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Turkey and War in Iraq: Avoiding Past Patterns of Violation

Summary and Recommendations

Looming war in Iraq and recent discussion of Turkey's potential role in Northern Iraq raise serious human rights concerns. Human Rights Watch takes no position on the legal justifiability of war, including possible U.S.-led military action in Iraq. Its work on Iraq focuses on continuing human rights abuses and, if there is a war, the compliance by all parties with international humanitarian law and protections for Iraqi civilians. However, if very large numbers of Turkish armed forces enter Northern Iraq there is a risk that they will resort to the mass detention and torture, political killings, "disappearances," and village burning that they used when fighting over similar terrain in southeastern Turkey. This briefing paper elaborates possible concerns about Turkey's potential role in Iraq and recommends action that Turkey and its allies should take to ensure that any Turkish operations in Iraq comport with international human rights and humanitarian law.

In negotiating terms for allowing U.S. troops access to Northern Iraq via Turkey, the Turkish government is not only looking for compensation for loss of trade and tourism income. It is also trying to obtain assurances about the future of the Kurdish-run enclave in Northern Iraq. The Turkish government believes that if Iraqi Kurdish forces were to capture the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, then the Iraqi Kurds would have the financial independence to establish a separate Kurdish state. On February 21, 2003 the Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis said, "At present the Kurdish area enjoys a certain autonomy.... We do not want this to be consolidated further and to be transformed into a federal state or an independent state." The Turkish government opposes this consolidation on the grounds that it might provide a model that would encourage Kurdish separatism within Turkey as well. Foreign Minister Yakis went on to indicate that Turkey would field more troops than the U.S. in Northern Iraq and that Turkish troops would be prepared to go into combat to prevent Kurdish forces seizing Kirkuk and the oil fields around it.

In fact, Turkish forces are already present in large numbers in the Kurdish-held enclave in Northern Iraq. Since 1997 an estimated 5,000 Turkish soldiers have occupied a fifteen-kilometer-deep strip along Turkey's border with Iraq. The Turkish army provides officers for a peacekeeping force between territories held by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Along the border strip, Turkish forces are also setting up camps into which they hope to channel possible mass flows of Iraqi civilians fleeing the conflict, in order to prevent them crossing into Turkey. A much larger Turkish force is massing on the Turkish side of the frontier with Northern Iraq, and, according to *Newsweek* of February 24, there are plans to deploy 60,000 to 80,000 Turkish troops up to 170 miles into Northern Iraq if Kurdish forces attempt to annex oil-rich Kirkuk. If such a deployment of Turkish troops were to provoke armed resistance from KDP and PUK forces, the resulting conflict could be protracted.

The political and military situation in Northern Iraq differs significantly from that in southeastern Turkey, but their human geography, consisting of large villages scattered through rugged mountains, are similar. Human Rights Watch is therefore concerned that the Turkish armed forces deployed in Northern Iraq might use the same methods they employed in southeastern Turkey between 1984 and 1999 during bitter conflict with the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK, now known as KADEK). Certainly, the rationale for possible Turkish intervention in Northern Iraq is the same as that which drove the conflict with the PKK: combating Kurdish separatism. Moreover, Northern Iraq's anomalous status (technically part of Iraq proper but granted de facto autonomy under at least two separate political authorities) means that Turkish forces operating there would face limited administrative or judicial scrutiny to constrain their conduct.

During a two-decade campaign against separatism inside Turkey's borders, state forces committed grave and widespread human rights violations. They detained thousands of citizens for interrogation under torture. Between 1980 and 2000, more than 400 prisoners died, apparently as a result of torture, in the hands of Turkish police or gendarmes (i.e. soldiers who carry out police duties in the countryside complementary to the police within city and town boundaries). Security forces emptied large areas of the countryside in the southeast by bombing and burning unarmed peasant settlements. Hundreds of thousands are still displaced. In the early 1990s, the Turkish security forces are believed to have sponsored networks of killers to eliminate hundreds of suspected enemies of the state by gunning them down in the street or making them "disappear."

In the course of the conflict, the PKK also massacred hundreds of civilians and executed prisoners, abuses that Human Rights Watch publicly condemned.

After Turkish forces captured the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire, but it retains bases in Northern Iraq. In the intervening years the Turkish government enacted significant reforms, and the growing stability brought about a striking improvement in the general human rights picture.

