
NEW IRAQ DIRECTLY CONCERNS TURKEY

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Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi keeps releasing statements with regard to the Bashiqa camp debate, which has heated up again after the Mosul operation came to the fore. Repeating that he does not wish to see the Turkish military in Mosul, al-Abadi added another interesting argument to the "picnic" polemic:

"There is not a picnic in Iraq but a fight against Daish. After we take back Mosul from Daish we would invite them as guests, but for now, there is no place for Turkish soldiers in Iraq since we are occupied with battling Daish and the presence of Turkish soldiers hinders us from doing that."

The argument suggesting that Turkish military hampers the fight against Daish simply makes no sense.

In Bashiqa, Turkey has been conducting train-and-equip initiatives in order to fight Daish in a way that encompasses all the elements of Iraq.

Some Iraqi military officers also took part in that initiative, too.

A couple of days before the first Bashiqa crisis, the Iraqi defense minister paid a visit to the camp and thanked Turkey for its support.

Also, it is known that Ankara has a penchant for using Bashiqa along with international coalition partners.

Furthermore, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and Foreign Minister Mevlet Çavuşoğlu have remarked numerous times that Turkey does not have any "different" demands regarding Mosul.

The terror caused by Daish and the PKK and the concerns of providing safety in Turkey and Iraq are the most important reasons for Turkey's presence in Bashiqa. Ankara wishes to be at the Mosul table in order to prevent the PKK's consolidation and the change of demographic structure in the region, like in the years of Iraqi occupation.

While other forces, including the U.S., which was not affected by the Iraqi civil war, are in the region, why is Turkey's presence seen as a problem? The answer to this question lies behind what al-Abadi abstained from saying.

Behind the argument that Turkey hampers the fight against Daish lies this message: "We do not want you to prevent us from establishing order and maintaining the demographic structure we want after the purge of Daish."

So, al-Abadi hints that they do not want to see Turkey's influence in the establishment of the new order in Iraq. In other words, they aim to maintain a policy of enhancing the Iranian and Shiite influence, which will leave the local elements in the regions purged of Daish out of the equation.

I wrote in one of my previous columns that the weakest point of the fight against Daish, led by the U.S. is that the post-Daish period is not being planned fairly and realistically. The negative aspects of this policy are now resurfacing one by one. The employment of some terrorist groups as land forces, such as the Shiite militia, the PKK and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), builds ground for a new conflict both among regional forces and local fundamental elements.

The PKK is endeavoring to gain legitimacy under the umbrella of al-Hashd al-Sha'abi (the People's Mobilization), while Sunni Arabs and other local elements are trapped in radicalization even wilder than Daish.

Also, the promises that are not kept in such a chaotic atmosphere shatter the trust between some allies such as the U.S. and Turkey, just as the Obama government has not kept its word regarding the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the PKK and uses and reinforces the PKK in the field under the umbrellas of the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) in Syria and al-Hashd al-Sha'abi in Iraq. Tired of such acts, Ankara wants to be at the front in order to provide its own safety and maintain its cooperation with allies on a reasonable platform.

With Operation Euphrates Shield, imposing hard power in the field as part of the Syria-Iraq context has become a component of Turkey's new policy. This choice undoubtedly brings new tensions, blockages and changing partnerships on to the agenda.

Blamed previously for not fighting Daish, Turkey is now trying to be limited in the field. The U.S., which wanted Turkey's participation in the Mosul operation beforehand, now takes a stance siding with Iraq, and thus Iran. Repeating the same mistakes in Iraq since the occupation of Iraq despite all the warnings, the U.S. is on the brink of a new mistake. Omitting Turkey out of the Iraqi agenda or placing the country into a secondary position due to the pressure from Iran will not create a new and peaceful Iraq. Turkey is the only country that has the potential to support Iraq's integrity by encompassing all the elements in Iraq.

Furthermore, Turkey's friends and neighbors should realize that it is a must for Turkey to fight the threats from all the PKK formations under different names in Iraq and Syria.

Kaynak/Source: