

# **TURKEY'S KURDISH IMPASSE: THE VIEW FROM DIYARBAKIR**

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## TURKEY'S KURDISH IMPASSE: THE VIEW FROM DIYARBAKIR

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As Turkey's biggest Kurdish-majority city and province, Diyarbakir is critical to any examination of the country's Kurdish problem and of the insurgent PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). The armed conflict has deteriorated in the past year and a half to its worst level in over a decade, with increased political friction and violence leading to the deaths of at least 870 people since June 2011. While as many Kurds live in western Turkey, particularly in Istanbul, as in the south east, grievances that underlie support within Kurdish communities for the PKK's armed struggle are more clearly on display in predominantly Kurdish areas like Diyarbakir: perceived and real discrimination in the local government and economy, alienation from central authorities, anger at mass arrests of political representatives and frustration at the bans on the use of Kurdish in education and public life. Yet Diyarbakir still offers hope for those who want to live together, if Ankara acts firmly to address these grievances and ensure equality and justice for all.

Across the political spectrum, among Kurds and Turks, rich and poor, Islamic and secular in Diyarbakir, there is a shared desire for a clear government strategy to resolve the chronic issues of Turkey's Kurdish problem. Official recognition of Kurdish identity and the right to education and justice in mother languages is a priority. The city's Kurds want fairer political representation, decentralisation and an end to all forms of discrimination in the laws and constitution. They also demand legal reform to end mass arrests and lengthy pre-trial detentions of non-violent activists on terrorism charges.

Control of Diyarbakir is contested on many levels. The state wants to stay in charge, channelling its influence through the Ankara-appointed governor and control over budget, policing, education, health and infrastructure development. The municipality, in the hands of legal pro-PKK parties since 1999, most recently the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), is gathering more power against considerable obstacles. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) that rules nationally has ushered in a more progressive approach to police, but this has not ended confrontations and defused local hostility. Turkey as a whole, and Kurdish-speaking cities like Diyarbakir in particular, need a coherent, informed debate on decentralisation and a strategy to implement it.

The current government has done more than any previous one to permit Kurdish language use in Diyarbakir and elsewhere, but most Kurds want nothing less than a commitment to education in their mother language. The government's initiative on optional Kurdish lessons should be fully supported as a stepping-stone in a structured plan to achieve declaration of that goal as a right.

Once Turkey's third best off economic centre, Diyarbakir and its surrounding province have fallen to 63rd place at last measurement. Investment has long been low due to violence, flawed government policies and PKK sabotage, kidnappings, terrorist attacks and extortion. But residents show their faith in the city's future through their investment, particularly in marble quarries and the booming real estate sector. Diyarbakir's location at a regional historic crossroads still makes it an important hub for elements of the service sector, such as courier businesses and hospitals. Thousand-year-old monuments could make it a tourist magnet.

Fighting between the security forces and the PKK, mostly in the south east, is rising. While Diyarbakir has mostly been spared the worst of the recent violence, the civilian population and local politics are nonetheless increasingly stressed and polarised by events. The AKP is losing its appeal, and the BDP, while uncontested as the strongest political force in the city, has yet to prove its political maturity and ability to be more than a front for an increasingly violent PKK. The moderately Islamic Gülen movement is trying to offer another way, and as a negotiated settlement seems less likely, Kurdish Islamic groups are boosting their already substantial influence.

Yet, voices from Diyarbakir insist that common ground exists, as it does throughout the rest of Turkey. Crisis Group, in two previous reports in 2011 and 2012, recommended that the government announce a clear strategy to resolve the conflict, focusing in the first instance on justice and equal rights for Kurds. It suggested that the government work pro-actively with Kurdish representatives on four lines of reform: mother-language rights for Turkey's Kurds; reducing the threshold for election to the national parliament to 5 per cent from 10 per cent; a new decentralisation strategy; and stripping all discrimination from the constitution and laws. Once these steps have been taken,

it could then move to detailed talks on disarmament and demobilisation with the PKK. In short, both sides need to exercise true leadership, by eschewing violence, committing to dialogue and achieving the Kurds' legitimate aspirations through Turkey's existing legal structures, especially in the parliamentary commission working on a new constitution.

This companion report additionally offers recommendations specifically for urgent action by the government and legal leadership of the Kurdish movement in Diyarbakır to strengthen Kurds' trust in the state by working to resolve pressing local problems and to ensure the long-term development of the city and province.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **To the Turkish Government and Diyarbakır community leaders, including the Kurdish movement's legal leadership:**

#### *To establish mutual trust between Turks and Kurds*

1. **The Turkish government** should pass and implement legal reforms to allow the use of mother languages in trials, shorten pre-trial detentions and ensure that Kurdish and other suspects are taken into custody in a humane manner. It should encourage local police to continue improving engagement with the Diyarbakır community and end use of excessive force, even in response to unauthorised public meetings and demonstrations.
2. **Community and Kurdish movement leaders** should comply with procedures on public meetings and demonstrations; renounce all PKK violence; and continue civil society efforts, such as the recently established "Dialogue and Contact Group".

#### *To guarantee use of mother languages in education and public life*

3. **The Turkish government** should complete the implementation of optional Kurdish classes in the 2012-2013 academic year transparently; define a timeline for full education in mother languages wherever there is sufficient demand; continue to prepare teachers and curriculums for this transition; allow local elected officials to change relevant laws and regulations so as to restore or give Kurdish names to local places; and relax the ban on the use of Kurdish in public services.
4. **Community and Kurdish movement leaders** should acknowledge the government's positive steps in these areas, and stop boycotts of optional Kurdish classes.

#### *To ensure a fair debate and eventual consensus on decentralisation*

5. **The Turkish government** should lead a debate in Diyarbakır, as well as nationwide, about municipal governance and decentralisation.
6. **Local government leaders** should cooperate and meet with central government representatives who visit the province and clearly express their commitment to achieving Kurds' democratic demands legally.

#### *To assist Diyarbakır's economic, social and cultural development*

7. **The Turkish government** should ensure that Diyarbakır receives a fair share of public funds, particularly for education, international airport facilities, railway connections and industrial zones, equivalent to that of comparable cities elsewhere in Turkey; and proactively promote domestic tourism to this and other historic cities in the south east.
8. **Community leaders** should reach out to Turkish mainstream opinion to help overcome prejudices about the Kurdish-speaking south east through the exchange of business delegations, school trips and professional conferences.

**Istanbul/Diyarbakır/Brussels,  
30 November 2012**

## TURKEY'S KURDISH IMPASSE: THE VIEW FROM DIYARBAKIR

### I. INTRODUCTION

Turkey's south-eastern province of Diyarbakır (Amed in Kurdish), with a population of some 1.5 million people, including around 840,000 who live in the city of the same name, has been a political centre for the region's Kurds since before the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Over 30 statelets and fiefdoms in the Kurdish areas of that empire had varying degrees of autonomy until the Republic's foundation in 1923. Diyarbakır was frequently referred to by the word *paytaht* (the capital).<sup>2</sup> Since antiquity, a ring of thick black basalt walls has surrounded what is now the old city, their 5.5km length, great bastions and height a surviving testament to the province's historic, geographical and political importance.<sup>3</sup>

Today, many Kurdish civil society groups and political factions still base their decision-making bodies there. It is a key focus of the Kurdish movement – a broad structure including the banned, foreign-based Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK), the banned pan-Kurdish umbrella organisation Kurdistan Communities Union (Koma Ciwakên Kurdistanê, KCK), Turkey's legal Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), and a major Diyarbakır-based civil society platform, the Democratic Society Congress (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi, DTK). Diyarbakır is also home to representa-

tives of the Kurdish Islamic movement, including *Mustazaflar Hareketi* (until recently *Mustazaf-Der*) and the new *Azadî* initiative (see Section V.D below).<sup>4</sup>

There is no province-wide study on ethnicity, but studies of mother languages help demonstrate who is Turkish or Kurdish.<sup>5</sup> Although the majority of Kurds speak Turkish, only about 10 per cent of residents say Turkish is their mother language.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in a 2011 survey of over 3,000 Diyarbakır women, 12 per cent said their mother language was Turkish, while 76.5 per cent said it was *Kurmanjî* and around 11 per cent *Zazaki*.<sup>7</sup>

### A. BETWEEN KURDISH PROBLEM AND PKK CONFLICT

Diyarbakır has spent many decades under various forms of emergency rule.<sup>8</sup> The military played a dominant role, particularly during the emergency rule between 1978 and 2002, when the city's jail became infamous for its atrocious conditions, and there was a plague of unresolved

<sup>1</sup> For previous reporting on the Kurdish movement in Turkey and related matters, see Crisis Group Europe Reports N°219, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, 11 September 2012; and N°213 *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, 20 September 2011; and Middle East Report N°81, *Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Cooperation?*, 13 November 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The word means centre of government or capital in Ottoman usage. Known as Amid or Amedi under the ancient Assyrians, and as Diyarbekir after the Muslims took over the province in the seventh century, the city received its present name in 1937 after the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, visited on 15 November 1937. On the history of the province see Vedat Göldoğan, *Diyarbakır Tarihi* (Ankara, 2011) and Cuma Karan, *Diyar-i Bekir ve Müslümanlarca Fethi* (İstanbul, 2010), both in Turkish.

<sup>3</sup> Believed to be built 4,000 years ago, the walls were restored and extended by the Romans in the fourth century. The only gap was cut in the 1930s, when a Turkish governor blew up a 300-metre section, apparently to increase airflow into the city.

<sup>4</sup> Parties are required by law to have their headquarters in Ankara, but its Diyarbakır co-chair said the main pro-Kurdish party (Peace and Democracy Party, BDP) considers Diyarbakır its base. Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, 16 May 2012.

<sup>5</sup> State officials make up most of the Turks, but a small group is locally born. Historically Diyarbakır was multi-ethnic, but a 2005 survey in Suriçi district inside the old city walls (population 157,000), found only a handful of Chaldean, Assyrian, Yezidi and Romas as well as some 40 Armenian families, unlike the nineteenth century, when over half the district's population was non-Muslim. Nonetheless, there are still functioning Chaldean Catholic, Armenian, and Assyrian churches. A large Armenian church, *Surp Giragos*, was opened for worship in October 2011 and renovated in 2012.

<sup>6</sup> In reality it may be below 5 per cent. Crisis Group interview, Kurdish pollster, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>7</sup> The survey was mainly concentrated in the northern areas of the province. "2011 Yılı Alan Çalışması İstatistikleri" [2011 Field Research Statistics], Women's Support Centre (KAMER). Nonetheless, 87 per cent of respondents answered in Turkish, only 13 per cent in Kurdish, almost all of those in the *Kurmanjî* version.

<sup>8</sup> Martial law was instituted in the region in 1978. A State of Emergency installed in eight provinces (later increased to thirteen) in the east and south east in 1987 was lifted by the AKP on 30 November 2002.

political murders.<sup>9</sup> Ankara forcibly evacuated rural areas of the south east in 1990-2000 in an effort to cut supplies to the outlawed and armed PKK, resulting in a tripling of the city centre's population, unplanned urbanisation, severe strains on local services,<sup>10</sup> and major changes in local society, economy and cultural life.<sup>11</sup> Neighbourhoods where such internally displaced persons (IDPs) concentrate are often recruiting grounds for the PKK, which has been declared a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the U.S., the European Union (EU) and most European countries, and are often the stage for confrontations with state authorities, including stoning of police cars and violent demonstrations. Diyarbakır is also one of the PKK's main recruiting grounds.<sup>12</sup>

When the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) undertook its Democratic Opening in 2005 a period of hope began. Foreign and domestic tourists became more common, good hotels became available, and cleaner streets and parks made the city look better. Since 2009, however, pessimism has set in again: most Turks associate Diyarbakır and its residents with the war between the PKK insurgents and the army. The stigma is such that few local drivers get Diyarbakır licence plates, because the police stop such cars so often elsewhere in the country.

Diyarbakır life is still dominated by the armed forces, with fighter-bombers often roaring overhead from a major airbase that also functions as the city's small domestic airport. Army operations are frequent in the province, and the barracks and officers' clubs are prominent in the town.

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<sup>9</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit., pp. 5, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Around 90 villages and over 300 hamlets were abandoned in Diyarbakır province. The population of the city centre was 275,000 in 1990. Deniz Yüksek, "Internal Displacement in the Province of Diyarbakır: Return, Urban Issues and Implementation of Compensation Law", Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) August 2007.

<sup>11</sup> A Kurdish businesswoman from an old Diyarbakır family reminisced: "Diyarbakır was very different when I was a child 40 years ago. People dressed in modern styles; there were elegant house parties. Me and my sisters stayed outside until late at night and rode our bicycles safely. [By contrast] in the 1990s, at the peak of unresolved political murders, we used to take our children inside after 6pm. People were very scared. People are also more conservative now". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>12</sup> A U.S. official who had studied PKK casualty reports said 17 per cent of PKK recruits overall came from Diyarbakır. Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, November 2012. A breakdown of 7,869 deceased militants since 1984, out of 18,000 that PKK says have died, indicates 845, around 11 per cent, came from Diyarbakır, making it the second largest source of recruits in Turkey after Mardin province. "Kurdish Insurgency Militants (KIM) 1976-2012 v1 dataset", Güneş Murat Tezcur, academic, Loyola University, 2012.

From a Kurdish perspective, the rift with the rest of Turkey has been further widened by the crackdown on public demonstrations, the military's unapologetic bombing of civilians in what has become known as the "Uludere" or "Roboski" incident<sup>13</sup> and mass arrests of Kurdish political activists (see Section II.C below).

Diyarbakır city has been mostly spared the recent surge in violence that has affected rural parts of the province's Hani, Lice, Kulp and Silvan districts.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, since June 2011, there have been at least 27 incidents in and around it, resulting in over 44 dead, several wounded, and 21 kidnapped, including civilians, according to Crisis Group's informal count.<sup>15</sup> While clashes are usually between militants and the police or army, militants shot at a civilian vehicle that refused to stop at a PKK roadblock in Hani district on 19 September 2012, killing one civilian and wounding two. Moreover, two teachers and a student were wounded in a Molotov cocktail attack on a Diyarbakır high school on 9 October. The assailants were not identified, although national media attributed the incident to the PKK.

On 12 September, 64 pro-PKK Kurdish inmates began a hunger strike, 24 of them in Diyarbakır's two prisons. By mid-November, nearly 700 in over 60 prisons nationwide had stopped eating. Joining them were seven deputies from the Kurdish movement's Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), including Diyarbakır deputies Emine Ayna and Leyla Zana (the latter a leading independent) and Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir. Demands include allowing jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to meet his lawyers – barred since mid-2011 – and giving Kurds the right to use their mother language in court and education. On 2 November, after the governorship denied a BDP request for permission to hold a demonstration in support of the hunger strike, clashes broke out between the police and Kurdish protestors.<sup>16</sup> The police detained several, and the local

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<sup>13</sup> In December 2011, the air force mistaking 34 Kurdish villagers for PKK militants, bombed and killed them near the Uludere (Roboski in Kurdish) village on the Iraqi border as they were smuggling oil products on mules and horses. See Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> The PKK has long used terrorist methods as one of its tactics to force the government to take it seriously and become the dominant element of the Kurdish movement. For more on its offensive since mid-2011, see Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> According to an informal minimum tally of official statistics maintained by Crisis Group since 12 June 2011 parliamentary elections, at least 870 people have been killed nationwide by end-November 2012, including 298 soldiers, police and village guards, 491 PKK fighters and 89 civilians.

<sup>16</sup> A BDP representative appreciated the justice minister's constructive approach on this issue, but felt degraded by Prime Minister Erdoğan's dismissive tone. He was referring to Erdoğan's

state prosecutor began to investigate the mayor for cursing the police. Responding to BDP calls in November, Diyarbakır residents, mainly in the central Bağlar and Yenişehir districts, repeatedly staged strikes and showed solidarity with the inmates by switching lights on and off for fifteen minutes. In some instances street clashes broke out.

Diyarbakır civil society, including the bar association, the AKP's local branch and BDP, mobilised to persuade the government to compromise. On 5 November, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç said lawyers' visits to Öcalan could resume, subject to justice ministry approval, and on 13 November, the parliament started debating a criminal procedure amendment to legalise Kurdish in courts. Showing his continued grip on the Kurdish movement, Öcalan called the strike off in a message conveyed by his brother, Mehmet, who made a rare 16 November visit to him in jail. Though the hunger strike ended nationwide the next day with no fatalities, the government should fully accept Kurds' right to their language in schools. Indeed, the reasonableness of the strikers' demands highlighted the way abandoning the Democratic Opening has left government policy in a dead end, in need of developing a comprehensive reform package.