Against this backdrop, Human Rights Watch regards the possibility of large-scale Turkish incursion into Iraq with trepidation. If recent hard-won human rights gains are not to be jeopardized, Turkey and its allies must be alert to the risks of replaying scenes from southeastern Turkey during the 1990s in Northern Iraq today.

The international community in general, but especially NATO, its member states and other participants in any potential war in Iraq, should make clear to Turkey at the outset that any expanded intervention in Northern Iraq must not result in human rights violations or war crimes. In particular, Human Rights Watch recommends that in the event of war in Iraq, and an expanded Turkish military presence in Northern Iraq:

- No security force units with a history of committing grave human rights violations, and no individual members of security forces implicated in human rights violations should be sent to Northern Iraq.

- Turkish armed forces entering Northern Iraq should not employ the "scorched earth" methods of controlling mountainous territory that they used in southeastern Turkey. That

is, they should not drive out the local population with violence and the threat of violence in order to create a free-fire zone.

- Intergovernmental and non-governmental human rights organizations, and where appropriate, Turkish judicial authorities or the judicial authorities of Northern Iraq, should have sufficient access to scrutinize Turkey's present and future military activities in Northern Iraq, particularly the management of prisoners and fleeing civilian populations.

- NATO states that share military equipment with Turkey and states that supply military assistance to Turkey have a special responsibility to ensure that Turkish forces do not use this equipment to commit any grave violations against civilian populations. As such, they should put in place effective measures to monitor Turkey's end-use of NATO assets and foreign-supplied weapons, and ensure accountability for any misuse of this weaponry and other military assistance.

- Populations fleeing Iraqi aggression or US attacks or other threats should not be confined to "safe" camps in Northern Iraq, but be permitted to cross the border to seek safety in Turkey. This may require that the international community provide financial and other assistance.

Past Patterns of Abuse and Current Concerns in Turkey and Northern Iraq

In a thirteen-year-long conflict with the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), Turkish security forces established a reputation for systematic torture and extrajudicial killing. When Turkish police, gendarmes, or soldiers had difficulty in distinguishing between rural civilian populations and armed insurgents, they drove the peasantry off their land and burned down thousands of settlements to create free-fire zones in the countryside. Soldiers torched villagers' homes, destroyed their crops and orchards, and machine-gunned their livestock. No official record was kept of these operations or the destruction wrought in the course of them, and no compensation was paid. Even by official figures, widely considered to be a serious underestimate, 380,000 people lost their homes. Most of the displaced are now living in poverty in the metropolitan areas of the country. Government return programs are a sham, without sufficient funding or political will to regenerate the fragile peasant economy. This pattern of violations has been corroborated by judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, which found Turkish security forces responsible for torturing, killing, and "disappearing" Kurdish villagers and burning them out of their homes. (See for example, *Akdivar and others v Turkey*, September 16, 1996; *Mentes v Turkey*, November 28, 1997; *Selçuk v Turkey, April 24, 1998; Asker v Turkey, April 24, 1998; Bilgin v Turkey, July 17, 2001; Dulas v Turkey, January 30, 2001; Orhan v Turkey June 18, 2002 Akdeniz and others v Turkey,May 31, 2001; Kurt v Turkey*, May 25, 1998; *Çakici v Turkey*, July 8,1999; *Ertak v Turkey*, May 9, 2000; *Timurtas v Turkey*, June 13, 2000.)

Turkish forces have also been responsible for civilian deaths in Northern Iraq. In May 2000, the European Court of Human Rights admitted the complaint of Halima Musa Issa and others concerning the death of seven Kurdish shepherds in Northern Iraq in April 1995. According to eye-witness accounts, Turkish soldiers operating inside Iraq detained the shepherds near the

village of Azadi, and kicked, slapped, and beat them with rifle butts before taking them away. Their families tried to find them, but the Turkish military unit in the area provided no information about the whereabouts of the missing men. When the Turkish army withdrew some days later, villagers found the shepherds' bodies riddled with bullet wounds and mutilated. The Turkish government denies that there were Turkish soldiers in the area at the time.

