front of the IHD building.<sup>23</sup> According to the BIA News Centre, "the IHD announced that the police in Adana murdered Siyar Perincek [...] During a press conference in the IHD Istanbul office, it was announced that police fired at Siyar Perincek [...] as he was driving a motorcycle in Adana. Police then stepped on his back when he fell off from the motorcycle and killed him with a bullet to his back. IHD said there were witnesses who saw the incident. 'Executions without trials are continuing [...] The murderers are free among us,' said the IHD press statement."<sup>24</sup>
  - Twelve-year-old Kurdish Ugur Kaymaz and his father, Ahmet, were killed in November 2005 in the south-eastern town of Kiziltepe in what officials said was an operation against "armed terrorists". Preliminary investigations, including one by parliament's human rights committee, concluded that the two were unarmed and may have been innocent civilians. Media reported that Ugur Kaymaz was hit by 13 bullets, and that his family said he was helping his father, a truck driver, to prepare for a trip to Iraq.
  - In terms of proposed anti-terrorist actions, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that the Turkish "security forces will intervene against the pawns of terrorism, even if they are children or women."<sup>25</sup>
  - Just as troublingly, "Turkish Human Rights Chairman Alatas recalled on his part that there were numerous allegations related to the killing of PKK militants in the recent months. 'There are claims that the bodies are being mutilated, that their organs are being cut off, that even if they are caught alive, they are tortured and killed as well as allegations that chemical weapons are being used. How are these going to be investigated?' he asked"<sup>26</sup>
  - In the US-backed *War on Terror*, schoolchildren, students, poets, musicians, writers, publishers, human rights campaigners, academics, lawyers and artists are all
- being targeted. Moreover, "according to a report in the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* a case has begun before the state security court in Diyarbakir against 27 children aged between 11 and 18, because they had demanded the right to native [Kurdish] language tuition [...] the state prosecutor [...] accused the children and adolescents of 'aiding a terrorist organisation' through their demands, and has called for prison terms of 3 years and 9 months".<sup>27</sup> In 2002, students' petitions calling for the right to merely receive some optional instruction in the Kurdish language, were incriminated "on grounds of being instrumental to the PKK's efforts to establish itself as a political organisation. State Prosecutors were briefed by the Ministry of the Interior in January, 2002, to bring charges of 'membership in a terrorist organisation' punishable with 12 years imprisonment against any students or parents who lodge petitions demanding optional Kurdish lessons. By 23rd January 2002, a total of 85 students and more than 30 parents ha[d] been imprisoned and over 1,000 people (among them some juveniles) detained [for] having demanded optional first language education in Kurdish".<sup>28</sup>
- The Turkish government is also guilty, according to the academic Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and other respected analysts, of "linguistic genocide" against Kurds and of additionally being in breach of two articles of the United Nations Genocide Convention: "In fact, education of Kurds in Turkey, both today and after the [proposed 'reform'] law package is being implemented, is genocidal. It still fits two of the definitions of genocide in the UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948) [...] Turkey tries to forcibly make Turks of Kurdish children through education, i.e. Turkey tries to transfer the children linguistically and culturally to another group. This is genocide, according to the UN definition."<sup>29</sup>
- Even today, for instance, as Turkey is engaged in the EU accession process, programmes in Kurdish for children on radio or TV remain prohibited. To merely peacefully and non-violently protest against the state's ongoing genocidal policies, or to advocate the basic cultural right of Kurds (who represent between 20-25% of the population in Turkey) to be educated in their mother tongue is, in the eyes of the Turkish state, to act in support of PKK terrorism.<sup>30</sup>
- We also need to be aware of a wider destructive plan around which the US backed Turkish state's 'War on Terror' is taking place: In September 2002, the Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK) drew attention to a "Secret Plan of Action", masterminded by members of the Turkish 'deep state'. According to the PSK: "The main aim of this plan is to make Kurdistan Kurd-free, to eradicate the Kurdish language and culture and thereby dispose of the Kurdish question. Dam projects which will flood historical towns of Kurdistan, flood the fertile agricultural land of the region and flood the valleys of incomparable natural beauty are part of this plan".<sup>31</sup> Whilst a local Kurdish, national and international initiative aimed at halting one such dam in the area – Ilisu – succeeded in halting one consortium from proceeding with the project in 2002, another consortium seems to have taken its place and been supported by the Turkish government. Despite substantive local Kurdish and national/international opposition to the project, the Turkish prime minister, on August 5th 2006, provocatively laid the foundational stone for this vast dam.
- Maggie Ronayne's findings are worth reflecting upon at this point: "The US-led war against the world is not only waged by military means [...] but [also] by development projects.<sup>32</sup> [...] These very profitable projects [can] displace large numbers of people and have devastating cultural and environmental impacts. The GAP development project [in south-eastern Turkey, which includes the Ilisu dam], in which US and European companies and governments are involved is a prime example of all this.<sup>33</sup> The action of the Prime Minister [in laying the foundational stone of the Ilisu dam] appears designed to put pressure on the affected communities and on European governments. The project would flood over 300 square kilometres in the Kurdish region [...] displacing up to 78,000 villagers. Local people would receive little or no benefit from the project. On the contrary, impacts of the dam would include more severe poverty, health problems, break-up of families and communities, environmental pollution [...] and wide-ranging cultural destruction. [...] The dam threatens to destroy thousands of years of culture and heritage and its survival into the future – first of all by targeting women and all in their care. It highlights women's opposition to cultural destruction by dams and war. Targeting women like this threatens the cultural destruction of the entire community. Indeed, the very area where [the] Prime Minister laid the foundation stone has not been surveyed at all, and it is therefore a breach of international law, including European Union directives, to proceed with any construction in the absence of archaeological survey and testing."<sup>34</sup>

## The Targeting of School Teachers, Parents, Schoolchildren, Students, Political Prisoners and Academics

Within the context of a US- and UK-supported *War on Terror* pro-Kurdish teachers who have sought to simply learn the Kurdish language in preparation for a time when they might be allowed to teach it in schools, have also been targeted by the “Anti-Terror Police” and tortured. Yendinci Gundem reports that “12 people, of whom 11 were teachers, were allegedly tortured while being detained by police after having been arrested in Kiziltepe for learning Kurdish together. The 12 people, 11 of whom were members of the teachers trade union Egitim-Sen, were arrested in an apartment [...] in Mardin on May 7th. A magistrate had issued warrants for their arrest. The Mardin branch of Egitim-Sen said in a written statement that: ‘Our colleagues were subjected to various methods of torture; they were sprayed with high-pressure water, they had plastic bags pulled over their heads, they were forced to sing marching songs and to do the goose-step, they were brutally beaten, left for 3 days without food or water, they were stripped naked, and had their testicles crushed’.”<sup>35</sup>

Parents have been murdered in the *War on Terror* simply because their children have been involved in legal pro-Kurdish cultural and political activities overseas. As Derwich Ferho, the chairman of the Kurdish Institute in Brussels has noted, his parents – who were in their 80s – were murdered by state-linked contra-guerrilla death squads in south-eastern Turkey in March 2006 because of his work and that of his brother (who works for the Kurdish satellite Roj TV station, also in Belgium): “They were killed in a horrible way in their village. Earlier they were threatened, because of the activities of my brother and me in Belgium [...] My father was sick and bedridden [...] He was killed in his bed and his ribs were broken. My mother must have resisted, because her throat was cut and she had many wounds inflicted by stabbing. My parents were threatened several times last month. People were saying: your sons must be wiser.”<sup>36</sup>

Charges are also levelled at peace campaigners in the name of the *War on Terror*. Most recently, in June 2006, three “Kurdish activists” were placed on trial “on anti-terrorism charges after they attempted to stage a peaceful protest near the Iraq border [...] They were arrested on May 2nd as they prepared to walk to the border of Iraq to peacefully protest the recent killings of civilians by security forces in south-eastern Turkey [...] All three are officials of Kurt-Der, a Kurdish association that Turkish authorities closed last month for conducting its internal business in the Kurdish language.”<sup>37</sup>

