

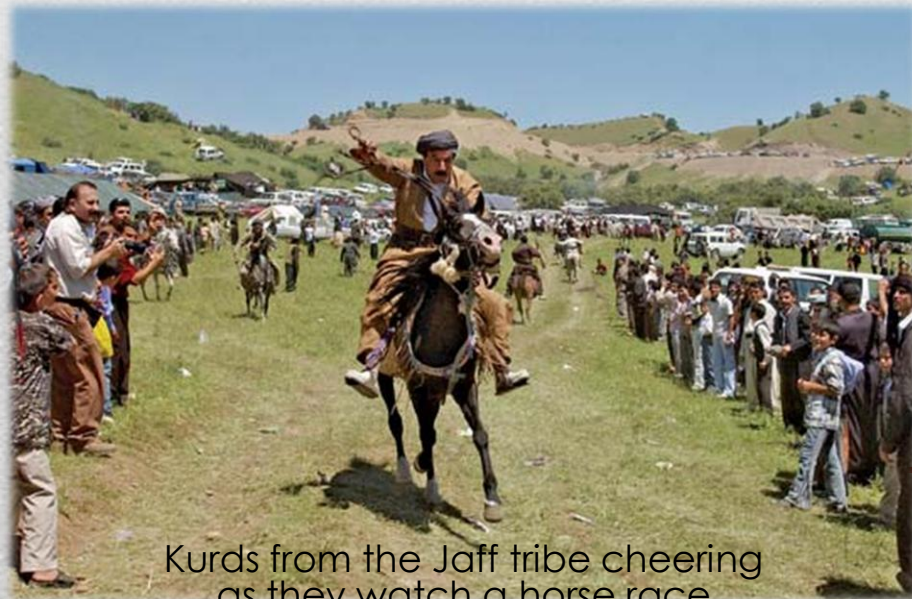
The Kurds and Kurdistan

The only friends we have are the mountains.
Kurdish Proverb



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

Kurdistan (*Land of the Kurds*) refers to an area of Kurdish settlement that roughly includes the mountain systems of the Zagros and the eastern extension of the Taurus. Since ancient times the area has been the home of the Kurds, a people whose ethnic origins are uncertain. For 600 years after the Arab conquest and their conversion to Islam, the Kurds played a recognizable and considerable part in the troubled history of western Asia - but as tribes, individuals or turbulent groups rather than as a people.



Kurds from the Jaff tribe cheering as they watch a horse race

The vast majority of Kurds live in a territory divided among **Turkey**, **Iran**, **Iraq** and **Syria**. Kurdistan, is a roughly defined geo-cultural region where the Kurdish people form a prominent majority population, and where Kurdish culture, language and national identity have historically been based.



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

- **state**: an independent political unit holding sovereignty over a specified territory (example: Canada), casually referred to as “country”
 - **nation**: a community of people with common ancestry, culture and territory, does *not* imply an independent political unit (examples: French Quebec, Acadians in Eastern Canada, “First Nations” throughout Canada ... several different nations within the boundaries of the Canadian state)
 - The territory of the ‘Arab nation’ extends over several Arab states.
 - **stateless nation**: an ethnic group (nation) that occupies territory, but does not belong to a single state (example: The Basques in Spain and France want autonomy or independence for a Basque state.)
 - Kurdistan is a stateless nation. As is usually the case, boundaries were drawn for political, not ethnographic reasons and those boundaries divided the Kurdish nation among four states.
-



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

Comparing Nation and State

NATION

- single language
- common history
- similar ethnic background
- unity from a common political system
- emotional commitment

STATE

- clearly delineated territory
- substantial population
- well-organized government
- shared political and cultural history
- emotional ties to institutions, political system or ideology





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

Kurdistan was erased from the world's maps after WW I when the Allied powers carved up Southwest Asia and denied the Kurds a state. Contemporary use of the term refers to four parts of Kurdistan, which include southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northern Syria (Rojava or Western Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), and northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan).

Some Kurdish nationalist organizations seek to create an independent state consisting of some or all of these areas with a Kurdish majority, while others campaign for greater autonomy within the existing national boundaries.

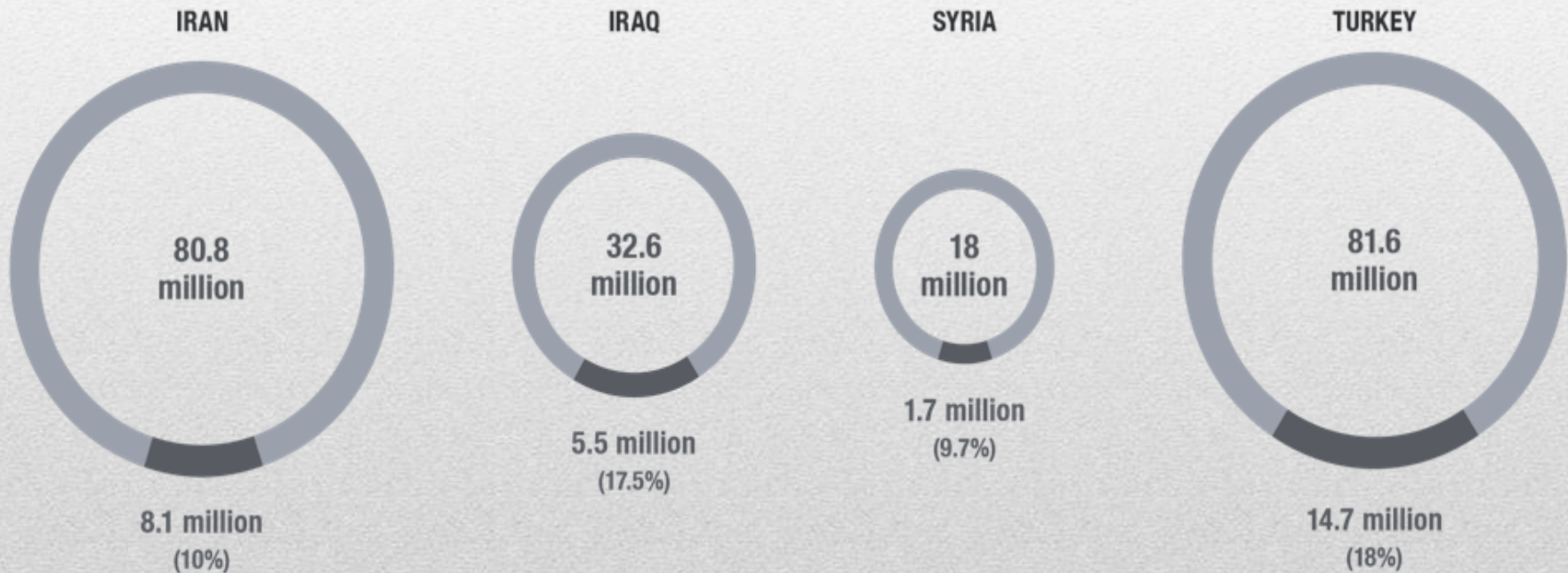


For decades, the Kurds looked to the US for support in their struggle against other governments. Washington's response has been classic *real politik* - using the Kurds when it wanted to hurt an opponent and then dropping them when their usefulness had run out.



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

30 MILLION KURDS





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation



The Kurds are very big on the trappings of statehood. It's as if they're eager to prove that they exist. When you arrive in Irbil (Iraq), immigration officers give your passport a Kurdish stamp. The Citadel in Irbil is considered the world's oldest continuously inhabited settlement.

The Kurdistan flag consists of three horizontal stripes in red, white and green with a yellow sun with 21 rays at its center. Number 21 is an important number in the Yazidi faith. It stands for rebirth. The population includes Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriacs, Turkmen, Yazidis, Arabs and Kurds living together in harmony.

Kurdistan's most prominent geophysical feature is **mountains**. The mountains are very important to Kurds. They have not only shaped their history, people, tradition and culture; they have also been used more practically as hide outs for the Kurdish *peshmerga* and for guerrillas fighting oppressing regimes. Kurdish domains end abruptly where the plains begin.





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

Iraqi Kurds have their own 175,000-man Army, the *peshmerga*, which means "those who face death."

Typically, their arsenal is made up mostly of AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers, surface-to-air missiles and aging Soviet howitzers. The Kurds have asked Washington for advanced weaponry, but so far have been denied it, probably because of pressure on NATO from the Turks who have argued that any powerful weapons the Kurds receive might be used later in a war with Turkey.





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

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The Kurds: The world's largest stateless nation

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© Adem Altan, AFP | Kurds celebrate Nowruz on March 22, 2015 in Ankara
Text by Sarah LEDUC

Latest update : 2015-07-30

Kurds: World's largest Nation without a State



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

The **quest for independence** is intrinsic to Kurdish identity. However, not all Kurds envision a unified Kurdistan that would span the Kurdish regions of all four countries.

Most Kurdish movements and political parties are focused on the concerns and the autonomy or independence of Kurds in their specific countries.

Within each country, there are also Kurds who have assimilated, and whose aspirations may be limited to greater cultural freedoms and political recognition.

[The Time of the Kurds](#) (9:53)





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

ئەه‌ی رەقیب

English: (Ay Raqeeb) O Enemy!

Ey Reqîb



Flag of Kurdistan

National anthem of

 **Republic of Mahabad (1946)**

 **Iraqi Kurdistan**

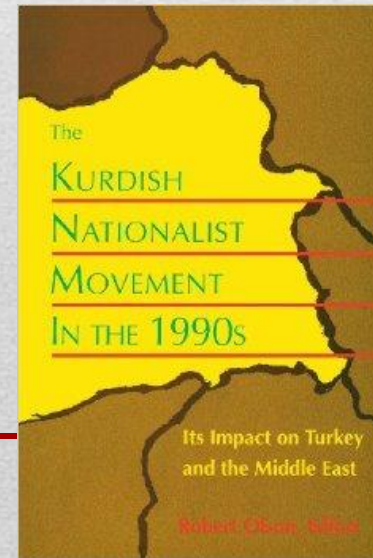
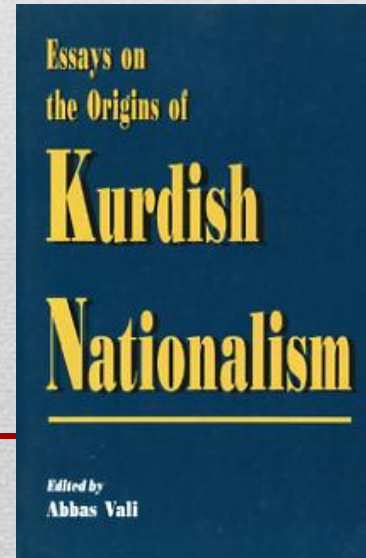
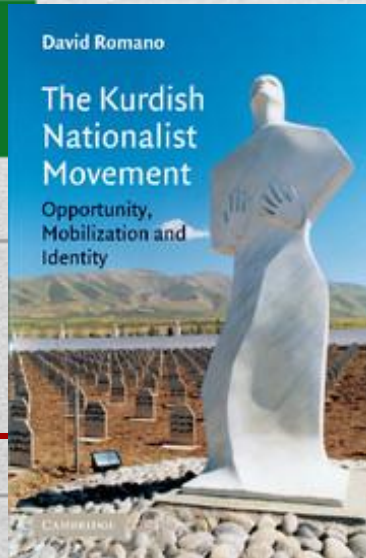
 **Syrian Kurdistan**

Lyrics

Dildar, 1938

Kurdish Nationalist Movement

[Kurdish National Anthem](#)





The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

Kurds
کورد *Kurd*



Total population
c. 30–32 million

Regions with significant populations

	Turkey	estimates from 12 to 16 million 15.7–25%
	Iran	estimates from 3.35 million to 8 million, 5–10%
	Iraq	estimates from 4 to 6.5 million, 15–23%
	Syria	estimates from 1.3 to 2.5 million, 6–15%
	Armenia	37,500
		20,800

Largest stateless nation?

Many Oromo would disagree but certainly it's the most geopolitically significant.

Oromo
Oromoo

Total population

c. 38 million

Regions with significant populations

	Ethiopia	25,488,344 (2007 est.)
	Kenya	227,674
	Canada	11,140

Languages

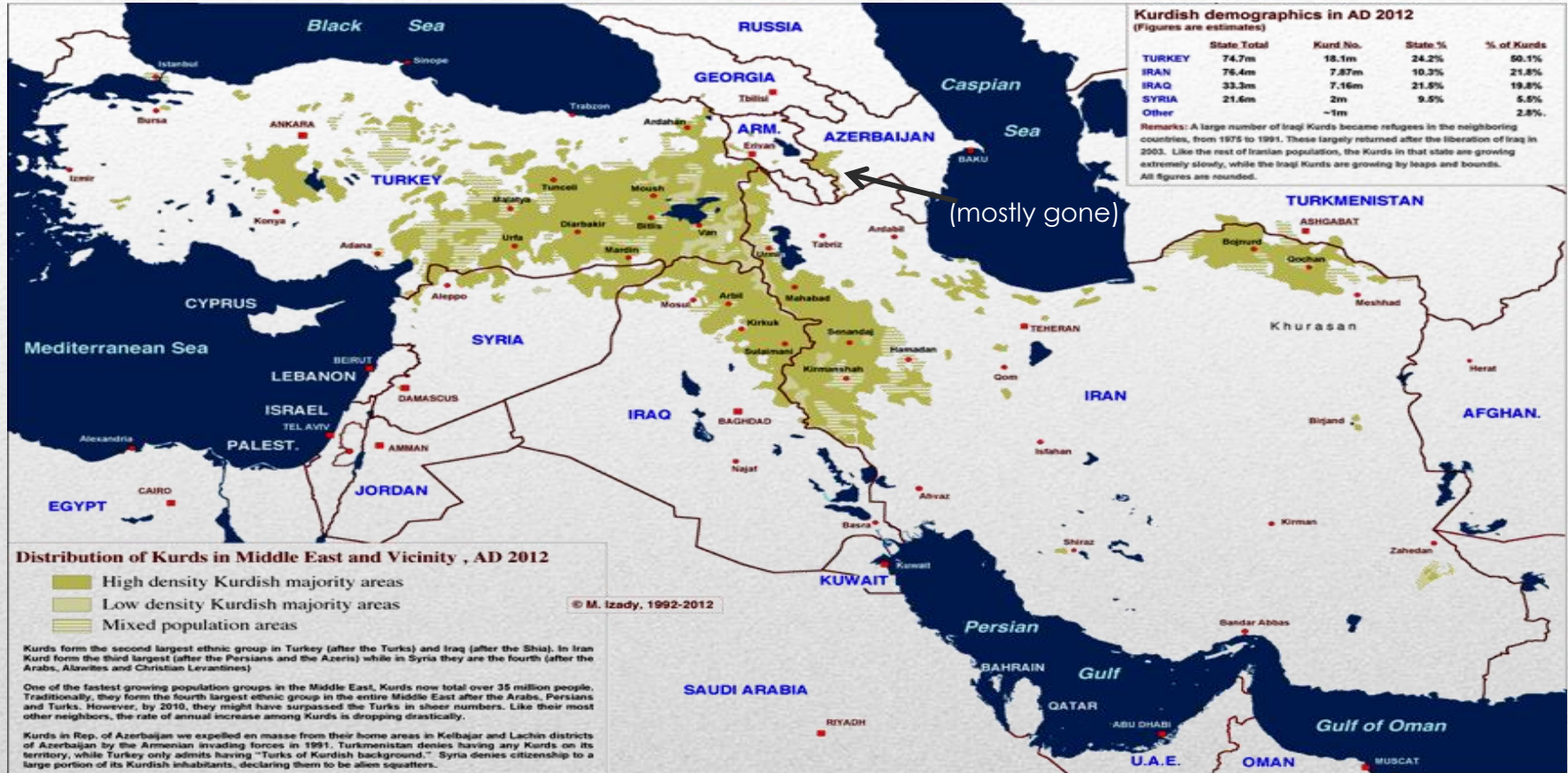
Oromo • Amharic • Tigrinya

Religion

Christianity 48.2% (Ethiopian Orthodox 30.5%, Protestants 17.7%); Sunni Islam 47.5%; traditional religion 3.3%



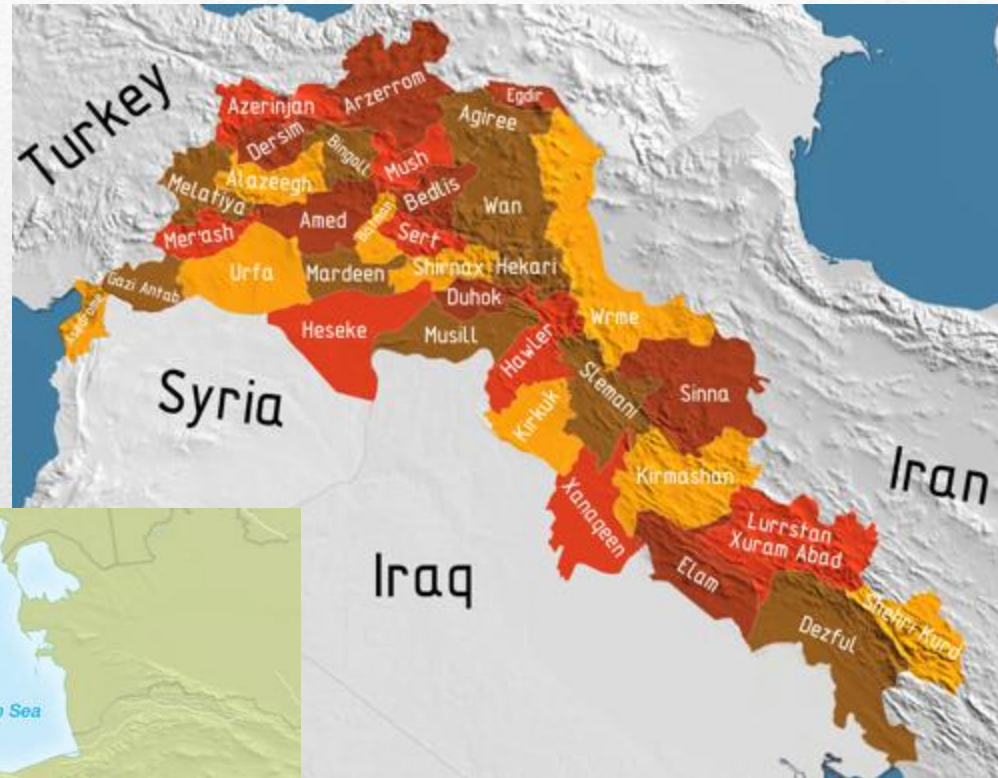
The Kurds: A Stateless Nation



Distribution of Kurds: A rough estimate by the CIA Factbook has populations of 14.5 million in Turkey, 6 million in Iran, about 5 to 6 million in Iraq, and less than 2 million in Syria, which adds up to close to 28 million Kurds in Kurdistan or adjacent regions. Recent emigration resulted in a **Kurdish diaspora** of about 1.5 million people, about half of them in Germany.



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation



aspirational maps of a united, independent Kurdistan expanded territory



The Kurds: A Stateless Nation

- The Kurdish issue at its core is simply this: A people with a distinct ethnic heritage aspires to control its own ancestral domains, and to be recognized as a state in the modern world.
- But there is nothing simple about the Kurds:
 - the rise and fall of the ancient Kurdish empire
 - the carving up of Kurdish lands after the 20th century's world wars
 - the chronic strife between Kurds and Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria
 - a series of betrayals by the US over the last several decades
 - the current factional infighting among Kurds themselves that is perhaps as serious a threat to their future survival as any





Kurdish Origins

The Kurdish region has seen a long list of **invaders and conquerors**: Ancient Persians from the east, Alexander the Great from the west, Muslim Arabs in the 7th Century from the south, Seljuk Turks in the 11th Century from the east, the Mongols in the 13th Century from the east, medieval Persians from the east and the Ottoman Turks from the north in the 16th Century and most recently, the US in its 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The Kurds **reinvented themselves** as Muslims after the Arab invasion and conquest, as Sunni Muslims after the Ottoman Turks conquest, as *Shiite* Muslims after the Persian conquest, as Kurdish Nationalists in the aftermath of World War I and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, as political revolutionaries (Kurdish Workers Party – PKK) in Turkey and Iraq (Kurdistan Democratic Party – KDP) in the 1970s, as freedom fighters (*peshmerga*) in the 1990s and as a unified secular, democratic Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) that provides all basic civil rights to its citizens including equal rights to women, all ethnic groups and all religions.