In August 2000 thirty-eight civilians, including women and children, were killed when Turkish jets bombed a group of pastoralists near Kendaxor, near Irbil, in Northern Iraq. Turkish military officials initially denied responsibility, but subsequently a foreign ministry spokesperson stated that Turkish forces had carried out airborne operations on the day of the tragedy, and that they would investigate claims of civilian casualties. In October 2000, news reports indicated that the Turkish government had paid an undisclosed sum of money to the leader of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani, to be forwarded as compensation to relatives of civilians killed in the Kendaxor bombing. Throughout the 1990s there were other cases of indiscriminate bombing and shelling by the Turkish air force, leading to civilian death and injury. Human Rights Watch's 1995 report *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey* focuses primarily on violations in Turkey, but gives information about three incidents of indiscriminate shelling, bombing, and strafing in Northern Iraq in 1993 and 1994, which resulted in the deaths of four people and the wounding of twenty-five.

Avoiding Deployment of Security Forces with Records of Abuse

In light of the well-documented patterns of past abuse, no security force units with an established record of committing serious human violations should be deployed in Northern Iraq. The Bolu Commando Brigade, for example, was reportedly responsible for numerous violations of the laws of war, including village destruction, indiscriminate fire, and "disappearances." Relatives of victims of several extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" in Diyarbakir province in 1993 named the Bolu Commando Brigade as the perpetrating unit. The European Court of Human Rights found Turkey guilty of violations of the right to life in two clusters of "disappearances" reportedly involving Bolu commandos. One case was the "disappearance" of eleven Kurdish inhabitants of the village of Alaca in Diyarbakir province in 1993 (*Akdeniz and others v Turkey*). The second was the "disappearance" of three men from the village of Caglayan in 1993. Relatives said that soldiers from the Bolu Commando Brigade took the men away (*Orhan v Turkey*). None of the perpetrators of these incidents have been brought to justice.

- Given the strong evidence linking the Bolu Commando Brigade with grave abuses in circumstances similar to those that may arise in Northern Iraq, the Bolu Commando Brigade should not be sent for service there. The same should apply for other units or individuals linked to past gross violations of human rights or humanitarian law.

- Members of the security forces who have a past conviction for ill-treatment or torture (including those whose sentences were amnestied), extrajudicial execution or "disappearance," or who are under investigation or on trial for such offences should not be sent for duty in Northern Iraq. Similarly, no member of the security forces should be armed and on duty in Northern Iraq if they are implicated in any of the 157 cases subject to judgments against Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights (there are currently

more than 1,000 additional cases against Turkey pending before the European Court of Human Rights).

The Turkish military should under no circumstances send village guards for armed service in Northern Iraq. Village guards are mainly Kurdish paramilitaries armed and paid by the Turkish government to fight the PKK. There are still about 90,000 village guards in southeastern Turkey. A 1995 report of the Turkish Parliament's Commission on Unsolved Political Killings confirmed that village guards were involved in a wide range of lawless activities, including killing and extortion, and called for the corps to be abolished. Almost every intergovernmental human rights mechanism that has since reported on southeastern Turkey has echoed that plea, including most recently the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions who recommended in her December 2001 report to the U.N. Human Rights Commission: "The village guard system, to which a large number of extrajudicial killings have been attributed, should be disarmed and disbanded without delay."

Village guard abuses continue in southeastern Turkey. Even in the relative calm and stability of the past eight months, it has been reported that village guards have deliberately killed five displaced villagers attempting to return to their homes. In view of the evidence linking village guards with drug smuggling, abduction, killings, and "disappearance," Human Rights Watch was surprised and alarmed to hear reports that in early 2003 the Turkish army began to train several hundred village guards in the border area under the name of "Lightning Group" (*Simsekler Grubu*) for service in Northern Iraq. Village guards who have undergone this training have been told that they may be required to work in the camps along the border that have been established to prevent a refugee influx into Turkey.

- Village guards should not be used for any armed activities in Northern Iraq, and especially not the management of large-scale refugee movements. If the regular armed forces want to use village guards because they speak Kurdish, then the armed forces should employ the guards as unarmed interpreters.

Avoiding "scorched earth" methods

During the course of the conflict in mainly rural southeastern Turkey, security forces resorted to what amounted to a scorched earth strategy – forcibly evacuating and burning any settlements that were not prepared to put up a corps of village guards. Where there are pressing reasons of security, governments do have the right to move populations. However, what happened in southeastern Turkey was neither an orderly nor lawful resettlement program but an arbitrary and violent campaign marked by hundreds of "disappearances" and summary executions.