A report by Sevend J. Robinson on behalf of the Commission for Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues, which was accepted by the annual OSCE Assembly in July 2002, additionally confirmed that, “in Turkey, [pro-Kurdish party] HADEP mayors are continually persecuted. For example, the mayor of Hakkari was prosecuted for issuing a calendar in the Kurdish and English languages – because it was a risk to the state [...] The Kurdish language continues to be banned in education and in the media [...] In Van, security forces have detained 500 students because of a petition in which they requested the right to Kurdish language tuition.”<sup>38</sup>

Kerim Yildiz (Executive Director of the Kurdish Human Rights Project) and Mark Muller (as barrister and Vice President of the UK Bar Human Rights Committee), in 2005, observed that Turkey was, indeed, refusing “even to concede that the armed conflict in the [Kurdish] south-east is symptomatic of the broader issue of her subjugation of the Kurds, defining the situation purely in terms of security and/or terrorism and refusing to become involved in bilateral negotiations with the Kurds”<sup>39</sup> On 25th August 2006, for example, “Turkish officials dismissed [an] offer from the terrorist PKK for a conditional cease-fire. The PKK’s second in command, Murat Karayilan, proposed a conditional cease-fire to the Turkish government, saying, ‘We are ready to observe a cease-fire on September 1st, coinciding with World Peace Day, and opt for a peaceful and democratic settlement to the Kurdish issue in Turkey’. He requested Turkey put forward a ‘political project’ that will meet their demands [...] Karayilan also made a similar offer last June, saying, ‘We appeal to the Turkish government, asking it to end military operations in order to open the path for dialogue, and we are ready, on our side, to declare a cease-fire’.”<sup>40</sup> Kongra-Gel had also “appealed its armed forces to take a decision of ‘No Action’ between 20th August and 20th September 2005”.<sup>41</sup> Mustafa Karahan, the head of DEHAP – the pro-Kurdish Democratic People’s Party – in Diyarbakir, described the way in which his party was even being restricted in its dialogue with the press, let alone the deep state: “The pressure faced by DEHAP is very obvious. When we want to say something to the press, our members get arrested. Many members of DEHAP are now arrested and in prison.”<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the official view of the Kurds in Turkey, in writer Mehmed Uzun’s opinion, remains “one of deep hatred. The phobia of Kurds is evident; ultra Turkish nationalism is nurtured by their abhorrence of Kurds”.<sup>43</sup> Mark Thomas, in April 2006, observed the marked “failure of the Turkish state to work with the Kurds to take advantage of the PKK ceasefire. Ankara has refused to negotiate. ‘We will not talk to terrorists,’ the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declares. And he has done so with the backing of the EU. Instead of urging dialogue, the EU has followed the UK and the United States in proscribing the PKK, even though it announced a ceasefire and formally renounced violence. Just about every attempt by grass-roots Kurdish groups to form inclusive democratic movements has been regarded by the EU and the UK as merely another group to add to the list of terrorist organisations”.<sup>44</sup>

Behic Asci, a member of the Turkish Association of Progressive Lawyers<sup>45</sup> has sought to alert people to the repercussions of these policies on political prisoners: “The Turkish legal system provides no protection for [...] political prisoners held in isolation. In one instance, when a guard demanded one of Asci’s clients stand up for a prisoner count, she responded that given [that] she was in an isolation cell, there was no need for her to stand to be counted. Enraged at this small show of defiance, the guard attacked the prisoner, crushing her skull against the cell wall. When Asci appealed to the court to protest his client’s mistreatment, his suit was rejected on the grounds that it was part of a “terrorist campaign” against F-type isolation prisons.”<sup>46</sup>