Kurdish Origins

Uncertain Origin of the Word “Kurd”

The exact origins of the name *Kurd* are unclear. The underlying toponym is recorded in Assyrian as *Qardu* and in Middle Bronze Age Sumerian as *Kar-da*. Assyrian *Qardu* refers to an area in the upper Tigris basin, and it is presumably reflected in corrupted form in Arabic (*Quranic*) *Ġūdī*, re-adopted in Kurdish as *Cûdî*.

The name would be continued as the first element in the toponym *Corduene*, mentioned by Xenophon as the tribe who opposed the retreat of the Ten Thousand through the mountains north of Mesopotamia in the 4th century BCE.

The ethnonym *Kurd* might be derived from a term *kwrt* - used in Middle Persian as a common noun to refer to nomads or tent-dwellers, which could be applied as an attribute to many groups with such a lifestyle.





Kurdish Origins

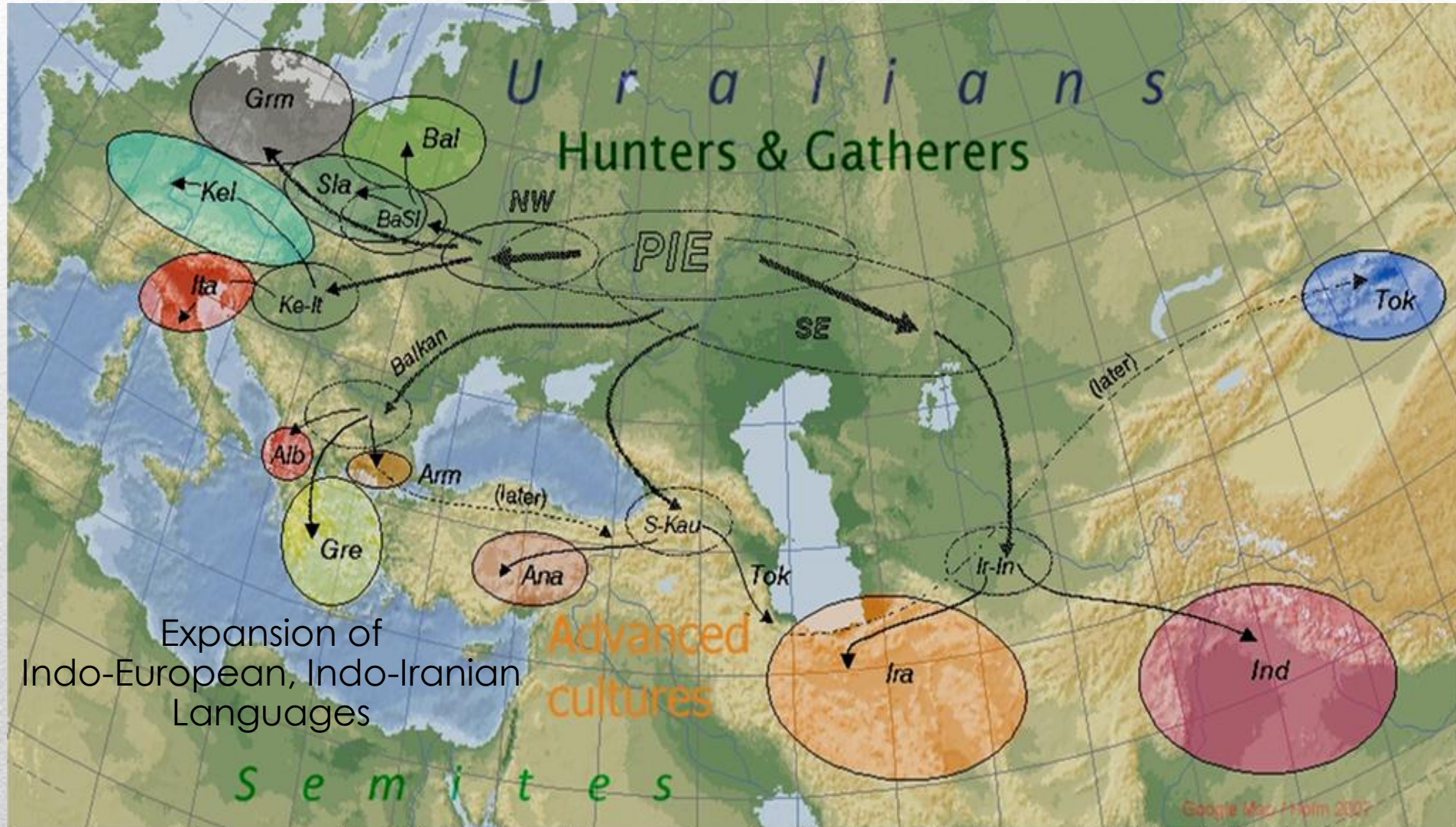
The origin of the Kurdish ethnic group is also uncertain but historians generally agree to consider them as belonging to the Iranian branch of the large family of Indo-European races.

In prehistoric times, kingdoms such as Mitanni, Kassites and Hourites reigned the mountainous areas situated between the Iranian plateau and the Euphrates.





Kurdish Origins



Subgrouping of Main Indo-European Language Branches according to SLRD-Method (Holm 2007),
 Projected to possible Migration Routes between the 35th and 25th Century B.C.



Kurdish Origins

Kurds are traditionally regarded as Iranians and of Iranian origin, and therefore as Indo-Europeans, mainly, because they speak Iranian. This hypothesis is largely based on linguistic considerations and was predominantly developed by linguists. In contrast to such beliefs, newest DNA-research of advanced Human Anthropology indicates, that in earliest traceable origins, forefathers of Kurds were obviously descendants of indigenous (first) Neolithic Northern Fertile Crescent aborigines, geographically mainly from outside and northwest of what is Iran of today in Near East and Eurasia. Oldest ancestral forefathers of Kurds were millennia later linguistically Iranianized in several waves by militarily organized elites of (R1a1) immigrants from Central Asia. These new findings lead to the understanding, that neither were aborigine Northern Fertile Crescent Eurasian Kurds and ancient Old-Iranian speaker (R1a1) immigrants from Asia one and the same people, nor represent the later, R1a1 dominated migrating early Old-Iranian-speaker elites from Asia, oldest traceable ancestors of Kurds. Rather, constitute both historically completely different populations and layers of Kurdish forefathers, each with own distinct genetic, ethnical, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These new insights indicate first interdisciplinary findings in co-operation with two international leading experts in their disciplines, Iranologist Gernot L. Windfuhr, Ann Arbor, and DNA Genealogist Anatole A. Klyosov, Boston, USA.

Conclusion: The Kurds seem to be descendants of many ancient ancestors in the Near-East and Eurasia, who over time spoke various languages, the present Iranian being only the last one.



Kurdish Origins



Height of the Bronze Age 1300 BCE



Kurdish Origins

Kurdish National Anthem

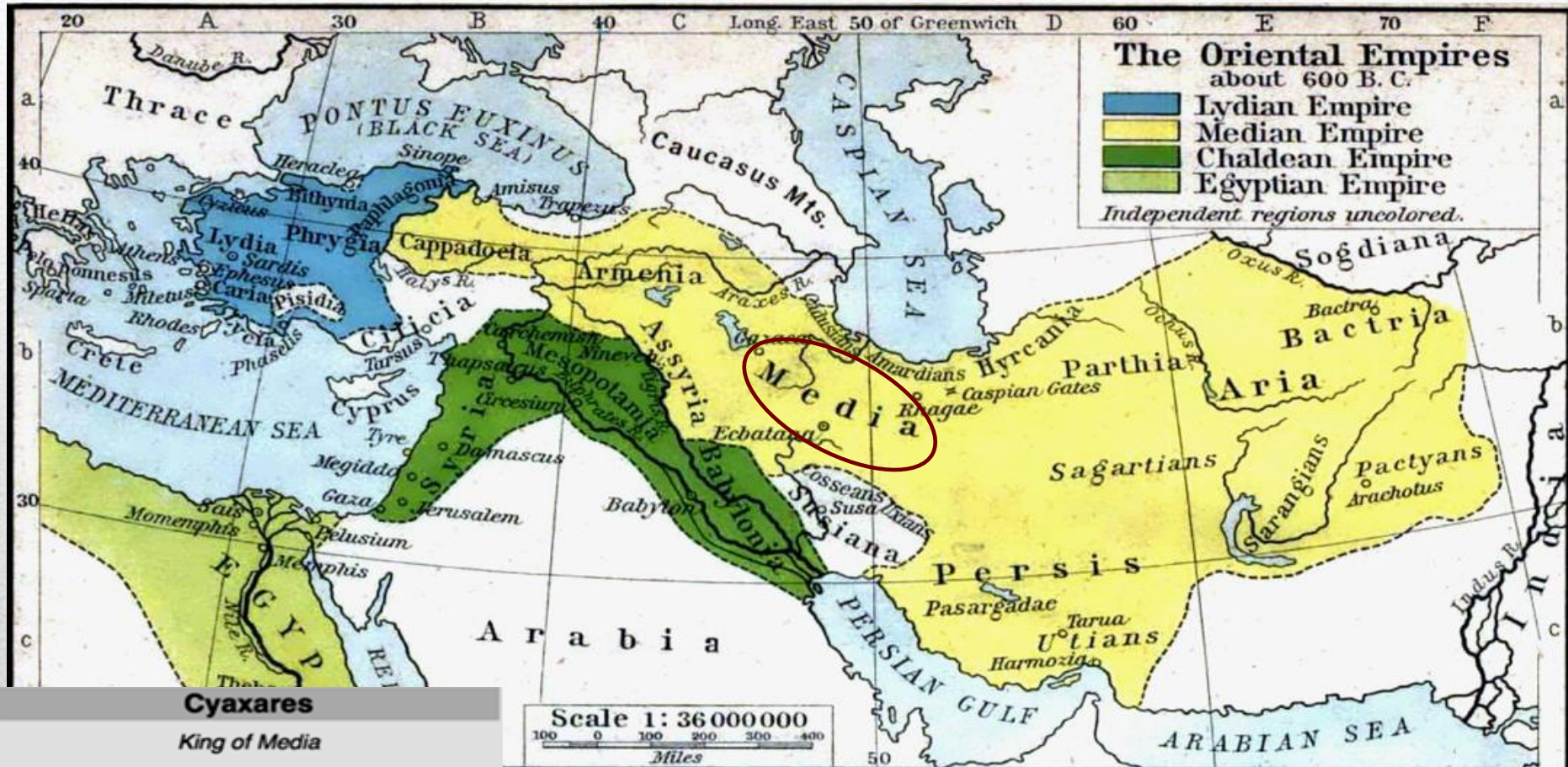


Flag of Kurdistan

Oh, enemy! The Kurdish people live on,
They have not been crushed by the weapons of any time.
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living.
They live and never shall we lower our flag.
We are descendants of the red banner of the revolution.
Look at our past, how bloody it is.
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living.
They live and never shall we lower our flag.
The Kurdish youth rise bravely,
With their blood they colored the crown of life.
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living.
They live and never shall we lower our flag.
We are the descendants of the Medes and Cyaxares.
Kurdistan is our religion, our credo.
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living.
They live and never shall we lower our flag.
The Kurdish youth are ready and prepared
To give their life as the supreme sacrifice.
Let no one say Kurds are dead, they are living.
They live and never shall we lower our flag.



Kurdish Origins



Cyxares

King of Media

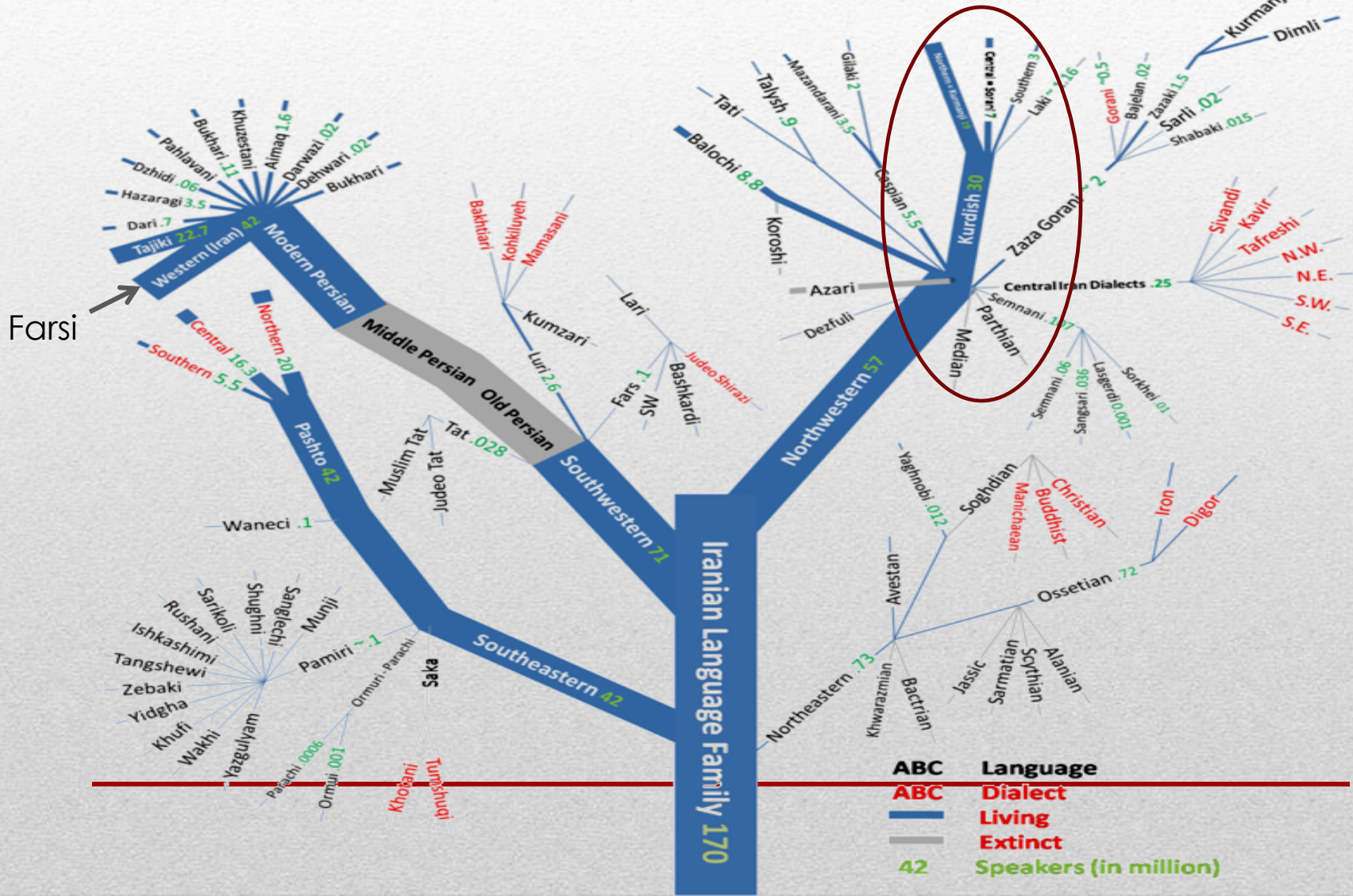
Reign	625–585 BC
Predecessor	Phraortes
Successor	Astyages
Born	Ecbatana (present-day Hamadan)

In the 7th century BCE, the **Medes** founded an empire which, in 612 BCE, conquered Assyria and spread its domination through the whole of Iran as well as central Anatolia. The date 612 is considered by Kurdish nationalists as the beginning of the 1st Kurdish year.



Kurdish Origins

Kurdish connection to Median language but Median almost unknown





Kurdish Origins

The political reign of the Medes was to end towards the end of 6 BCE, but their **religion and civilization** were to dominate Iran until the time of Alexander the Great. From this date until the advent of Islam, the fate of the Kurds, who geographers and Greek historians call *Karduchoi*, was to remain linked to that of the other populations of the empires which succeeded one another on the Iranian scene: the Seljuks, the Parthes and the Sassanids.



Parthes: 247 BCE – 224 CE



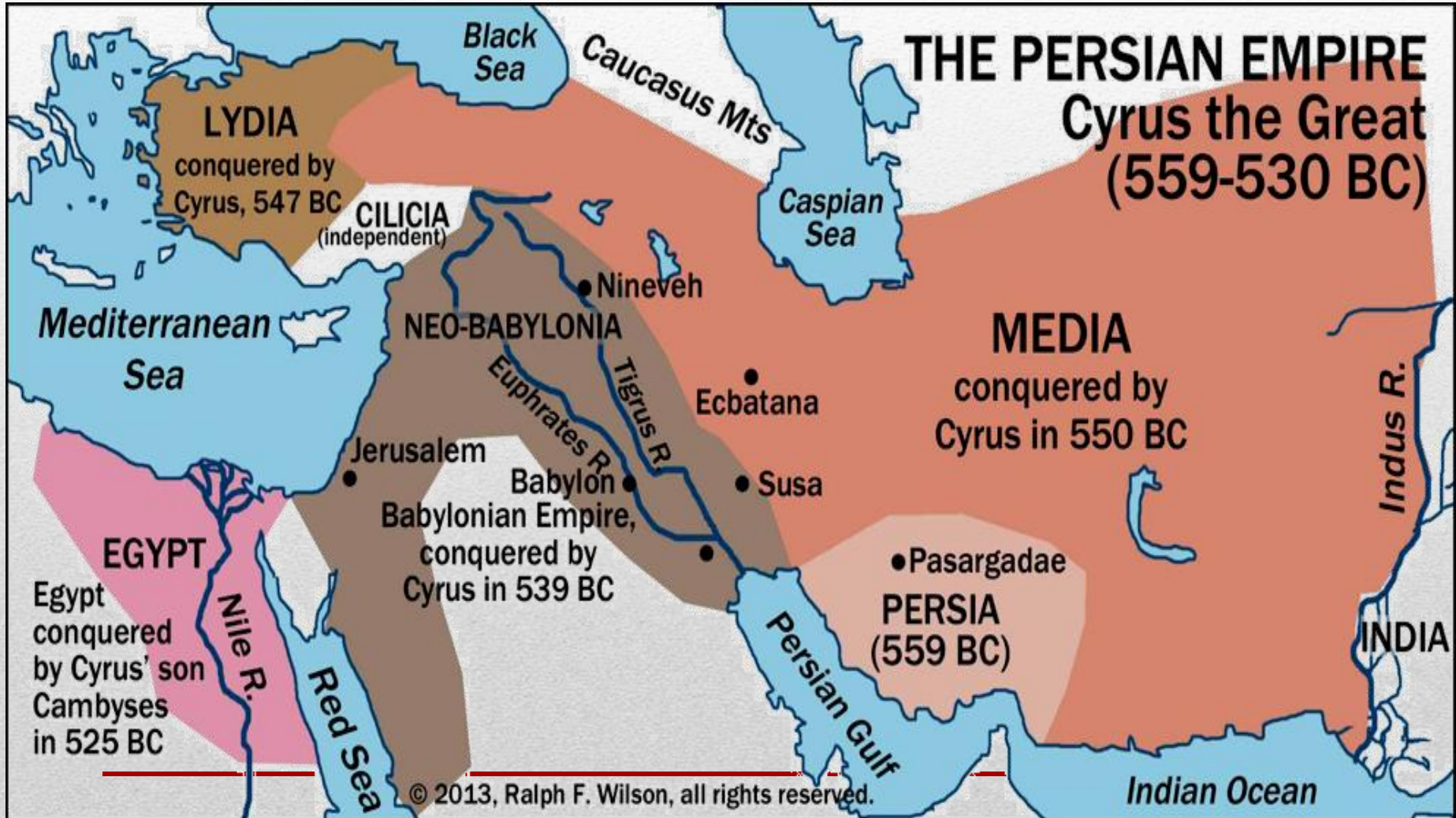
Sassanids: last imperial dynasty before the rise of Islam, 224 – 651 CE, Zoroastrianism



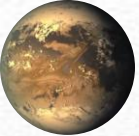
Seljuks: 1037 – 1194 CE, Sunni Muslim



Kurdish Origins



Median Empire yields to Persian Empire



Kurdish Origins



First Persian Empire yields to Parthian Empire, which in turn yields to second Persian Empire.