The U.N Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement prohibit the use of displacement in armed conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand, echoing imperative requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention that are increasingly applicable to internal armed conflicts, such as through the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In such cases, the authorities must conduct the process in a lawful and ordered manner, providing alternative accommodation that meets the population's nutritional, health, and

hygiene needs. The U.N. Guiding Principles impose upon states a particular obligation to protect from displacement indigenous peoples, minorities, peasants, pastoralists, and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands. The Guiding Principles also specify that displacement should not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty, and security of those affected.

- Human Rights Watch recommends that the government of Turkey should commit itself to avoid the war crime of forcible displacement in the event of any war in Iraq, and renounce the "scorched earth" tactics previously employed in southeastern Turkey.

Access to ensure effective monitoring

Many of the abuses that marked the Turkish armed forces' operations within Turkey were exacerbated because they were unrestrained by many of the checks, balances, and opportunities for civilian supervision customary in, for example, most other Council of Europe, OSCE, or NATO member states. The military's operations are severely lacking in transparency. Chaotic and unreliable record keeping makes it difficult for independent governmental, intergovernmental, or non-governmental monitors to investigate the involvement of Turkey's military in alleged violations. The Turkish armed forces are not subject to Ministry of Defense authority, but are answerable only to the General Staff who advise the prime minister. The European Court of Human Rights has indicated that the deference shown by the judiciary to the security forces is a factor in the systematic failure to investigate abuses in the southeast. Courts are still extremely reluctant to prosecute members of the armed forces. Reports of torture and ill treatment by gendarmes at gendarmeries remain common in Turkey. In recent years prosecutors have shown more willingness to indict police for alleged abuses, but gendarmes continue to operate with virtual impunity. Official figures show that a hundred times as many police officers were indicted for torture and ill treatment in the past two years as were gendarmes for torture in the past five years.

If the Turkish army were to expand its presence in Northern Iraq, independent and accountable civilian oversight by means of internal military supervisory mechanisms, by government, by the judiciary, by civil society, and by the media, would be essential to ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. During the emergency stages of a conflict, these forms of oversight might not be practical. But as indicated above, a large-scale incursion deep into Iraq is unlikely to be over in days or weeks. Even over, this longer period of time the particular circumstances of long-term dislocation and power-vacuum found in Northern Iraq make it unlikely that any form of administrative, judicial, or civil society supervision will be available to constrain military abuses unless the Turkish government and other involved governments deliberately set out to make provisions for access by supervisory mechanisms.

Turkish civil society could help to make up the deficit in judicial and ministerial supervision of the military's activities. But Turkish authorities have long repressed domestic human rights organizations, and obstructed, detained, and prosecuted their members when they have attempted to monitor Turkish forces' activities in the countryside. To give a typical example: in July 2001, after a soldier was killed by a landmine near the villages of Asat and Ortakli in Sirnak province,

gendarmes forcibly evacuated both settlements and destroyed homes. Inhabitants of the village reported that gendarmes detained and interrogated them under torture, raping them with truncheons and subjecting them to electric shocks. When Osman Baydemir, president of the local branch of the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA), traveled to Sirnak to investigate the allegations, he was detained together with a villager he had interviewed. The detained villager reported that gendarmes tortured him in order to make him sign a statement alleging that the HRA delegation had bribed him to give false testimony incriminating the security forces.

The U.N. Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms acknowledges and affirms the role of non-governmental organizations in contributing to the elimination of human rights violations. Articles 6 and 8 underline the right of such organizations to seek information about the implementation of public policy with regard to rights and fundamental freedoms, to be granted access in the conduct of public affairs and, where necessary, to criticize state authorities where they are failing to protect human rights.

Based on recent experience, Human Rights Watch is concerned that the minimal oversight that civil society is able to exert within Turkey may be reduced to zero in Northern Iraq. Following the deaths resulting from the Turkish airforce bombing in Kendaxor, Northern Iraq, a delegation organized by a collection of trade unions and professional bodies called the Diyarbakir Democracy Platform travelled to the Iraqi border on August 29, 2000 intending to investigate. Turkish border officials prevented the delegation from crossing the frontier on the orders of the regional governor.