## The Nature of US Psychological Warfare Assistance

We need to recognise and confront the fact that there does not appear to be any effective public oversight into the nature of accountability of these deep political US-Turkish arrangements and operations. Key questions arise: will US special forces continue to provide JCET training or assistance to Turkey’s notorious mountain commandos? As Chalmers Johnson has noted: “Republican representative Christopher Smith, chairman of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, says: ‘Our joint exercises and training of military units – that have been charged over and over again with the gravest kind of crimes against humanity, including torture and murder – cry out for explanation’. But the US Secretary of Defence seems to be unconcerned”.<sup>47</sup>

There is certainly concern that the US state will choose to maintain collaboration with Turkey’s notorious mountain commando brigades and other special military/paramilitary/police forces. In recent months it has been announced that, “after completing a six-month intensive training course, 242 [Turkish] special forces personnel have been appointed to posts in the [Kurdish] east and southeast [of Turkey]. Reports say that with the newly appointed personnel, there are now 3500 members of the Special Forces in Hakkari, Sirnak, Tunceli and Bingol”.<sup>48</sup> An April 2006 report in The Turkish Weekly suggests that Turkish special forces have, indeed, been given the green light by the US to intensify the basis of their offensive psychological warfare operations against the PKK in northern Iraq: “Turkish armed forces, using infra-red cameras, spotted PKK terrorists crossing the border near Cukurca town, after which a special force team of around 100 soldiers proceeded to cross the border into Iraqi territory. The go-ahead to send in the special forces team was reportedly given from Ankara over the weekend. Recent meetings between Turkish and US officials have indicated that the US has given the nod to Turkish action on this front”.<sup>49</sup>

US operational support for psychological warfare which targets PKK leaders in northern Iraq – as recently as July 2005 – has also been confirmed from a leading Turkish military source: “The Turkish army said Tuesday the United States had ordered the capture of commanders of the rebel Kurdistan Workers’ Party in Iraq [...] The United States ‘have issued a direct order for the capture of the leaders’ of the PKK, General Ilker Basbug, the army number two, told a group of journalists”.<sup>50</sup> According to a 21st April 2006 report by the Cihan News Agency, “The Turkish NTV news channel report[ed] [...] that the US has been providing intelligence to Turkish security forces carrying out anti-terror operations in southeast Turkey near the Iraqi border. NTV claims that the CIA and US army intelligence have tipped off the Turkish security forces during operations in which a total of 31 PKK terrorists were killed in two separate areas.”<sup>51</sup>

We also know that US International Military Education Training (IMET) courses were conducted with Turkish forces in 2001, 2002 and were requested for 2003.<sup>52</sup> This programme has been “harshly criticized in Congress for having trained soldiers in Colombia and Indonesia who went on to commit human rights violations”.<sup>53</sup> We also know that the US Congress approved IMET training with Turkish forces for 2005 and President Bush requested further IMET funding

- Firat News Agency, Accessed at: <http://www.kurdmedia.com/news.asp?id=13122>.

42 As quoted in Yilmaz, A. (2003) ‘Mustafa Karahan: Interview with Mustafa Karahan, the head of DEHAP in Amed’, KurdishMedia.com, 9 January 2004 (<http://www.kurdmedia.com/inter.asp?id=10099>).

43 Uzun, M. (2005) ‘The Dialogue and Liberties of Civilizations’, Presented at the Second EUTCC International Conference on ‘EU Turkey and the Kurds’, in the EU Parliament, 19 - 21 September 2005 (<http://www.eutcc.org/articles/8/20/document217.ehtml>).

44 Thomas, M. (2006) ‘There is one EU problem that is resolutely not going away and will only get worse: that is, Turkey’s membership’, The New Statesman, 24 April 2006 (<http://www.newstatesman.com/200604240014>).

45 According to Simon Cooper and Ruth Riordan, “Asci began the death fast on International Lawyer’s Day, April 5, because, he says, he could no longer sit back and watch his clients die” (‘On the death fast of Lawyer Behic Asci’, Green Left Weekly, 16 August 2006, as reproduced in Info Turk, No. 336 ([http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm#Istanbul\\_](http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm#Istanbul_)).

