

6 dead, 10 missing as flooding hits Turkey's Black Sea coast

Mon, 2020-08-24 00:35

ANKARA: Flooding caused by heavy rains has killed six people along Turkey's Black Sea coast and left 10 others missing, including some rescue workers, officials said Sunday.

Television footage showed vehicles and debris being swept away by floods on the main road of the mountain town of Dereli, which lies 20 km inland from the Black Sea in Giresun province. Bridges, roads and buildings were washed away by what Agriculture and Forestry Minister Bekir Pakdemirli said was more than 5 inches of rain in less than a day.

"This is the first time I've seen such a natural disaster," Pakdemirli said from Dereli. "The town's skyline has changed."

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, who traveled to Giresun to oversee rescue efforts, said 153 people had been rescued from the floods. He said 98 villages in the region were cut off and 38 were without electricity. About 20 people were stranded in a wedding hall in Dereli.

Two of the dead were police officers whose vehicle was swept away by the floods. Three of their colleagues and the operator of a mechanical digger are among the missing. Their vehicles fell into a ravine when a main road collapsed as they traveled to the disaster area.

This is the first time I've seen such a natural disaster ... the town's skyline has changed.

Bekir Pakdemirli, Turkish minister

Across the province, 17 buildings were destroyed and more than 360 were damaged, officials said.

Heavy rain along Turkey's Black Sea coast on Saturday evening also saw apartment buildings evacuated after landslides in Rize province, 180 km east of Giresun.

At this time of year, the Black Sea region's population is swollen by seasonal workers who travel to harvest tea and hazelnuts and live in flimsy camps.

Meteorologists forecast more heavy storms ahead for Giresun and the neighboring provinces of Trabzon, Rize and Artvin.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, speaking at an event in Istanbul, vowed to help those affected by the floods.

"As a state, we will quickly overcome the destruction and devastation here with God's will," Erdogan said.



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Intensifying Turkish war against Kurds marks Treaty of Sevres centenary
Protests against Libya's GNA erupt in Tripoli over living conditions

[Intensifying Turkish war against Kurds marks Treaty of Sevres centenary](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-08-23 22:28

MISSOURI: As Turkey carries out almost daily attacks on impoverished Kurdish regions in neighboring Syria and Iraq, keeps its own elected ethnic Kurdish MPs indefinitely imprisoned, and coerces Iraqi Arab and Kurdish authorities to act as its local police, it is hard to remember that August marks the centenary of a pact in which provision was made for a Kurdish state.

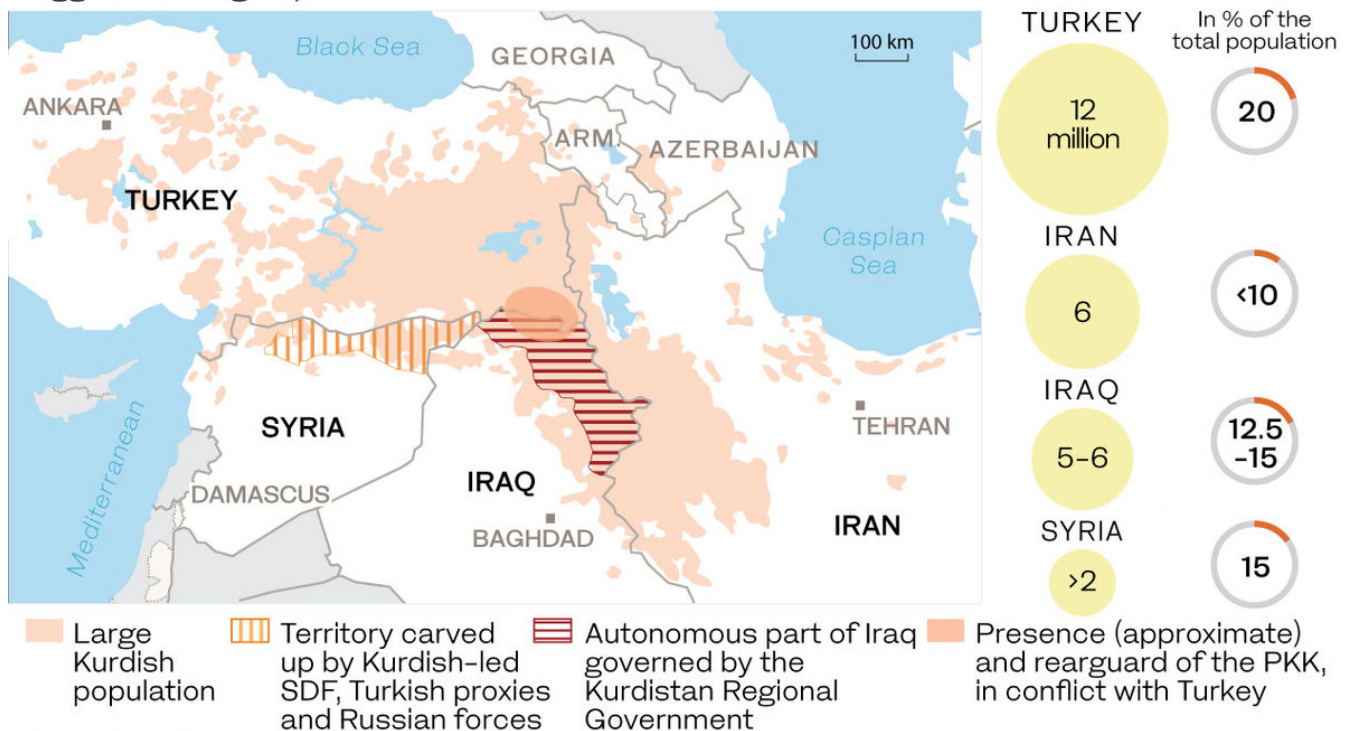
The Treaty of Sevres, signed on Aug. 10, 1920, essentially laid out the Ottoman Empire's terms of surrender following the First World War. The treaty, which included signatories from Britain, France, Italy and the Ottoman Empire, promised religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey various safeguards to protect them and their rights.