Kurdish Origins

Having put up fierce resistance to the Arabo-Muslim invasions, the Kurds ended up joining Islam, without, as a result, becoming Arabized. This resistance continued for about a century.

The Kurdish tribes resisted the Arab tribes for **social rather than religious reasons**. All methods were used to coax the Kurds and convert them to Islam, even, for example, the matrimonial strategy, the mother of the last Omayyad caliph, Marwān Hakim, was Kurdish.

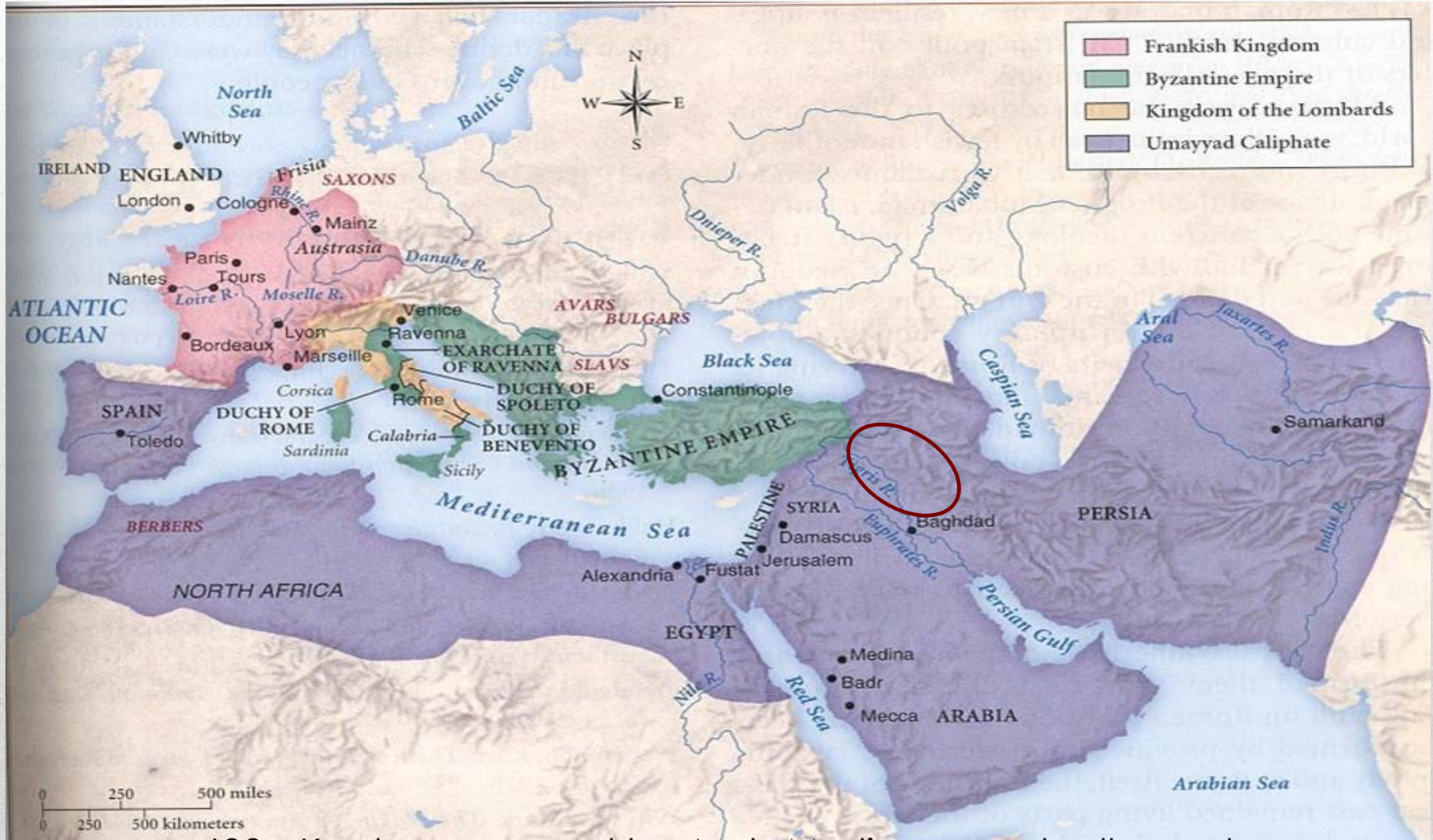
Due to the weakening of the caliphs' power, the Kurds, who already had a key role in the arts, history and philosophy fields, begin to assert, from the middle of the 9th century onwards, their own **political power**.

In 837, a Kurdish lord, Rozeguite, founded the town of Akhlat on the banks of Lake Van and made it the capital of his principality, theoretically vassal of the caliph, but in actual fact virtually independent.





Kurdish Origins



600s: Kurds conquered by Arab Muslims, eventually most converted to Islam but kept their own language



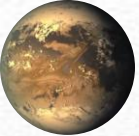
Kurdish Origins

In the second half of the 10th century Kurdistan was shared among 4 big Kurdish principalities. In the North, the *Shaddadids*, (951-1174), in the East, the *Hasanwayhids* (959-1015) and the *Banu Annaz* (990-1116) and in the West the *Marwanids* (990-1096) of Diyarbakir.

One of these dynasties would have been able to impose its supremacy on the others and build a state incorporating the entire Kurdish nation if the course of history hadn't been disrupted by the massive invasions of tribes surging out of the steppes of Central Asia.

Having conquered Iran and imposed their yoke on the caliph of Baghdad, the **Seljuk Turks** annexed the Kurdish principalities one by one. Around 1150, Sultan Sandjar, the last of the great Seljuk monarchs, created a province from Kurdistan.





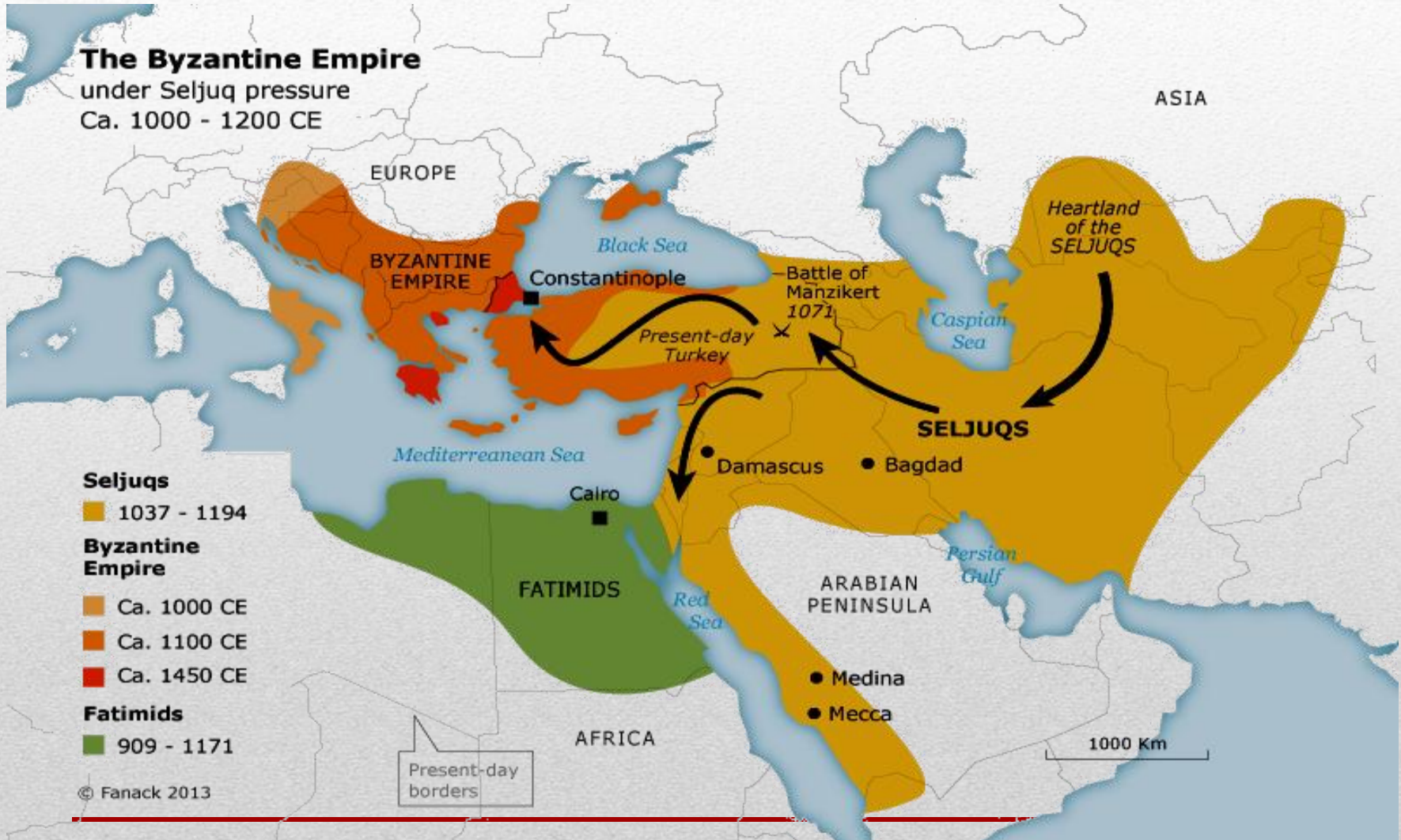
Kurdish Origins



political fragmentation of Muslim world,
establishment of minor Kurdish dynasties,
westward migration



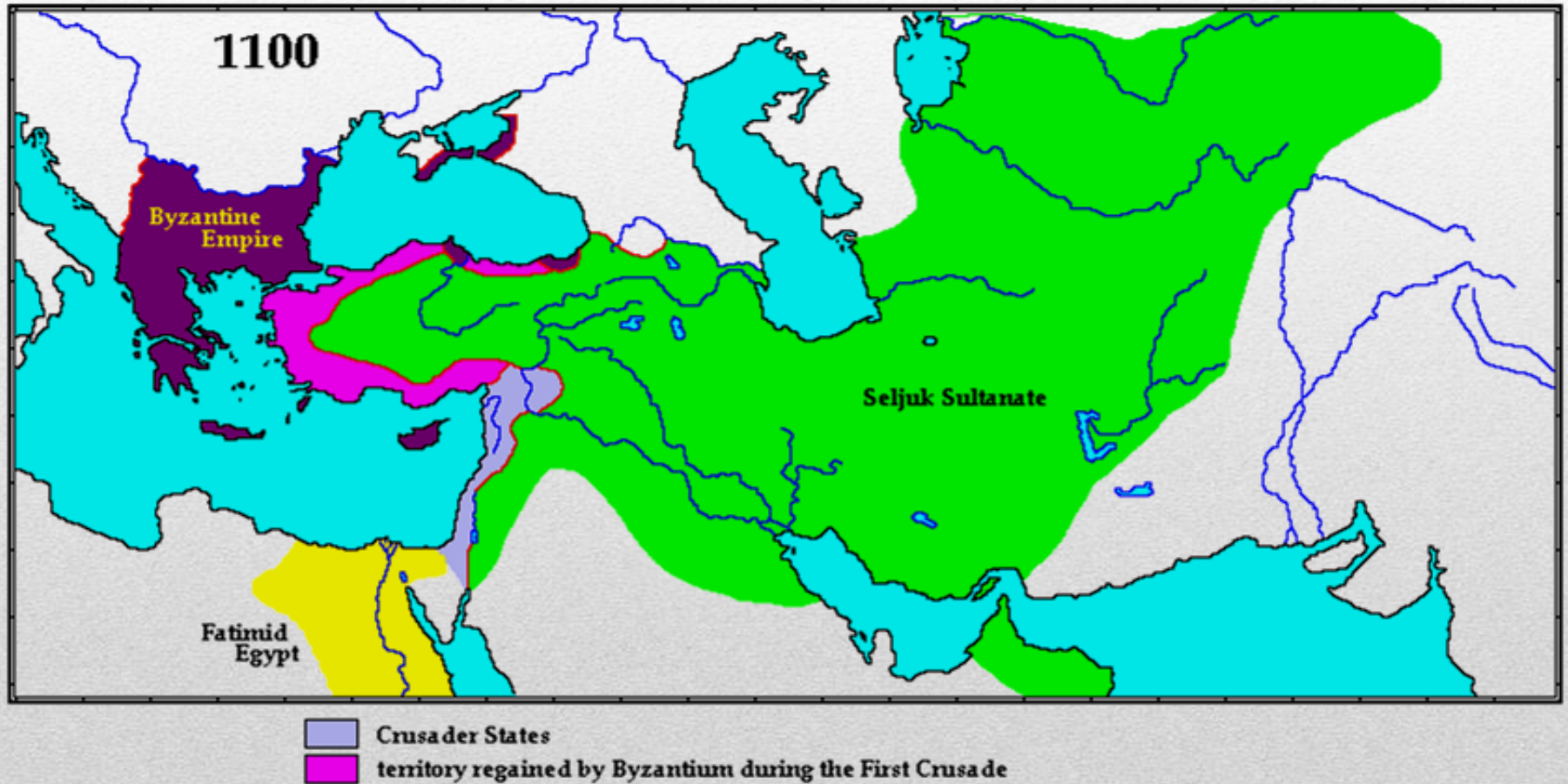
Kurdish Origins



late 1000s: Seljuk (Turkic) conquest



Kurdish Origins



First Crusades: European/Byzantine response to Seljuks



Kurdish Origins

Sets the stage for the most famous Kurd in history

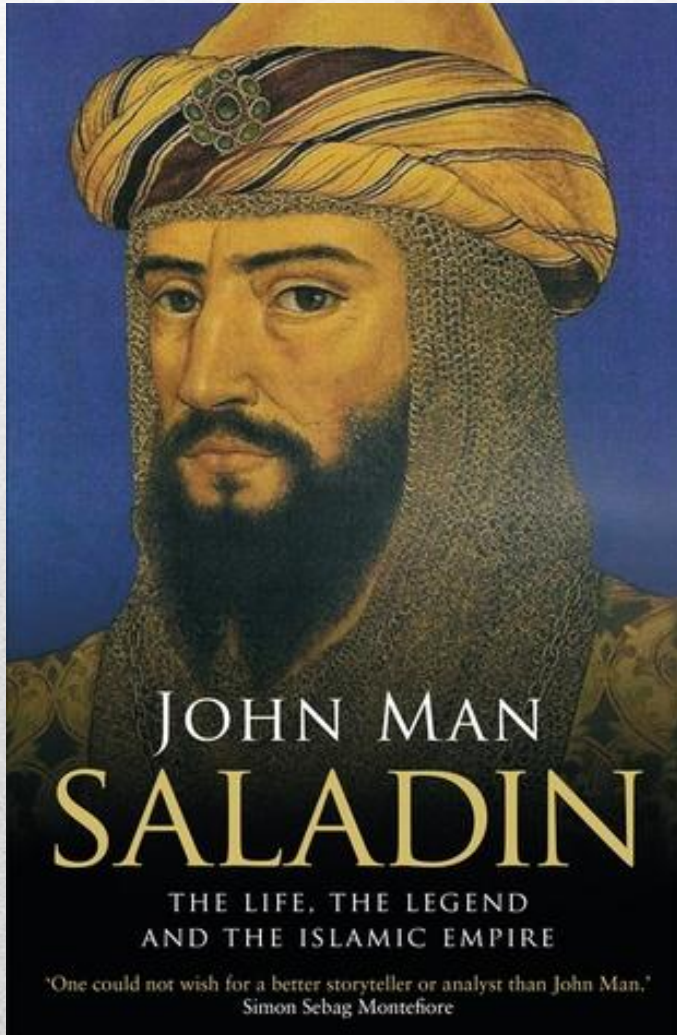
Only about twelve years after the disappearance of the last great Seljuk, a **Kurdish dynasty**, that of the *Ayyubids* (1169-1250), founded by Saladin emerged and took over the leadership of the Muslim world for about a century, until the Turko-Mongolian invasions of the 13th century.

Saladin and his exploits against the crusaders are well-known in Europe. His empire incorporated almost the whole of Kurdistan, and all Syria, Egypt and Yemen. It was the time of the **Crusades**, of the **hegemony of the religious on the political and the national**.





Kurdish Origins



An-Nasir Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (1137 – March 1193), known as **Saladin**, was the first sultan of Egypt and Syria and the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty. A Sunni Muslim of Kurdish origin, Saladin led the Muslim military campaign against the Crusader states in the Levant.

Under Saladin's command, the Ayyubid army defeated the Crusaders at the decisive **Battle of Hattin** in 1187, and thereafter wrested control of Palestine from the Crusaders, who had conquered the area 88 years earlier. Although the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem continued to exist until the late 13th century, its defeat at Hattin marked a turning point in its conflict with the Muslim powers of the region.



Kurdish Origins



Saladin's Ayyubid dynasty at his death, 1193

[If you get the chance, try to catch a re-run of *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2005, 145 min). It's from the Crusaders' point of view but gives a pretty realistic look at the Crusades and Saladin.]



Kurdish Origins

In the 12th century, Kurdistan emerged as a recognized geographical entity, a Kurdish dynasty was supreme in the Muslim world and written literature in the Kurdish language blossomed.

It's also during this century that the [Nestorian Church](#) (Christian community of Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, US and Malabar, India, represents the ancient church of Persia, sometimes called the Assyrian Church), with its metropolitan center in Kurdistan, developed with extraordinary rapidity. Its missions spread across the whole of Asia, as far as Tibet, Sin Kiang, Mongolia and Sumatra. The most spectacular success of these missions was the conversion of the great Mongolian Khan Guyuk in 1248.

In 1258, when the Mongolian Hulagu, influenced by these missions, took Baghdad, he put the caliph to death but saw to it that the palace was given to the Nestorian Church.

By the end of the 13th century, Islam had gained the upper hand over the Mongolians and the Nestorians were massacred. The center of the Nestorian patriarchate moved over the centuries but still remained in Kurdistan.



Kurdish Origins

In the second half of the 15th century the Kurdish region took the form of an autonomous entity, united by its language, culture and civilization, but politically split up into a series of principalities. However, at least among the well-read, there was an awareness of belonging to a single country.

At the beginning of the 16th century the Kurdish region became the main stake of **rivalry between the Ottoman** (Sunni) **and Persian** (Shia) **empires**. The new shah of Persia, who had imposed Sufism as the state religion, tried to spread it across the neighboring countries. The Ottomans wanted to put a stop to the shah's expansionist aims and to secure their Iranian border in order to embark on the conquest of the Arab countries. Caught in the pincer movement of the two giant powers, the Kurds, politically split, had no chance of surviving as an independent entity.

Persian Shah Abbas I and his court





Kurdish Origins

In 1514, the Ottoman sultan inflicted a bitter defeat on the shah of Persia. Fearing the victory, would be short-lived, one of his most valued advisors, the Kurdish religious scholar, Idris Bitlisi, came up with the idea of recognizing all the former rights and privileges of the Kurdish princes in exchange for a commitment from the latter to guard the border and to fight at the side of the Ottomans in the case of a Persian-Ottoman conflict.

Confronted with the choice of being annexed at some point by Persia or formally accepting the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan in exchange for a very wide autonomy, the Kurdish leaders opted for the latter and **Kurdistan, or more exactly its countless fiefs and principalities, entered the Ottoman empire via diplomacy.**



traditional Kurdish house
from the 15th century



Kurdish Origins

Ottoman-Safavid War of 1532–1555

Part of the Ottoman–Persian Wars



As the Ottomans pushed deeper eastward into Persian domains, entire Kurdish regions of Anatolia (westernmost Asia, making up the majority of modern Turkey) were at one point or another exposed to horrific acts of **despoliation and deportation**. These began under the reign of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp I (ruled 1524–1576). Between 1534 and 1535, Tahmasp, using a policy of scorched earth against his Ottoman enemies, began the systematic destruction of the Kurdish cities and countryside.