## B. A SOUNDING-BOARD FOR REFORMS

Crisis Group has outlined in two previous reports, in 2011 and 2012, the main issues fuelling the PKK conflict and urged Turkey to commit to a conflict resolution strategy dealing with the violence and the underlying Kurdish problem separately. Those reports also called on the Kurdish movement to end terrorism, abandon attempts to create a parallel state and clearly articulate and explain its goals.<sup>17</sup>

This study examines Crisis Group's previous findings in the context of Diyarbakır. It shows how Kurds' grievances, demands, hopes and fears play out on the ground in Turkey's main Kurdish-speaking city and province, a sounding-board for the country's 12-15 million Kurds. Specifically, it looks at how these fit with the four main lines of reform: the right to mother-language education and public services, fairer political representation through lowering the vote threshold to enter the national parliament; decentralisation after a full national debate; and removal of all discrimination in laws and the constitution.

The Kurdish political movement wants its demands addressed in the new constitution currently being drafted by

a multi-party parliamentary commission, which BDP has in the past boycotted.<sup>18</sup> The BDP's participation in this commission, even when there are disagreements with the AKP, is essential. But debate of these demands in Diyarbakır is stilted at best. The legal, pro-Kurdish BDP's attempt to start a signature campaign in March 2012 to convey the demands to parliament was denied by the Governor as "unconstitutional".<sup>19</sup> This prompted a Kurdish political activist to retort: "This is ridiculous! They reject our campaign, saying it is unconstitutional, but it is that very constitution that we are trying to change".<sup>20</sup>

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gan's statement in Germany on 30 October 2012 in which he said there were no widespread hunger strikes in Turkey, and those striking were putting on a show. Crisis Group telephone interview, Diyarbakır municipality official, 5 November 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group Reports, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*; and *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, both op. cit.

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<sup>18</sup> A typical formulation of these demands includes: recognition and protection of Kurdish identity; free use of Kurdish in all areas of life, including education, and making Kurdish an official language; a political status involving self-governance; and the right of organisation, including of political parties with "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" in their names. Letter to the Turkish parliament from Kurdish organisations, including several political parties, made available to Crisis Group, Diyarbakır, May 2012. Others add reducing from 10 per cent to 5 per cent the national vote share a party needs to enter parliament.

<sup>19</sup> A March 2012 letter from Diyarbakır police headquarters informed BDP's Diyarbakır office that its demand for booths to collect signatures went against the unitary nature of the Republic, was divisive, echoed terrorist organisation (PKK) propaganda and was aimed at exerting pressure on the public. Letter made available to Crisis Group, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish movement political activist, Diyarbakır, 18 May 2012.

## II. THE STRUGGLE TO CONTROL DIYARBAKIR

Turkey's highly centralised government, the traditional predominance of western Turkish officials serving in the east of the country, restrictive laws, ideological taboos and fears of Kurdish separatism have long stifled debate on local governance reform. While Kurds have risen high in the republican system – members of parliament and the Cabinet usually reflect their 15-20 per cent share of the population – in the past this generally meant accepting an ideology that specifically minimised Kurdish identity or demands.

Turkey signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1991, but put reservations on nine of its articles that would otherwise strengthen local authorities by involving them in the central decision-making process; allow them to determine their own internal structures; give them more freedom over financial resources; permit them to associate with other local governments, both domestically and internationally; and give them the right to judicial recourse if barred from exercising their powers.<sup>21</sup>

### A. CENTRAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES: COOPERATION AND RIVALRY

Turkey's 81 provinces have centrally-appointed governors and elected mayors; both are limited by ambiguous and often uncoordinated decision-making by ministers and bureaucrats in the capital. Ankara appoints provincial and district governors, police chiefs, judges, teachers, and heads of such local administrative departments as education and media supervision. Elected mayors and municipal councils have authority over water, sewage, garbage collection and local transport, but little say with regards to other core services, including health, education and major infrastructure.

Provincial Governor Mustafa Toprak, as the supreme local representative of the state, heads the government's executive branch in the province, and is responsible for state officials except those in the judiciary and military. He has mostly supervisory powers, but the municipality says it needs his approval for even minor administrative decisions like naming parks, streets and squares. Municipal council decisions have to be submitted to the governor to be put into effect, and while the governor cannot legally block them, municipal officials say the courts can do so for administrative reasons, based on the governor's input.<sup>22</sup>

Diyarbakır's municipality has been run by the BDP and its predecessor legal Kurdish movement parties since 1999.

These parties came to power in local elections with 46 per cent of the votes in 1999, 52 per cent in 2004 and 66 per cent in 2009. The BDP prides itself for, among other things, providing access to purified drinking water to 98 per cent of the city and sewage connections to 99 per cent, while carrying out urban transformation projects, assisting the needy through charity organisations and food banks and renewing the city's cabs.

Governor Toprak and Mayor Baydemir cooperate in such areas as urban transformation projects and organisation of fairs, and some locals acknowledge that recent governors have a much better approach than in the past. But the governor and mayor often also engage in blame games, for example over responsibility for frequent power cuts in the city.<sup>23</sup> Municipal officials complain about having to receive permission from the governor for "everything".<sup>24</sup> District and metropolitan mayors in the province were at loggerheads with the governor in November 2011 over the implementation of a nationwide law allowing the transfer of excess municipal employees to other institutions.<sup>25</sup>

Over 75 per cent of the metropolitan municipality's budget in Diyarbakır comes from the central government, with the governor's approval.<sup>26</sup> While the municipality provides some important public services, basic and costly provincial infrastructure like major roads, railways and airports is paid for by the central government.<sup>27</sup> The city and province remain deeply dependent on outside funding since their own revenue-generating capacity through taxes and fees is very low.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The municipality expects a solution from the governor: "The dams are here, power stations are here, but electricity is under the governorship". Crisis Group interview, Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır mayor, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012. A Diyarbakır deputy governor said networks are overwhelmed by 70 per cent illegal electricity usage in the province. Crisis Group telephone interview, Cemal Hüsni Kansız, 1 October 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, September 2012. "The governors act like municipalities. The government and governors get the final say on all of our projects. Municipalities are dependent on Ankara". Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>25</sup> "Diyarbakır'da işçi krizi", *Gazete Diyarbakır*, 21 November 2011.

<sup>26</sup> In 2011, 125.5 million Turkish Lira (\$70 million) of a 167.6 million TL (\$93 million) budget came from Ankara. The ratios were 77 and 79 per cent in the previous two years. Crisis Group email correspondence, municipal official, 7 September 2012.

<sup>27</sup> In 2012, the state set aside one billion TL (\$556 million) for Diyarbakır's highways alone. Crisis Group telephone interview, Mehmet Aslan, secretary general of Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DTSO), Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Turkey ratified the charter on 21 May 1991 but put reservations on Articles 4.6, 6.1, 7.3, 9.4, 9.6, 9.7, 10.2, 10.3 and 11.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, November 2012.



Locals' views of the governor and central state authorities are generally dismal. An August 2012 survey found that only 9 per cent of Diyarbakır residents trust the governor to contribute to a Kurdish settlement; 64 per cent said they did not trust him at all. A government executive in Diyarbakır was in turn sceptical about the Kurdish movement.<sup>29</sup> Locals' lack of confidence extends to all central government bodies: only 18 per cent said they trust the ruling AKP on the same issue (68 per cent had no trust), and only 15 per cent expressed faith in the national parliament.<sup>30</sup> Critics of the pro-Kurdish BDP say its political ideology comes at the expense of meaningful cooperation with the governor, or solving city problems like traffic, the environment and drug abuse.<sup>31</sup>

Increasing Turkish-Kurdish tensions also undermine meaningful cooperation: "Every time there is a guerrilla funeral, it affects how governmental agencies look at us. During heightened conflict, we see a difference in how they approach our project proposals", Mayor Baydemir noted.<sup>32</sup> Further, the state has blocked municipal relations with foreign entities. A €100 million loan from a German foundation for a garbage separation and reuse project fell through in October 2011 after Prime Minister Erdoğan alleged that such German foundations were sending money to the PKK through BDP municipalities.<sup>33</sup> Diyarbakır can only get small amounts of foreign credit because the central government does not guarantee its debt.<sup>34</sup>

Mayor Baydemir admits the war frustrates his own efforts, too: "We are trying to make Diyarbakır a culture and tourism centre in the Middle East. [But] when there is a [PKK]

funeral coming into town, we have to cancel any festivals or anything else we have planned". His solution is not to distance himself from the Kurdish movement, however. "The ultimate solution of the Kurdish problem is status for the Kurds", he said. That means "a federal system and regional governments where each region has its own parliament, its own administration and one representative that is in the federal parliament".<sup>35</sup>

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has tried reforms in local government since 2003.<sup>36</sup> A current proposal, dubbed a "super municipalities law", could extend the reach and power of metropolitan municipalities. Diyarbakır's pro-Kurdish BDP metropolitan municipality backs it, because it would mean, at least in theory, an increase in jurisdiction and assets.<sup>37</sup>

The Turkish government should lead a debate in Diyarbakır and nationwide about local government, including international models, inform public opinion and set out plans for strengthening elected local bodies. The goal should be eventual decentralisation of authority over education, policing and budgets. For its part, the Kurdish movement in Diyarbakır should clarify specific demands and complaints, meet and collaborate with central government representatives who visit the province, and respect Turkey's laws even as it tries to amend them by working through existing legal structures. (See also Section II.D below).

## B. GOOD COP, BAD COP

Another manifestation of Kurds' animosity towards the state has been fear of the police, who are generally perceived as more political and anti-Kurdish than the army.<sup>38</sup> In the

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<sup>29</sup> "They are a terrorist organisation. KCK [Kurdistan Communities Union, the umbrella organisation including the PKK] and DTK [Democratic Society Union, a legal civil society platform of the Kurdish movement] are being run from the same centre. They throw Molotov cocktails. They give guns to people and make them do what they say. They give bombs to children; these don't come from heaven. They should pick up rubbish. But they leave it there to be burned on the days of demonstrations". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, May 2011.

<sup>30</sup> "Kürt Sorununun Çözümünde Kişi ve Kurum Değerlendirmesi" ["Views by individuals and institutions on a solution of the Kurdish problem"], Centre for Social and Political Research (SAMER), August 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Yunus Memiş, head of Diyarbakır branch of the government employees union (Memursen), Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012; and former senior Diyarbakır police officer, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, September 2012. See also "Alman vakıflar PKK'yı fonluyor" ["German foundations fund the PKK"], *Yeni Şafak*, 2 October 2011.

<sup>34</sup> The municipality has been able to use foreign credit for sewage and drinking water projects in the past, but not since their second term in office started in 2009. Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

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<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>36</sup> An AKP law to strengthen local special provincial administrations and municipalities in many areas, from health to education, passed in parliament in 2004 but was partially vetoed by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who said it undermined the state's unity. Other parts of the law were annulled by the Constitutional Court in 2004 and 2005. Nonetheless, in 2005, AKP abolished the central village administration and transferred its assets and duties to the special provincial administrations.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012. The metropolitan municipality would take control of some assets of special provincial administrations, which currently do local public works in areas outside the municipalities' 20km radius, and would answer both to the governor and to the democratically elected provincial councils.

<sup>38</sup> All men in Turkey, Kurdish or Turkish, must do military service. "Soldiers from western Turkey can easily go out in public in Diyarbakır; the locals are good to them". "Right now, there is no discrimination against soldiers, but if things continue at this rate, I am afraid there may be". Crisis Group interviews, local officials, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

past decade, sentiment has improved somewhat.<sup>39</sup> A former senior police officer said half of Diyarbakır's 5,000 police are now Kurds.<sup>40</sup> Triggering a national debate but also repudiation by the prime minister and a criminal investigation by the interior ministry, a new chief, appointed in September 2012, took an immediately empathetic approach:

If you don't cry for a dead terrorist, you are not human. We are all responsible for the children who go up to the mountains [to join the PKK] .... We knew [in the 1990s] that each evacuated village was a threat against our future .... I know well that a security-focused approach will not solve this [Kurdish] issue .... If there is a problem in society, how are we going to solve it if we don't talk about it?<sup>41</sup>

A former senior Diyarbakır officer argued that the mentality of the force has changed.<sup>42</sup> Proud to represent a new, more progressive approach to policing, he spoke basic Kurdish with residents, attended their funerals, suggested that a solution to the Kurdish problem could only be achieved through an end to violence, with dialogue and compromise, and voiced compassion for the families of killed PKK militants:

I have given my condolences to the families of 650 deceased. I don't care if they had been in jail or not; as long as it is not a terrorist's funeral, I go. I wish we could also go to [PKK] funerals; they are our citizens, too. But there would be too much media and public backlash .... The majority of the Diyarbakır police force are like me. I tell the locals who are initially hostile towards me, "if your village was burned, it wasn't me who did

it. I am here to serve you. Work with me, and we'll fight together against those responsible".<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, the public still mostly sees the harsher face of the security forces in their aggressive crackdowns on demonstrations. Most recently, a BDP deputy suffered a broken leg during clashes with the police in Diyarbakır during an unauthorised demonstration on 14 July 2012.<sup>44</sup> BDP members claim they are constantly harassed by the authorities and point to their headquarters' broken windows: "Even if we hold just a press conference outside our door, the police break it up with high-pressure water hoses and tear gas".<sup>45</sup> Among harder line activists, there is still fear and resentment:

When we look into the eyes of policemen, there is nothing – no modicum of compassion, no affection .... I see them at demonstrations; they are not there to peacefully dispel people; they are there to kill Kurds .... Maybe there is no longer torture like there used to be. But they [still] keep us in jail. It is a slow death.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, police say most of the time people gather without getting governorship permission, or engage in actions not covered by the permits given to them, thus necessitating intervention.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>39</sup> "Our relations with the police have improved in the last three to four years; we work well with them". Crisis Group interview, Nilgün Yıldırım, civil society activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012. "The police here are now better, more educated. Ten years ago you couldn't speak with the police ... but [normalisation] is still a long way away". Crisis Group interview, local small business owner, Diyarbakır, 17 May 2012.

<sup>40</sup> "Children are surprised when the police speak Kurdish with them. They don't know that Kurds can become policemen". Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Recep Güven, Diyarbakır police chief, quoted in "Her teröriste içim ezilir" ["I grieve for every terrorist"], *Taraf*, 8 October 2012. Prime Minister Erdoğan replied that day: "We will not cry for terrorists who killed our children and died in the process. I am clear about this .... [One] needs to know [one's] place. Let the politicians handle politics". "Başbakan Erdoğan'dan Diyarbakır emniyet müdürüne mikrofonda ayar" ["Prime Minister Erdoğan fine-tunes Diyarbakır police chief on the microphone"], *Milliyet*, 9 October 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Police officers in Diyarbakır go through a week of orientation upon arrival, take training courses including public relations, and participate in public projects such as writing and acting in free theatre plays about domestic violence.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Clashes broke out between police and demonstrators demanding an end to jailed PKK head Öcalan's isolation on Imralı island; 87 people were detained. The national Human Rights Association (IHD) said the police intervention amounted to "torture" and claimed pepper gas was fired into mosques. "İnsan Hakları Derneği Gözlem Raporu" ["Human Rights Association Observation Report"], 17 July 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, May 2012. A former Diyarbakır senior police officer, however, pointed out that the police interfere in press conferences and other public events because the organisers intentionally do not obtain the necessary permission from the governor, "so that when the police interfere, they will be the victim. And it's not like the police charge on them immediately. What the news doesn't show is that usually there is about an hour of negotiations between the police and demonstrators. At the end of this, only the hardliners remain and engage in clashes with the police". Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Crisis Group interview, daughter of arrested KCK suspect, Diyarbakır, September 2012. "Us Kurds, we try to solve things among ourselves; we don't trust the police". Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>47</sup> According to a former senior police officer, 2,000 people attacked police vehicles and stoned the main court building during a 2009 demonstration against the "KCK operations"; the next time a permit was requested and denied. Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

To increase Kurds' trust in the Turkish state, the government should further encourage the more empathetic approach of the local police, train them in community policing and punish instances of excessive force used to stop public gatherings. For their part, the Kurdish movement and Diyarbakır community leaders should comply with all laws and procedures on public meetings and demonstrations.

