

PLANNING A HOLIDAY IN TURKEY?

Turkey that is committing war crimes against its own people?

Turkey that has laid siege to Kurdish towns with military curfews?

Turkey that is supporting ISIS and other reactionary groups in northern Syria and Iraq?

Turkey that routinely arrests political opponents, journalists, and protestors?

Spending your tourist money in Turkey means fuelling the Government's war against its own Kurdish citizens.

Think about what your money is supporting and #BoycottTurkey

Tourism and the Turkish Economy

In December 2015, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu unveiled new measures for the tourism industry in an attempt ensure the country continues to compete globally for vital tourist dollars. Revealing a new logo and slogan, *Discover the potential*, the Government initiative includes a slick new website and video designed to entice business partners and customers to Turkey.¹



Turkey has long been a favourite destination for European tourists in search of sea, sun, culture and cheap deals. It has for several years been in the top ten tourist destinations in the world, receiving around 37 million visitors in 2014. The tourism sector is one of Turkey's biggest revenue generators and brought in an estimated \$31 billion (US dollars) at its peak in 2014 - that's 12% of the country's GDP - making its direct contribution to the country's economy higher than almost all other sectors, including banking.²

The importance of tourism to the Turkish economy and financial stability of the state is clear. When, in 2015, the violent clashes engulfing southeast Turkey and neighbouring Syria began to make headlines in the international press, a raft of articles glumly observed its impact on the tourism sector and watched the figures fall by between 4 and 5%. This was partially due to the sanctions placed

¹ <http://www.turkeydiscoverthepotential.com/>

² <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/travel-tourism-sectors-generate-12-pct-of-turkeys-gdp-report.aspx?pageID=238&nID=83118&NewsCatID=349>

on Turkey by Russia after the military downed a Russian fighter jet crossing the Syrian border and the subsequent banning of holiday packages for Russian tourists to Turkey. Despite the Turkish government refusing to officially apologise for the incident, the Minister for Tourism, Mahir Unal, insisted at the end of 2015 that one of the priorities of the country's tourism sector is to not lose Russian tourists, who bring in a sizeable proportion of the industry's revenue.

Discover the Potential is part of the same efforts to make sure the drop in revenue is only temporary and is part of a long-term strategy for the tourism sector, which the Government believes is more than simply a useful means to improve national income. Rather, tourism is a "strategic sector for the future".³ That strategy is laid out in *Vision 2023*, issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2007, which aims to increase the number of visitors to 50 million - and the revenue generated from tourism to \$50 billion (US dollars) a year by 2023.

Selling Turkey to Tourists



Given the importance the Turkish state has placed on the tourism sector, it should come as no surprise that huge marketing efforts have been behind the sector's growth over the years. The

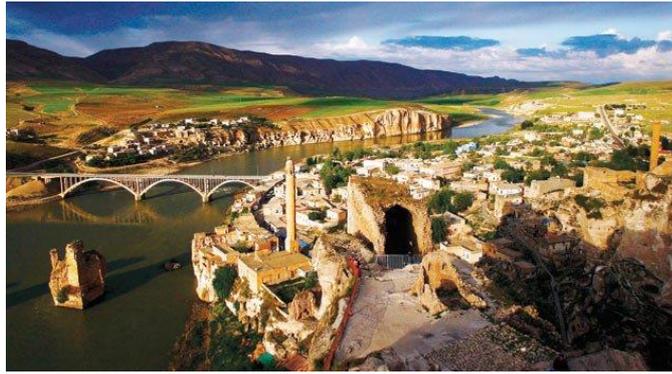
country has been carefully marketed to the international audience with a variety of websites, brochures and international advertising campaigns displaying the obvious beauty of the country's natural landscape and 10,000 year history. A discerning tourist, however, might question why such websites as www.goturkey.com entirely omit any reference to Kurdish history and culture, and its long-standing contribution to the culture and society of the country.

For example, despite being widely spoken among the 20 million or so Kurds in the country, Kurdish is named as a little spoken language on the Ministry of Culture website, mirroring the long-standing tradition of denial when it comes to the Kurdish language.⁴ Important heritage sites in the Kurdish regions, such as the city walls and gardens of Amed (Diyarbakir) which sits on the Fertile Crescent, or the ancient city of Hasankeyf, which is said to be one the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, are barely mentioned, if at all.

³ <https://www.thebusinessyear.com/turkey-2013/precious-jewel/vip-interview>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/turkey/turkey993-08.htm>

This omission of these areas as worthwhile visiting sites has a major impact on the potential economic development of the Kurdish regions, which have long been deliberately disregarded, underinvested and economically



underserved. For over forty years, provinces in the Kurdish regions have repeatedly been placed under state of emergency; thousands of villages and forests have been razed to the ground; infrastructure attacked and education neglected. Compared to the west of the country, where tourism is seen to make an important contribution to the local economy, in the eastern Kurdish regions the area's economic potential is redirected out of Kurdish regions, flowing into the west. For example, a massive hydroelectric project to build the Illisu Dam will submerge the city of Hasankeyf under water⁵ – but preserving the living culture of the city seems to be unimportant for the government, which simply says:

“If the 65 million people of Turkey are to be enabled to enjoy a modern lifestyle, there will be occasions when the interests of archaeology have to be subordinated to those of economic development.”⁶

Tourist dollars fund war against Kurdish people

While idyllic images of sun, sea and beaches in the western coastal regions of the country sell the idea of a holiday-maker's paradise,⁷ in the Kurdish regions an entirely different story is unravelling. Here, the revenue generated from foreign tourists is not being used to drive the local economy. Instead, it is falling on Kurdish citizens in the form of sniper fire, F16 missiles and tear gas.

