Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	**1261**
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 – Kurdistan Workers' Party
Udgivet:	1. november 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	16. december 2019

Document #2019476
USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Kurdistan Workers' Party

Aka the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress; the Freedom and Democracy Congress of Kurdistan; KADEK; Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan; the People's Defense Force; Halu Mesru Savunma Kuvveti; Kurdistan People's Congress; People's Congress of Kurdistan; KONGRAGEL.

Description: Founded by Abdullah Ocalan in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist separatist organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was designated as a FTO on October 8, 1997. The group, composed primarily of Turkish Kurds, launched a campaign of violence in 1984. The PKK's original goal was to establish an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey.

Activities: In the early 1990s, the PKK moved beyond rural-based insurgent activities to engage in urban terrorism. Anatolia became the scene of significant violence, with some estimates suggesting at least 40,000 casualties. Following his capture in 1999, Ocalan announced a "peace initiative," ordering members to refrain from violence and requesting dialogue with Ankara on Kurdish issues. The PKK foreswore violence until June 2004, when its hardline militant wing took control and renounced the self-imposed cease-fire. Striking over the border from bases within Iraq, the PKK engaged in terrorist attacks in eastern and western Turkey. In 2009, the Turkish government and the PKK resumed peace negotiations, but talks broke down after the PKK carried out an attack in July 2011 that left 13 Turkish soldiers dead. In 2012, the PKK claimed responsibility for multiple car bombings resulting in the deaths of at least 10 people. Between December 2012 and July 2015, the Turkish government and the PKK resumed peace negotiations, dubbed the "solution process." They made significant progress, but the negotiations ultimately broke down – owing partly to domestic political pressures and the war in Syria.

Between January and mid-July 2015, the PKK carried out small-scale armed attacks against Turkey's security forces and military bases. In August 2016, the group claimed a VBIED strike against Sirnak police headquarters, which killed 11 people and wounded more than 70 others. In January 2017, Turkish officials blamed the PKK for a car bomb and shooting outside of a courthouse that killed two people. In June 2017, the PKK attacked a military convoy in southeastern Turkey, using mortar and machine gun fire to kill more than 20 soldiers.

In 2018, numerous attacks by the PKK were reported against Turkey's security forces including an attack claimed by the PKK in November 2018 against a Turkish army base, which resulted in dozens of causalities. Turkey's Ministry of the Interior claimed that the PKK killed 27 civilians in Turkey in 2018.

Since 2015, the group has been responsible for the deaths of more than 1,200 Turkish security officials and civilians.

Strength: The PKK is estimated to consist of 4,000 to 5,000 members, 3,000 to 3,500 of whom are located in northern Iraq.

Location/Area of Operation: The group is located primarily in Turkey and Iraq. Affiliated groups operate in Syria and Iran.

Funding and External Aid: The PKK receives financial support from the large Kurdish diaspora in Europe.

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ecoi.net summary:
Brief description of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)

Countries:
Iran, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey

Source:
USDOS – US Department of State (/en/source/11558.html)

Original link (no longer valid):
~~https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018/#PKK~~

Document type:
Periodical Report

Language:
English

Published:
1 November 2019

Document ID:
2019476

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.