### C. THE HEAVY HAND OF THE LAW

The greatest blow to Kurdish citizens' trust in the state has been the countrywide arrests over the past three and a half years of several thousand Kurdish politicians, officials and activists, mainly from the BDP, in operations against the PKK-linked Kurdistan Communities Union (Koma Civa-kên Kurdistanê, KCK). Some were later released or sentenced, but most remain in preventive detention, charged with membership of or aiding a terrorist organisation, but not with committing a violent act.<sup>48</sup> Even moderate Kurds see these "KCK operations", as they are known, as the government's attempt to eliminate an entire political movement.<sup>49</sup> The Diyarbakır governor, however, calls the KCK "a criminal network using violence" that must be "prosecuted using the law".<sup>50</sup>

Detentions began in Diyarbakır in April 2009, and BDP says that more than 1,000 have been arrested in the province.<sup>51</sup> The co-chair of the party's local branch was detained for four days on accusations of leading a terrorist organisation and is still a suspect.<sup>52</sup> Two local mayors, Fırat Anlı (Yenişehir district) and Zülküf Karatekin (Kayapınar district), are in jail, along with members of the city council,

including its president.<sup>53</sup> Mayor Baydemir is also a suspect in the state's case against the KCK, has not been allowed to leave the country since 13 January 2010 and protests that constant legal harassment prevents his party from running the city effectively:

I spend most of my time preparing defences for inspectors and attending court hearings. We constantly feel pressured by the judiciary and interior ministry. We are operating at a disadvantage compared to local governments in western Turkey.<sup>54</sup>

Many see the judiciary and prosecutors as politically biased and do not trust them.<sup>55</sup> A KCK suspect's relative said judges treat their lawyers almost like suspects.<sup>56</sup> Local officials call the KCK indictments revenge for Kurds' success in the 2009 local elections, a "legal comedy", or "an attack on local governments".<sup>57</sup>

The arrests have crippled BDP's ability to generate political responses and reduce tensions with the state.<sup>58</sup> The provincial BDP co-chair said constant legal threats stop the party from maintaining a normal membership roster.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Charges are often based on statements implying support for one or more of the goals of the KCK and its Turkish Assembly offshoot (KCK/Türkiye Meclisi, KCK/TM). For more on the KCK, see Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mustafa Toprak, Diyarbakır governor, May 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Many top-level activists at the Kurdish movement's civil society platform Democratic Society Congress (DTK) have been charged with membership in or aiding a terrorist organisation, or with carrying out propaganda for it. In January 2012, more than half of the delegates were arrested under "KCK operations", including 32 from the 101-person permanent council. Those in jail lose their delegate status because they cannot attend meetings. Activists also allege that constant police harassment – including phone and vehicle surveillance – amounts to "psychological pressure". "It would be better if they just arrested me!", one said. Crisis Group interviews, Kurdish movement political activists, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır mayor, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Many locals instead take advantage of a parallel, informal judicial system, now referred to as "alternative law" but with its roots in social tradition. Seeking retribution by violent action or in blood feuds is more common in the east and south east than elsewhere in Turkey. To resolve some disputes, ad-hoc local assemblies choose three arbitrators, and whose decision the parties in dispute accept to implement. Sait Şanlı, a butcher from Diyarbakır's Lice district who was caught in a blood feud at the age of five, initiated a voluntary Peace Committee and arbitrated hundreds of such family feuds, kidnappings and property disputes for eight years, before his death at 67 in 2009. Disputes may also come to Mayor Osman Baydemir for arbitration. Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>56</sup> The daughter of a KCK suspect said evidence against some was simply that PKK propaganda could be heard playing in the background of a phonetap. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>57</sup> The now defunct pro-Kurdish DTP increased the number of its municipalities from 54 to 99 in the 29 March 2009 local elections. "The AKP government tried to take revenge for its electoral failures". "Background, Aftermath and Evaluation of the 12th June 2011 General Elections", Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, 5 October 2011, made available to Crisis Group.

<sup>58</sup> "Old cadres were taken in for KCK trials. These were the responsible, sensible ones. The new BDP cadres are inexperienced; they can't do much in terms of preventing the escalation of violence". Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>59</sup> BDP signed up 10,000 members in Diyarbakır in seven months, but stopped because memberships are annulled after each party closure. A member can donate up to 15,000 TL (around \$8,300).

The BDP feels neglected, she added, accusing fellow politicians of turning a blind eye:

When my apartment was raided and searched eight months ago during a police operation [against KCK], my neighbours from AKP and CHP [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party] acted like nothing happened. They sent their kids off to school with a kiss in the morning as if everything was normal. They did not talk to me. They are from this region, too, so they should understand our suffering.<sup>60</sup>

A March 2012 survey in Diyarbakır found that 68 per cent thought the KCK operations had increased pessimism about a solution to the Kurdish problem.<sup>61</sup> The daughter of a suspect held in pre-trial detention since April 2009 recalled the stress induced when her father was taken in a 4:30am raid along with 42 others. She said he was active in BDP but not charged with an act of violence and that though there have been more than twenty hearings, his cross-examination has not begun, since the court is still reading the indictment's hundreds of pages aloud. Refusal to allow suspects to testify in Kurdish adds to the delays. The family, which thinks he may have to remain in jail another two years until the trial ends, suffers emotionally, financially and physically. The disheartened and bitter daughter commented:

We didn't see him for a month after he was arrested. We couldn't get his retirement salary from the state for six months. My mother has high blood pressure and her health deteriorated. My sister had to leave university because of psychological problems caused by the trauma. When AKP started a Kurdish [Democratic] opening in 2005, we thought things would change, that we wouldn't be arrested or beaten any more. ... But now I think there is a deliberate policy of destroying and eliminating the Kurds.<sup>62</sup>

To tackle such resentment toward the state, the government needs to undertake reforms urgently to end middle-of-the-night raids and lengthy pre-trial detentions, and allow suspects to use Kurdish in court.

The Diyarbakır branch of Turkey's Human Rights Association (IHD) also feels targeted. Its deputy president has been arrested and its premises raided twice since 2009. Its head asserted that oppression is worse than in the 1990s, even though there is nothing like the death squad killings that then targeted his organisation.<sup>63</sup> A human rights lawyer said that victims shy from coming to the IHD because private information may be compromised in raids, and she herself has reservations about working there.<sup>64</sup>

#### D. "DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY" AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Meeting in Diyarbakır on 14 July 2011, the Kurdish movement's civil society platform, the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), declared "democratic autonomy" for Kurds in the south east.<sup>65</sup> However, most Kurds do not know what this means.<sup>66</sup> The original formulation by PKK leader Öcalan described a confederal future for all the region's Kurds that "will start a new phase in Kurds' relations with states not only in Turkey but also Iran, Syria, and

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<sup>63</sup> "During the KCK operations in 2009 our deputy president Muammer Erbey was detained, our premises were raided, eleven computers and all our documents were taken. We got them back six months later, but police had copied all information, including identities of people coming to us and their applications, which should have remained confidential. We had another raid on 30 January 2012. They took twelve computers. We got them back four months later, and only because a colleague went to the courthouse every day for four months .... Our association was shut down for a total of three years between 1997 and 2002 but even then there were no raids. Since 2002, they allow us to work on paper, but they have been raiding our premises and taking all our information. They want to make us useless". Crisis Group interview, Raci Bilici, head of Human Rights Association (IHD) Diyarbakır branch, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

<sup>64</sup> "I am worried I will be sent to prison for working here. But someone has to defend these people's human rights". Crisis Group interview, Human Rights Association (IHD) lawyer, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Founded in 2007, DTK is a platform of some 700 civil society organisations, as well as individuals, businessmen and farmers, mostly active in Kurdish-speaking areas. A permanent council of 101 is elected by 850 delegates in a General Assembly, and there is a fifteen-person coordination board with two chairs and nine permanent commissions. General Assembly meetings are every six months, often in BDP premises. Smaller Kurdish parties, such as HAK-PAR and KADEP, are not represented in it.

<sup>66</sup> "It is not clear where democratic autonomy begins and where it ends". Crisis Group interview, Ümit Fırat, Kurdish intellectual, İstanbul, May 2012. "Among all of PKK's demands, democratic autonomy is the one that least resonates with the Kurdish population". Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012. Öcalan first mentioned it in 2007; in 2010, the PKK adopted it, and what is now the BDP included it in its party program.

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"If we tried, we could get 100,000 or 150,000 members in a month". Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012. Several Kurdish movement parties (notably HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, and DTP) have been closed in Turkey.

<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>61</sup> "Mart Ayı Gündem Anketi" ["March Agenda Survey"], SAMER, Diyarbakır, 6-7 March 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Crisis Group interview, daughter of arrested KCK suspect, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

Iraq".<sup>67</sup> But confederalism, viewed with scepticism by many experts, is a non-starter for Turkey and the other states.<sup>68</sup> DTK activists admit the model is only at a conceptual stage and needs to be more empirically grounded.<sup>69</sup>

The model has more gaps than specific policy elements.<sup>70</sup> For instance, it is silent on specific powers to be assigned to the confederal "Democratic Autonomous Free Kurdistan". Assemblies at different levels of local administration would gather in a regional parliament. The confederal entity would also elect representatives to a joint parliament with Turkey. Kurdish would have official status alongside Turkish, and the entity would have its own self-defence mechanism. However, despite these demands for a status that looks close to independence, the Kurdish movement denies that it wants to redraw boundaries or create a new state.<sup>71</sup>

The activists' view of an economy under "democratic autonomy" rules out capitalism, industrialism and monopolies, but Turkey's Kurdish business circles find the proposals "romantic" and "naïve".<sup>72</sup> It is unclear how the model's "small state, big society" principle can at the same time provide free, equal and easy access to health care and free "democratic academies" to answer education needs. The

thorny issue of taxation is to be negotiated with the Turkish state and any outcome put to a referendum. The state would be made responsible for transferring funds to the region to overcome national inequalities.

The Kurdish movement's vagueness about "democratic autonomy" provokes fears in mainstream Turkey that it is code for an independent Kurdistan. Most Kurds appear to want much more than just powerful municipalities, but not a separate state.<sup>73</sup> Their movement should clarify its goals beyond any doubt, while the government should ensure that debate on all possible arrangements – including independence – is decriminalised.

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<sup>67</sup> "Demokratik Özerklik Çalıştayı Sunumları" ["Presentations from the Democratic Autonomy Workshop"], DTK, Diyarbakır, 12-13 May 2012.

<sup>68</sup> "A federation like this would substantially limit the sovereignty of the states concerned and would therefore have no chance of being implemented". Protection of the Constitution Report 2010, German interior ministry, Berlin, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> "We try not to sound like old Marxists but realise that our ideas are a bit [unrealistic]". Crisis Group interview, member of DTK's economic committee, May 2012, Diyarbakır. "It is not a parallel state. It is a mechanism that will exert pressure on decision-makers". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish businessman and political activist involved in DTK, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Activists define democratic autonomy in nine categories that match the DTK's nine commissions, namely: politics, society, diplomacy, economy, culture, ecology, law, self-defence and women. For example, democratic autonomy foresees women's assemblies, communes, cooperatives, congresses, conferences, "free women academies" and "gender equality boards". "Demokratik Özerklik Çalıştayı Sunumları", op. cit. They say they are "working to fill in the blanks" in each area. Crisis Group interview, Kurdish movement political activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>71</sup> "This would not be an armed structure like the KCK or PKK, but [refers to] people ensuring their own safety", *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> The activists who met in Diyarbakır were lukewarm toward technology, frowned on consumerism, disliked private property, opposed hydro-electric dams and ruled out interest rates and stock markets. They wanted to encourage communes and cooperatives and prioritised environmental concerns. *Ibid.* "DTK/BDP has a romantic, left-wing tendency. This shows they don't read the region. They mean well, but they are not grounded in reality". Crisis Group interview, Mehmet Aslan, secretary general, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

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<sup>73</sup> In an August 2012 survey, 48 per cent of respondents wanted democratic autonomy, 18 per cent independence; only 9 per cent said increased powers for local government would answer their needs for legal status. "Kürt Sorununun Çözümünde Kişi ve Kurum Değerlendirmesi" ["Views from Individuals and Institutions on a Solution to the Kurdish Problem"], SAMER, August 2012. An earlier survey in Diyarbakır had similarly found that 41 per cent backed democratic autonomy; 18 per cent independence; 7 per cent increased local government powers; and 5 per cent federation. "Mart Ayı Gündem Anketi" ["March Agenda Survey"], SAMER, 6-7 March 2012. A survey in the wider east and south east found that 41 per cent wanted democratic autonomy; 19 per cent independence; and about 12 per cent a federal administration; 9 per cent said they would be happy with increased powers for local municipalities. "Toplumsal Sorunlar ve Yeni Anayasa: Algı, Beklenti ve Talepler Ön Rapor" ["Social Problems and the New Constitution: Preliminary Report on Perceptions, Expectations and Demands"], SAMER, February and March 2012, Diyarbakır. A survey by an Istanbul research organisation in August 2012 found that only 15 per cent of Kurds would be satisfied with strengthening municipalities. "Terörle Mücadelede Toplumsal Algılar" ["Public Perceptions in the Fight Against Terror"], Bilgesam, 12 September 2012. According to a Turkish academic and PKK expert, a larger percentage of Kurds than the polls reveal favour independence, but most do not want to make the economic sacrifices that an independent state would require. Crisis Group interview, Güneş Murat Tezcur, Loyola University, Istanbul, November 2012.

### III. KURDISH TRIES TO FIND ITS VOICE

In Diyarbakır, integrating Kurdish into daily and official life is the strongest demand across the political spectrum. Many use Turkey's main Kurdish languages, Kurmanjî and Zazaki, at home and in public, but the psychological effects of the 1920s-1990s bans on writing, singing or speaking in Kurdish linger. There are still very few Kurdish shop signs, and one rarely hears songs in Kurdish. When the state finally set up a Kurdish TV station in 2009, the language turned out to have been suppressed for so long that a Kurdish news producer complained only one in twenty Diyarbakır interviewees spoke enough to sound good on air.<sup>74</sup> Now there are two different newscasts to address differences between Kurmanjî and Zazaki, the former spoken by perhaps two thirds of Turkey's Kurds.<sup>75</sup> Development of an academic, common Kurdish that can be formally taught is only now being discussed.

#### A. SHIFTING THE DEAD WEIGHT OF LONG OFFICIAL BANS

Bans on the public use of Kurdish have stifled the language since the "East Rehabilitation Plan" of 1925. Law 2932, adopted in 1983 by the military junta that came to power in the 1980 coup, made illegal all expression of thought in languages other than "the primary languages of the states recognised by Turkey", which left out Kurdish. It was revoked in 1991 by then-President Turgut Özal. The phrase "language prohibited by law" remained in Articles 26 and 28 of the constitution until AKP removed them in 2002 as part of a European Union (EU) harmonisation package.

However, Article 3, paragraph 2 of the constitution still states that Turkish is the only official language. Constitutional provisions and other laws limit Kurdish use in government or municipal offices, courts or schools.<sup>76</sup> The need

for official registration discourages Kurdish shop signs or its usage in business life. Municipalities have put up some Kurdish street signs and park names in and around Diyarbakır, but these cause controversy, with the governor saying that until the law changes, "place names are the business of the interior ministry".<sup>77</sup> The state used to reject Kurdish names for children, but now they are allowed as long as they do not include letters not in the Turkish alphabet (X, Q, W, Î, Ê, and Û).

The ban on Kurdish in local administration sometimes undermines access to equal services.<sup>78</sup> When in 2004, the Mediterranean coast municipality of Alanya realised that the many expatriates living there could not read basic communications, they started printing water bills in English and German. When Diyarbakır's Suriçi Municipality, however, adopted a similar multi-lingual approach to its services in 2007, a court case was started against district Mayor Abdullah Demirbaş, and the municipal council was dissolved. A municipal worker said he uses Kurdish when citizens come into his office, but only Turkish in official communications.<sup>79</sup>

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ing songs in four languages. Its provincial head said he regularly gives speeches in Kurdish, and AKP ministers who came for the inauguration ceremony of Silvan Dam in May 2012 greeted the public in Kurdish. Crisis Group interview, Halit Advan, head of AKP Diyarbakır branch, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012. In a 2009 report, IHD said Constitutional Articles 3, 4 and 14 have also been used to bring lawsuits against mayors. "Kürtçe'nin Kamusal Alanda Kullanılması Önündeki Yasal Engellere İlişkin Özel Rapor" ["Special Report on Legal Obstacles to the Use of Kurdish in the Public Sphere"], IHD Diyarbakır branch, 20 May 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mustafa Toprak, Diyarbakır governor, Diyarbakır, May 2011. A case was opened against Suriçi Mayor Abdullah Demirbaş for hanging a Kurdish banner celebrating human rights week in his district in 2006. In 2007, he was removed from duty for naming three streets in his district after Kurdish, Armenian and Assyrian writers. Crisis Group interview, Abdullah Demirbaş, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012. In July 2012, the Diyarbakır state court banned names of nineteen parks in Diyarbakır as well as the proposed new name of the Kayapınar Youth and Culture Centre because they used Kurdish letters not in the Turkish alphabet. The decision cited a 31 July 2006 law on addresses and numbers, as well as a 23 May 2011 publication by the state's Turkish Language Board specifying which words can be considered Turkish. "But Show TV [a mainstream Turkish TV channel] also has the letter 'w' and is a foreign word. No one is banning them". Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>78</sup> "Some women who come to our centre because of domestic violence speak very little Turkish. It's difficult for them to get assistance from the police or the justice system". Crisis Group interview, Nilgün Yıldırım, civil society activist, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012. Investigations were opened against Suriçi Mayor Demirbaş in 2007

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<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Diyarbakır's primary Kurmanjî dialect is also "Turkified" and difficult for locals on the eastern rim of Turkey's Kurmanjî-speaking areas to understand. Crisis Group interviews, Nebahat Akkoç, Kurdish civil society activist, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012; Ercan Akkar, editor-in-chief of the local *Güneydoğu Ekspres* newspaper, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>76</sup> These include the penal code's Article 222 on the Turkish alphabet and Article 257 on public officials' malpractice; Article 42 of the 1982 Constitution which says "no language other than Turkish can be taught as a mother language to Turkish citizens in education institutions"; and Law 805, requiring the use of Turkish in economic enterprises. Article 81/c of Law 2820 on political parties bans parties from using any language other than Turkish, but this has been relaxed in practice after Article 58 of Law 2839 on elections was amended in April 2010 to allow Kurdish during elections. AKP conducted its propaganda in Diyarbakır in Kurmanjî, Zazaki, Arabic and Turkish, includ-

While Turkish nationalists fear that allowing the free use of Kurdish in official paperwork would advance separatist sentiments, lifting restrictions sometimes has the opposite effect. For instance, a well-known Kurdish musician said her album sales dropped after the state lifted the ban on Kurdish music.<sup>80</sup> Not only Kurdish movement representatives, but also other key actors in Kurdish-speaking areas – the ruling AKP, the former Mustazaf-Der Islamist group and, to a degree, the moderate Islamic Gülen movement – agree on the need to allow Kurdish in all areas of life. The government should relax the ban on its use in public services and allow local elected officials to restore or give Kurdish names for local places, changing relevant laws and regulations where necessary.

## B. KURDISH MEDIA PARADOXES

Kurdish does not dominate Diyarbakır media, even after the lifting of the ban on Kurdish-language publications. Continuing distrust of state policies, combined with a lack of experience with written Kurdish, have prevented it from becoming the main language of publication in the province.<sup>81</sup> Of the eight major, registered local papers, none are solely in Kurdish, and only a couple have Kurdish columns.<sup>82</sup> Local newspapers' daily circulation is estimated at a meagre 6,000, including free copies.<sup>83</sup> Ironically, some of the most radical papers, like *Demokratik Vatan*, are in Turkish, printed in Istanbul. Despite strict Turkish laws against PKK propaganda, these often carry long, ideological interviews with PKK leaders, and are mostly found on the desks of Kurdish movement sympathisers or waiting rooms of their offices, not on newsstands. Other national pro-Kurdish movement papers like *Özgür Gündem* in Turkish and *Azadiya Welat* in Kurdish can be found more easily in Diyarbakır.

There are five private local TV channels and three private ones broadcasting via satellite, as well as seven local radio

channels.<sup>84</sup> At least one local channel, pro-Kurdish movement Gün TV, does regular Kurdish broadcasting and complains about harassment.<sup>85</sup> The government's 24-hour Kurdish channel, TRT6, began broadcasting in January 2009 and has studios in the government channel's renovated building in Diyarbakır. Programs are mainly in Kurmanjî but include some in Zazaki and Sorani.<sup>86</sup> Kurds often say the programming is poor, outdated and boring. It includes no Kurdish education shows for children, because these are still banned. The channel has overcome the paranoia that a Kurdish-language channel would split the country, but its personnel say they are ostracised by the pro-Kurdish movement because they work for state salaries.<sup>87</sup>

The Kurdish movement has its own Roj TV, known since March 2012 as Nuçe TV, which broadcasts in Kurdish and Turkish from Denmark with studios in Brussels and has a wide audience in Diyarbakır.<sup>88</sup> But its focus on insurgency propaganda provokes mixed feelings; a Kurdish human rights activist said he does not let his children watch, be-

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<sup>84</sup> Local channels are Gün TV (and radio), Dicle TV, Can TV (and radio), 21 (and radio) and Söz TV. Satellite broadcasters are Amed TV (and radio) and Uzay TV, while pro-Hizbullah Çağrı TV and radio station also broadcast over the internet. Fetullah Gülen's Dünya TV, based in Gaziantep, broadcasts 24 hours in Kurdish via satellite and has some audience in Diyarbakır. Crisis Group interviews, Diyarbakır, May-September 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Some 60 to 70 per cent of programs are in Kurdish, mostly Kurmanjî, with commercials in Turkish. Some local companies advertise in Kurdish. Gün TV personnel say police raided their premises in April 2009, took all their archives and hard drives, and returned them blank. Several people associated with them, including reporters and legal council, were arrested in KCK operations during the past year. "We are an opposition channel .... Our news manager had asked the crew to cover a demonstration, and this is used as evidence against him in the indictment". Crisis Group interview, Gün TV manager, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Sorani is a Kurdish dialect that predominates in Iraqi Kurdistan.

<sup>87</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Diyarbakır, May-September 2012. "There is a lot of religious programming, and the programs are dubbed into poor Kurdish, with Turkish thrown in". Crisis Group interview, U.S. researcher on Kurdish, Istanbul, 30 May 2012. "We invite BDP members to talk to us. One of them told us 'I don't have anything against you personally, but we have taken a decision as a group to boycott your programs'. The public won't let us interview them on the street". Crisis Group interview, TRT6 journalist, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>88</sup> A Copenhagen city court ruled that Roj TV and its parent company, Mesopotamia Broadcast A/S, had connections to the outlawed PKK and fined them to 5.2 million Danish Kroner (around €700,000) on 10 January 2012. Eutelstat removed the channel from its signal. On 26 September 2012, Denmark's Radio and Television Board suspended the channel's licence for two months for non-compliance with court orders to submit recordings.

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for also hanging "welcome" banners in Kurdish, Assyrian, and English at the entrance of the city, and for demanding that municipality personnel speak Kurdish, Armenian or Assyrian (alongside Turkish). Crisis Group email correspondence, Abdullah Demirbaş, 13 November 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>81</sup> A local paper's editor was hesitant about publication in Kurdish. "We are talking about starting a quarter page in Kurdish. [But] there is a trust issue [towards the state]. I often auto-censor. Everything gets politicised here, even sports news". Crisis Group interview, Ercan Akkar, editor-in-chief, *Güneydoğu Ekspres*, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>82</sup> The registered Diyarbakır papers are *Olay*, *Güneydoğu Ekspres*, *Öz Diyarbakır*, *Yeni Gün*, *Diyarbakır Söz*, *Yeni Yurt*, *Diyarbakır Haber* and *Mücadele*.

<sup>83</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ercan Akkar, editor-in-chief, *Güneydoğu Ekspres*, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

cause it “disturbs their psychology”.<sup>89</sup> Most Kurds say they do not trust or watch Turkey’s mainstream channels, even though national news channels like NTV or Haber-türk are the ones most often playing in local restaurants. The public resents Turkish media not least for the simplistic way it portrays Diyarbakır.<sup>90</sup>

### C. RE-INVENTING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In a March 2012 survey carried out in the predominantly Kurdish-speaking east and south east, a majority supported some kind of mother-language instruction: 35 per cent wanted education in their mother tongue, with other languages to be offered as electives; an additional 21 per cent favoured bilingual education in Turkish and Kurdish.<sup>91</sup> Another 42.5 per cent wanted Turkish to remain the main language in education, with one third of this group saying Kurdish should be an elective. A Diyarbakır survey found that an overwhelming 83 per cent of respondents thought Kurdish should be an official language alongside Turkish.<sup>92</sup>

However, language is only one of many educational shortcomings in Diyarbakır, as in the rest of the south east. A December 2010 survey found over 17 per cent in the province illiterate, compared to 8 per cent nationwide; a separate 2008 study found the literacy rate was 70 per cent, compared to a nationwide 88 per cent, and that the rate fell to 56 per cent among Diyarbakır women compared to a nationwide 81 per cent. In 2008, 26 per cent of youth between the ages of five and nineteen had no access to education. The western province of Kocaeli, with around the same population as Diyarbakır, received three times more public investment in education between 2002 and 2007.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012. Many say Roj TV is the favourite of Diyarbakır Kurds, mainly because it updates issues not sufficiently covered by national media, including the fighting and developments regarding court cases against Kurdish movement figures. A resident explained: “My uncle is in [the PKK]. A couple of years ago, Turkish media reported that he was killed in an operation. Within hours, Roj TV ran a story including a statement from him, saying he was well”. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>90</sup> “Whenever they are giving news about Diyarbakır, even when there is no violence here, they show as a background [the rundown] Fiskaya neighbourhood. As if that is all Diyarbakır is about”. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır resident, May 2012.

<sup>91</sup> “Toplumsal Sorunlar ve Yeni Anayasa: Algı, Beklenti ve Talepler Ön Rapor”, SAMER, op. cit.

<sup>92</sup> “Mart 2012 Gündem Araştırması” [“March 2012 Agenda Survey”], SAMER.

<sup>93</sup> Kocaeli is one of Turkey’s major industrial (and tax-paying) centres. “Kürt Meselesini Yeniden Düşünmek” [“Rethinking the Kurdish Issue”], Konda research company, December 2010, and “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Sosyo-Ekonomik Sorun-

Because there are not enough schools and teachers, there are over 50 students on average per classroom.<sup>94</sup> The province uses a “two-shift” system, meaning one group of students comes in during the morning and a second group in the afternoon, so that half of all schoolchildren are out of school half the day.<sup>95</sup> Around 1,500 new classrooms are being built, but a local union chief said that even doubling the number would not be enough to switch to a one-shift system.<sup>96</sup> Diyarbakır needs 2,673 additional teachers, according to the education ministry.<sup>97</sup> Private schools fill some gaps, but are expensive and few. The government should ensure that Diyarbakır has fair access to state investment in education and consistently inform local leaders and public opinion about its plans to remedy current shortcomings.

Turkey’s Kurds and the Kurdish political movement are unwavering on their demand for education in their mother language. Other influential actors in the region, namely the ruling AKP, the Mustazaf-Der Islamist group and Fetullah Gülen’s Hizmet movement, agree on this, although the latter’s focus has been on elective courses.<sup>98</sup> Local experts

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lar ve Çözüm Önerileri” [“Developmental Differences in East and South-east Anatolia and Recommendations for a Solution”], Union of South-east Anatolia Municipalities, November 2008, p. 56.

<sup>94</sup> There are around 460,000 students from kindergarten to high school, 17,000 teachers, and a little over 9,200 classrooms in Diyarbakır. According to a Turkish primary school teacher, until recently the state assigned new teachers every two years. Now they stay for four years, which means they can be more committed to their schools and students. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, May 2012. “It used to be 100 students per class ten years ago; now it’s 50. Relatively speaking, it is getting better”. Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>95</sup> “These children may join gangs and get into trouble if they are on the streets for half the day. As the state, we need to embrace them, build more libraries, gyms and parks for the youth. These children have not lived through the region’s traumas. We can win them over”. Crisis Group interview, former senior Diyarbakır police officer, Istanbul, September 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Crisis Group interview, Yunus Memiş, head of Diyarbakır branch, government employees union (Memursen), Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>97</sup> “2010-2014 Stratejik Plan” [“2010-2014 Strategic Plan”], available on diyarbakır.meb.gov.tr.

<sup>98</sup> “Mother language should be used in all areas of life – judiciary, education, health”. Crisis Group interview, Halit Advan, head of AKP Diyarbakır branch, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012. “Mother language should be used in education, and Kurdish should be the second official language. All the rights Turks have should be extended to Kurds. That is how you end the Kurdish problem and end the PKK”. Crisis Group interview, Hüseyin Yılmaz, head of the Islamist former Mustazaf-Der group, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012. “Why wasn’t the opportunity given to teach Kurdish in our schools? Turkish is given as an elective course in our schools abroad, even in the U.S. This is what be-



underline the need for a model based on social and regional characteristics, as well as a legal and constitutional guarantee of the right to education in mother languages.<sup>99</sup> A pro-Kurdish movement official blamed central government policies for Diyarbakır's low success rates in national exams: "We Kurds surely can't have such low IQ as a group! The government has to ask itself what is wrong. We say we want to be in charge of our own education. They say: 'But you can't teach in Kurdish'. Well, let us decide that!"<sup>100</sup>

Not being able to use their mother language in early education holds students back.<sup>101</sup> Most teachers are from the region, many from Diyarbakır. In practice, they already use Kurdish in classrooms if they can, even though it is officially forbidden.<sup>102</sup> But not all teachers assigned to public schools in the area speak Kurdish. A Turkish teacher remembered with grief trying to teach Zazaki-speaking students:

The kids did not understand me, and I did not understand them .... I would write "door" in Turkish and hang it on the door. The first year of education is wasted. There is no time set aside for the kids to learn Turkish. They have to learn a new language and catch up with their peers elsewhere in Turkey .... I am [ashamed of] having taken part in this system. But [unlike others] I did not use violence towards kids who could not speak Turkish.<sup>103</sup>

The region's abysmal performance in education has many causes. A Turkish teacher, married to a local Kurmanjî-speaker and working in Diyarbakır, said other problems were that "people are unemployed, teachers are unmotivated, parents are not involved in their kids' education,

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ing a great state means". Fethullah Gülen's statement on his website, [www.tr.fgulen.com](http://www.tr.fgulen.com), 25 October 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>101</sup> "The young student feels more comfortable in the classroom if the teacher speaks some Kurdish. Otherwise he or she is pushed to silence". Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012. See also Vahap Coşkun, Şerif Derince and Nesrin Uçarlar, "Scar of Tongue", Diyarbakır Institute of Social and Political Studies (DISA) March 2011.

<sup>102</sup> "When the kid doesn't understand what I am saying, I have to explain it in Kurdish; what else can I do?", Crisis Group interview, Turkish primary school teacher working in Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nebahat Akkoç, Kurdish civil society activist, 4 September 2012. A Kurdish high school teacher in Diyarbakır's Hani district agreed that lack of bilingual education contributes to lacklustre student performance, and added that not a single child from his school got into university in 2011. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

and there are many issues inside the families like child brides and blood feuds".<sup>104</sup>

In a surprising but positive move, Prime Minister Erdoğan in June 2012 announced that Kurdish would be taught as an optional course in public schools if enough students requested it.<sup>105</sup> In September 2012, it was offered to fifth grade students,<sup>106</sup> and the education ministry announced that around 21,000 fifth grade students nationwide – of over 1.25 million – had signed up for the "Living Languages and Dialects" course, which includes Kurdish and Circassian. But out of 3,500 students starting fifth grade in Diyarbakır, only 132 chose to study Kurdish.<sup>107</sup> A Kurmanjî dictionary for primary students will soon be published.

A Kurdish expert and academic involved in this process said several factors contributed to the low sign-up rate. The last-minute introduction of the elective without having teachers or books in place led parents to doubt its effectiveness. The Kurdish movement called for a boycott, claiming the courses were a government tactic to delay full Kurdish-language education. Kurds said they were not satisfied with the elective option, since they consider full mother-language education a basic right.<sup>108</sup>

Kurdish kids start school in Turkish, which is not their mother language. Even though they are not Turkish, they have to recite the pledge every morning, which starts with "I am a Turk". Prime Minister Erdoğan told [German Chancellor] Merkel [during a visit to Germa-

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<sup>104</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>105</sup> AKP amended Law 2923 on teaching foreign languages in 2002 as part of the EU harmonisation package, so as to allow private instruction in Kurdish.