The fact that journalists are already being prevented from crossing the border into Northern Iraq confirms fears that the Turkish military's first instinct will be to restrict access as far as possible. The Turkish government and other governments involved in the crisis in Iraq must do all they can to combat this tendency and establish a culture of transparency.

It may not be possible to ensure civil society organizations access to investigate security force practices or the scenes of alleged abuses during the first days of an intervention, but an appropriate level of access should be provided as soon as practically possible in what is likely to be a long-term operation. HRW specifically recommends:

- The Turkish government should provide broad access to the region for Turkish parliamentary representatives, journalists, and Turkish and international non-governmental organizations. Access to particular locations and sites of alleged abuses should only be restricted as strictly required by the needs of safety.
- The Turkish armed forces should provide the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to any prisoners it may take within Northern Iraq. (Turkey has not provided access to ICRC within its own borders, but the Kurdish administrations throughout Northern Iraq have generally provided full access to ICRC for the past five years).

End-use monitoring of military equipment supplied to Turkey

Another important check against violations by the Turkish military in Northern Iraq could be effective end-use monitoring by governments supplying arms to Turkey. A large proportion of weapons and equipment that Turkish security forces may use in Northern Iraq was sold or given to Turkey by France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S., all of whom are fellow NATO members. Under multilateral agreements (for example, in the 1993 OSCE Criteria on Conventional Arms Transfers, the 2000 OSCE Small Arms Document, and the 1998 European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports) and in national policy statements, many of these countries have acknowledged their responsibility as weapons suppliers to adhere to minimum arms export criteria on the observance of human rights and compliance with international humanitarian law. In addition, these states are fellow participants with Turkey in the Wassenaar Arrangement, established in 1996 to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in arms transfers.

Turkey's NATO allies have a duty to ensure that the weapons they supply and use jointly would not be used to commit human rights violations if Turkey were to embark on a larger scale incursion into Iraq. Turkey has a complementary duty to keep and offer for inspection the documentation necessary to demonstrate this, and if necessary provide other forms of access. (The Wassenaar Arrangement's *Best Practices for Effective Enforcement* recommends that participants confirm the end-use of items they have supplied through "several means, ranging from documentation to on-premise checks of the end user and end-use.")

In order to ensure that the appropriate end-use of military equipment is verifiable, the Turkish military, the Turkish government, fellow NATO governments and governments authorizing supply of weapons to Turkish armed forces should establish channels and mechanisms for full disclosure of the circumstances of use of lethal weapons in Northern Iraq. Important elements of such monitoring would include:

- Close monitoring by personnel of NATO member and supplier country embassies, including the compilation of information and reports regarding alleged misuse of military equipment, visits to sites of alleged misuse, and interviews of victims and witnesses;

- A system of transparent record-keeping by the Turkish government covering use of all NATO assets and equipment manufactured and provided by NATO countries including dates, times, and locations of use, targets of any lethal force, casualty figures, the identity of individuals detained or transported in such equipment, units involved, and their commanding officers;

- Regular periodic consultation between NATO member countries and supplier countries and Turkish government authorities resulting in written explanations of any reported misuse of equipment and steps taken to investigate and hold those responsible accountable, as well as general measures taken to promote adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law by Turkish security personnel who use military equipment;

- Regular public reporting by NATO member governments, and supplier governments regarding their monitoring activities, findings, and the nature and effect of their dialogue

with the Turkish authorities regarding the end-use of NATO assets and military equipment.

Protection of asylum-seekers and refugees

Human Rights Watch is concerned that preparations made by Turkish authorities to meet possible large-scale refugee movements within Northern Iraq may not afford refugees proper protection. We recognize that Turkey, a country with its own chronic economic problems, has repeatedly had to shoulder a heavy financial burden to meet refugee crises arising from its neighbors, and we have urged governments of states outside the Iraq region to provide international assistance to neighboring countries, including Turkey, to help cope with the potential outflow of refugees from Iraq. (See Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper *Iraq: Prepare for Humanitarian Crisis*, February 13, 2003; www.hrw.org/press/2003/02/iraq0213.htm)

The Turkish government, fearing a new large influx, has established a series of camps within the fifteen-kilometer Turkish-occupied strip in Northern Iraq. When it introduced this plan in November 2002 the Turkish government stated that its main goal would be "to send foreigners settled in the camps either back to their region of origin or to third countries."