46 Cooper, S. and Riordan, R. (2006) ‘On the death fast of Lawyer Behic Asci’, Green Left Weekly, 16 August 2006, as reproduced in Info Turk, No. 336 ([http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm#Istanbul\\_](http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm#Istanbul_)).

47 Johnson, C. (2000) The Costs and Consequences of American Empire, p. 72-74.

48 The New Anatolian (2006) ‘Police Send More Special Forces to East, Southeast’, The New Anatolian, 17 August 2006 (<http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm>).

49 Turkish Weekly Net (2006) ‘Turkey and Northern Iraq’, JTW and News Agencies, 30 April 2006 (<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=30830>).

50 AFP (2005) ‘Turkey Says US Ordered Arrest of PKK leaders, Threatens Incursion Into Iraq’, AFP, Ankara, 19 July 2005.

51 Cihan News Agency (2006) ‘US intelligence aids Turkish strikes against PKK terror organization’, Cihan News Agency, April 21, 2006, as reported in Info-Turk, No. 333, May 2006 (<http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists>).

52 Foreign Policy in Focus (2002) Special Report, May 2002, Appendix 2: IMET Training And Human Rights Abuse: The Official Record (<http://www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/app2.html>).

53 Risen, C. (undated) ‘Hot for Teacher’ (<http://www.flakmag.com/opinion/jcet.html>).

54 Berrigan, F. and Hartung, W. D. and Heffel, D. (2005) U.S. Military Aid and Arms Transfers Since September 11: A World Policy Institute Special Report, World Policy Institute (<http://worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/wawjune2005.html#15> and <http://worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/wawjune2005.html#15>).

55 Foreign Policy in Focus (2002) Special Report, May, 2002: Programs and Funding ([http://www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/programs\\_body.html](http://www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/programs_body.html)).

56 Foreign Policy in Focus (2002) Special Report, May, 2002: Programs and Funding ([http://www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/programs\\_body.html](http://www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/programs_body.html)).

57 ‘FBI committed to help Turkey against Kurdish rebels’, 9 December 2005 (<http://www.breitbart.com/news/na/051209170330.w0g64v73.html>).

58 See Fernandes and Ozden, U.S., UK, German and NATO ‘Inspired’ Psychological Warfare Operations Against The Kurdish ‘Communist’ Threat in Turkey and Northern Iraq.

59 Hurriyet (2005) ‘Turkey bargains with CIA over PKK’, Hurriyet, 12 December 2005 (as reproduced in <http://www.kurdmedia.com/news.asp?id=10864>).

60 Darling, D. (2005) ‘Tidbits from Turkey on Iran’, Winds of Change, December 21, 2005 ([http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/tidbits\\_from\\_turkey\\_on\\_iran-print.php](http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/tidbits_from_turkey_on_iran-print.php)).

61 Darling, D. (2005) ‘Tidbits from Turkey on Iran’, Winds of Change, December 21, 2005 ([http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/tidbits\\_from\\_turkey\\_on\\_iran-print.php](http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/tidbits_from_turkey_on_iran-print.php)).

Sensing a possible attack by US backed forces and, perhaps, in an endeavour to ‘dissuade’ Turkey from joining in the US plans for an assault of some kind on Iran, it is instructive to note that there has been recent intensified co-operation between Iran and Turkey on the issue of ‘joint operations’ against the PKK and PKK-linked forces.