<sup>106</sup> In 2013 it will be offered to sixth graders, in 2014 to seventh graders and to eighth graders. This corresponds to the middle "4" in Turkey's new "4+4+4" (years) education system. It is not certain when the Kurdish classes will be included in the first or last of the four-year tranches. Crisis Group telephone interview, Kadri Yıldırım, head of Mardin Artuklu University's Living Languages Department, 27 September 2012.

<sup>107</sup> "Diyarbakır'da Kürtçe dersine ilgi az" ["Low interest in Kurdish classes in Diyarbakır"], *Doğan Haber Ajansı*, 17 September 2012.

<sup>108</sup> "We prepared two books that will be used in Kurdish courses, in Kurmanjî and Zazaki, in the span of two months from July to the end of August, working day and night. They have not been printed yet. The ministry has also cut the number of trainee teachers from 500 to 250". Crisis Group telephone interview, Kadri Yıldırım, head of Mardin Artuklu University's Living Languages Department, 3 October 2012. "I should be able to have my kid educated in my mother language at a state school with the taxes that I pay!", Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012. "The government is trying to stretch out the process so that the language will die by itself". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish movement political activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

ny in October 2010] that assimilation is a “crime against humanity”. But no one tells him he is guilty of assimilation, too.<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, AKP defends its policies and asks for time to see them through:

We know that we need to integrate mother-language into educational life .... But we can't do this without laying down the groundwork. We don't have enough [Kurdish language] teachers. We have projects underway [to train them] .... We are building the foundations first. We ask [the Kurds] to allow us to finish the job.<sup>110</sup>

Kurdish intellectuals and activists have already voiced many proposals and ideas.<sup>111</sup> A Kurdish specialist agreed that even if the decision were announced today to start education in mother languages, with full financial and psychological backing from the government, five years would be needed to put the foundation in place.<sup>112</sup> A Kurdish academic suggested:

We can start with Turkish and then switch to a bilingual system, or vice versa. We can discuss different methods .... It is embarrassing to discuss whether or not to give people the right to education in their mother language. Let us recognise this right first, and then we'll talk about how to implement it.<sup>113</sup>

## IV. PRIME LOCATION, ECONOMIC BLIGHT

Diyarbakır residents' strong sense of being held back economically by Turkish governments over the years adds to their distrust and resentment toward the state. The city was a major economic and administrative centre from ancient times until the early twentieth century advent of the Republic of Turkey. But it has suffered a precipitous decline due to the 28 years of PKK conflict and lack of investment but also, Kurds say, because of discrimination against them and their biggest city.

### A. A CRUSHED ECONOMY

In 1927, Diyarbakır ranked third in the country's socio-economic development index. It steadily fell every five years, all the way to 63rd place out of 81 in the last available study (2003).<sup>114</sup> In 2009 its per capita income was estimated at below \$1,500 – less than a fifth of the \$8,200 national figure, though just eight years earlier it was better than half the national figure: \$1,313 to \$2,146.<sup>115</sup> In general, all 22 provinces of the east and south east lag behind the rest of the country, with about half the population living in poverty.<sup>116</sup> About twelve of these provinces are majority Kurdish-speaking, and another six have large Kurdish populations.<sup>117</sup> Diyarbakır's unemployment rate is between 15.5 and 20 per cent, and the province relies significantly on remittances from young men who go to western Turkey for seasonal jobs, four to five months at a time.

Divisions based on wealth are endemic. Modern malls, new residences and luxury SUVs contrast with shanty homes and utter destitution in several downtown districts where poverty is a leading problem, especially among women.

<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group interview, Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır mayor, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interview, Halit Advan, head of AKP's Diyarbakır branch, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>111</sup> For instance, the Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (DISA), suggests four alternatives: providing education in the mother language until fifth grade and then switching to a mixed-language education system; a balanced and phased multi-lingual and multi-dialect education in both Turkish and Kurdish; a phased, multi-lingual and multi-dialect education with Turkish as the main language; a “revitalisation” program for Kurds whose main language has become Turkish. “Anadile 4 farklı model önerisi” [“Four different suggested models for mother-language”], *Taraf*, 8 October 2012.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Kadri Yıldırım, head of Mardin Artuklu University's Living Languages Department, 3 October 2012.

<sup>113</sup> Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>114</sup> “Bölgelerin Sosyo-ekonomik Gelişmişlikleri” [“Socio-economic Development of Geographical Regions in Turkey”], State Planning Organisation, [www.dpt.gov.tr](http://www.dpt.gov.tr).

<sup>115</sup> “Gelişmişlik Farklılıkları, Doğu Anadolu'nun Gelişmişlikteki Yeri ve Çözüm Önerileri” [“Developmental Differences in East and South-east Anatolia and Recommendations for a Solution”], Development Bank of Turkey, April 2012; Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>116</sup> “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Sosyo-Ekonomik Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri”, Union of South-east Anatolia Municipalities, op. cit., November 2008, p. 5. The lower unemployment figure is from Turkey's State Statistical Institute, 2011, the higher from Mehmet Aslan, Secretary General, DTSO. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012. The national average is estimated at 10 per cent.

<sup>117</sup> Turkey is divided into seven geographical regions: Marmara and Aegean to the west, Mediterranean to the south, Black Sea to the north, Inner Anatolia in the centre and East Anatolia and South-east Anatolia to the east and south east.

A 2011 study of over 3,000 Diyarbakır women found that 53 per cent were married before the age of eighteen; 88 per cent married within the extended family; and on average they had their first child at nineteen.<sup>118</sup> For women, the situation is only starting to change (slowly) among the elite. Prominent Diyarbakır businesswoman Filiz Bedirhanoglu said people encouraged her in a 2012 bid for the presidency of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Although her husband is also a business leader, she said “women used to merely represent their spouses in the chamber, but are now slowly asserting themselves in their own right”.<sup>119</sup>

A cultural clash accompanies the economic divide, especially between the poorer population living in dilapidated houses concentrated in Suriçi and Bağlar districts, as well as the Gürdoğan and Fiskaya neighbourhoods – where monthly income for a family can fall below 500 Turkish Lira (around \$280) – and the affluent segment that lives in newly-built luxury developments where villa prices can go up to 500,000 TL (\$280,000). As poverty and crime have risen in the city, capital and brainpower have migrated. Original residents blame the villagers displaced to Diyarbakır by the conflict for undermining traditional habits, norms and values.<sup>120</sup>

Ankara lifted the state of emergency in 2002, and the displaced can theoretically go back home. But the interior ministry's “Return to Villages and Rehabilitation” project since 1998 has had only minor impact. Some claim that the incentives given to return to ancestral villages – raw materials rather than money – are not enough. Security is another concern. Houses, fields and highland grazing pastures have been taken over by the state-backed Village Guards militia that has sometimes attacked returning families.<sup>121</sup> A displaced person in Diyarbakır said:

My village had a population of 1,500 in 1992 when it was evacuated and burned down [by state forces]. We were not allowed to return until 2003. The village guards

had even uprooted the grape vines so people would not return. I was a high school student at the time, I had to quit my education and move around Turkey to find work ... Now only fifteen to twenty families have returned, mostly elderly people or those that couldn't make it in the big cities. The village guards have taken over some property ... My brother was beaten by village guards in broad daylight because of a dispute over our land. We were too scared to go to court.<sup>122</sup>

Many internally displaced now also prefer urban life and to be compensated for lost property. This is difficult. One who has lived in Diyarbakır for twenty years told Crisis Group he tried for six years and finally gave up.<sup>123</sup>

Although the east and south-east combined make up 28 per cent of Turkey's land mass and house 16 per cent of its population, on average just 8 per cent of total public investments reached them in the two decades to 2011,<sup>124</sup> and their share in national GDP was just 9 per cent, when regional data was last published in 2001.<sup>125</sup> While more public investment has been allocated to them in recent years – over 10 per cent went to the east and 16 per cent to the south east in 2011, mostly due to hydro-electric dam investments – they still fail to attract much private capital.

Diyarbakır has also fallen behind in competition with the cities of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, both of which are further west, have majority Turkish-speaking urban populations and are considered safer.<sup>126</sup> For instance, it needs a new

<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group interview, May 2012.

<sup>123</sup> Crisis Group interview, IDP living in Diyarbakır, May 2012. According to a 2012 study by a Turkish think-tank, between October 2004 (when the law came into effect) and December 2010, around 257,000 applications for compensation were processed out of some 359,000 filed. A little over half were approved, for 2.2 billion TL (\$1.2 billion) in total compensation, a 15,000 TL (\$8,300) average, according to the study, for a six-to eight-person household and seven to seventeen years of material losses. “Adaletin Kıyısında: ‘Zorunlu’ Göç Sonrasında Devlet ve Kürtler/5233 Sayılı Tazminat Yasası'nın Değerlendirmesi” [“On the Shores of Justice: The State and the Kurds After ‘Forced’ Migrations/An Assessment of Compensation Law 5233”], TESEV, 2012.

<sup>124</sup> Investment data from “Gelişmişlik Farklılıkları, Doğu Anadolu'nun Gelişmişlikteki Yeri ve Çözüm Önerileri”, Development Bank of Turkey, op. cit. The local governments of the two regions received 8.5 per cent of the central budget in 2008. “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Sosyo-Ekonomik Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri”, Union of South-east Anatolia Municipalities, op. cit.

<sup>125</sup> GDP data is calculated from “İllere göre GSYİH [provinces' GDP]”, Turkey's State Statistics Institute (TUIK), www.tuik.gov.tr.

<sup>126</sup> Around 6 per cent of total investments under the incentives went to the south-east region between 2002 and 2006, but without Gaziantep, the number drops to 1.5 per cent. “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Sosyo-Ekonomik Sorunlar ve Çözüm

<sup>118</sup> Nearly half of all women interviewed in Diyarbakır said poverty and unemployment were their top worries. “2011 Yılı Alan Çalışması İstatistikleri [2011 Field Research Statistics]”, Women's Support Centre (KAMER). Women are generally disadvantaged in Turkey – for instance, not one of 81 provincial governors is a woman.

<sup>119</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>120</sup> A young man said, “[the immigrants] completely destroyed the fabric of this city. We used to live in Bağlar with my family. We had to move because [the IDPs] took over, and it's in ruins now. They are uncivilised; they live like animals”. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır resident, May 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Interior Minister Idris Naim Şahin said there were 45,181 such guards as of April 2012, and they are paid around 860 TL (\$475) per month. “Türkiye'de kaç korucu var?” [“How many village guards are there in Turkey?”], *Sabah*, 6 September 2012.

industrial zone, but differences over where to build it mean that the current zone must accommodate new companies.<sup>127</sup> In 2009 this sole zone employed just 3,500 people in 68 firms, while Gaziantep's multiple zones had jobs for 70,800, and Şanlıurfa's employed 8,500; even the industrial zone in nearby Mardin, a province half Diyarbakır's size, employed 4,000.<sup>128</sup>

The head of a local business chamber complained that in the last five years, the state has pulled back from large, politically-motivated investments in the province.<sup>129</sup> One of its biggest investments, a new prison that reportedly cost 100 million TL (\$55 million), attracts much sarcastic comment.<sup>130</sup> Locals were shocked to learn the state was also planning an open-air prison on the site of the old state tobacco factory, despite local business community proposals to turn it into a textile and clothing complex with jobs for 5,000. On the other hand, the governor said the new civil-

ian airport promised by Prime Minister Erdoğan during his June 2011 visit would be completed by June 2013, though construction had not begun by September 2012.<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile the army has ruled out adding proper international services to the civilian terminal of Diyarbakır's military airport. The BDP's local branch, municipal officials and local businessmen all believe the central government intentionally holds Diyarbakır back.

While Diyarbakır's Kurdish movement can be fervent when asking for political autonomy from Ankara, when talking about the economy, it wants closer ties to the centre.<sup>132</sup> The municipality's long wish list includes that budgets be proportional to a province's population; and that the national budget's allocation for local governments rise to 20 per cent from the current 5 per cent and be adjusted further upward for less-developed regions.<sup>133</sup> As everywhere in the country, local businesses want bureaucratic decentralisation. A Kurdish executive described the burden under the current system:

In order to get a permit for an [industrial] plant, I have to send a file to Ankara three times and wait for months for a response. It's not like they have the best engineers there. It is the same thing when schools here have to wait for teacher assignments. Everything has to be coordinated by Ankara.<sup>134</sup>

Other problems discouraging economic development, despite government incentives, are lack of a railway link to the industrial zone and of full, normal international access to the airport, and high energy prices that add to already high transportation costs.<sup>135</sup> A local executive suggested the government suspend taxes on investors for a few years,

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Önerileri", Union of South-east Anatolia Municipalities, op. cit., p. 64. Between 2006 and 2011, only 6.7 per cent of investments taking advantage of government incentives went to the south east, and 4.8 per cent to eastern Turkey. "Gelişmişlik Farklılıkları, Doğu Anadolu'nun Gelişmişlikteki Yeri ve Çözüm Önerileri", Development Bank of Turkey, op. cit.

<sup>127</sup> Some 300 hectares will be added, but up to 1,500 are needed. Around 150 small- and medium-sized local enterprises, each representing \$5 million to \$10 million in new investments, have already applied to join the extended zone. Crisis Group interviews, Şahismaîl Bedirhanoglu, head of South-eastern Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (GÜNİAD), Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012; Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, 6 September 2012.

<sup>128</sup> "GAP Bölgesi Sosyo-ekonomik Göstergeler" ["GAP Region Socio-economic Indicators"], prime ministry's GAP Regional Administration Directorate, September 2010. Gaziantep has the same population as Diyarbakır but five industrial zones and \$4.2 billion in exports.

<sup>129</sup> "The state used to think that economic development [of the south east] would solve the Kurdish problem. But Ankara no longer believes this, so it probably sees no point in burdening the [national] budget with investments [to the region]". Crisis Group email correspondence, Mehmet Aslan, Secretary General, DTSO, 13 November 2012.

<sup>130</sup> In a September 2010 speech at a party congress in Diyarbakır, Prime Minister Erdoğan promised to tear down the infamous Diyarbakır prison and build a new one: "If only this Diyarbakır prison could speak. If only it could recount what happened in the 12 September [military coup] era .... We are closing down the Diyarbakır prison. We are speedily building a new one .... We don't want [the old prison] to remind our city of 12 September". "Erdoğan Amed'e verdiği sözü tuttu!" ["Erdoğan keeps his promise to Amed"], Firat News Agency, 29 February 2012. But his message to leave the past behind was lost on many in Diyarbakır. "Erdoğan's 'big investment' to Diyarbakır is another prison. He announces an industrial zone for [Gazi]Antep and a prison for Diyarbakır. For him, it's a five star hotel for Kurds". Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

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<sup>131</sup> Crisis Group email correspondence, Mehmet Aslan, Secretary General, DTSO, 13 November 2012. He cited government statistics that Diyarbakır airport had per apron in 2010 the most planes and second most passengers in Turkey.

<sup>132</sup> A Kurdish business executive pointed out the irony: "If we say 'we want independence', the government can tell us 'fine then, why should I invest?'" Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 6 September 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Crisis Group interview, municipal official, Diyarbakır, 4 September 2012.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>135</sup> A deputy governor said work is under way to nationalise land to build a 2.2km railway link to the industrial zone. Crisis Group telephone interview, Cemal Hüsnü Kansız, 1 October 2012. Transport costs are a major problem, particularly for the high-value marble business, whose 49 quarries and 23 factories earn half the province's export income. One third of the marble goes to China. "To export, I have to reach the ports, namely Mersin port on the Mediterranean. The cost of getting my marble to Mersin port from Diyarbakır is almost the same as getting it from Mersin to China!" Crisis Group interview, Kurdish mining executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

extend the incentives' scope to cover earlier investments and subsidise energy prices.<sup>136</sup>

## B. IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF CONFLICT

Diyarbakır's biggest economic handicap however, is spill-over from the PKK conflict. Even routine delegations of businessmen from other parts of Turkey fear to visit the city.<sup>137</sup> A local executive explained:

Private capital does not like risk. We had a mining deal with a Canadian company two years ago. They put it on hold when the violence intensified. Then we heard they had taken their investment to Kayseri province [in central Turkey] instead. Only locals make sizeable investments here.<sup>138</sup>

The PKK deliberately targets infrastructure and investments.<sup>139</sup> Insurgents have blown up trains to Diyarbakır and burned machinery belonging to the biggest local mining and marble company four times since 2010, causing over €3 million in damages. The targeted company says it tries to stay out of politics, but the first attack may have been linked to its chairman's stand against the PKK/KCK call on people to boycott the 12 September 2010 referendum to change the constitution. The company has reluctantly halted some of its operations in Diyarbakır.<sup>140</sup>

The upsurge in violence since June 2011 is a serious concern in a region where terrorism insurance and government support are in short supply.<sup>141</sup> Some businesses say that the PKK targets companies/individuals who refuse to pay extortion money. Employees are threatened, and the at

least 65 PKK kidnappings of civilians in the south east over the past seventeen months have included several state workers. Trucks on main roads east of Diyarbakır have been stopped and burned.