With regard to the Kurds, the treaty stated: "If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas." (Kurdistan Section III Article 64)

Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (who later came to be known as Ataturk), remnants of the Ottoman army organized military resistance to the terms of the treaty. Convinced that they were fighting to save the sultanate and caliphate, and promised recognition and self-governance in the new Turkey, most Kurdish tribes joined with Ataturk during what came to be known as Turkey's War of Independence.

KURDS: MIDDLE EAST'S 'LARGEST NATION WITHOUT A STATE'

Living mainly in four countries, 25–35 million Kurdish people constitute the region's fourth biggest ethnic group



ARABNEWS

Sources: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, F. Balanche & M. Horan

The Ataturk-led resistance to Sevres proved successful, and the treaty was replaced in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne. Ataturk's representatives in Lausanne insisted on stipulations regarding minority rights in the new treaty, however, wherein Turkey only recognized "non-Muslims" as minorities, specifically the Jewish, Greek and Armenian communities. Turkish representatives in Lausanne rejected the concept of ethnic minorities in Turkey, thereby also refusing to entertain cultural, linguistic or other minority rights for such groups.

With the loss of its holdings in Europe and Arab lands, as well as genocidal campaigns against Christians in Ottoman lands, the Kurds stood out as

Turkey's only remaining significant minority in 1923.

The refusal of Turkish diplomats to recognize ethnic minority rights in Lausanne was thus squarely aimed at the Kurds. Their policy formed the first step in betraying earlier promises of recognition and self-governance to the Kurds who participated in Turkey's War of Independence.

Under a Muslim sultanate and caliphate, Kurds (the large majority of whom are Sunni Muslim) could have expected an equal place. It thus made sense for Kurds to join Turks in fighting for these two institutions in 1920. But Ataturk abolished the sultanate in 1923 and the caliphate in 1924, replacing them with a secular nation-state concept imported from parts of Europe.

Taking his cue from France in particular, Ataturk then went about trying to make the Turkish state and nation completely co-terminous, meaning that only a Turkish ethnic national identity would be permitted in the new Turkey. Kurdish language, culture, music, names and any other manifestations of Kurdish identity were promptly outlawed.

The Kurds unsurprisingly revolted against the secularization and Turkification of the new state in 1925 and 1927-30. These revolts and numerous subsequent ones were all brutally suppressed.

The 1937-38 suppression of the Kurdish revolt in Dersim (renamed Tunceli by Turkish authorities) is recognized by many as a genocide, with 10,000-30,000 killed, including civilians hiding in caves who were murdered with poison gas or burned alive by Turkish forces.

When Kurdish unrest began manifesting itself in Turkey again in the 1960s, one right-wing Turkish nationalist periodical warned the Kurds to "remember the Armenians" – a somewhat ironic choice of rhetoric given Turkish nationalists' refusal to admit that the Ottomans ever committed genocide against the Armenians of Anatolia, whose numbers fell from some 2 million in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the First World War to almost nothing after 1915.