Retreating before the Ottoman army, Tahmasp ordered the destruction of all crops and settlements, driving the inhabitants before him into Azerbaijan from where they were later permanently transferred nearly 1,000 miles east.



Miniature from the *Süleymanname* depicting Suleiman marching with an army in Nakhchivan, summer 1554, at the end of the Ottoman-Safavid War.

Date	1532–1555
Location	Iraq, Armenia, Persia
Result	Decisive Ottoman victory; Peace of Amasya
Territorial changes	Ottomans gain large parts of Mesopotamia (Iraq), Western Kurdistan, Western Armenia, and Western Georgia



Kurdish Origins

Sharaf Khan Bidlisi
Şerefxanê Bedlîsî
شهرهفخانی بهدلیسی

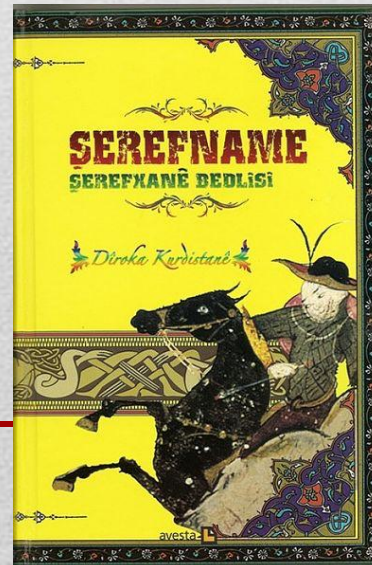
Emir, Mir and Khan



A portrait of Sharaf Khan Bidlisi

1500s: First History of the Kurds

The [*Sharafnama*](#) is the book of Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi (medieval Kurdish historian and poet, 1543–1599), written in 1597 in Persian. The *Sharafnama* is regarded as the main source of Kurdish history. Bitlisi wrote mostly about minor Kurdish dynasties, the vassals of larger states. The book deals with Kurdish dynasties such as Saladin the Great and his Ayyubid Dynasty, ancient and Medieval Kurdish principalities in Southwest Asia and the Caucasus, as well as mention of the pre-Islamic ancestors of the Kurds.



Reign	Emirate of Bitlis
Successor	Shamsaddin Bag Abu Alma'ali
Born	February 25, 1543
Died	1603 (60 years)
Full name	Sharaf Khan Bidlisi
Dynasty	Bitlisi dynasty
Father	Shamsaddin Batlisi
Religion	Islam



Kurdish Origins



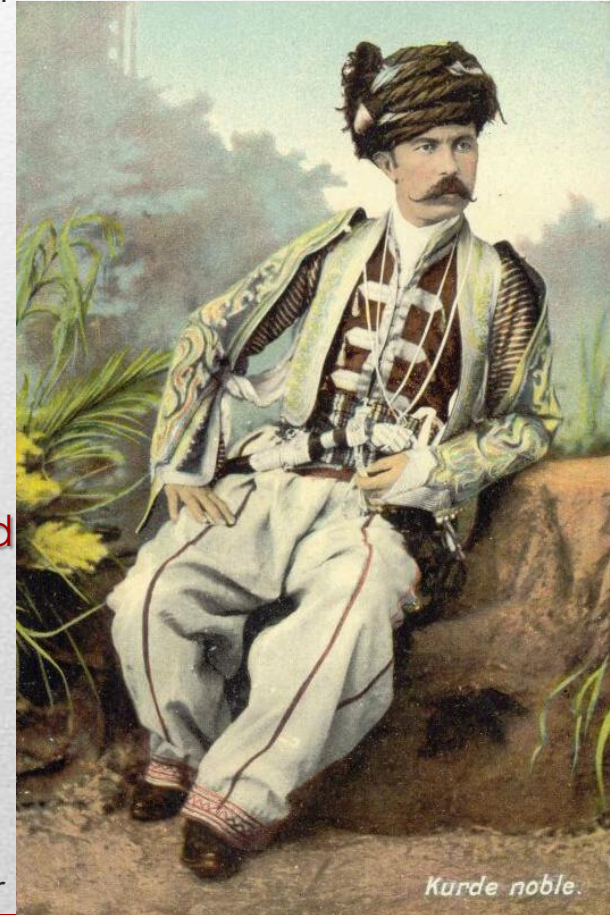
1600s: Ottoman (Sunni Turkish) vs. Safavid (Shia Persian) empires with the Kurds in the middle



Kurdish Origins

This de facto independence was to assure Kurdistan about three centuries of peace. The Ottomans controlled some strategic garrisons on Kurdish territory, but the rest of the region was governed by Kurdish lords and princes possessing wide autonomy. The Ottomans, protected by the powerful Kurdish barrier against Persia, were able to concentrate their forces on other fronts. As for the Kurds, they were virtually independent in the management of their affairs. This arrangement functioned until the beginning of the 19th century.

Every Kurdish court was the center of **important literary and artistic life**. As a whole, despite the political division, this period constitutes the **golden age** of Kurdish literary, musical, historical and philosophical creation. Kurds were known throughout the Muslim world for their theological schools, teaching of natural sciences, masters of Sufism, poets and literature. It was not until the beginning of the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire interfered in their affairs and tried to bring an end to their independence, that the Kurds attempted to create a unified Kurdistan.



Kurde noble.



Kurdish Origins

Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

Part of [Great Eastern Crisis \(1875–78\)](#)



The [Battle of Shipka Pass](#) in August 1877

Date	24 April 1877 – 3 March 1878 (10 months, 1 week, 2 days)
Location	Balkans , Caucasus
Result	Russian victory Treaty of San Stefano , Treaty of Berlin
Territorial changes	Reestablishment of the Bulgarian state; <i>de jure</i> independence of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro from Ottoman Empire; Kars and Batumi Oblasts become part of the Russian Empire

Late 1800s: Problems for the Ottoman Empire

Ottoman centralization initiatives undermined Kurdish autonomy. In 1847, the last independent Kurdish principality, that of Bohtan, collapsed. Ottoman forces were advised and helped by European powers in their fight against the Kurds.

initial development of Kurdish nationalism:
Sheikh Ubeydullah (a *Sayyid*, a descendant of Muhammad and leader of this first modern Kurdish nationalist struggle) demanded recognition from the Ottoman Empire and Qajar dynasty (Persia) authorities of an independent Kurdish state, or Kurdistan, which he would govern without interference.



Kurdish Origins

Having annexed the Kurdish principalities one by one, the Ottoman government tried to integrate the Kurdish aristocracy by distributing posts and payments fairly generously and by setting up so-called tribal schools, intended to instill in the children of Kurdish lords the principal of faithfulness to the sultan.

This attempt at integration was successful to an extent but it also furthered the emergence of elite Kurdish modernists. Under their leadership a modern phase in the Kurdish political movement rose, charitable and patriotic associations and societies multiplied, and the idea of organizing a structured movement in the Kurdish population began.



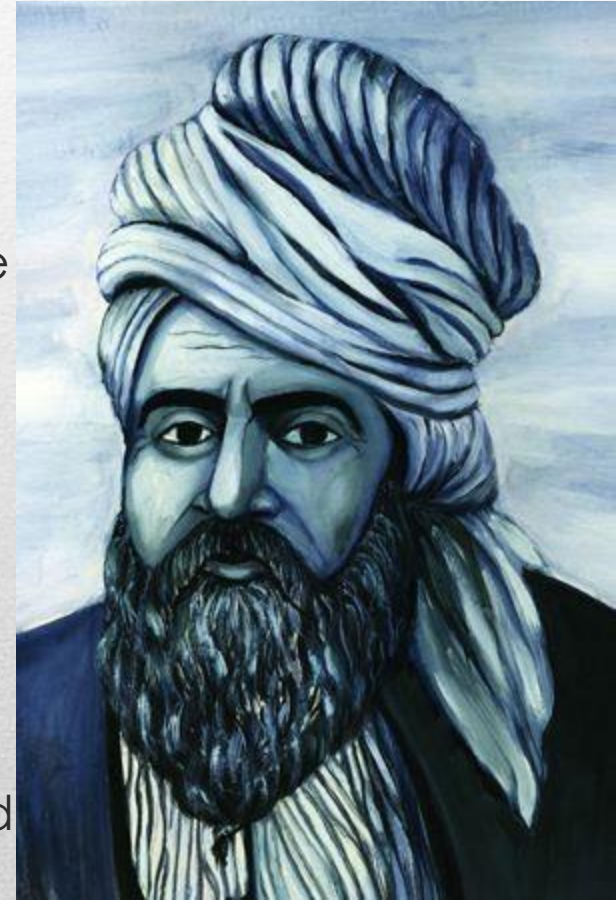
Lady Adela Jaff (1847-1924) and children



Kurdish Origins

The emergence of Islamic *sheikhs*, as national leaders among the Kurds was the result of the elimination of the hereditary semi-autonomous Kurdish principalities in the Ottoman Empire following the Ottoman centralization policies of the early 19th century.

Sheikh Ubeydullah was one of several religious leaders who were there to fill the void and re-establish a sense of lawfulness in the former principalities that had been left to feuding chieftains. Despite previous revolts by Kurdish leaders to reassert control over their former principalities, Sheikh Ubeydullah is regarded as the first Kurdish leader whose cause was nationalist and who wished to establish an ethnic Kurdish state.





Kurdish Origins

Ubeydullah wrote in a letter to a Christian missionary in the region: "The Kurdish nation, consisting of more than 500,000 families is a people apart. Their religion is different, and their laws and customs distinct... **We are also a nation apart.** We want our affairs to be in our hands, so that in the punishment of our own offenders we may be strong and independent, and have privileges like other nations... This is our objective... Otherwise, the whole of Kurdistan will take matters into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continual evil deeds and the oppression, which they suffer at the hands of the Persian and Ottoman governments."

Ubeydullah was able to gain the military support of Kurdish tribesmen but his militia was defeated by the Qajar army and he withdrew his forces to Ottoman territories. Facing attacks on both sides of his territory, Ubeydullah eventually surrendered to Ottoman authorities in 1881.



Kurdish tribesmen, 1873

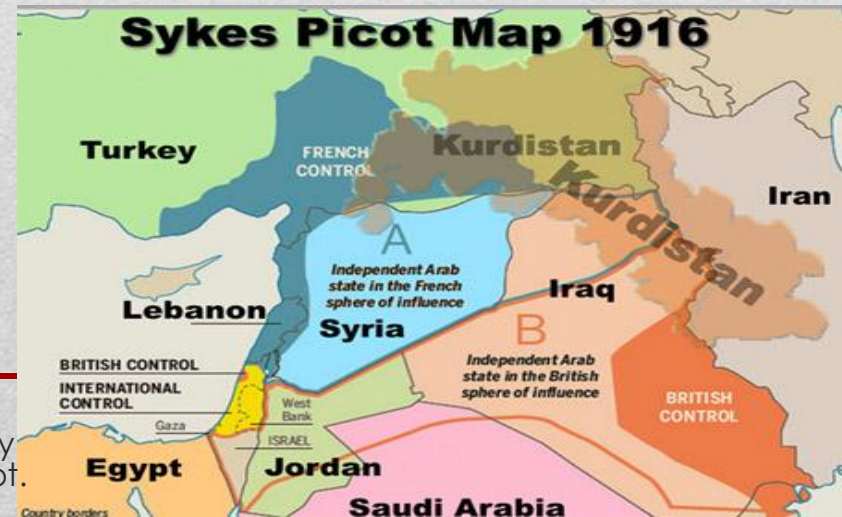


Kurdish Origins

Two efforts in the WWI years worked against the Kurds.

1. At the end of the 19th century the Ottoman Empire was prey to severe **nationalist convulsions**, each people aspiring to the creation of its own state. Having tried in vain to keep this conglomeration alive by the ideology of pan-Ottomanism, then of pan-Islamism, the **Turkish elite became pan-Turkish** and in favor of the creation of a Turkish empire from the Balkans to Central Asia (Young Turk movement).
2. During WWI, the British and French formed a secret agreement called the **Sykes-Picot Agreement**. The agreement consisted of plans to carve up Southwest Asia into spheres of control to support their own colonial interests.

The Syrian and Mesopotamian provinces under the Ottoman Empire would be divided into five states: Lebanon and Syria under French control, and Palestine, Jordan and Iraq under British control.



Kurdistan is superimposed on the map only to show its location in relation to Sykes-Picot.



Kurdish Origins

In the early years of the 20th century, a group of Kurdish intellectuals launched a movement for a separate Kurdish state. This national movement developed in tandem with the **Young Turk movement** in Turkey.

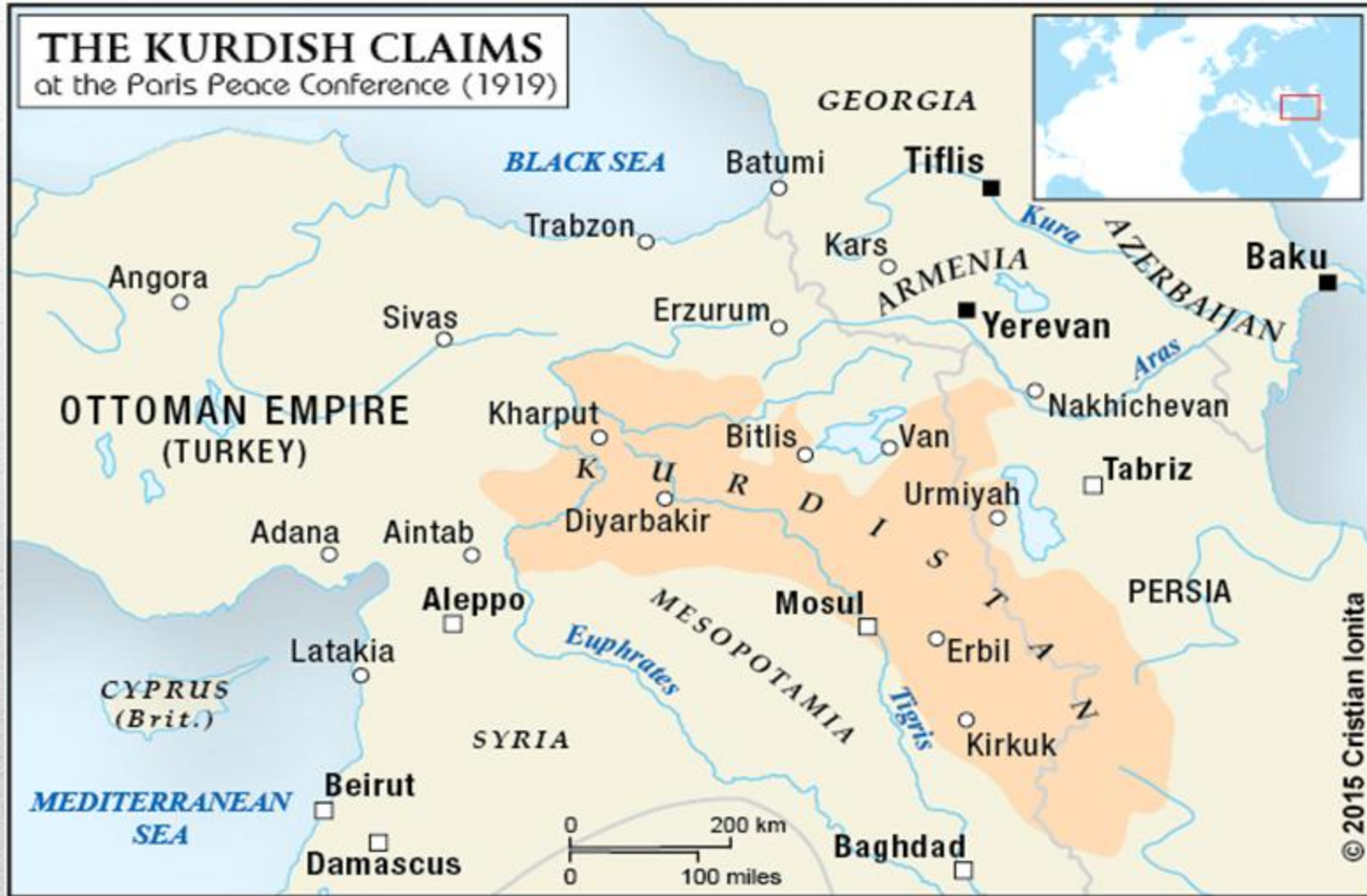
After the outbreak of WWI, which pitted the Ottoman Empire against Czarist Russia, the leaders of the Young Turks (including Mustafa Kemal - later known as **Kemal Atatürk**) launched a campaign against Christian Armenians, who were accused of siding with the Russians. This nationalist campaign included pro-Islamic propaganda aimed at the Turkish and Kurdish masses.

The result was the first **state-sponsored genocide** of the 20th century. At least a million Armenians (as well as other Christians, for example, the Assyrians) were killed in the course of the government's campaign to expel them from Turkey. Kurdish nationalists today prefer to ignore or deny the fact that Kurds also played a role in the Turkish state's genocidal persecution of the Armenians.