62 Where Turkey has offered to contribute some ‘peacekeeping troops’, after Israel’s destruction of much of the infrastructure of the region during its recent 2006 offensive there. The US also, importantly, relies on Turkey to provide troops at key moments in its Afghanistan NATO linked ‘War on Terror’ campaign. Chossudovsky also argues that: “There is another dimension which directly relates to the war on Lebanon [...] Israel is slated to play a major strategic role in ‘protecting’ the Eastern Mediterranean transport and pipeline corridors out of [the Turkish linked] Ceyhan [BTC Project] [...] The bombing of Lebanon is part of a carefully planned and coordinated military road map. The extension of the war into Syria and Iran has already been contemplated by US and Israeli military planners. This broader military agenda is intimately related to strategic oil and oil pipelines. It is supported by the Western oil giants which control the pipeline corridors. In the context of the war on Lebanon, it seeks Israeli territorial control over the East Mediterranean coastline [...] Prior to the bombing of Lebanon, Israel and Turkey had announced [...] underwater pipeline routes, which bypassed Syria and Lebanon [...] On the other hand, the development of alternative land based corridors (for oil and water) through Lebanon and Syria would require Israeli-Turkish territorial control over the Eastern Mediterranean coastline through Lebanon and Syria. The implementation of a land-based corridor, as opposed to the underwater pipeline project, would require the militarisation of the East

Mediterranean coastline [...] Is this not one of the hidden objectives of the war on Lebanon?" - Chossudovsky, M. (2006) 'The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil', 26 July 2006 (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=CHO20060726&articleId=2824>).

- 63 In the short term, it may also be politically inconvenient to endorse an all out Turkish invasion of northern Iraq. The US is critically dependent, for the moment, upon KDP-PUK 'Iraqi' Kurdish support in its 'Iraqi Imperialist Programme'. Consequently, as long as the PUK-KDP agree to assist the Turkish state with its 'anti-PKK' offensive, it is likely that it will ask Turkish forces to desist from overt incursions into the area. It seems likely, though, that several cross-border covert operations will continue to be approved, even as the US may seek to encourage the Israeli state and the PUK-KDP to collaborate with each other in Turkish approved covert operations aimed at further targeting the PKK.
- 64 Korkut, O. (2006) 'Anti-Terror Schemes May Encourage Torture', BIA News Center, 26 April 2006, in Info Turk, No. 333, May 2006 (<http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists>).
- 65 BIA News Center (2006) 'Reaction by NGOs: "New Terror Bill Takes All Citizens Terrorist"', 28 April 2006, in Info-Turk, No. 333, May 2006 (<http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists>).
- 66 BIA News Center (2006) 'Reaction by NGOs: "New Terror Bill Takes All Citizens Terrorist"', 28 April 2006, in Info-Turk, No. 333, May 2006 (<http://www.info-turk.be/index.html#Activists>).
- 67 Churchill, W (2003) *Perversions of Justice*, p. 347. For further details on this, also refer to: Fernandes, D. and Ozden, I., US, UK, German and NATO Inspired Psychological Warfare Operations Against the 'Kurdish Communist Threat' in Turkey and Northern Iraq and Fernandes, D. (2006) 'On The Possibilities of Successfully Taking A Case To The International Criminal Court', in 'War and Occupation: Human Rights Abuses, Torture and Disappearances Under Detention', The 5th International Conference Against Disappearances, 16th -20th May 2006, Diyarbakir, Turkey. Organised by The International Committee Against Disappearances (ICAD) and Aiding and Solidarity Association with the Families who lost their Relatives (YAKAY-DER).
- 68 Keen, D. (2006) *Endless War? Hidden Functions of the 'War on Terror'*, 2 p. 77.
- 69 Keen, D. (2006) *Endless War? Hidden Functions of the 'War on Terror'*, p. 77.

Desmond Fernandes and Iskender Ozden's book, *US, UK, German and NATO 'Inspired' Psychological Warfare Operations Against The Kurdish 'Communist' Threat in Turkey and Northern Iraq*, will be released in November 2006. It is published by Apec Press (Stockholm, Sweden) and can be obtained in the UK from Housmans Bookshop (5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, London N1 9DX. Tel: 020 7837 4473)