With the exception of Turkey's 1974 intervention in Cyprus, the Turkish armed forces seemed to specialize in only one thing since the creation of the Turkish Republic: Suppressing Kurds. Apart from Cyprus and participation in the Korean War and the 1991 Desert Storm campaign in Iraq, the Turkish military's only significant operations in the 20th century involved counterinsurgency against Kurds.

Most of the military campaigns took place in Turkey itself, but from the 1980s onward the Turkish military also frequently conducted cross-border raids into Iraq to chase after guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). And so it continues to this day.

Turkey's invasion and occupation of Afrin in northern Syria in 2018 was aimed at PKK-aligned Syrian-Kurdish groups there. The October 2019 Turkish invasion and occupation of parts of northern Syria east of Afrin had the same objective.

Although no significant attacks from Kurdish forces in Syria into Turkey had occurred since the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Turkey claimed a need to occupy and establish “buffer zones” in northern Syria. The Turkish invasions seriously threatened Kurdish-led operations against Daesh in Syria.

Although one might not know it from the scant media coverage, almost weekly Turkish strikes in Iraqi Kurdistan, with remarkably similar rhetoric about necessary “buffer zones,” have been ongoing for several years. The most recent series of operations (dubbed Claw-Eagle and Claw-Tiger) this year have seen Turkish ground troops deployed to the area, in addition to Turkish bases already present in Iraqi Kurdistan since the mid-1990s.

The maneuvers in the summer of 2020 also seemed to be conducted in cooperation with Iranian forces, with Turkish airstrikes against fighters of the Free Life Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PJAK), an Iranian-Kurdish party aligned with the PKK.

Recently, a Turkish drone strike killed two high-ranking officers of the Iraqi army who were meeting with PKK militants in northern Iraq after clashes between the two. Both Baghdad and Erbil, the seat of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region of Iraq, have repeatedly protested against Turkey’s violations of Iraqi sovereignty, but to little effect.

Turkey claims a right to defend itself and act against the PKK presence in Iraq or PKK-aligned Kurdish groups in Syria. If the mere presence of such groups, especially in the very mountainous and difficult-to-control territory along the border, justifies invasions and occupations of Arab territories, a similar logic could in theory be used by Israel or the US to target Palestinian Hamas leaders hosted in Ankara and Istanbul today, to say nothing of Arab countries whose Islamist critics have extensive propaganda campaigns operating from Turkish soil.

The official Turkish approach of the last 100 years seems rather like a policy of opposing Kurdish self-government “even if it’s in Alaska,” as a popular Turkish joke goes. When Turkey invaded northern Syria in 2018 and 2019, one justification offered by Turkish leaders was that they did not want “to see Syria become another northern Iraq.” By this, they meant Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, of course.

One-hundred years after the Treaty of Sevres, it looks like “le plus ça change, le plus c’est pareil.”

• *David Romano is Thomas G. Strong Professor of Middle East Politics at Missouri State University.*







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Turkish strikes kill three Kurds in Iraq
Turkey's Kurds demand spending probe, end to military ops in Libya, Syria

[Protests against Libya's GNA erupt in Tripoli over living conditions](#)

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Sun, 2020-08-23 20:00

TRIPOLI: Hundreds of Libyans marched in the capital Tripoli on Sunday evening to protest deteriorating living conditions and denounce corruption in the

war-torn country, witnesses said.

Angry at extended cuts to power and water, and long lines at petrol stations, the mostly young people marched in the streets of the city center, chanting slogans including "No to corruption!"

Libya, which sits atop Africa's largest proven crude oil reserves, has endured almost a decade of violent chaos since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed veteran dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

The war-weary country is plagued by water shortages and power blackouts that snuff out air-conditioners in the searing summer heat.

The deplorable situation has been compounded by the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has depressed global oil prices and spread in the country despite social distancing measures.

"We are tired of living without hope," Ayman Al-Wafi, a young man in his twenties, told AFP by telephone from the protest.

Ignoring restrictions in place to curb the spread of the virus, the protesters marched in front of the seat of Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) before gathering in Martyrs' Square.

Police vehicles and security forces were present at the march, according to witnesses and videos shared on social media.

Al-Wafi later told AFP that protesters had left Martyrs' Square after "security forces started firing in the air."

The protest comes just two days after the country's warring rival administrations announced separately that they would cease all hostilities and hold nationwide elections.

The surprise announcement Friday was made by Fayez Al-Sarraj, head of the UN-recognized GNA, and Aguila Saleh, speaker of the eastern-based parliament backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who launched an abortive offensive in April 2019 to seize Tripoli.