Kurdish Origins

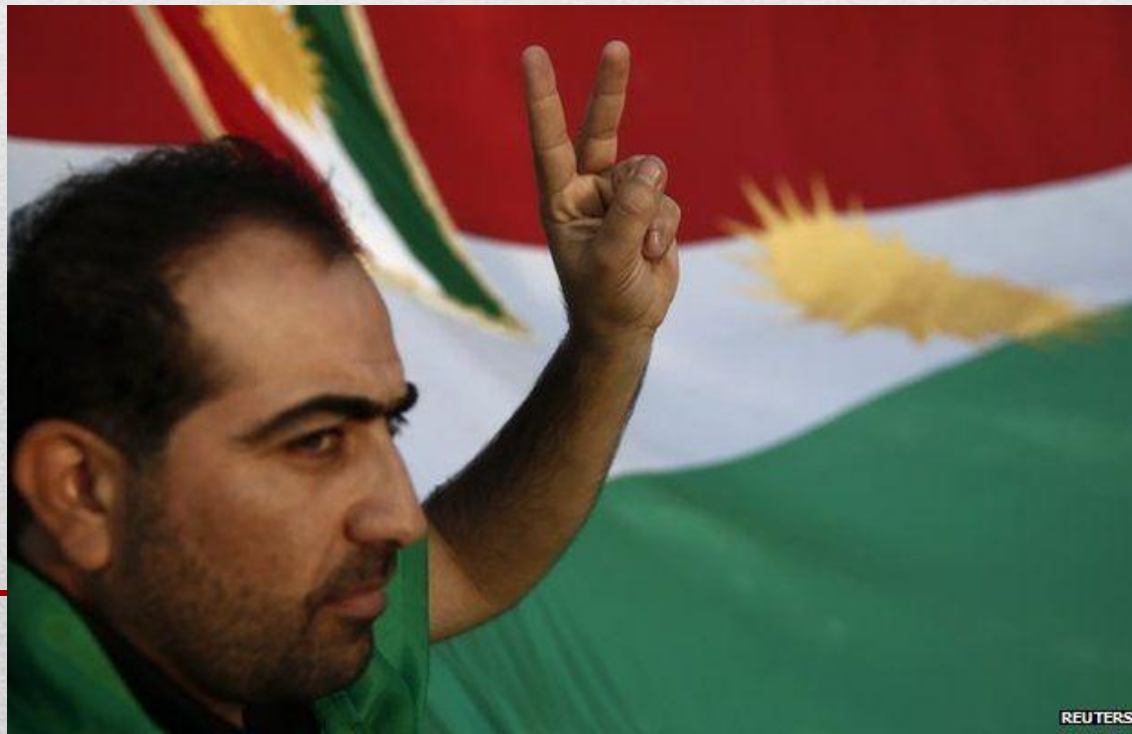


Post WWI: Strong development of Kurdish nationalism and demands for a Kurdish state



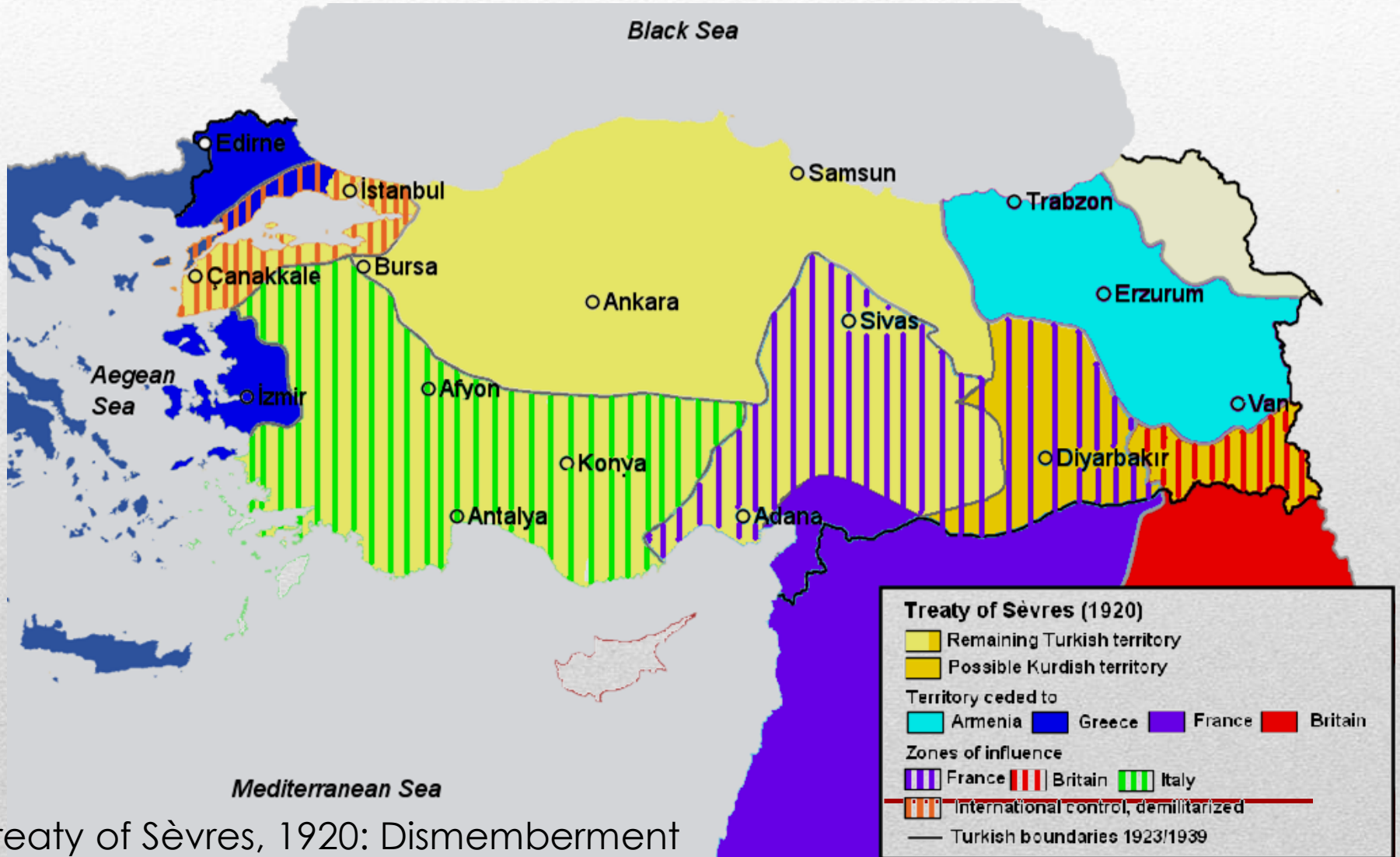
Kurdish Origins

At the end of WWI, the **Treaty of Sèvres** was drafted to deal with the dissolution and partition of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty bolstered Kurdish nationalists' aspirations by providing for a referendum to decide the issue of the Kurdistan homeland.





Kurdish Origins



Treaty of Sèvres, 1920: Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire



Kurdish Origins

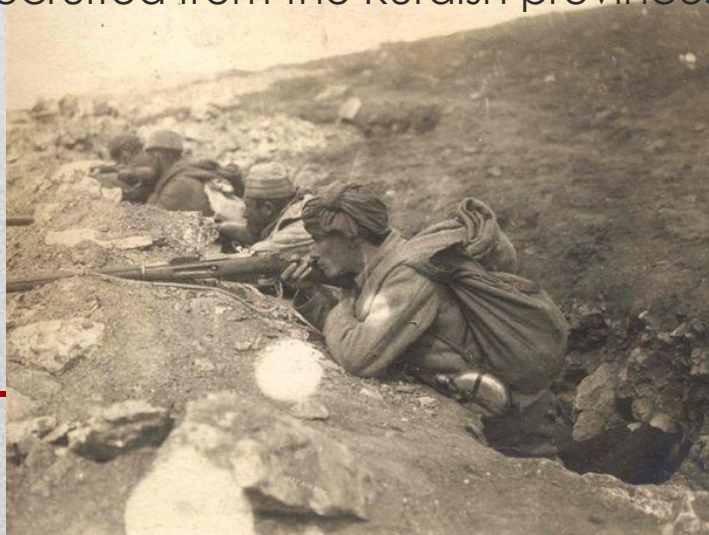




Kurdish Origins

Following the Ottoman Empire's defeat and subsequent dissolution after WWI, Kemal Atatürk (Young Turks) led the **Turkish National Movement**, established a provisional government in Ankara, defeated the forces sent by the Allies in the **Turkish War of Independence**, rejected the Treaty of Sèvres and negotiated the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).

Until 1923, Atatürk's resistance movement had close cooperation from Kurdish feudals in southeast Anatolia. Kurds fought with his movement against the allies' occupations in southeast Anatolia with their own armed forces. The first forces of Turkey's war of independence were in fact recruited from the Kurdish provinces.





Kurdish Origins

According to some sources, in 1920 Atatürk promised a common "state of Turks and Kurds" to win the support of the Kurdish clans in resisting the harsh terms of the Treaty of Sèvres [the equivalent of the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany the year before] and in driving the Greeks out of Asia Minor.

However, the **Treaty of Lausanne**, which annulled the Treaty of Sevres, gave control of the entire Anatolian peninsula to the new Turkish Republic including the Kurdistan homeland in Turkey. There was no provision in the new treaty for a referendum for Kurdish independence or autonomy. Kurdistan's hopes for an autonomous region and independent state were dashed.



L'ENFANT TERRIBLE.

Young Turk. "I WILL FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR OUR NATIONAL HONOUR."
Old Turk. "WELL, IF YOU MUST. BUT I WASH MY HANDS OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS—UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU WIN."



Kurdish Origins



1923 Treaty of Lausanne: Turkey established in almost its modern boundaries

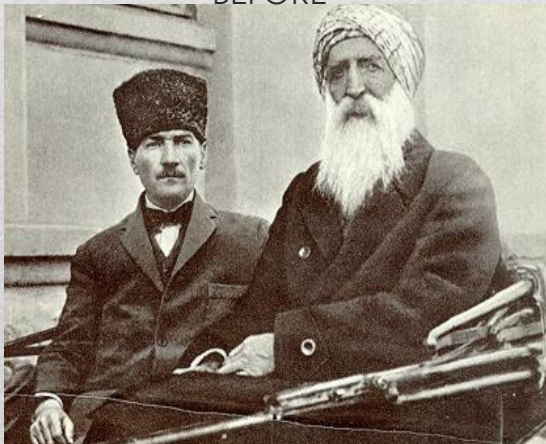
Kemalist Turkey: A state based on Turkish identity



Kurdish Origins

Several years later Atatürk rewarded his Kurdish allies (who were by then officially designated merely as "**mountain Turks**") with merciless persecution. The teaching of Kurdish in schools was outlawed and it was even forbidden to mention the *existence* of Kurds or other national minorities within Turkey. Under Atatürk, a series of Kurdish uprisings were brutally suppressed, and hundreds of thousands of Kurds were deported into central and western Turkey.

BEFORE



Atatürk and his Kurdish allies

AFTER





Kurdish Origins

After the overthrow of the Turkish monarchy by Kemal Atatürk, Turkey, Iran and Iraq each **agreed not to recognize an independent Kurdish state.**

Before WWI, traditional Kurdish life was nomadic, revolving around sheep and goat herding throughout the Mesopotamian plains and highlands of Turkey and Iran. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire after the war created a number of new nation-states, but not a separate Kurdistan. Kurds, no longer free to roam, were forced to abandon their seasonal migrations and traditional ways.

Thus at the end of 1925, the land of the Kurds, known since the 12th century by the name Kurdistan, found itself divided between four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. And for the first time in its long history, it was even deprived of its cultural autonomy.





Kurdish Origins

Turkey: Harsh Cultural Measures Worsen

The Turkish state banned speaking and singing in Kurdish. To write in Kurdish and to publish Kurdish language books, newspapers and journals was prohibited.

The original names of majority Kurdish cities and towns were replaced with Turkish names.

There was an attempt to rewrite the Kurdish narrative. Kurds, who would disown their identity and accept assimilation could have achieved any rank in the state. But public space was banned to those who insisted on preserving their Kurdish identity and who were not ashamed of being a Kurd. The only treatment such Kurds would get was oppression and marginalization.





Kurdish Origins

- 1920: After WWI, the Kurds are promised independence by the Treaty of Sevres.
- 1923: Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk rejects the treaty and Turkish forces put down Kurdish uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s. The Kurdish struggle lies dormant for decades.
- 1945: Kurds succeed in establishing the **Republic of Mahabad**, with Soviet backing. A year later, the Iranian monarch crushes the embryonic state.
- 1978: **Abdullah Öcalan**, one of seven children of a poor farming family, establishes the **Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK)** which advocates independence.
- 1979: Öcalan flees Turkey for Syria. Turmoil of Iran's revolution allows Kurds to establish unofficial border area free of Iranian government control. Kurds don't hold it for long.
- 1984: Öcalan's PKK begins armed struggle, recruiting thousands of young Kurds, who are driven by Turkish repression of their culture and language and by poverty. Turkish forces fight the PKK guerrillas, who also establish bases across the border in Iraq, for years. Conflict costs about 30,000 lives.
- 1998: Öcalan, who has directed his guerrillas from Syria, is expelled by Syria under pressure from Turkey. He begins his multi-nation odyssey until he is captured in Kenya in 1999 and taken to Turkey.



Kurdish Origins

Kingdom of Kurdistan

Keyaniya Kurdistanê

شانشینی کوردستان

Unrecognized state



1922–1924



Flag



1920s, 1930s: Failed Efforts to Establish Kurdish States, Rebellions

The **Kingdom of Kurdistan** refers to a short-lived unrecognized state proclaimed in the city of Sulaymaniyah following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Officially, the territory involved was under the jurisdiction of the British Mandate of Mesopotamia.

The **Republic of Ararat** or Kurdish Republic of Ararat was a self-proclaimed Kurdish state. It was located in eastern Turkey, centered on Karaköse Province. (Agiî is the Kurdish name for Ararat.)

Republic of Ararat

Komara Agiriye

Komara Araratê



1927–1930



Flag



Coat of arms

Capital

Kurd Ava / Kurdava
(Doğubayazıt)

Languages

Kurdish
Kurmanji
Sorani
Zazaki
Gorani

Government

Republic

President

Ibrahim Haski

Supreme Commander

Ihsan Nuri

Capital

Sulaymaniyah

Languages

Kurdish

Government

Monarchy

Malik

Mahmud Barzanji

Prime Minister

Qadir Barzanji



Kurdish Origins

Kurdistansky Uyezd (Red Kurdistan) was a Soviet administrative unit that existed for six years from 1923 to 1929. The majority of Kurds in the region were Shia.

In the late 1930s, the **Soviet Union** deported most of the Kurdish population of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Kazakhstan. The Kurds of Georgia were victims of Stalin's purges in 1944.



Iran was invaded by the Allies in 1941, with the Soviets controlling the north. In the absence of a central government, the Soviets attempted to attach northwestern Iran to the Soviet Union, and promoted Kurdish nationalism. A group of middle-class people supported by tribal chiefs took over the local administration.

Although the **Kurdish Republic of Mahabad** was not declared until 1945, the area administered itself for more than five years. In 1946, the Iran military took the area, destroyed or banned everything Kurdish and executed the leaders.



Kurdish Origins

- Kurds in northern Iraq - under a British mandate - revolted in 1919, 1923 and 1932, but were crushed. Under **Mustafa Barzani**, they have waged an intermittent struggle against Iraq.
- 1970: Iraq granted Kurds language rights and self rule, but the deal broke down partly over oil revenues.
- 1974: New clashes erupted; Iraqis forced 130,000 Kurds into Iran. But Iran withdrew support for Kurds the following year.
- 1988: Iraqis launched poison-gas attack, killing 5,000 Kurds in town of Halabja.
- 1991: After Persian Gulf War, northern Iraq's Kurdish area came under international protection.
- 1999: Two rival Iraqi Kurdish factions, one led by Mustafa Barzani's son Massoud, the other by Jalal Talabani, brokered a peace deal; goal is for Kurdish area to become part of a democratic Iraq.



Kurdish Origins

From the end of WW I to the Gulf War in 1990, the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria fought separate guerrilla campaigns to achieve autonomy. All of the campaigns were forcibly put down and the Kurdish people suffered greater repression each time.

Since the Gulf War in 1990-1991 and the enforcement by the US of **no-fly zones** in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, the Iraqi Kurds have had autonomy. However, supply routes have been blockaded by the Iraqis and the Kurds have suffered great hardship.





Kurdish Origins

In 1992, an alliance of political parties, the **Iraqi Kurdistan Front**, held parliamentary and presidential elections. As a result, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front established the **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**, a new autonomous government of Kurdistan in Iraq.



The KRG is a secular government modeled along the lines of a modern independent state in a federation with the rest of Iraq. They have their own parliament, military (the *peshmerga*), borders and foreign policy.

In 1994, a power-sharing arrangement between the **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)** and the **Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)** collapsed. This decay led to civil war and two separate administrations, one formed in Irbil and the other in Sulaymaniyah. The Civil War continued for four years until 1998 when the PUK and KDP signed the **Washington Agreement**, concluding the war.



Kurdish Origins

In 2003, the Americans invaded Iraq and the *peshmerga* joined the fight to overthrow Saddam Hussein. After Hussein was driven from office, an Iraqi national referendum approved a new constitution. The new constitution recognized the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Kurdistan Parliament.

In 2006, the PUK and KDP arranged to unify administrations under **Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani**.

Islamic State, the latest threat, now controls a large swath of land straddling the Iraq and Syrian borders. Islamic State has attacked Kurdish cities in both Syria and Iraq. The *peshmerga* has defended and attempted to retake cities previously under the control of the Kurds. The *peshmerga* has shown to be an effective fighting force, but has few resources.

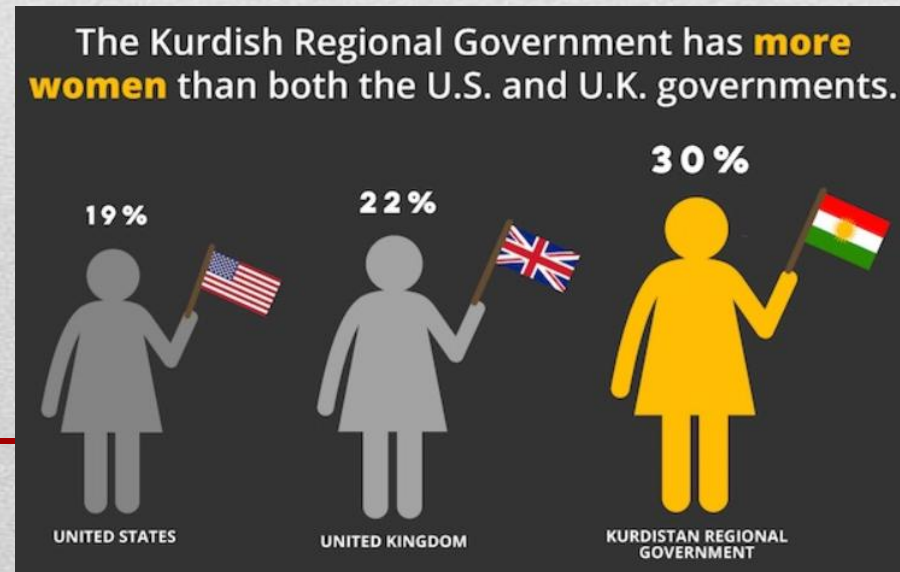
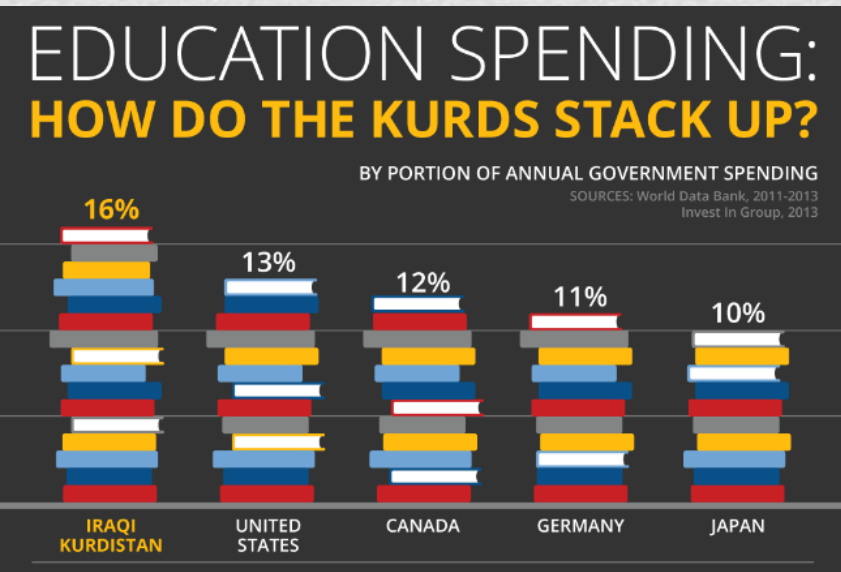




Kurdish Culture

The Kurdish people quite literally live and die by the geography and politics surrounding the Kurdish region. The Kurdish people have had to fight to maintain their culture for centuries.

Borne from a **long history of strife**, Kurdish culture places value on **individual freedoms**. Whether it be overt religious tolerance, strides towards equality in the status of women, or democratic government, Kurdish culture values individual life and has fiercely defended its ability to **live free from external rule**.





Kurdish Culture

Kurdish culture has a rich **oral tradition**. Most popular are epic poems called *lawj*, which often tell of adventure in love or battle.

Kurdish **literature** first appeared in the 7th century CE. In 1596, Sharaf Khan, Emir of Bitlis, composed a history of the Kurds in Persian called the *Sharafnama*. Almost one hundred years later, in 1695, a great national epic called the *Memozin* was written in Kurdish by Ahmed Khani.

Dengbej refers to a musician who performs traditional **Kurdish folk songs**. The word *deng* means voice and *bej* means to sing. *Dengbej* are best known for their *stran*, or songs of mourning. Traditional Kurdish instruments include the flute, drums and the *ut-ut* (similar to a guitar).



Popular **sports** include soccer, wrestling, hunting and shooting, and *cirit*, a traditional sport that involves throwing a javelin while mounted on horseback. Camel- and horse-racing are popular in rural areas.





Kurdish Culture

Carpet-weaving is by far the most significant Kurdish folk art.

Kurdish rugs and carpets use medallion patterns; however, far more popular are the all-over floral, *Mina Khani* motifs and the *Jaff* geometric patterns. The beauty of Kurdish designs are enriched by high-chroma blues, greens and saffrons as well as terracotta and burnt orange hues made richer still by the lustrous wool used.



The traditional Kurdish rug uses Kurdish symbols. It is possible to read the dreams, wishes and hopes of the rug maker from the sequence of symbols used. Kurdish people study how meaning is constructed and understood by talking with the rug maker.

Other crafts include embroidery, leather-working and metal ornamentation. Kurds are especially known for **copper-working**.