A longer, more detailed version of this article is available on the Variant website: [www.variant.org.uk](http://www.variant.org.uk)

for the financial year 2006. It is also known that Turkey was the recipient of a US Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme in 2005, and President Bush, again, requested further FMF for Turkey in 2006.<sup>54</sup> FMF, it needs to be appreciated, "provides grants for foreign militaries to buy US weapons, services, and training. Although the majority of these funds are used to buy weapons, mobile training teams are often deployed as a facet of weapons sales packages to train the foreign country's forces in the operation and maintenance of the weapon system(s). In other cases, aid recipients use this money to buy training for their soldiers in specific skill areas. In such cases, U.S. mobile training teams, usually made up of Special Operations Forces, are sent to the host country for up to six months".<sup>55</sup>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) have also provided assistance to Turkish forces involved in the *War on Terror*: "The FBI is [...] involved in training foreign police and paramilitary forces. This training is justified primarily as part of its efforts to counter drug trafficking, terrorism, and organized crime [...] No annual report provides public information on FBI foreign training programs [...] The DEA, also part of the Justice Department, conducts international police training as well [...] The international police training programs of the FBI and the DEA are funded at least in part out of the annual appropriation for Justice Department operations and are, therefore, exempt from the vetting requirements".<sup>56</sup> FBI director Robert Mueller said: "We are working with our counterparts elsewhere in Europe and in Turkey to address the PKK and work cooperatively, to find and cut off financing to terrorist groups, be it PKK, al-Qaeda."<sup>57</sup>

That the DEA and FBI are providing extensive and ongoing anti-terrorist and anti-narcotics assistance to Turkey's security, military, and paramilitary forces is ironic, given the heavy involvement in organised crime, state terrorism and drugs trade among these sectors.<sup>58</sup>

Confirmation that the FBI and CIA were co-ordinating their anti-PKK initiatives with the Turkish state came in a December 2005 *Hurriyet* report: "Following the visit of FBI director Robert Mueller to Turkey, CIA chief Porter Goss followed in Mueller's footsteps and paid a visit to Ankara for talks with officials from the Turkish General Staff and the intelligence service MIT. The visits have triggered speculations that the US might start a serious initiative for the neutralization of PKK after the Iraqi elections. Turkey will also convey to Goss its concerns about developments that might pave the way for the founding of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq [...] Turkish Land Forces Commander General Yasar Büyükanit was currently in the US for talks with US officials" over these matters.<sup>59</sup>

A report from the blog group Winds of Change observes that, "the most interesting details of the [December 2005] meeting seem to have appeared in *Cumhuriyet*, which states: 'During his recent visit to Ankara, CIA Director Porter Goss reportedly brought three dossiers on Iran to Ankara. Goss is said to have asked for Turkey's support for Washington's policy against Iran's nuclear activities, charging that Tehran had supported terrorism and taken part in activities against Turkey. Goss also asked Ankara to be ready for a possible US air operation against Iran and Syria'.<sup>60</sup> The Bush administration's need to secure Turkey's assistance in its joint plans with the Israeli state to restructure the Middle East has probably also meant that it will, in return, have had to commit itself, once again, to aggressively supporting the Turkish state's war against the PKK.

It seems reasonable to conclude that a new intensified phase of joint US-Turkey psychological warfare operations is under way. The US Embassy in Ankara, for instance, recently confirmed that General Joseph W Ralston (USAF, retired) had been appointed as Special Envoy for Countering the PKK with responsibility for coordinating US engagement with the governments of Turkey and Iraq to eliminate the PKK and other terrorist groups operating in northern Iraq and across the Turkey-Iraq border. "This appointment underscores the commitment of the United States to work with Turkey and Iraq to eliminate terrorism in all its forms".<sup>61</sup> For instance, local news sources in northern Iraq (south Kurdistan) reported on August 14, 2006, that "over 100 Turkish MIT (National Intelligence Agency) agents had been permitted to cross over into the region together with members of the Turkish Special Forces".<sup>62</sup> These cross-border military incursions into the Iraq – supposedly a US protectorate<sup>63</sup> – are unlikely to have taken place without a green light from Washington.

If, as we are now informed, the Bush administration, in its wisdom, is committed to destroying the PKK additional questions arise. Will there be, as many Kurdish and human rights analysts contend, a resurgence of false flag operations? Will initiatives that seek to resolve the Kurdish question through military/paramilitary means, rather than through peaceful dialogue, be intensified? Will there be a resurgence of anti-terrorist abductions, disappearances, massacres, and torture sessions for Kurdish civilians, intellectuals,

schoolchildren, students, journalists, politicians, lawyers and other perceived pro-Kurdish supporters in Turkey and northern Iraq?