The PKK/KCK also orders shop closures and school boycotts and at times burns schools and kidnaps teachers to disrupt education.<sup>142</sup> Some of the public supports PKK-staged protests voluntarily, while others do so from fear of punishment, but most of the city, except a few better-off areas like the Ofis district, goes along.<sup>143</sup> However, such protests increasingly frustrate local businesses and cost the PKK support, according to some locals. A one-day October 2012 Kurdish-movement strike in support of jailed pro-PKK hunger-strikers was widely obeyed, closed shops, schools and bus services and signalled dangerous new levels of tension in the city. While it is clear that the PKK wants to weaken the state's hold on the local economy, Kurds are unsure about what it proposes instead.<sup>144</sup> A restaurant owner complained:

Whenever there is a guerrilla funeral, KCK hands out a statement ordering shops to be closed. Stores are fed up with it. But it's hard to defy [the PKK/KCK]. They could attack your store. Our restaurant employs ten people and pays their social security. Our revenue is 1,500 to 2,000 TL per day. Will they give us this money?<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>137</sup> "The head of [Black Sea province] Çorum's chamber of commerce and industry bid his family 'farewell' before coming with a delegation to Diyarbakır. People think they are entering a combat zone". Crisis Group interview, Mehmet Aslan, Secretary General, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>139</sup> "The PKK wants to control the economy". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, 6 September 2012.

<sup>140</sup> The company also thinks competitors may be deliberately and falsely denouncing them to the PKK. "We are from this region. We chose to invest in Diyarbakır and created a new industry here. But now we have to move the bulk of our investments elsewhere". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>141</sup> "Prime Minister Erdoğan said, 'if [the PKK] burns one machine, we'll send two more!' We got a few courtesy calls in 2010, but no one has even called us after the [last three] attacks". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

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<sup>142</sup> Three teachers were kidnapped on 29 September 2011 in Lice district and two on 22 September 2012 in Şenyayla district. In both cases, they were released a few days later. On 9 October 2012, groups allegedly linked to the PKK attacked schools in Diyarbakır and Şırnak with Molotov cocktails, wounding at least five.

<sup>143</sup> Bread shops and pharmacies are exempt.

<sup>144</sup> "The PKK and BDP have to make clear how they plan to structure the economy under democratic autonomy. Does it count on tax collection only? Or will it run it together with the central government?" Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business executive, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Crisis Group interview, local business owner, Diyarbakır, September 2012. "Sellers used to voluntarily shut their shops [in protest] before; now they don't want to. They do it under intimidation from PKK. Some don't do it at all. They're at an economic choke point. If they close their shops for each protest, who will take care of their families? They want the PKK to understand this. They shut stores at Newrouz for instance but then quickly re-opened". Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012. A former senior Diyarbakır police officer said if the PKK orders people to close their shops for three days, they open after one. Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, September 2012.

### C. SMALL STEPS TOWARDS ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The city's prime location, at the heart of the fertile plain south of the Anatolian plateau and on an ancient crossing of the Tigris River, still persuades courier companies and home appliance manufacturers to choose it as their south-eastern Turkey hub. Diyarbakır has the most hospitals and beds in the region.<sup>146</sup> Possibly this is because people in the area lacked proper health care during the 1990s state of emergency and are now overcompensating.<sup>147</sup> More than 500,000 people in Diyarbakır – a third of the province's population – have health care cards provided by the state to the poor, which helps cover their medicine and treatment.<sup>148</sup>

At the same time, a building boom in the suburbs caters to those ready to spend up to 250,000 TL for a flat and 500,000 TL for a villa (\$140,000-\$280,000). About 30,000 new residences have been built in the last five years, increasing Diyarbakır's housing stock by 43 per cent.<sup>149</sup> Half-finished apartment complexes line highways leading out of town, with activity down only slightly in the last few months. Two new shopping malls are joining the existing three, where international and Turkish brands compete. Stores, from music to home textiles to clothing, said sales are good.<sup>150</sup>

Alongside a more obvious traditional, conservative makeover, Diyarbakır's slowly modernising face is becoming evident in lively bars in the Ofis district that advertise weekly tango nights and in its increasingly bold – albeit small – community with different sexual orientations.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Eighteen hospitals and 3,262 beds, as of 2007. By 2011, Diyarbakır had more health facilities – four private hospitals, nine medical centres, 59 other clinics and facilities – than all the other provinces in the south east combined. The private hospitals alone employ 2,000 people. "Diyarbakır'ın Mevcut Durumu ve İlin Talepleri Raporu" [Diyarbakır's current situation and demands], DTSO, February 2011.

<sup>147</sup> Quoting a military officer in 1996, Turkish writer Hasan Cemal wrote that around 500 health centres were closed in the south east, and hundreds of thousands of people did not have access to healthcare, *Kürtler* (İstanbul, 2003), p. 300.

<sup>148</sup> Health ministry data quoted in "Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Sosyo-Ekonomik Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri", Union of South-east Anatolia Municipalities, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>149</sup> Metin Can, "Ekonomi kimliğin önünde" [Economy comes before identity], *Sabah*, 11 May 2011; Şahap Cengiz, "Diyarbakır gayrimenkul piyasasının gelişimi" [Evolution of the Diyarbakır real estate sector], [www.anreva.com.tr](http://www.anreva.com.tr), 2012.

<sup>150</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>151</sup> For instance, the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) community took part in Newrouz celebrations in 2011 and 2012. But participants reported that they had to pretend to come from western Turkey to avoid being harassed by conserva-

A burgeoning culture of breakfast cafes – as Diyarbakır hitches itself to a Turkey-wide fashion for cafés serving full breakfasts typical to the Kurdish-speaking east – demonstrates an aspiration for a more prosperous lifestyle. Restoration in the heart of the old city has turned the grey basalt stone arcades of the once derelict Hasan Paşa Hanı into a lovely meeting place. In the han's vaulted basement is one of the largest and best-kept bookshops in Turkey, and probably the only one built inside a 500-year-old structure. Its wide-ranging, multi-lingual selection further testifies to the city's ambitions.

Some continue to hold out hopes for a strong, positive future impact from the government's south-eastern Anatolia Project (GAP) irrigation scheme, started in 1977. Out of 1.8 million hectares that its dams on the Tigris and Euphrates will eventually irrigate in the region, 681,000 are in Diyarbakır province. However, while most of the dams and 90 per cent of the electricity projects are done, less than a fifth of the irrigation is completed, and only 4 per cent of the irrigation goal has been reached in Diyarbakır province.<sup>152</sup>

Connecting Diyarbakır's fertile, rolling hills to GAP's irrigation canals would boost employment, given that the farming sector employs 63 per cent of the province's workforce, around twice the national average.<sup>153</sup> The government plans to complete the canals in 2013, but local businessmen's best estimates range from 2015 to 2017.<sup>154</sup> There are problems with transferring water from dams to fields and with nationalisation of properties. The most important GAP project for Diyarbakır is the Silvan Dam, which was not in the original scheme and construction on which started in early May 2012. The PKK has attempted to sabotage it, both to damage the state's investment efforts and because the parts of the district it would flood include some of its hideouts.<sup>155</sup>

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tive locals. "Flamamızı anlamadılar, bizi Avrupa'dan geldik sandılar" ["They didn't understand our flag, they thought we came from Europe"], *Hürriyet*, 3 April 2011.

<sup>152</sup> "Presidency of GAP Administration 2011 Annual Report", [www.gap.gov.tr](http://www.gap.gov.tr); "Diyarbakır'ın Mevcut Durumu ve İlin Talepleri Raporu" ["Diyarbakır's Current Situation and Demands"], DTSO, February 2011.

<sup>153</sup> "Diyarbakır'ın Mevcut Durumu ve İlin Talepleri Raporu", DTSO, op. cit. A local businessman cited studies showing each irrigated hectare added a job. Crisis Group interview, Mehmet Aslan, Secretary General, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

<sup>154</sup> Crisis Group interviews, local businessmen, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>155</sup> Crisis Group interview, Şahismail Bedirhanoğlu, head of South-eastern Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (GUNSIAD), Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012. The government apparently foiled a PKK attempt to sabotage Silvan Dam's opening day on 4 May 2012 with two kilograms of explosives. "4

The government should help Diyarbakır make better use of its status as a centre for the region by pro-actively encouraging and advertising tourism to the many monuments in and near the city. Tourism is currently limited, but Iraqi Kurdish visitors have become numerous, and domestic tours are now common to historic sites and cities even farther east, indicating significant potential if tensions subside.

## V. POLARISED POLITICS

Diyarbakır's Kurdish-speaking majority feels relatively united in its grievances and demands despite hard lines between competing organisations and visions of how to achieve change. As the fighting worsens between security forces and the PKK, polarisation between the ruling AKP and the Kurdish movement has sharpened. Still, compared to the most violent years in the 1990s, a wide middle ground and many more nuances in community leaders' positions remain.<sup>156</sup>

The legal wing of the Kurdish movement is represented by the BDP, whose activists are pre-eminent in Diyarbakır; but the AKP still wins an average one third of the vote in the south east's twelve majority Kurdish-speaking provinces. Turkey's main opposition parties, including the CHP and the Turkish nationalist National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), have only a marginal presence in the city and region.<sup>157</sup> Fetullah Gülen's Hizmet (service) movement and Turkey's Hizbullah, represented by Mustazaf-Der (association of the oppressed), the latter until closed by the court in May 2012, compete for social influence but are not directly involved in party politics.

### A. AKP'S DECLINING APPEAL

AKP's votes in Diyarbakır went down from 42 per cent in 2007 to 32 per cent in June 2011, giving it five members of parliament.<sup>158</sup> A Kurdish commentator explained how, caught between the PKK's violent approach and the radical Islamism of Hizbullah, Kurdish voters initially supported the AKP but are now withdrawing:

The AK Party's new relationship with Kurdish society starting in 2002 is a very valuable legacy, but it's a reality that this has stalled in the past year. Calling the BDP "backstabbers" is [a threat to push millions of Kurds out the door] .... The warplanes in the skies above Diyarbakır and Hakkari only remind Kurds of their be-

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<sup>156</sup> "Even though I have relatives who have joined the PKK, I don't want to support BDP. I don't want to support AKP either. Both derive their power from weapons. I want a new party that renounces all violence, but it does not exist yet". Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>157</sup> In June 2011 general elections, they won 2 per cent and 0.8 per cent of Diyarbakır's vote respectively. CHP's leader until 2010, Deniz Baykal, resolutely opposed Kurdish rights, but this has been changed by the new leader, from the Kurdish-speaking province of Tunceli, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who has tried to rebuild its position in the region by promoting Sezgin Tanrıku- lu, a former president of the Diyarbakır bar and a tireless Kurdish rights activist, to party vice president.

<sup>158</sup> It currently has six members of parliament from Diyarbakır due to the disqualification of a BDP member. See below.

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Bakana yönelik bombalı saldırı önlendi" ["An attack targeting four ministers was prevented"], Anatolian Agency, 6 May 2012.

sieged state and fear of death: “you are our prisoners, and we can destroy you anytime we want”.<sup>159</sup>

AKP's provincial head says democratisation can help solve the region's problems and that AKP has moved from “assimilation and denial” to recognition of Kurds' culture and identity. The party abolished the State Security Courts, lifted the death penalty after Öcalan's conviction and removed restrictions on Kurdish language and broadcasting. The Diyarbakır public still praises the government for delivering services like modern passport procedures at police stations and better local highways, but many also feel that Prime Minister Erdoğan failed to follow through on key initiatives.<sup>160</sup> This was most reflected during his June 2012 visit, when many shop owners obeyed a Kurdish movement order to close in protest. But reflecting divisions in the city, and AKP's continuing strength, several locations had multi-lingual “Welcome” banners in Turkish, Kurmanjî and Zazaki.<sup>161</sup>

AKP's image has been especially tarnished by the rising death toll from PKK-military clashes and its endorsement of arrests of several thousand BDP activists accused of terrorism or PKK affiliation.<sup>162</sup> While the government claims it has expanded rights and access to media, Kurdish politicians and activists say they feel more threatened. A local human rights organisation said, “there is no change for the better in Diyarbakır in the last year. Everyone is afraid –

even those that have never been involved in violence – about being taken into police custody”.<sup>163</sup>

In the 2011 general elections, AKP put forward new, little-known candidates from Diyarbakır, whom pro-BDP circles accused of being “new model Kurds”, who toe the government line.<sup>164</sup> BDP supporters were particularly angry after AKP's Oya Eronat, a political novice, took the parliamentary seat of independent Diyarbakır candidate Hatip Dicle, who came in first in the city with 11.6 per cent of the vote but was disqualified due to the sudden upholding of a court verdict against him.<sup>165</sup>

The PKK has, in turn, targeted AKP. A district official, Veyssel Çelik, was kidnapped on 13 May 2012 and released on 29 June through mediation of several NGOs, including the Diyarbakır bar association and human rights organisations.<sup>166</sup> An attack on AKP's unassuming, run-down Diyarbakır office on 21 March, the day of Nowruz (New Year celebrations for Kurds and other regional peoples), left a policeman injured and windows shattered but has apparently not hampered the party's efforts in the province.

## B. REPRESENTING THE KURDISH MOVEMENT: BDP

The Kurdish movement put forward independent candidates for the 2011 parliamentary elections, the only way it could get past the high 10 per cent national vote threshold to enter parliament. Winning 62 per cent of the vote in Diyarbakır initially gave the main Kurdish party, BDP, six members from the province.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Orhan Miroğlu, “AK Parti ve Kürtler” [“AK Party and the Kurds”], *Taraf*, 4 June 2012.

<sup>160</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Diyarbakır, September 2012. “Ak Party can't stand behind its actions because it is afraid of public opinion . . . Prime Minister Erdoğan wanted to solve the Kurdish problem. But some circles blocked the process”. Crisis Group interview, Yunus Memiş, head of Diyarbakır branch, government employees union (Memursen), 5 September 2012.

<sup>161</sup> “Erdoğan protestıyla karşılandı” [“Erdoğan was greeted with protests”], *Yüksekova Haber*, 2 June 2012. His speech did not mention, let alone explain or apologise for, the deaths of 34 Kurdish civilians in Uludere in December 2011, or detail any plans to solve the Kurdish issue. Instead, he talked about investments planned for the city. “Erdoğan's Diyarbakır address falls short of expectations”, *Today's Zaman*, 3 June 2012. “Diyarbakır Erdoğan'ı üç dilde karşılıyor” [“Diyarbakır welcomes Erdoğan in three languages”], *Vatan*, 2 June 2012.

<sup>162</sup> “With the ‘Kurdish opening’ and [anti-coup] Ergenekon operations, Kurds were hopeful that Erdoğan and [his] AKP were going to solve the Kurdish issue. Now, after KCK arrests and increasing military operations, most Kurds would say they regret voting for him”. Crisis Group interview, Vecdi Erbay, journalist, IMC TV, Diyarbakır, May 2012. “You can't say ‘I will give your rights’ but continue to kill PKK [insurgents]. Their parents are your citizens, too!” Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

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<sup>163</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>164</sup> “We don't expect anything good to come from those Kurdish MPs”. Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, 16 May 2012. A local journalist disagreed: “The MPs AKP puts forward from Diyarbakır are usually clan leaders or rich businessmen. They are chosen because they get good votes here”. Crisis Group interview, Vecdi Erbay, journalist, IMC TV, Diyarbakır, 17 May 2012.

<sup>165</sup> Three days before the 12 June 2011 elections, the Supreme Court of Appeals upheld a lower court conviction holding a 2007 speech was “terrorist propaganda”. A political unknown before AKP chose her for its 2011 election list, Eronat's seventeen-year-old son died with several students in a 2008 PKK bomb attack in front of a private school in Diyarbakır.

<sup>166</sup> On 30 June he announced his resignation from the party, saying no one from AKP called his family or relatives after his abduction. “Partimden istifa ediyorum” [“I quit my party”], *Vatan*, 30 June 2012.