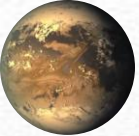
Kurdish Languages

Who Are the Kurds?

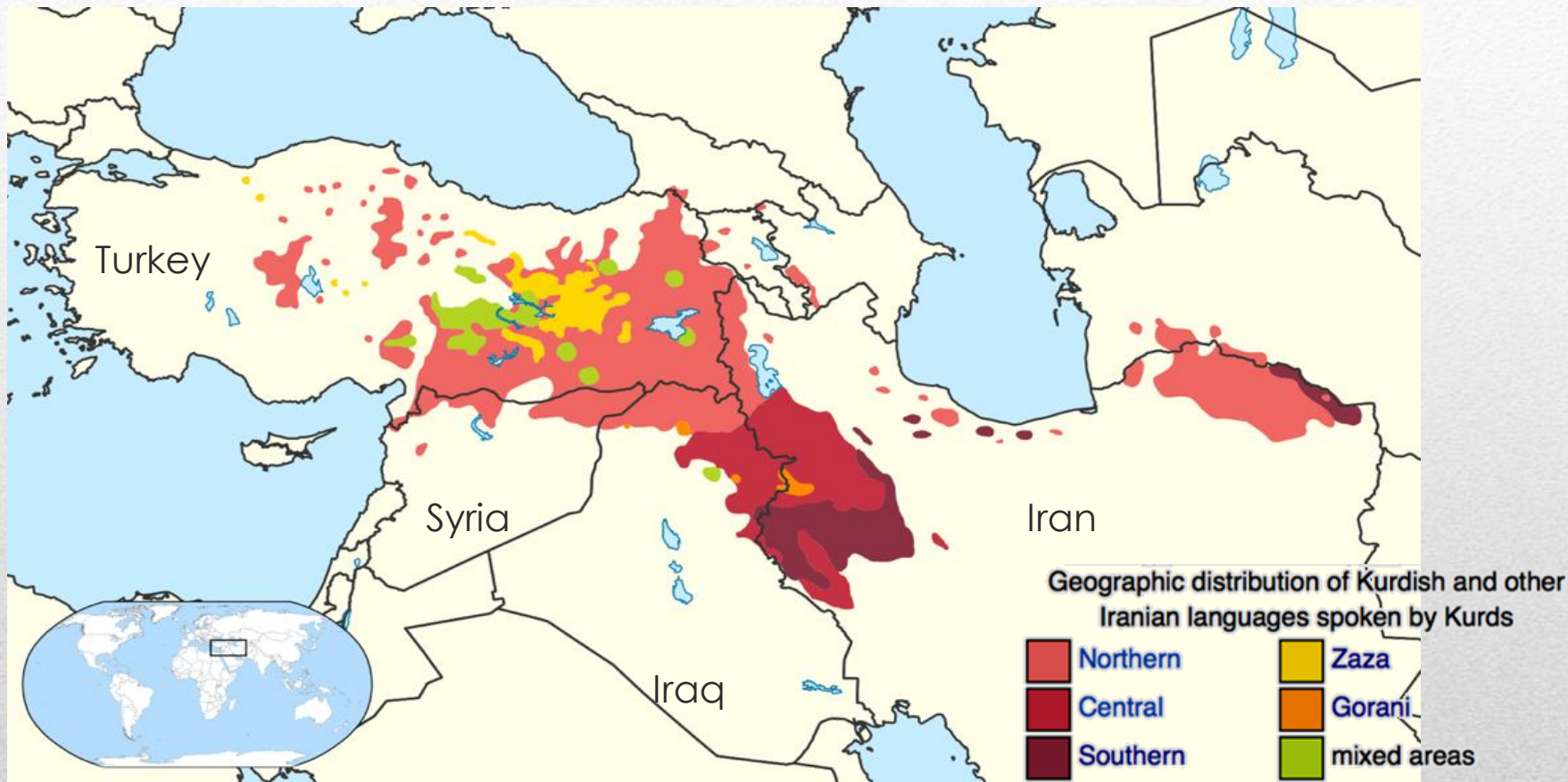
A Language Group?

Not exactly.

Commenting on the differences between the dialects of Kurdish, Kreyenbroek clarifies that in some ways, Kurmanji [Kurdish] and Sorani [Kurdish] are as different from each other as English and German, giving the example that Kurmanji has grammatical gender and case endings but Sorani does not, and observing that referring to Sorani and Kurmanji as "dialects" of one language is supported only by "their common origin...and the fact that this usage reflects the **sense of ethnic identity and unity of the Kurds.**"



Kurdish Languages



Kurdish is a **continuum of Northwestern Iranian languages** spoken by the Kurds in Western Asia. Kurdish forms three dialect groups known as Northern Kurdish (*Kurmanji*), Central Kurdish (*Sorani*), and Southern Kurdish (*Pehlewani*). A separate group of languages, Zaza-Gorani, is also spoken by several million Kurds, but is linguistically not Kurdish.



Kurdish Languages

Hawar alphabet

Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish language is written in an extended Latin alphabet, consisting of 31 letters (each having an uppercase and a lowercase form):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Majuscule forms (also called uppercase or capital letters)																														
A	B	C	Ç	D	E	Ê	F	G	H	I	Î	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	Ş	T	U	Û	V	W	X	Y	Z
Minuscule forms (also called lowercase or small letters)																														
a	b	c	ç	d	e	ê	f	g	h	i	î	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	ş	t	u	û	v	w	x	y	z

Sorani alphabet: The Sorani Kurdish dialect is mainly written using a modified Arabic script with 33 letters introduced by Sa'id Kaban Sedqi. Unlike the standard Arabic alphabet, which is an abjad, Sorani is almost a true alphabet in which vowels are mandatory, making the script easier to read. Yet contemporary Sorani does not have a complete representation of Kurdish sounds, as it lacks short **i**, and is also unable to differentiate the consonant **w** from the short vowel **u**, and the consonant **y** from the long vowel **î**.

ع	ش	س	ژ	ز	ڤ	ر	د	خ	ح	چ	ج	ت	پ	ب	ا	ئ
17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
ئ	غ	ف	ڤ	ق	ک	گ	ل	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ۆ	وو	ی	ئ
34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18



Kurdish Languages



Kurdish Academy of Language

enables the Kurdish language in new horizon

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Current Attempt to Create Unified Alphabet

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Kurdish Unified Alphabet

The expansion of virtual connections and the availability of diverse sources of information on the Internet have raised new technical concerns related to the format and use of communication tools. Internet use has quickly become part of household life in the West. Kurdish immigrants have joined this trend, and in the process have become notable users of cyber-special communication

If anything, **the history of Kurdish language** has been one of astonishing resiliency. Approximately 40 million people worldwide currently speak various **Kurdish dialects**. Since the Kurdish homeland is divided among more than a dozen countries in the geographic heart of the Middle East-and makes up one of the largest stateless nations on earth-communication across international frontiers has been difficult. It is only since late 1970's that speakers of various Kurdish dialects have been able to connect across the states that administer Kurdistan. Most recently, in the age of computerized communication networks, Kurds are beginning a new chapter of the history of their language that may enable them to mobilize nationally to ensure that Kurdish is the primary language used by their children.





Kurdish Languages

Kurdish Nationalists: Ambivalence over language standardization

Yekgirtú
Initiative

One alphabet - one nation - celebrating diversity
Yek ziman - yek netewe - pîroz bê joraújori/pirjuri
Yek ziman - yek netewe - pîroz bê coraúcori/pircuri

One writing system

The yekgirtú initiative is against the standardization of Kurdish as one language, instead, we promote a standardization of one writing system as proposed by Dilan Roshani at Kurdish Academy of Language (KAL). It should be added that we regard Kurdish as one language, not a language group as others may define it.

We promote the use of the four great dialects for use in written form, (standardized to some extent within each dialect). At the same time we strongly suggest the use of local expressions and dialects in order to create a more alive and diverse culture and language according to UNESCO's declaration of cultural diversity.

Should there at some point be developed a standard literary language such as the Arabic MSA, we would actively support this.

We are in firm belief of "purifying" the Kurdish language as the different dialects are infested with foreign, Semitic (Arabic), Turkic and Persian words and expressions. A language undeniably creates borrowed words from geographically and linguistic nearby languages, but when a language is forced upon another, the latter will lose its integrity, heritage, future and will endanger the culture's survival as a whole.



Kurdish Languages

In 2005, a Turkish court fined 20 Kurds 100 lira (US\$74) for holding up placards at a New Year's celebration containing the letters Q and W. The use of those letters - and X as well - violated the law of Nov. 1, 1928 on Adoption and Application of Turkish Letters, the purpose of which was to **change the writing system of Turkish from the Arabic-based system of the Ottomans to the Roman-based system** developed under the secular, modernizing regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Q, W and X appear in Kurdish but not in Turkish, and **restricting a minority language** - Kurdish has historically been spoken by 10-25% of the country's population - is one way to oppress a minority.

And although the fine represented a technically correct application of the statute, **enforcement of the law was selective**. Western companies routinely used the banned letters - in advertising and promotion - without consequence, for example in the case of Xerox Turkey, a longstanding, habitual abuser of the dreaded X.

Now, after 85 years, the letters Q, W and X have apparently been legalized as part of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's *Democratization Package* of Sept. 30, 2013.





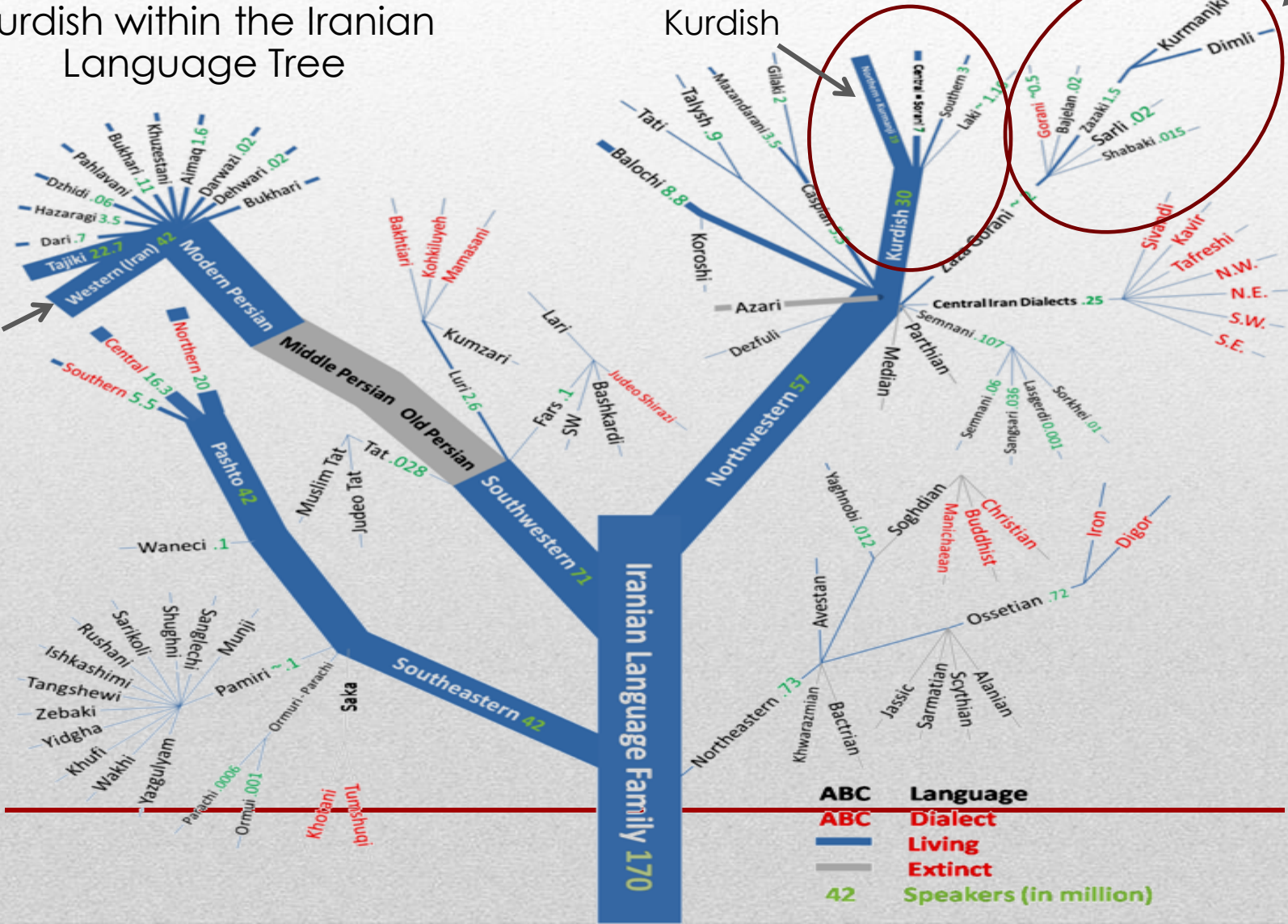
Kurdish Languages

Zazaki/Gorani

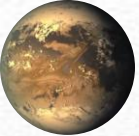
Kurdish within the Iranian Language Tree

Kurdish

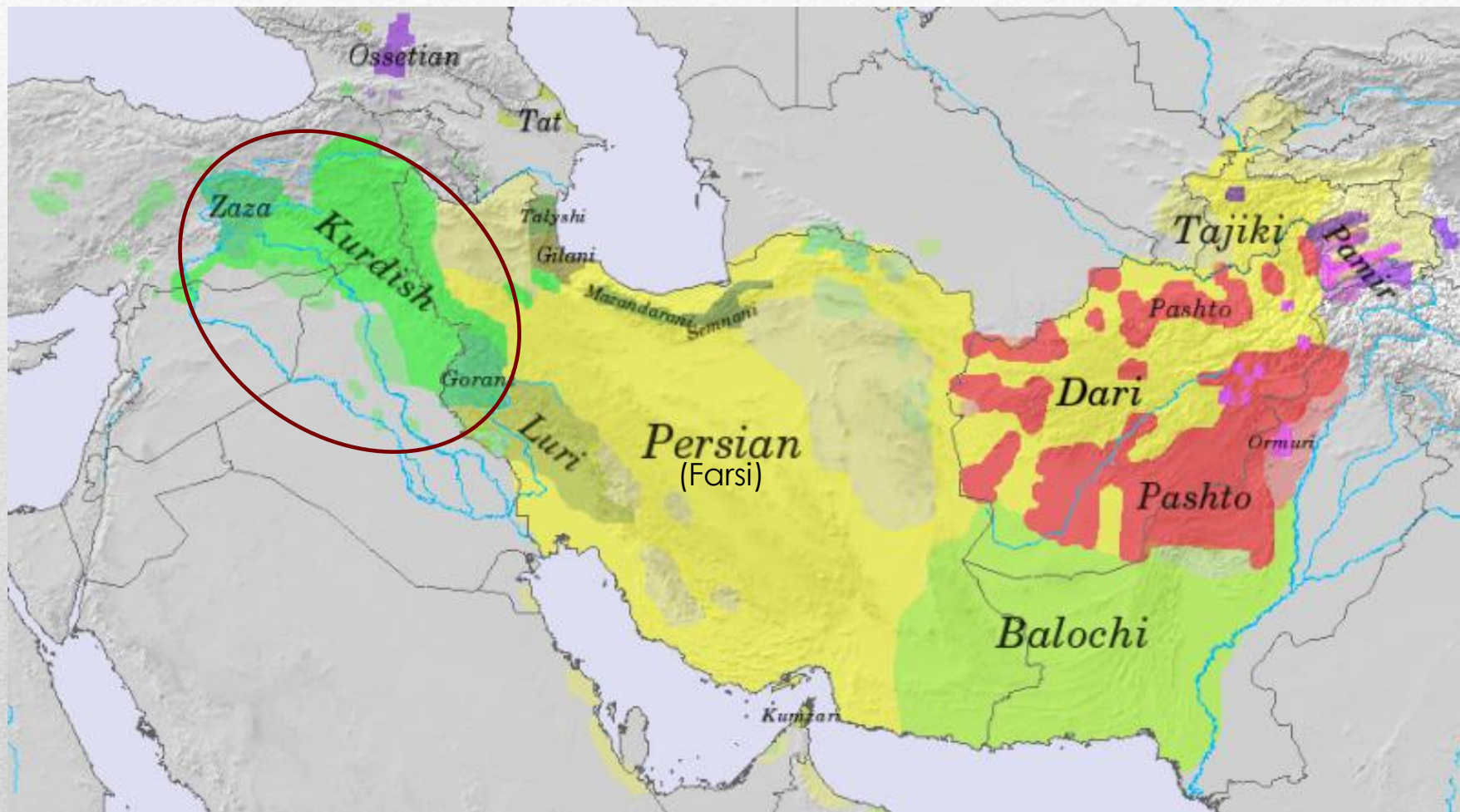
Farsi



ABC	Language
ABC	Dialect
— (Blue)	Living
— (Grey)	Extinct
42	Speakers (in million)



Kurdish Languages



Iranian Languages



Kurdish Calendar

The Kurdish calendar was **originally a lunisolar calendar related to the Babylonian calendar, but is now a solar calendar related to the Iranian calendar**. For example, on March 21, 2016, it was the first new-day in the Kurdish calendar which was the first of Cejnan 2628.

It has been proposed that the standard Kurdish calendar should start at 612 BCE or the taking of Nineveh by the Medes. According to this if the Gregorian calendar is used as a reference for calculation then the simple equation would give the correct Kurdish year on 20 or 21 March depending on the Gregorian year;

$$1 + (\text{Actual Gregorian Year} + 611) = \text{Kurdish Year}$$

$$1 + (2011 + 611) = 2623 \text{ on March 21, 2011}$$

As expected, this native calendar is strongly promoted by the Kurdish nationalists, while the pan-Islamic lunar calendar is allowed to serve Muslim religious purposes. In reality, however, depending under which administrative jurisdiction they live now, the Kurds seldom get to use their native calendar, which clashes, with notable exception of Iran, with the official state calendars.

In Iraq and Syria, the Western Gregorian calendar is observed unchanged for all governmental purposes, except for the nomenclature of the months, which is replaced by the ancient Aramaic. In Turkey and the territories of the former Soviet Union, the Gregorian calendar is used without any change.

In Iran the old Zoroastrian calendar, identical in every way to the native Kurdish calendar (except for the nomenclature), is used by the state.