But the prospect of a let-up in violence came as coronavirus cases skyrocketed 15-fold in Libya since June, the ICRC said, warning this was further deepening a dire humanitarian crisis.

"Infrastructure all over the country is falling apart. People have little electricity, drinking water, sanitation, or medical care in the middle of a growing pandemic," International Committee of the Red Cross president Peter Maurer said in a statement.



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East Libyan forces dismiss cease-fire push by rivalsHaftar warns Erdogan: Stay out of Libya or you face our bullets

[UN warns of new Yemen disaster as flood death toll rises to 148](#)

Sun, 2020-08-23 22:46

MUKALLA: Yemen faces a new catastrophe from torrential rain and flooding that have devastated the country for the past three months, the UN warned on Sunday.

Flash floods have killed at least 148 people, left more than 300,000 homeless and destroyed property, crops and livestock.

The flooding has left thousands of Yemenis jobless and has hampered efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus, said UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Andrej Mahecic.

“UNHCR is deeply concerned that the displaced communities are extremely vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many unable to practice social or physical distancing, access clean water for hand-washing or enact other measures to prevent transmission of the virus,” Mahecic said.

The provinces of Marib, Amran, Hajjah, Hodeidah, Lahj, Aden and Abyan are the worst affected, with thousands forced to flee their homes and seek shelter in mosques, health centers and schools.

“Many of the internally displaced people affected by the floods were already living in abject poverty, often in overcrowded, makeshift shelters made from plastic sheeting or mud, which have been washed away,” Mahecic said.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The provinces of Marib, Amran, Hajjah, Hodeidah, Lahj, Aden and Abyan are the worst affected.
- Thousands have been forced to flee their homes and seek shelter in mosques, health centers and schools.

Dams have collapsed and the biggest, at Marib, overflowed, flooding shelters and washing away farms. There are now fears that Marib dam may burst because it has not been properly maintained.

“It is highly vulnerable to bursting. This would destroy the downstream irrigated area, which hosts thousands of displaced people, as well as the lower parts of Marib town,” Mahecic said.

Ahmed Saeed Baamer’s family and three others sought shelter with relatives in the village of Radfan, west of the port city of Mukalla, when a rainstorm and floodwaters made their home uninhabitable. They have now gone back home to await help.

“We had no other option but to return to the house,” Baamer, a nurse, told Arab News. “Our relatives’ houses are overcrowded. The government has not helped us. A government engineer saw the damage in my house and left without saying when they would help. All we want is safer accommodation.”

Salem Al-Khanbashi, Yemen’s deputy prime minister and head of the supreme national emergency committee, told Arab News that the government had allocated 2.5 billion Yemeni riyals (\$9.9 million) for reconstruction and relief after floods in March and April. When the rain continued, the cash-strapped government turned to international donors for help.

“We could not allocate more funds as floods and rain became more destructive and caused huge damage across the country. The reconstruction bill is beyond the government’s abilities,” Al-Khanbashi said.



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Saudi aid agency provides medical supplies to Yemen
Saudi aid agency provides medical supplies to Yemen

[Egypt signs African anti-corruption pledge](#)

Sun, 2020-08-23 22:39

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has approved Egypt's accession to the African Union Convention for the Prevention and Combating of Corruption.

The 2003 agreement, signed in Maputo, Mozambique, aims to encourage and strengthen measures by African states to prevent, punish and eradicate corruption and related crimes in the public and private sectors.

It also seeks to strengthen, facilitate and regulate cooperation among states to ensure the effectiveness of measures for preventing corruption and related crimes in Africa, as well as and harmonizing and streamlining policy aimed at corruption on the continent.

The principles of the agreement include respect for democratic principles and institutions, citizen participation, the rule of law and good governance, respect for human rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, transparency in public affairs and the promotion of social justice.

Ghada Wali, Director-General of the UN Office at Vienna, said that Egypt will host the largest anti-corruption conference in the world next year, and will increase efforts in fighting the crime.

FASTFACT

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She added in an interview on Al-Hayat TV that Egypt has a plan to combat drugs and terrorism.

Last December, Egypt submitted its voluntary report to the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary mechanism for reviewing and evaluating the performance of member states.

The Administrative Control Authority received the review delegation for the mechanism and was briefed on the efforts of Egypt's National Anti-Corruption Academy of the Authority.



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Egypt's Al-Azhar and Coptic Church send two aid planes to Lebanon
Egypt's temporary Tutankhamun exhibition marks the end of third London visit