<sup>167</sup> The number of parliamentarians from Diyarbakır fell from six to five after disqualification of Hatip Dicle, who had won the largest share of votes (11.6 per cent); Nursel Aydoğan and Leyla Zana received 10 per cent each. Three joined the Peace



The BDP sees Diyarbakır as its base and the inhabitants as its “natural members”. Occasionally residents accuse the party of not working hard enough for a settlement to end the violence, but open criticism is rare. While defending Kurdishness is the BDP’s defining cause, it tries to represent the interests of all minorities and is unusually progressive on the rights of women, who play an important role in the Kurdish struggle and make up 20 per cent of the PKK.<sup>168</sup> The party has women’s councils that choose their own candidates for high office, and its Diyarbakır, Mersin, Ankara, Istanbul and Van branches have women co-chairs.

Criticism of the BDP is muted, partly because its constituency overlaps with the PKK’s, whose intolerance of dissent is notorious.<sup>169</sup> Both laud Öcalan, and local officials, while insisting the organisations are separate, do not deny multiple ties with the PKK.<sup>170</sup> An ex-senior policeman is convinced the PKK calls all the shots in Diyarbakır:

The BDP cannot free itself from the influence [of Qandil Mountain, the main PKK base in northern Iraq]. The PKK even determines BDP’s elections candidates. When [Mayor] Osman Baydemir was on his way to greet the prime minister during his 2002 Diyarbakır visit, the PKK called him and told him to turn back. And he did.<sup>171</sup>

Many in Turkey would agree with this view following national media broadcasts of sound recordings in 2010, apparently of Mayor Baydemir being accused by a KCK tribunal of not taking part in 2008 demonstrations demanding Öcalan’s release, along with a photo showing him leaving a building Turkish media said was where the session was

held.<sup>172</sup> Baydemir denied the allegations, and a municipal official said the photo was taken much earlier after a hospital visit by the mayor and his bodyguard.<sup>173</sup>

As the Kurds’ major legal party and with clear popular legitimacy, BDP needs to overcome questions about its independence and commitment to non-violent, democratic politics. The Kurdish movement should end any kind of illegal political organisation in Turkey that could be construed as a parallel state and remain committed to ending attacks on civilians, working for a ceasefire and eventually disbanding insurgent units.<sup>174</sup> Those who vote for it in the province do not necessarily support the PKK’s violent tactics. And they deserve legitimate representatives who will be accepted as credible negotiating partners for a sustainable solution to their grievances.

### C. THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT TRIES AN ALTERNATIVE WAY

The moderate Hizmet (service) movement of Fetullah Gülen – a Turkish religious leader who lives in exile in the U.S., partly for health reasons and partly due to past charges of an Islamist agenda – is relatively new on the Diyarbakır scene and primarily seeks to promote dialogue and reconciliation through education. It brings Turkish teachers and administrators from other parts of the country to Diyarbakır and gives Kurdish students opportunities to study in western Turkey. Teachers often have international experience, appreciate Kurds and their culture and support Kurdish-language courses.<sup>175</sup>

The Hizmet movement runs 27 free reading rooms in Diyarbakır for children from lower-income families.<sup>176</sup> Courses are in Turkish, but students come from Kurdish-speaking families, and the teachers often speak Kurdish with their parents. Investors associated with the Hizmet have opened five private primary schools and fourteen pre-

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and Democracy Party (BDP) in parliament; Şerafettin Elçi stayed with another small Kurdish party, KADEP; Leyla Zana remained an independent.

<sup>168</sup> Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

<sup>169</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit. A former municipal employee from the pro-Islamic Welfare (Refah) Party said, “Diyarbakır is a highly polarised city. Everyone has an official and an unofficial opinion. But they will only tell you the official [BDP] line; they can’t openly criticise it”. Crisis Group interview, Kurdish lawyer and former municipal employee, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>170</sup> “We are not the same organisation [as the PKK], but we share the same base and constituency. BDP MPs attend guerilla funerals. Some of these [guerillas] may be relatives of BDP members”. Crisis Group interview, municipal official, May 2012. A human rights worker said, “BDP came out of the PKK, not the other way around, so they can’t do much to end the violence”. Crisis Group interview, Mazlum-Der human rights organisation lawyer, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>171</sup> Crisis Group interview, former senior Diyarbakır police officer, Istanbul, September 2012.

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<sup>172</sup> Baydemir’s KCK prosecutors reportedly included a junior municipality employee. A recording in Turkish can be found at <http://on.fb.me/VtZ9UW>.

<sup>173</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, 5 November 2012.

<sup>174</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement*, op. cit.

<sup>175</sup> The “hoca [Fethullah Gülen] had been supporting Kurdish elective courses before, but it wasn’t the right time [to go public]. Now he can say it openly . . . . We should kiss the hands of the Kurdish public. Even though they have been through so much pain, only a small percentage of them went up to the mountains [to join the PKK]”. Crisis Group interview, Turkish teacher associated with Hizmet movement, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>176</sup> Some 4,500 students use these reading rooms, and the group receives two or three times more applications than it can accept. Crisis Group interview, Turkish teacher associated with Hizmet movement, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

paratory courses (*dershane*) for university and high school entrance exams.<sup>177</sup> Charity projects are part of the movement's Kimse Yok Mu? (Is anybody there?) humanitarian organisation that gives aid in Turkey and abroad.

Though Hizmet is not directly engaged in politics, some Kurdish activists see it as firmly behind the government's anti-KCK operations and crackdown on Kurdish dissent, because of its alleged influence on the judiciary and the police and ties to the AKP.<sup>178</sup> Pro-PKK media reflects the scepticism: "[The Gülen movement] has a project to redesign society. They got rid of the army, the [staunchly secular] Kemalists, now the only remaining opposition group is the Kurds. They want to delay resolving the Kurdish issue".<sup>179</sup>

Hizmet representatives say the PKK harasses their institutions in Diyarbakır, for example in a series of five attacks on a *dershane* since September 2009. Though BDP denies that the PKK attacks Gülen institutions, Hizmet teachers believe they are targeted because they "take away PKK's base among the poor and uneducated".<sup>180</sup>

#### D. TURKEY'S KURDISH ISLAMISTS REGROUP

Another group may soon try to win Kurdish Islamists' votes. Turkey's Hizbullah – not connected to the Lebanese Shia community's Hezbollah militia – began small in Diyarbakır in the early 1980s and was associated in the 1990s with state-sanctioned killings of PKK members as well as dozens of other murders mainly in the south east, for which 27 members were put on trial in 2000.<sup>181</sup> After

a lull, in 2004, it began to operate through a number of organisations, particularly the former Mustazaflar Derneği, or Mustazaf-Der (association for the oppressed), now referred to as Mustazaflar Hareketi (movement for the oppressed). A Diyarbakır court ordered Mustazaf-Der closed in 2010, citing its ties to the outlawed Hizbullah; the Supreme Court approved the decision on 11 May 2012.

Mustazaf-Der has been most effective, and visible, in organising mass gatherings in Diyarbakır. It brought together hundreds of thousands of people on 22 April 2012 to celebrate the Prophet Mohammed's birth and gathered over 10,000 in İstasyon Square on 27 May to protest the Supreme Court decision to uphold its closure and announce its decision to create a political party before the 2014 local elections. According to its leader, its popularity is increased by its charity and outreach programs.<sup>182</sup>

Hostility between the PKK and Hizbullah has never ended, though the two organisations overlap in some families, with Mustazaf-Der's head saying he has a nephew in the "mountain", a euphemism for the PKK. Mustazaf-Der blames the PKK for stirring up new tensions. There were seventeen attacks on its Diyarbakır branch and between 60 to 70 attacks on its association in the region in general since 2006; the perpetrators have never been found. Hizbullah warned the PKK in a statement on a friendly website on 22 June 2012 that it has avoided conflict to protect fellow Muslims but would respond to continued provocations.<sup>183</sup>

Further complicating the picture, a faction has broken off from Mustazaf-Der, led by one of the main lawyers in the Hizbullah court case. Based in Diyarbakır, the Azadî (freedom) Initiative describes itself as "a congregation of individuals with Islamic responsibility in northern Kurdistan".<sup>184</sup> Its goal is "justice" and "freedom" for Kurds, with a focus on the language, recognition of green, yellow and red as Kurdistan flag colours, creation of a local parliament and an end to "assimilation". Renouncing all violence, its leader said, "violence is not the only solution. I believe twenty million people can get their rights through passive

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<sup>177</sup> A full-year *dershane* course costs about 2,000 to 2,500 Turkish Lira (\$1,100 to \$1400), and 95 per cent of the students are Kurdish. About 25 per cent of their teachers are from Diyarbakır. Crisis Group interview, *dershane* director, Diyarbakır, May 2012. Private primary school fees are around 8,500 TL (\$5,000). A headmaster at one school says the majority of students are Kurdish, and there are no tensions. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>178</sup> Critics of the Gülen movement accuse its members of a years-long campaign to infiltrate the courts, the civilian security forces and other Turkish institutions once dominated by adherents of the secularist, Kemalist ideology of the early Turkish republic. Crisis Group interview, Zübeyde Zümürüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>179</sup> Crisis Group interview, manager of a pro-Kurdish movement TV station, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>180</sup> Crisis Group interviews, private course manager and primary school teacher, both associated with Hizmet movement, and Zübeyde Zümürüt, BDP Diyarbakır co-chair, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>181</sup> The number later increased to 31. The cases, carried out mainly by Istanbul and Diyarbakır courts, ended for 24 of the suspects in February 2012 with life sentences for eight and between six to twelve years in prison for sixteen.

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<sup>182</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Diyarbakır, September 2012. Their Diyarbakır branch helps 500 families regularly, others on a need basis, and distributed meat to 16,000 during the Muslim sacrifice holiday. Crisis Group interview, Hüseyin Yılmaz, head of former Mustazaf-der Islamist group, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

<sup>183</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012; "Hizbullah Basın Bürosundan Kamuoyuna" ["To the public from Hizbullah's press office"], <http://huseynisevda.biz>, 22 June 2012.

<sup>184</sup> Information available on its website, [www.insiyatifazadi.com](http://www.insiyatifazadi.com). A key figure in the initiative and former Hizbullah lawyer Sıdkı Zilan, a Zazaki Kurd from Diyarbakır, said it is an Islamic party that believes in compromise and alliances. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

resistance".<sup>185</sup> It plans to form a political party but is in no hurry to complete the process.<sup>186</sup>

While the Kurdish Islamic movement's decision to enter politics is based on the conviction that Islamist Kurds will choose a Kurdish alternative over AKP and Gülen, many Kurds are sceptical about its strength,<sup>187</sup> even though some local AKP supporters fear that a new Islamic party would divide the ruling party's voter base.<sup>188</sup> The Kurdish movement is also trying to appeal to Islamic sentiment. Since April 2011, it has organised Kurdish-speaking imams and scholars to hold alternative Friday prayer services, called "Civilian Fridays", in several provinces in the south east, including Diyarbakır. These can attract thousands of worshippers in large public areas like city squares.

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<sup>185</sup> "We are different than the PKK and Hizbullah in that they are both hegemonic and to an extent illegal forces. Although Hizbullah laid down arms ten years ago, it is still associated with illegality in people's minds". Like Turkey's Hizbullah, its idea for a solution overlaps with the Kurdish movement's demands: recognising Kurdish identity in the constitution through neutral wording, allowing mother-language education and making Kurdish an official second language. "Then, the PKK will not be able to find supporters so easily". Crisis Group interview, Sıdkı Zilan, Kurdish lawyer and leading Azadî initiative figure, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>186</sup> It is a de facto organisation rather than a formal political party because the proposed name, "Kürdistan İslami İnsiyatifi", includes the words "Kurdistan" and "Islam", which are not allowed for official entities. Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> "The Kurdish public is not fundamentalist. Even though [pro-Islamic] groups get support from the government, they are not strong here". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish movement political activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012. "The numbers showing up for [Mustazaf-Der's] events for the Prophet's birth are misleading. My mother and my sister went, too, because they love the Prophet, but they vote BDP". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır correspondent, international news agency, Diyarbakır, 18 May 2012. A Turkish observer on 22 April said most participants were bussed in: "All of a sudden, these women in black *çarşaf* (garment covering full body and face) and men carrying Islamic banners came out; it was like someone had flipped a switch, they were nowhere to be seen before". Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, May 2012.

<sup>188</sup> "Mustazaf-Der has a good cause here; they do good work for the Kurdish problem. But I don't approve of their decision to form a party. It will cause a split in Ak Party votes. Even if Ak Party has shortcomings, they are still [the best]". Crisis Group interview, Yunus Memiş, head, Diyarbakır branch, government employees union (Memürsen), Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

## VI. FITTING IN WITH TURKEY

Suppression, discrimination and paranoia have led to deep Kurdish distrust of the state, a feeling that has grown over the past six years.<sup>189</sup> Symptoms range from suspicion of immunisation campaigns to occasional PKK allegations about Turkey's supposed use of chemical weapons that are widely believed in Kurdish movement circles despite lack of any credible evidence.<sup>190</sup> Escalation in violence since 2011 has aggravated the sense of alienation and injustice. Kurds are angry with the government for denying them recognition and equal rights:

Why is Prime Minister Erdoğan calling us "my Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin"? Why can't he just say "my Kurdish citizens"? I am a legal citizen of this country. I did my military service; I attended its schools, and I worked for its government. I fulfilled all my duties to the government. Why can't the government fulfil its duties towards me [by recognising my identity and language]?<sup>191</sup>

Even Kurds resolutely opposed to the PKK complain of discrimination, as a pro-AKP academic explained:

I live in Ankara. My neighbour and his wife were visiting as I was about to leave for a trip to Istanbul. I said I was going to do my program. My neighbour's wife asked, "oh, which channel"? I said TRT6 [the Kurdish-language channel]. She then said, to my Turkish wife, "Oh, I see you have him domesticated!"<sup>192</sup>

Similarly, a young civil society activist in Istanbul was astonished to be asked to leave a taxi after the driver heard her talk in Kurdish and mention Diyarbakır.<sup>193</sup> Western Turks' alienation from the Kurds seems to be growing; a

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<sup>189</sup> IHD argues that 28 March 2006, when a PKK funeral led to clashes with police that killed ten, was a breaking point for Kurds. Crisis Group interview, Raci Bilici, head, Diyarbakır branch, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012. For more on that event, see "28 Mart 2006 Diyarbakır Olaylarına İlişkin İnceleme Raporu" ["Investigation report into the events of 28 March 2006 in Diyarbakır"] IHD (in Turkish) on [www.ihd.org.tr](http://www.ihd.org.tr). At the time, Prime Minister Erdoğan said, "my security forces will do whatever is necessary, [including against] women or children". Opposition Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) parliamentarian from Diyarbakır Sezgin Tanrıkulu, "Yalancı değil kalıcı bahar" ["A permanent, not a fleeting, spring"], *Radikal*, 10 June 2012.

<sup>190</sup> "The state provided free tetanus shots. Some people here said 'they are trying to sterilise us'. I was scared, and didn't get one". Crisis Group interview, Kurdish business person, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>191</sup> Crisis Group interview, IDP in Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>192</sup> Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, May 2012.

<sup>193</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nilgün Yıldırım, civil society activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

survey conducted in August 2012 found that one in four Turks does not want to live with Kurds, compared to only 2 per cent of Kurds who did not want to live with Turks.<sup>194</sup> Outside the public sphere, Kurds are engaged in wide discussions of whether they can go on living with “the Turks”.<sup>195</sup> The head of the Diyarbakır bar, Emin Aktar, told the following story of his attendance at the May 2011 national congress of bar associations:

When I started my speech by saying “hello” in Kurdish, half the 500 there protested. They swore, shouted “get him off the platform”!, “what are you saying”?, and so on. These included people I knew. They tell us “take your rights”, but this is what happens when we do. It makes you wonder what they mean .... I’ve lost seven, eight members of my family in this war. Try to understand us! Otherwise we have no reason to live together.<sup>196</sup>

Every time a militant is killed or a person is arrested the trauma resonates through large families and communities. In the Kurdish movement, a 30-year-old, educated Kurdish woman – married, pregnant and gainfully employed – can be unapologetically in favour of the PKK’s armed struggle:

I don’t want the PKK to put down arms before the state officially gives me my rights as a Kurd .... I support a separate Kurdish state. We don’t need independence, but [autonomy within] our own boundaries. I don’t trust the Turkish state. Even if it codifies my rights in law, I feel like it can still kill me in my sleep. We can’t defend our lawful rights in Turkey.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Some 16 per cent of Turks said they did not want to live with Kurds; another 9 per cent said they would not want to live in the same neighbourhood or apartment. By contrast, 78 per cent of Kurds showed willingness to live next to Turks or be related by marriage. “Terörle Mücadelede Toplumsal Algılar”, Bilgesam, op. cit. Some 3,000 people were interviewed online.