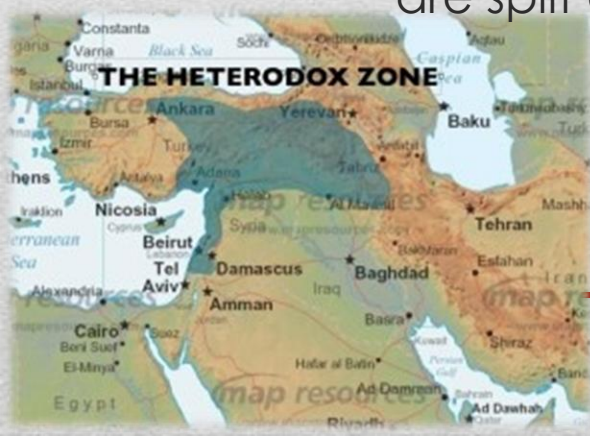




Religion Among the Kurds

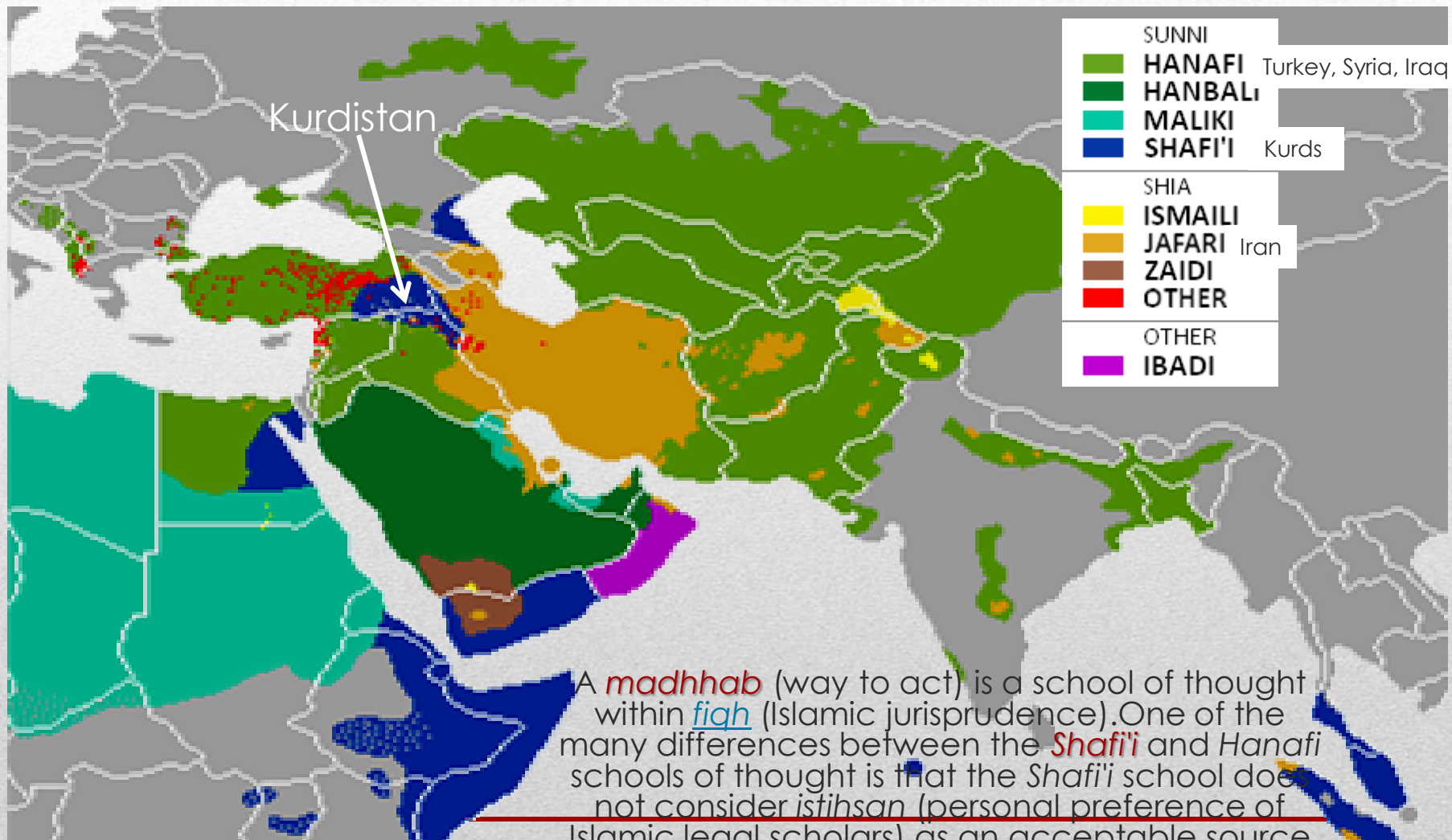
As a whole, the Kurdish people are adherents to a large number of different religions and creeds, **perhaps constituting the most religiously diverse people of West Asia**. Traditionally, Kurds have been known to take great liberties with their practices. The Kurdish parliament formed new ministries to represent religious minorities, including Jews, Zoroastrians, Yazidis and Baha'i.

98% of Kurds in Iraq identify themselves as Sunnis and only 2% identify as Shias. (A small minority of Iraqi Kurds, including Yazidis, are not Muslims.) But being a Kurd does not necessarily mean alignment with a particular religious sect. In neighboring Iran, Kurds are split about evenly between Sunnis and Shias.





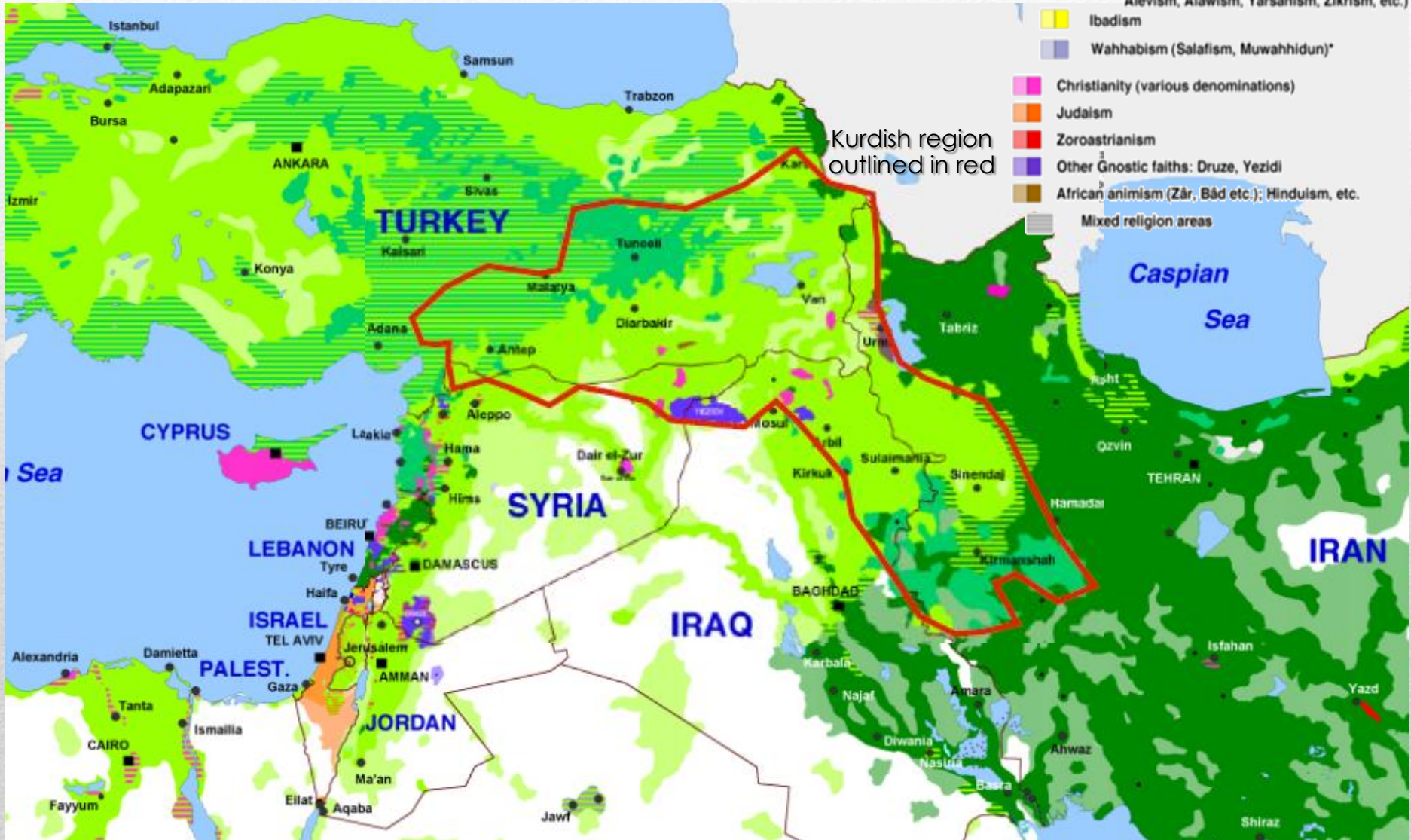
Islamic Schools of Thought



A *madhhab* (way to act) is a school of thought within *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). One of the many differences between the *Shafi'i* and *Hanafi* schools of thought is that the *Shafi'i* school does not consider *istihsan* (personal preference of Islamic legal scholars) as an acceptable source of religious law because it amounts to human legislation of Islamic law.



Religious Composition of Southwest Asia

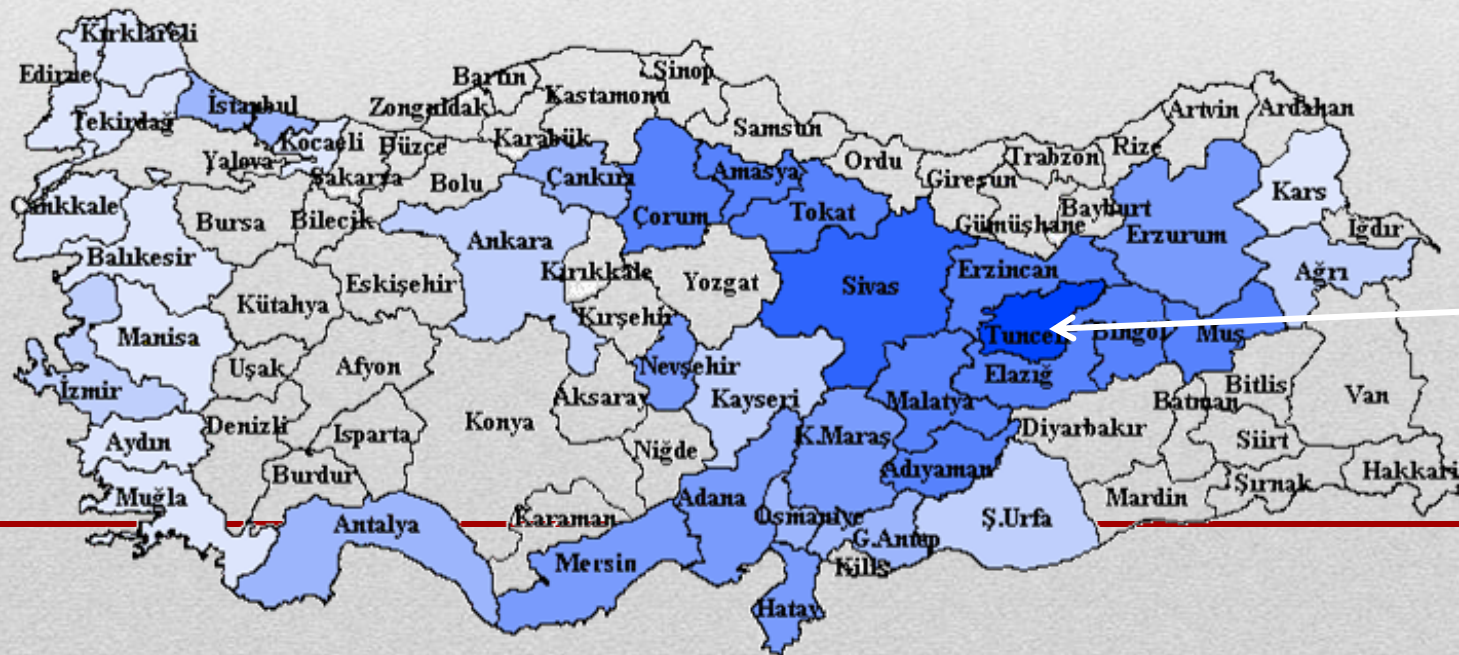




Distribution of Alevi Population in Turkey

Alevism is a branch of Shi'a Islam that is practiced in Turkey and the Balkans among **ethnic Turks and Kurds**, and is related to - though distinct from - Alawism in Syria. Alevi make up 20% of Turkish Muslims and comprise Turkey's largest religious minority community.

Instead of adherence to the *shari`a*, Alevi profess obedience to a set of simple moral norms. They claim to live according to the inner (*batin*) meaning of religion rather than its external (*zahir*) demands.



Zaza Core



Alevi Population in Turkey

Turkey unrest

Turkey's Alevi minority fear future under Erdogan presidency

Religious minority feels marginalised during PM's time in office

Alevis differ from Turkey's majority Sunnis and, according to some, are not Muslims at all. They drink alcohol, worship on Thursdays rather than Fridays, and doubt the existence of heaven and hell, while revering the [Imam Ali](#), central to Shia Islam.

"Ours is a kind of secular religion," says Vedat Kara, a spokesman for many of Istanbul's Alevi organizations, who emphasizes that men and women worship together. "But they are **trying to assimilate us into mainstream Islam.**"



The Ahl-e Haqq in Iran and Iraq

Yarsan or Ahl-e Haqq (people of truth) or Kaka'i is a **syncretic religion** (blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system) founded by [Sultan Sahak](#) in the late 14th century in western Iran. The total number of members is estimated at 500,000 -1,000,000, primarily found in western Iran and eastern Iraq, mostly **ethnic Goran Kurds**.

The Ahl-e Haqq follow the mystical teachings of Sultan Sahak. From the Ahl-e Haqq point of view, the universe is composed of two distinct yet interrelated worlds: the internal (*bātinī*) and the external (*zāhirī*), each having its own order and rules. Although humans are only aware of the outer world, their lives are governed according to the rules of the inner world. Among other important pillars of their belief system are that the Divine Essence has successive manifestations in human form (*mazhariyyat*) and a belief in the transmigration of the soul (*dunaduni* in Kurdish).

DON'T HATE ME
BECAUSE I'M
YARSAN



The Ahl-e Haqq in Iran and Iraq

One aspect the Yarsani faith has in common with Islam is the *ghulat Shia* Islamic assertion of the divinity or godhead/godhood of [Ali](#), although it can be identified as Kurdish esoterism which emerged under the intense influence of Bātinī-Sufism during the last two centuries.

**Yarsan, is not just an old religion,
but a part of Kurdish culture too...**

يارسان
Yarsan

There are however, some followers of the Ahl-e Haqq who believe that they are an Islamic group and that all other doctrines contradicting the *Quran* occurred centuries later by other influences. They believe that some followers today who claim they aren't Muslim lack knowledge, since the Ahl-e Haqq belief sees Ali as a perfect example to follow.



The Yazidis of Kurdistan

The Yazidis (also Yezidis) are an **ethnically Kurdish religious group** indigenous to northern Mesopotamia. Yazidism is an ancient religion that is strictly endogamous (marriage within a specific group as required by custom or law). Yazidism is linked to ancient Mesopotamian religions. Even though they are ethnically Kurdish, Yazidis are a distinct and independent religious community with their own unique culture. The number of Yazidis in their native lands has been in decline since the 1990s as a result of significant migration to Europe, especially to Germany.

The Yazidis are monotheists believing in God as creator of the world, which he has placed under the care of seven holy beings or angels, the chief of whom is *Melek Taus*, the Peacock Angel. The Peacock Angel, as world-ruler, causes both good and bad to befall individuals, and this ambivalent character is reflected in myths of his own temporary fall from God's favor, before his remorseful tears extinguished the fires of his hellish prison and he was reconciled with God.







The Jews of Kurdistan

Kurdish Jews

Total population

~200,000

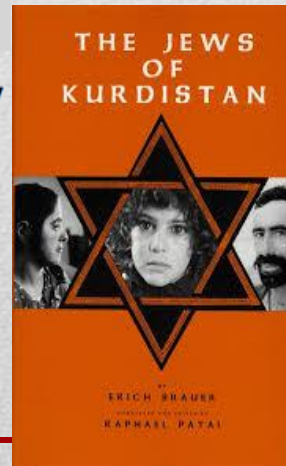
Regions with significant populations

	Israel	200,000
	Kurdistan	400-730 families

Languages

Northeastern Neo-Aramaic dialects (particularly Judeo-Aramaic) were their native tongues in Kurdistan and are the native tongues of older generation today. Younger generations today speak the languages of their countries of residence, plus Mizrahi Hebrew (liturgical use) and traditional Kurdish, and Azeri (in Iran) dialects.

Until their immigration to Israel in the 1940s and early 1950s, the Jews of Kurdistan lived as **closed ethnic communities**. The Jews of Kurdistan largely spoke Aramaic, as a *lingua franca*, with some additionally speaking Kurdish dialects, in particular the Kurmanji dialect in Iraqi Kurdistan.



The vast majority of Kurdish Jews was forced out of Iraqi Kurdistan and evacuated to Israel in the early 1950s, together with the Iraqi Jewish community. The vast majority of the Kurdish Jews of Iranian Kurdistan relocated mostly to Israel in the 1950s.



The Jews of Kurdistan

The Jews of Kurdistan - until their great exodus in 1950-51 - **lived mainly in the Iraqi region** (146 communities), with some in the Iranian region (19 communities) and only a few in Turkey (11 communities). There were also a few Jews in the Syrian region and other places (11 communities).

An ancient tradition relates that the Jews of Kurdistan are the descendants of the **Ten Tribes from the time of the Assyrian exile** (722 BCE) ... The places to which King Shalmaneser V exiled the tribes are in the vicinity of Kurdistan.

Too, during the 1st century, the kingdom of **Adiabene** was situated in this region. Its inhabitants, their king, Monobaz, and his mother Helena converted to Judaism in the middle of the 1st century. It is assumed that there are descendants of these proselytes among the Jews of Kurdistan.





The Jews of Kurdistan

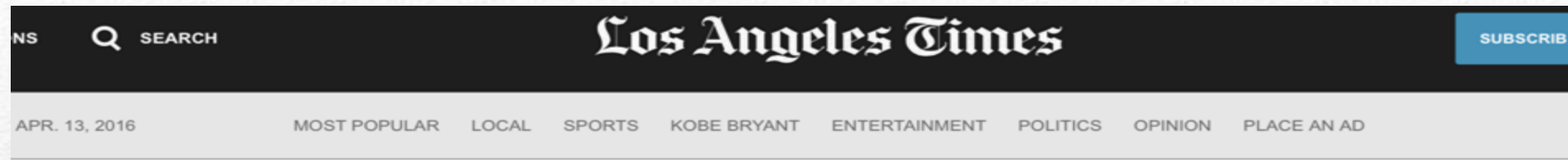
In more modern times, the number of Jewish merchants in this area was greater than the number of craftsmen. The **tradesmen** were wholesalers, shopkeepers and peddlers. The **craftsmen** were weavers, gold- and silver-smiths, dyers, carpenters, tanners, cobblers and unskilled workers. Jewish **farmers** cultivated mainly wheat, barley, rice, sesame, lentils and tobacco. They owned orchards, vineyards, flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle. There were also **agricultural villages**, all of whose inhabitants were Jews.

Today on the streets of Irbil Kurdistan a small group of local Jews wear their *kippahs* proudly. It is a sight only the city's elderly can recall having seen before, and seeing this long-forgotten religious headgear has brought a few to tears.





Israel and Kurdistan



Netanyahu expresses support for Kurdish independence

JUNE 29, 2014, 3:21 PM | REPORTING FROM JERUSALEM

With an eye on developments in Iraq, Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) expressed open support Sunday for Kurdish independence.

In a policy address in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu said that among the challenges facing Israel was the need to build cooperation with moderate countries in the region to help fend off the threat posed by extremists such as the [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria](#), or [ISIS](#).

He said Israel must back efforts to support Jordan, which borders both Syria and Iraq, so that the insurgency doesn't spread there.

"It is upon us to support the international efforts to strengthen Jordan, and support the Kurds' aspiration for independence," Netanyahu said. The Kurds, he said, are a "fighting people that have proven political commitment and political moderation, and they're also worthy of their own political independence."

He did not specify whether he meant only Iraqi Kurds, or Kurds living across a broad stretch of the region in countries including Iran, Syria and Turkey. Those countries, as well as Iraq, have long opposed creation of a Kurdish state including territory now within their borders.



Photo: Kurdish demonstration in Stockholm Sweden in late November 2007



Israel and Kurdistan

Israel has been arming the Kurds for many years. It also has special forces trainers on the ground advising them. For more than a decade, the **Israelis have been persuading Kurdish leaders to establish an independent Kurdistan** in northern Iraq. For Israel, it would mean having a pro-Israeli, Sunni Muslim state sandwiched between Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Shiite majorities of Iraq and Iran.

The largest Kurdish population of 15 million is in Turkey, but the most powerful Kurdish group, which is half that number, is based in northern Iraq where it has a sizable arsenal and controls the rich oil fields around Kirkuk. In the past, the Mossad has trained Kurdish groups in Iran to carry out terrorist bombings against the government in Tehran.



an American Jew in Iraqi Kurdistan



Israel and Kurdistan

The Kurds have always practiced a **moderate, more secular form of Islam** and have tended to **focus more on their nationalistic goal** of an independent Kurdistan that could attract Kurds from across the region, a prospect that worries Turkey.