## Concerns Over The New 'Anti-Terrorism Law'

We also need to ask ourselves whether the Bush administration will persist in using a terrorist definition of the PKK which it will have been furnished with by its Turkish counterpart. Certainly, Condoleezza Rice, during her most recent visit to Turkey, did not publicly express any concern over such definitions when she provided assurances that the Bush administration was fully supportive of Turkey's *War on Terror*. The Bush administration appears to be minded to accept the absurd and dangerous definitions that are being provided and used under the new Turkish 'Anti-Terrorism Law' to criminalise individuals and organisations. These definitions have the capacity to criminalise the non-violent activities of many Kurdish and non-Kurdish people.

Concerns over this matter were even recently expressed by the UN Special Rapporteur: "[A] letter, sent on May 21 [2006] to the Parliament Justice Committee by Martin Scheinin, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, informed Turkey that the new law fails to meet the requirement of proportionality in the use of force by security forces, introduces 'improper restrictions on freedom of expression' and reflects the danger of punishing civilians not involved in violence. 'This danger is exacerbated by the very broad definition of terrorism and the very long and wide list of terrorist offences'."

According to the lawyer Nalan Erkem, a member of the Izmir Bar Association Prevention of Torture Group (IOG): "The arrangements that the draft makes with regard to access to an attorney take away all of the rights of the defendant [...] While it opens the way for torture and mistreatment, the draft also aims to prevent lawyers from proving their existence". Erkem argued that the draft was in the nature of an insult to lawyers in Turkey, stripping away the defence rights that were enshrined under Turkey's accession plans with the EU.<sup>64</sup> "Representatives of 17 non-government organisations (NGOs)<sup>65</sup> read a press statement in front of Istanbul's Sultanahmet Justice Hall [...] where an appeal was made to [...] reject it. The move came after similar appeals from leading Turkish human rights groups including IHD and MAZLUMDER. The country's Human Rights Foundation (TIHV) joined in the criticism and said the law would not only shift Turkey from its previous EU projections but also meant a turn to a 'tolerance policy towards torture'.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

In reflecting upon the current situation, it is worth noting that the Bush administration has set in place a series of arrangements that are aimed at securing immunity from prosecution of all US, Turkish and Israeli forces who may be charged with war crimes or genocide crimes. The US government, it seems, has not only been seeking to unethically provide immunity from prosecution of its own military and civil personnel at the International Criminal Court (ICC), but also those of its client states – Israel and Turkey in particular: "Senior (US) officials have stated repeatedly and quite categorically that they will continue to reject any jurisdictional arrangement allowing international prosecution of its own civilian authorities or military personnel for war crimes as 'an infringement upon US national sovereignty'. Objections have also been raised with regard to any curtailment of self-assigned US prerogatives to shield its clients – usually referred to as 'friends' – from prosecution for crimes committed under its sponsorship – e.g. [...] Turkish officials presiding over the ongoing 'pacification' of Kurdistan".<sup>67</sup>

The information gathered in this article shows that "an important part of the political function of the *War on Terror* has been the way it legitimises political intimidation by a range of allies beyond the Bush/Blair/Aznar axis. In effect, the *War on Terror* has given a licence to internal repression in countries supporting this war."<sup>68</sup> And that includes Turkey, of course. "As in many civil wars, demonising one party has created space for the abuses of others. As Michael Mann observes, labelling opponents as al-Qaeda allows repressive governments to do what they want with limited international criticism".<sup>69</sup> Not only has the US government's stance allowed the Turkish government to act repressively and ruthlessly with regard to the Kurdish question, it has actively assisted it, as it did throughout the genocidal period of the 1990s, through its ruthless anti-terrorism initiatives. We need to seriously reflect upon these issues and act to expose and end these unacceptable actions and activities.