<sup>195</sup> “People here don’t feel like they belong [with the state] any more. They need to be reminded that it was the Kurds and Turks together that won Turkey’s war of independence [1918-1923]. After that, the Kurds were pushed aside. Now is the time to remedy those mistakes. Open the parliamentary archives. Let’s face the past. People are already talking about it behind closed doors; let’s talk about it openly”. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır correspondent, international news agency, Diyarbakır, 17 May 2012. “Emotionally, the Kurds have broken from the state and have attached themselves to [BDP Diyarbakır mayor] Osman Baydemir. They have high expectations from DTK and BDP. They want Baydemir to solve everything from the city’s traffic problem to their kids’ drug addictions”. Crisis Group interview, Vecdi Erbay, journalist, IMC TV, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Crisis Group interview, May 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

If the government continues to give priority to a military solution, clamp down on political dissent and postpone reforms, it risks losing a generation of young Kurds whose parents found common cause with the Turks on the political left. Nationalism is on the rise on both sides, with the young becoming particularly radical.<sup>198</sup> A Kurdish mayor has first-hand experience of how change for the worse has influenced his son:

I have been elected by 66 per cent of the people here to serve a second term in office. I don’t even own a pocket knife, let alone engage in any violence. Nonetheless, there are 73 cases against me for a total of 480 years in prison. Seeing this, my sixteen-year-old son went up to the mountains [to join PKK] in 2009.<sup>199</sup>

The sharpening atmosphere of discrimination, is again strengthening support for the PKK, just as the PKK offensive since 2011 has brought back polarisation reminiscent of the worst years of violence in the 1990s.

My family lived in central Turkey when I was a child. Because they were scared of the state, my parents never instilled in me a sense of Kurdishness. I didn’t know what I was, but some of the kids in my school started calling me “dirty Kurd [Kurd]”. I didn’t understand why. Then they began demanding that I show them my tail. That summer I had to go swimming [naked] to show them I didn’t have a tail. I regret the suffering of the past 30 years. But if it wasn’t for [the PKK], I would be a 42-year-old man still trying to convince people I didn’t have a tail.<sup>200</sup>

But the majority of Kurds continue to want to live in Turkey and more than 71 per cent of Turks and 90 per cent of Kurds said they can have a common future.<sup>201</sup> Diyarbakır’s Mayor Baydemir explained:

We don’t want separation. That would be the biggest unfairness to Kurds economically. Everything has been taken away from us for years. We only want to be a part of the civilised world. We don’t want to redraw the borders; we just want to make them softer and more flexible.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> A young local Kurdish official said, “we have been treated as a step-child for so long. Especially the younger generation has a very clear Kurdish identity. We have everything we need here. And the central government’s policies have kept us living in misery”. Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, September 2012.

<sup>199</sup> Crisis Group interview, Abdullah Demirbaş, Suriçi district mayor, Diyarbakır, 15 May 2012.

<sup>200</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish lawyer and local official, Diyarbakır, 5 September 2012.

<sup>201</sup> “Terörle Mücadelede Toplumsal Algılar”, Bilgesam, op. cit. But see Section II.D, fn. 71, above for different poll results.

<sup>202</sup> Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, 14 May 2012.

The Kurdish movement's civil society platform, DTK, wants the status issue put to a referendum but repeats Baydemir's point it does not seek an independent Kurdish state: "We want to live with the Turkish people together in an equal, free environment . . . . Our reasons for not wanting a separate state are [also] ideological [since] we say the state is mother of all evils".<sup>203</sup>

Mostly, Kurds want respect and empathy from the government and the rest of the country, and a better life for their children.<sup>204</sup> In a clear sign that the local elite wishes to ease escalating tensions, and in reaction to apparent policy paralysis in Ankara, well-known Diyarbakır figures came together in September 2012 to offer to mediate a solution between parliamentary parties, mainly BDP and AKP. Calling themselves the "Dialogue and Contact Group", they included the chairman of the regional businessmen's association, the head of the bar association and the heads of two leading human rights NGOs, as well as journalists and academics.<sup>205</sup> In addition to broadening a Kurdish middle ground between the PKK and the government, other civil society initiatives, such as business delegation exchanges, school trips and professional conferences, could also be used to reach out to Turkish mainstream opinion and overcome prejudices about Kurds.

The government should seize on the Kurds' desire to remain in Turkey by first winning back its estranged citizens' hearts and minds. On the other hand, to overcome the public's paranoia that Kurdish organisations are working for an independent Kurdistan, the Kurdish movement must clearly explain its specific plans regarding decentralisation or a federal option, underlining that they are different from independence. As a Kurdish academic put it:

Take the Kurdistan Regional Government [in northern Iraq. Turkey's] Kurds feel proud perhaps when they visit, but none of them want to move and live there. If you ask them where they want to live, they say Ankara or Istanbul, not Erbil. But the state has to do something to strengthen their sense of belonging to Turkey.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kurdish movement political activist, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>204</sup> A local taxi driver who had worked for two straight days and nights said, "I work for my kids' futures, so they have an education and don't go up to the mountains". Crisis Group interview, Diyarbakır, May 2012.

<sup>205</sup> An organiser of the group described the initiative: "Turkey is going through difficult times. We have been meeting and talking among ourselves and with activists and academics for over a month. We had a meeting on 2 September in Istanbul with the government and established this group. Before that, we had asked AKP and BDP whether they would be open to the idea, and they said 'yes'. We are focusing on three areas, namely establishing dialogue between political parties, speeding up talks on the new constitution and reducing tensions and the environment of violence". Şahismail Bedirhanoğlu, head of South-eastern Industrialists' Businessmen's Association (GÜNSIAD), Channel 24 interview (in Turkish), at <http://bit.ly/QcB9W3>.

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<sup>206</sup> Crisis Group interview, Vahap Coşkun, Kurdish academic, Diyarbakır, 16 May 2012.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Diyarbakır, once a commercial bastion that led the nation's development indices, has been battered by decades of conflict and injustice. A budding economic revival risks being undermined by the non-resolution of the nexus of issues known as the Kurdish problem and the resumption of PKK-related violence that has reached levels not seen since the 1990s.

As Diyarbakır struggles to find ways to escape being dragged back into that grim, violent period, the Turkish state has a responsibility to help, by offering equal rights in mother-language use, local governance and identity and political representation. Despite sharp divisions among local political camps and between the state and Turkey's Kurds, Diyarbakır shows that these basic goals are supported across the local political spectrum and can best be addressed through reforms, as long as there is the political will to implement a comprehensive package.

Turkey's Kurds have a minority nationalist faction, prominent in Diyarbakır, but its hardline views should not be attributed to the Kurdish population as a whole. While there is again a growing feeling of alienation and injustice, a majority, as seen in Diyarbakır, still wants to be part of a more democratic, inclusive Turkey. The Kurdish movement owes it to Kurds to set out clearly a political agenda that reflects this reality. The government, other parties in parliament and Turkish media should distinguish clearly between political activists and violent fighters. Both Turks and Kurds should build on the common-sense preference for a prosperous, united future, before the trend to polarisation and radical rhetoric sets in deeper.

The struggle for the hearts and minds of Diyarbakır residents – and of Kurds at large – is not yet lost. If central state policies can be refocused on creating a more equal, democratic Turkey, and if the leaderships of both sides place more emphasis on fostering realistic discussion of differences than populist rhetoric, there are still many reasons to hope that Turks' and Kurds' millennium-long common history can continue more harmoniously.

**Istanbul/Diyarbakır/Brussels,  
30 November 2012**

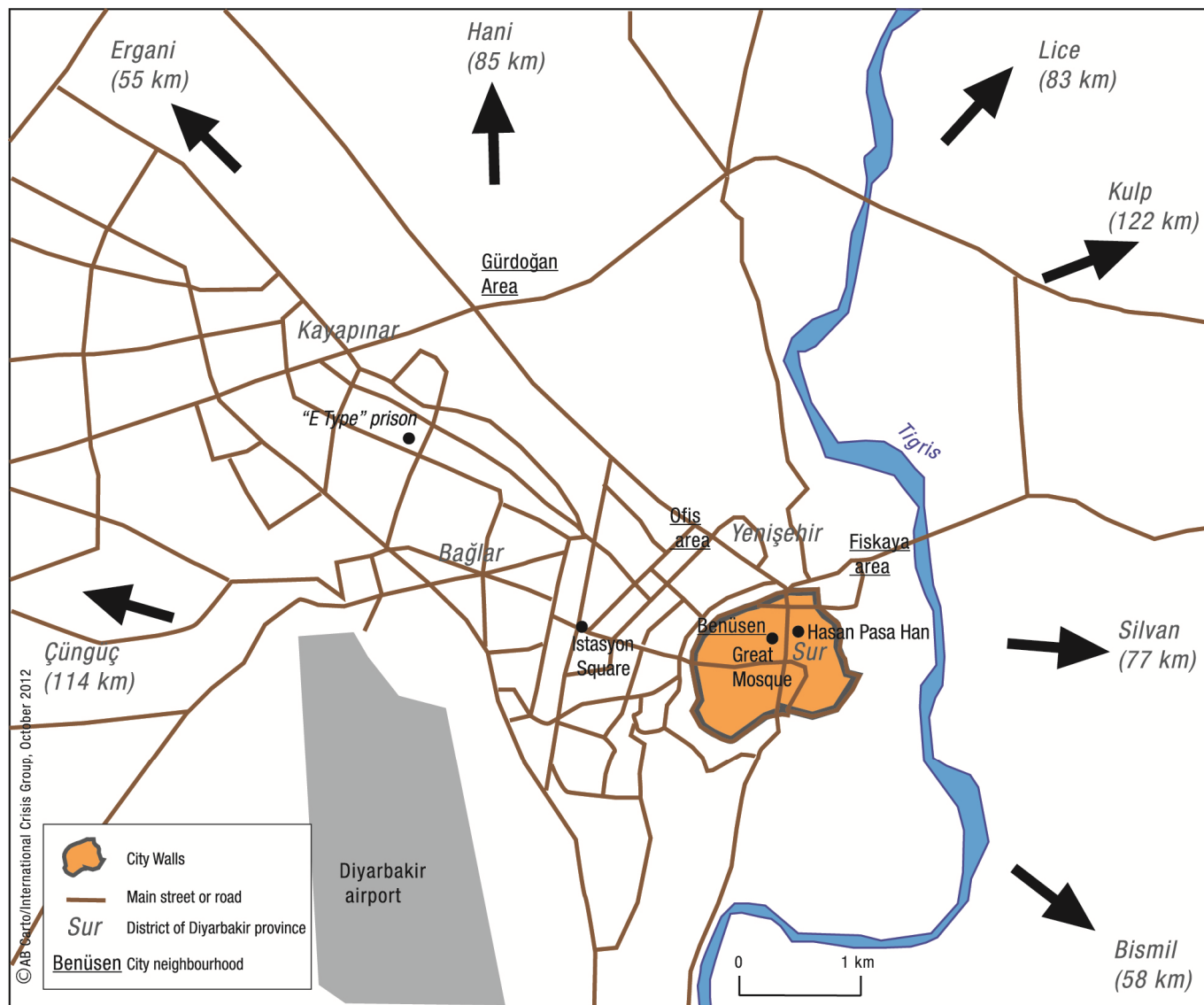
## APPENDIX A

### MAP OF TURKEY



## APPENDIX B

### MAP OF DIYARBAKIR CITY





## APPENDIX C

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**AKP** – (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party), Turkey's ruling party, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It enjoys a strong parliamentary majority and popular support; its ideology mixes conservatism, religious piety, populism and economic development. The party won 50 per cent of the vote in the June 2011 parliamentary elections. It currently holds 326 of the 550 seats in parliament.

**BDP** – (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, Peace and Democracy Party), the main legal Kurdish movement party in Turkey. Its six predecessors were closed by courts for links to the PKK. Thousands of BDP activists are currently charged with, or jailed on suspicion of, links to terrorism and PKK/KCK membership, though there are almost no charges of actual violent acts. BDP-affiliated candidates won 6.5 per cent of the vote in June 2011 elections. The party has 29 members in its parliamentary group and the support of several independents.

**CHP** – (Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party), the main left-of-centre opposition party; it has a new interest in Kurdish reforms and a deep-rooted loyalty to the statist, nationalist heritage of republic and party founder Kemal Atatürk. The party won 26 per cent of the vote and 135 of the 550 seats in parliament in June 2011 elections.

**Dershane** – Private courses for high school and primary school students nationwide to prepare them for university and high school entrance exams.

**DTK** – (Demokratik Toplum Kongresi, Democratic Society Congress), a legal platform for Kurdish movement political parties in Turkey, non-governmental organisations, associations and prominent individuals; while broad-based, many of its decisions are strongly influenced by Kurdish movement politics.

**GAP** – (Southeast Anatolia Project), a Turkish state irrigation scheme, started in 1977 and covering 1.8 million hectares in the south east.

**Hizmet (Service) movement** – Turkish religious leader Fetullah Gülen's moderately Islamic, international initiative that primarily establishes educational institutions and involves hundreds of foundations, companies and professional associations.

**KCK** – (Koma Ciwakên Kurdistanê, Union of Communities in Kurdistan), created by the PKK in 2005-2007, this is an umbrella organisation for all PKK affiliates in Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the diaspora. The Turkish chapter is known as the KCK/TM (for Türkiye Meclisi, or Turkey Assembly).

**MHP** – (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, Nationalist Action Party), Turkey's main right-wing opposition party, won 13 per cent of the vote in June 2011 elections. It currently holds 56 of the 550 seats in parliament.

**Mustazaflar Hareketi** – (Movement of the Oppressed, formerly Mustazaf-Der), the leading legal organisation of Turkey's (outlawed) Hizbullah, based in the predominantly Kurdish south east. It was set up in Diyarbakır in 2004 as Mustazaflar Derneği (Association of the Oppressed, or Mustazaf-Der for short) but was shut down in May 2012 by Supreme Court decision. The group is in the process of establishing a political party under the new name.

**PKK** – (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, Kurdistan Workers' Party), founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan, it started an armed insurgency in Turkey in 1984. The PKK has 3,000-5,000 insurgents based in northern Iraq and in Turkey and substantial minority support among Turkish Kurds. It is banned as a terrorist and drug-smuggling organisation by Turkey, the EU, the U.S. and a number of other countries.

## APPENDIX D

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 130 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former U.S. Undersecretary of State and Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since July 2009 has been Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices or representation in 34 locations: Abuja, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Bishkek, Bogotá, Bujumbura, Cairo, Dakar, Damascus, Dubai, Gaza, Guatemala City, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kathmandu, London, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Port-au-Prince, Pristina, Rabat, Sanaa, Sarajevo, Seoul, Tbilisi, Tripoli, Tunis and Washington DC. Crisis Group currently covers some 70 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in

Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, North Caucasus, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, institutional foundations, and private sources. The following governmental departments and agencies have provided funding in recent years: Australian Agency for International Development, Austrian Development Agency, Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Canadian International Development Agency, Canadian International Development Research Centre, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument for Stability, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Agency for International Development, Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Kingdom Department for International Development, U.S. Agency for International Development.

The following institutional and private foundations have provided funding in recent years: Adessium Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Elders Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Humanity United, Henry Luce Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Radcliffe Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Stanley Foundation, The Charitable Foundation, Tinker Foundation Incorporated.

**November 2012**

## APPENDIX E

### CRISIS GROUP REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS ON EUROPE SINCE 2009

#### Balkans

*Macedonia's Name: Breaking the Deadlock*, Europe Briefing N°52, 12 January 2009 (also available in Albanian and Macedonian).

*Bosnia's Incomplete Transition: Between Dayton and Europe*, Europe Report N°198, 9 March 2009 (also available in Serbian).

*Serb Integration in Kosovo: Taking the Plunge*, Europe Report N°200, 12 May 2009.

*Bosnia: A Test of Political Maturity in Mostar*, Europe Briefing N°54, 27 July 2009.

*Kosovo: Štrpce, a Model Serb Enclave?*, Europe Briefing N°56, 15 October 2009 (also available in Albanian and Serbian).

*Bosnia's Dual Crisis*, Europe Briefing N°57, 12 November 2009.

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