Herding refugees into "safe areas" of the kind offered by the Turkish military's camps is not a satisfactory solution for a number of reasons. First, the numbers of civilians fleeing the conflict may far exceed the predicted capacity of the camps. In December, the Turkish Red Crescent stated that the camps would be able to accommodate 80,000-100,000 people. In view of the U.N. predictions that up to a million and a half civilians may try to leave Iraq in the event of war, the camps may be insufficient. Moreover, the military-occupied zone is a rugged area with difficult communications. In the event that very large numbers begin to flee northward, there is a risk that it would become difficult to supply the camps with food, water, fuel, and medicine in the enormous volumes that would be required. Difficulty of access contributed to the high mortality rate among refugees in the border area in 1991.

Second, placing the camps in the military-occupied zone may make them a target of attack rather than a "safe area." In the event of an unexpected military reverse, a "safe area" can become very dangerous indeed. The Srebrenica massacre, the biggest atrocity of the war in Bosnia, was a direct result of an attempt and eventual failure to maintain a "safe area" arrangement.

Asylum seekers and refugees have a right to seek refuge in a place they consider that they will be safe. Turkey cannot justify keeping its borders closed to refugees on the ground that it has set up "safe areas" in Northern Iraq. Turkey, a member of UNHCR's ruling Executive Committee, should adhere to Executive Committee conclusions that in such mass refugee influx situations, states should "always admit [asylum seekers] at least on a temporary basis and provide them with protection. . .without any discrimination." ["Protection of Asylum-Seekers in Situations of Large Scale Influx," ExCom Conclusion No. 22, 1981, para. IIA(1) and IV(1). See also "Temporary Refuge," ExCom Conclusion No. 19, 1980, para. (b)(i).]

A further cause for concern is Kurdish refugees from Turkey sheltering in Northern Iraq. The largest group is living in precarious circumstances at the Makhmur refugee camp. In March 1994 helicopters and jets bombed the villages of Kumçati, Sapanca, and Gever in Sirnak province near the Iraq border, killing thirty-six civilians, including at least seventeen children. Villagers reported that in the days leading up to the attack, gendarmes had subjected them to death threats because they had refused to join the village guard corps. After the bombing, several thousand Kurdish villagers crossed into Northern Iraq seeking safety. About 4,800 are still in Iraq, in a camp established at Makhmur, below the 36th parallel. It is alleged that the camp is unofficially controlled by PKK/KADEK. In 2002 the Turkish government asked the Iraqi government to close down the Makhmur camp and hand its inhabitants over for trial. Clearly, if this group of refugees were forced to move northward toward the militarized zone in the event of a conflict, there is a risk that they would be subjected to human rights violations at the hands of Turkish forces. Much the same risks probably face the rest of the estimated 13,000(mainly Kurdish) refugees from Turkey currently sheltering in Northern Iraq.

Human Rights Watch advances the following recommendations relating to the humanitarian crisis Turkey may face:

- The Turkish government should open its borders to those fleeing from Northern Iraq in the event of a conflict there. Protection afforded to refugees and asylum seekers should not be lifted until it is absolutely safe to do so. Countries outside the region should provide necessary financial assistance to help Turkey cope with such a crisis.

- Under no circumstances should armed paramilitary village guards be given any responsibility for managing refugee flows in Northern Iraq.

- If the population in the Makhmur camp, currently supported by UNHCR, is forced to move northward they should remain under the direct care of UNHCR representatives in Iraq, or UNHCR representatives in Turkey if they cross the border, and they should be given effective protection from any form of reprisal, punishment, or discrimination from Kurdish Democrat Party forces or by Turkish armed forces. Other refugees from Turkey in Northern Iraq should receive similar protection, including resettlement to a third country where necessary and practical.

Conclusion

In the past twelve months Turkey has made significant progress in tackling its human rights problems, and received proper credit for doing so. The Turkish armed forces' contribution to peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan has also been widely recognized. What threatens in Northern Iraq, however, would not be a tour of peacekeeping, but a long drawn-out conflict. This conflict would be closer to home, and would be driven by the Turkish state's traditional imperative to combat Kurdish separatism. For the military, this imperative has sometimes overridden all other considerations, including respect for human rights and humanitarian law protections. The Turkish government and its allies must put safeguards in place now to ensure that there is no return to the ruthless methods that earned the security forces such ill-repute in the 1990s.