Each dollar spent by foreign tourists provides the Government the means to continue its massive campaign of military destruction which is devastating villages, historic architectural sites, and, of course, the lives of the people who live there.

Turkey is ranked 15th highest in the world in military spending and runs the second-largest army in NATO. For years, the government received grants and loans from the US for the purchase of arms, but since around 2000 has

⁵ <https://corporatewatch.org/news/2015/sep/18/save-hasankeyf-stop-il%4%B1su-dam>

⁶ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ilisu-dam.en.mfa>

⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/turkey/11252725/The-top-10-beach-holidays-in-Turkey.html>

generated enough of its own revenue to continue to purchase advanced weaponry themselves. The vast majority of this spending has been used to equip the military in its dirty war against the Kurds, which between 1984 and 2000 cost the government \$130 million (US dollars) and continues to make up a major proportion of its annual budget, even at moments when resources have been scarce.⁸



Indeed, it currently costs \$1 million each time one F-16 fighter jet is launched into the air. When the last ceasefire between the Kurdistan Workers' Party - PKK and the Turkish government ended in July 2015, following the bombing of Amuda Cultural Centre in Suruc in which over 30 Turkish and Kurdish solidarity activists were killed, the Turkish military unleashed 75 F-16s and F-4E jets on Kurdish 'targets', which dropped 300 smart bombs between them over the course of just two days.⁹ The massive revenues from tourism the year before must surely have helped the military prepare for this war, facilitating the purchase of F-35 generation fighters; 109 US-made Sikorsky helicopters; a long-range missile defence system and even more besides.¹⁰

The result of Turkey spending on its war against the Kurdish people has been well documented: since 1984, over 40,000 have been killed (mostly Kurdish, mostly civilians); 3000 villages have been burned to the ground, and over 2 million people have been displaced.

Turkey's war crimes against its own citizens

As the Government's marketing campaign gets under way, its plans to assure its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community are underway too. Framing the violence against the Kurds as simply Turkey's 'fight against terrorism', the government will do its best in coming months to make sure the international public trusts the safety of its beaches, resorts and hotels. Bombing Kurdish cities is the price they are happy to pay for that illusion.

It is, of course, Turkey's own military that presents the most serious threat to citizens and tourists alike. Since June 2015, when the People's Democratic Party (HDP) managed to achieve a historic victory and win 13.1% the vote in the national election, the government has begun an open and bloody attack on

⁸ IBP Inc., *Turkey Intelligence, Security Activities and Operations Handbook - Strategic Information and Regulations*, 2009.

⁹ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/turkey-syria-iraq-pkk-kurds-pyd-ypg-two-front-conflict.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/05/turkey-military-spending-increase.html#ixzz3UJtckgEI>

Kurdish civilians and their supporters. In July that year, and in total violation of international law, they began bombing PKK targets in Iraq, killing 10 civilians in the village of Zergele.

Soon after, around 10,000 Turkish troops armed with some of the world most sophisticated weaponry initiated ground operation against the Kurdish movement and its supporters. Curfews were declared in cities across the southeast, often for days at a time, and a policy of brutal suppression of any form of resistance has



become the standard. Over 260 civilians have been killed since August last year and hundreds more arrested; snipers have been placed on rooftops and targeted children, women, and the elderly. Nurses have been shot as they attended to wounded people on the street, and ambulances have been prevented from entering certain districts. Drinking water and electricity supplies have been deliberately cut off, while school are being used as military headquarters. 300,000 Kurds have been forced to flee the violence. Dozens of people are being killed each day.

And in addition to that, some of Kurdistan's most historical cultural sites are being destroyed as police set mosques and churches ablaze and riddle them with bullets.¹¹

Inevitably, those cities in the Kurdish regions like Amed (Diyarbakir) that had the most potential to use tourism to bolster the local economy have seen business fall dramatically since 2014 after enjoying a brief period of success while peace talks between the Kurdish movement and the government took place. Now that military attacks, curfews, assassinations and arrests are taking place on a daily basis, these cities have seen the number of visitors plummet and local businesses threatened with closure.

Turkish brutality exposed

¹¹ <http://www.bestanews.com/12812/police-destroy-historic-buildings-in-diyarbakir>



The current operations against the Kurds are in violation of international law and constitute war crimes by any standard. The Kurdish people have been exposed to some of the most vicious crimes that have simply gone unnoticed or un-investigated by the international community. In August 2015, YJA Star guerrilla Ekin Wan was tortured and killed, her body dragged naked through the streets Varto and images of the

brutality shared by Turkish police on social media. Later in the year, renowned human rights lawyer and supporter of Kurdish rights Tahir Elci was shot in the head in broad daylight.

Boycott Turkey in 2016!

It seems clear to now that the Turkish government aims to break the resistance of the Kurdish people and raze Kurdish cities that have resisted state-sponsored terrorism to the ground. No government has called on Turkey to halt the violence, and virtually not international attention has been given the massacre unfolding.

But we can make a difference.

If we feed the Government's coffers with money spent on hotels, cocktails and sightseeing, we are all responsible fuelling this horrific war. Tourism is where the country gets much of its revenue; boycotting tourism is how we, as supporters of the Kurdish struggle for self-determination and right to life, can make a definite difference.

We call on you to boycott Turkey and its military occupation of the south-east. We call on you to boycott Turkey's war crimes and civilian deaths. We call on you to boycott Turkey's campaign of mass intimidation, harassment, torture and killing.