Israel is, nevertheless, determined to win the argument in Washington for the Kurds because it believes the creation of an independent Kurdish state with ties to Tel Aviv is a foregone conclusion. For Israel, the Kurds could be a new political force in Southwest Asia that will form a distinct, mutually beneficial relationship with Israel.

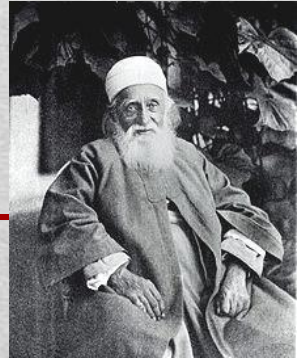




The Bahá'í in Iran and Iraq

The Bahá'í faith is a **monotheistic religion** which **emphasizes the spiritual unity of all humankind**. Three core principles establish a basis for Bahá'í teachings and doctrine: (1) the unity of God, that there is only one God who is the source of all creation; (2) the unity of religion, that all major religions have the same spiritual source and come from the same God; and (3) the unity of humanity, that all humans have been created equal, coupled with unity in diversity, that diversity of race and culture are seen as worthy of appreciation and acceptance. The human purpose is to learn to know and to love God through such methods as prayer, reflection and being of service to humanity.

The Bahá'í faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in 19th-century Persia. Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned and exiled from Persia to the Ottoman Empire. Under the leadership of his son, **`Abdu'l-Bahá**, the religion gained a footing in Europe and America, but it still suffers intense persecution where it originated, in present-day Iran.



`Abdu'l-Bahá



The Bahá'í in Iran and Iraq

Bahá'ís continue to be persecuted in Islamic countries, as **Islamic leaders do not recognize the Bahá'í Faith as an independent religion**, but rather as apostasy from Islam.

The most severe persecutions have occurred in **Iran**, where over 200 Bahá'ís were executed between 1978 and 1998, and in Egypt.

The rights of Bahá'ís have been restricted to greater or lesser extents in numerous other countries, including **Iraq**. There are no official statistics on Bahá'ís in Iraq, but there are communities in Baghdad and in Sulaymaniyah, as well as in the Kurdistan Region, where they have a degree of security.

Iran has a history of persecuting members of the Bahá'í faith. Its outlawed Bahá'ís living in the country's Kurdish regions enjoy good relations with the local Sunni community and there is mutual respect between both sides.



house of the Báb, Shiraz, Iran, before being demolished and replaced with an Islamic religious center



Contemporary Kurdish Christians

An educated guess for the total number of Christian Kurds would place them in the range of tens of thousands.

The Kurdish-Speaking Church of Christ (The **Kurdzman Church of Christ**) was established in Irbil by the end of 2000, and has branches in the Silêmanî and Duhok governorates. This is the first evangelical Kurdish church in Iraq. Its logo is formed of a yellow sun and a cross rising up behind a mountain range. Kurdzman Church of Christ held its first three-day conference in Ainkawa north of Irbil in 2005 with the participation of 300 new Kurdish converts.

There is also a tiny **Armenian Christian** community in the Kurdish area of Turkey. According to other sources, 500 Kurdish Muslim youths have converted to Christianity since 2006 throughout Kurdistan. In recent years, the trend of Kurds converting to Christianity continues.



A Christian church in the Kurdish city of Dirik in Western Kurdistan
Photo: Rozh Ahmad/Rudaw



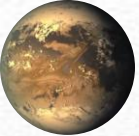
Contemporary Kurdish Christians

Kurds who converted to Christianity usually turned to the Nestorian Church. In the 12th century, the [Nestorian Church](#) (**Assyrian Church**), with its metropolitan center in Kurdistan, developed with extraordinary rapidity. By the end of the 13th century, Islam had gained the upper hand and the Nestorians were massacred. The center of the Nestorian patriarchate moved over the centuries but still remained in Kurdistan.

Some non-Christian Kurds of Anatolia and even central Kurdistan still bless their bread dough by pressing the sign of the cross on it while letting it rise. They also make pilgrimages to the old abandoned or functioning churches of the Armenian and Assyrian Christians. This may well be a cultural tradition left with the non-Christian Kurds through long association with Christian Kurds, or very possibly it stems from the time that many Kurds themselves were Christians.

10th century Armenian Church in Eastern Kurdistan on Lake Urumia





Contemporary Kurdish Islam

Kurdistan official says attendance at Quran schools in decline

By Rudaw 11 hours ago



Books on Islam were the largest draw at this year's Erbil International Book Fair.

ERBIL, Kurdistan – Attendance at Quranic schools, religious centers and mosques has declined in the Kurdistan Region, according to an official at the ministry of religious affairs.

"Less learners have these days been seen visiting the Quran learning centers," Mariwan Naqshbandi, spokesperson of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs at the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), told *Rudaw*

He said that attendance at centers where students learn the Quran has declined by about 70 percent, and that the number of people visiting mosques and other religious centers has dropped by some 20 percent.

"Not only the Quran centers, but also the number of people visiting religious places has declined -- including mosques -- since government security agencies have had them under surveillance," Naqshbandi claimed.



But...

Hersh | 10 hours ago

8 7

These sensationalist ridiculously short articles on this subject is not helping anyone understand the issue if Islam in KRG, I urge Rudaw to stop reporting like this. There's a big open debate in KRG today not only about the role of Islam but the role of religion in society. I don't understand why Rudaw doesn't take the time to translate or text some of their in-depth analyses, commentaries, debates, programs etc from their rich Kurdish section? this will allow the readers to understand the issue much better.



Iranian Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago. Worldwide there are less than 200,000 Zoroastrians. They are roughly split into two groups: the Iranian Gabars and the Indian Parsis.

The religion has deep Kurdish roots. Zoroaster was born in the Kurdish part of Iran and the religion's sacred book, the *Avesta*, was written in an ancient language from which the Kurdish language derives. Zoroastrians opened their first contemporary temple in the region in the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah in 2016.

Zoroastrianism /zɒrəʊs'æstriənɪzəm/, /-zɔr/, also called **Zarathustraism**, **Mazdaism** and **Magianism**, is an ancient monotheistic Iranian religion and a religious philosophy. It was once the state religion of the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires. Estimates of the current number of Zoroastrians worldwide vary between approximately 145,000 circa 2000 and 2.6 million in more recent estimates. [1] The change over the last decade is attributed to a greater level of reporting and open self-identification more so than to an actual increase in population; however, precise numbers remain difficult to obtain in part due to high levels of historic persecution in Middle Eastern regions.



Iranian Zoroastrianism

Some issues of modernization are emerging around which there is some internal dissension. The most divisive topic seems to be that of **conversion**.

Many traditionalists desire to maintain the status quo which disallows conversion entirely, and even disallows membership in Zoroastrianism to children of mixed marriages if the father is not a Zoroastrian.

Some reform-minded Zoroastrians fear the strict guidelines will doom their people to extinction, and they wish to make the faith less exclusive, perhaps even allowing unrelated converts. Although there are organizations set up to promote both points of view, such issues are unlikely to cause a complete "schism" in the faith.

Although once the **primary religion of Iran**, since that time Zoroastrians have gone through periods of extreme persecution. There are few Zoroastrians left in Iran today but, along with Christians and Jews, Zoroastrians are recognized as [People of the Book](#) and are protected.



the Prophet Zoroaster



Iranian Zoroastrianism



PS21

PROJECT FOR THE STUDY OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The curious rebirth of Zoroastrianism in Iraqi Kurdistan

BY PS21 ON NOVEMBER 26, 2015 • (LEAVE A COMMENT)

Faced with the barbaric actions of Islamic State on their doorstep, a growing number of Kurds, particularly the youth, are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the various interpretations of Islam on offer in the region. There is an age-old Zoroastrian mantra: "Good words, good thoughts and good actions." It still holds for the small but growing number of Zoroastrians living in Iraq's Kurdistan Region. According to local media reports, around 10,000 have converted to Zoroastrianism in the last year alone. Some purport this figure to be as high as 100,000.

While some look to secular, Western cultural ideals, others are looking to the past and exploring ancient Kurdish beliefs. Up until the 7th century Islamic conquests, Kurds across the region were followers of various pre-Abrahamic faiths, such as Zoroastrianism and Yazidism. In August this year, the **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officially recognized Zoroastrianism** as a religion.

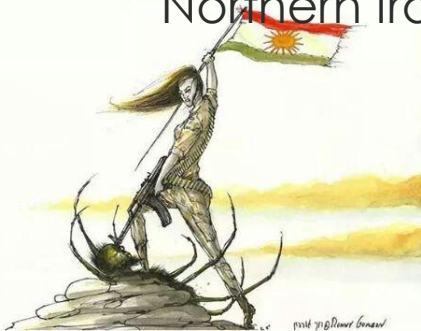
Turkish President Erdoğan has spoken virulently about the conflict in the region, targeting Kurds demanding autonomy and recognition, calling them "Atheists and Zoroastrians" in an attempt to appeal to religious sentiment and rouse Islamist fervor.



Politics in a Stateless Nation

Kurds dream of a state, but aren't as united as you might think. Most Kurds want some form of democratic, secular state, whatever the machinations of their egotistical and often corrupt leaders. The political culture in Iraqi Kurdistan, for example, serves primarily to concentrate power in the hands of specific individuals rather than promoting and enabling the values of freedom, democracy and diversity. And the Kurds are growing tired of being patient about it.

Without their own nation state, **independence is part of the Kurds' cultural identity** and many Kurdish political groups are separatist by nature. Historically this has led to tensions with their host countries' governments and military groups. The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) in Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq are the two most well-known Kurdish political groups, though many other groups exist.





Politics in a Stateless Nation

With a fragile peace holding in the long war of the Turkish Kurds against Turkey, with the Kurdish regional government in Iraq now everyone's favorite ally in the war against Islamic State, and with the Syrian Kurds being helped to do what was once unthinkable - carve out their own autonomous region from the Assad regime - the Kurds, denied self-rule after WWI, can now dare to dream of their own state.

Kurdish politics is going through critical times. It is too early to predict which rival group will better respond to the **growing public discontent with Kurdish political actors** and turn shifting regional dynamics to their greater advantage.





Major Kurdish Political Movements

You can use this chart as a reference for the remainder of the presentation.

-  LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY
-  INSURGENCY
-  ALLIANCES



Huda-Par
Free Cause Party



HDP
Peoples' Democratic Party



PKK
Kurdistan Workers Party
Abdullah Ocalan



PYD
Democratic Union Party



KDP
Kurdistan Democratic Party
Masoud Barzani



PJAK
Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan



Gorran
Movement for Change



PUK
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Jalal Talabani

[a user's guide to Kurdish politics](#)

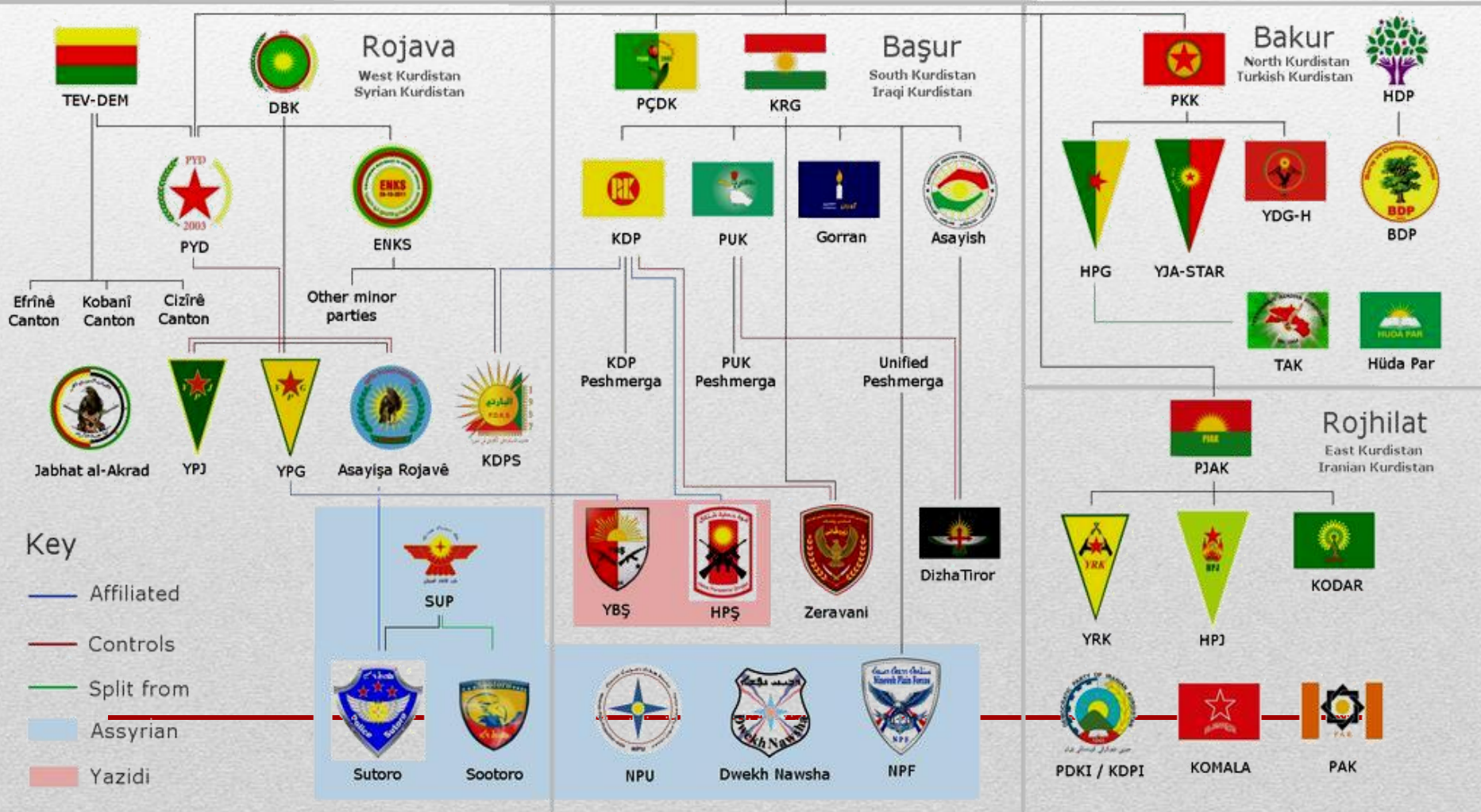
[Kurdistan Communities Union \(KCK\)](#): umbrella group of Kurdish political and insurgent groups in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq



Kurdish Political Alliances

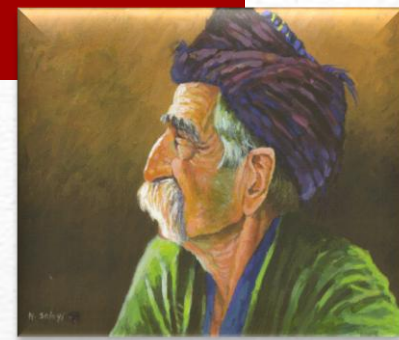
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Transnational





Kurds' Common Conditions

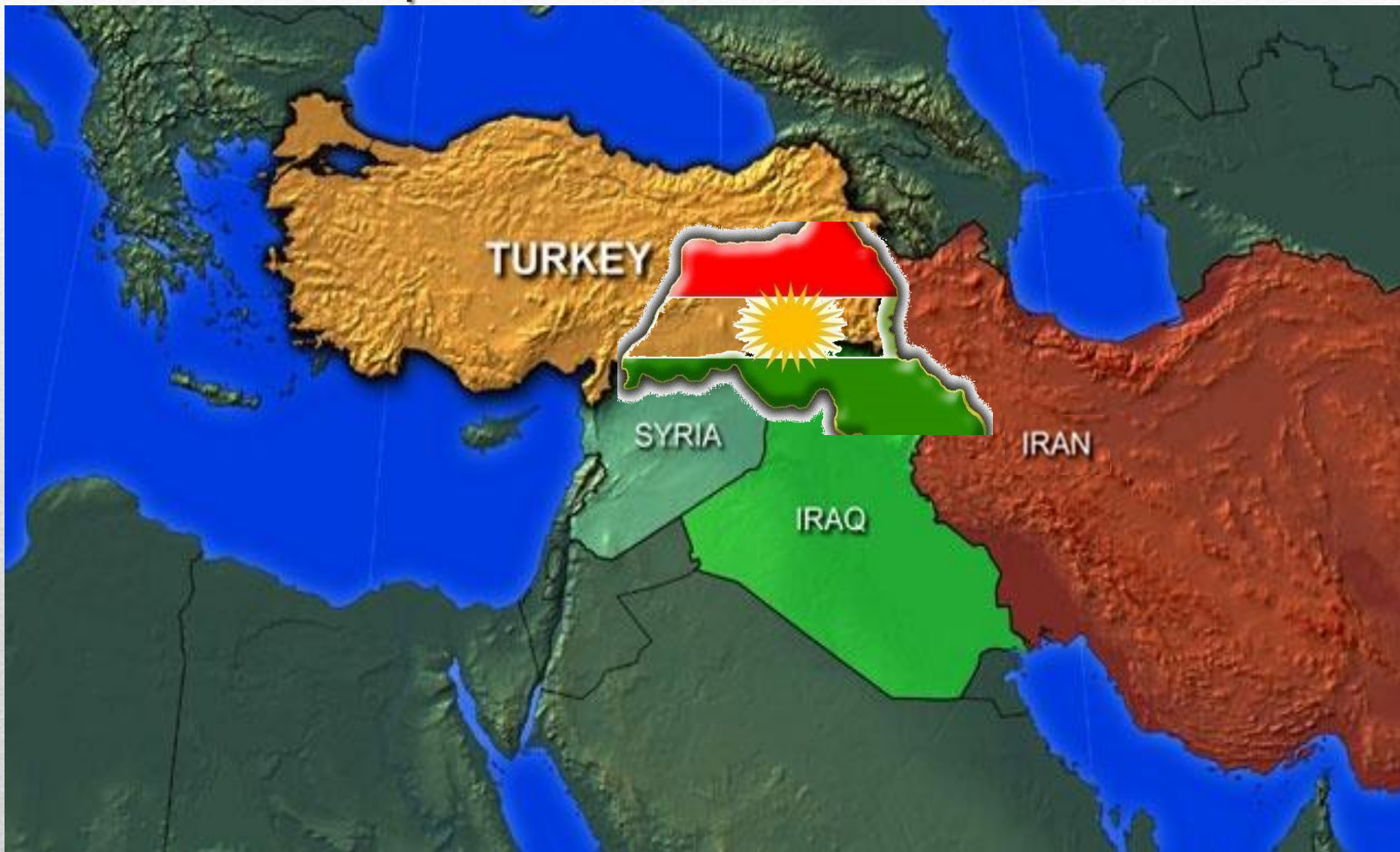


In the modern era, the Kurdish nation, with its distinctive society and culture, has had to confront in all of the host states centralizing, ethnically-based nationalist regimes - Turkish, Arab and Persian - with little or no tolerance for expressions of national autonomy within their borders. While the modes and scale of oppression have varied in time and by place, the conditions of the Kurds share some important features.

1. The Kurdish areas **overlap state borders** and thus acquire significance for national security, and are vulnerable to interference and manipulation by regional and international powers.
 2. The Kurdish regions of these countries are usually the **poorest, least developed areas**, systematically marginalized by the centers of economic power.
 3. The dynamics of assimilation, repression and Kurdish resistance in each country have **affected the direction and outcome of the Kurdish struggles in the neighboring countries**.
 4. These Kurdish societies are themselves **internally complex**, and fraught with differences in politics and ideology, social class, dialect and (in a few places) clan.
-



The Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq





The Kurds in Turkey

1970s: Start of the PKK/Turkish Conflict 1974–1984: Rise of PKK

- 1977: Haki Karer, a leader of the Revolutionaries of Kurdistan group was assassinated in Gaziantep.
- 1978: Halil Çavgun, another Revolutionaries of Kurdistan leader was assassinated by wealthy Kurdish landowners.
- 1978: The founding congress of the **Kurdistan Workers' Party** was held in the village of Fis near Lice in Diyarbakır Province. The Turkish state, Turkish rightist groups, and some Kurdish landowners continued their attacks on the group.
- 1978: Grey Wolves (ultra-nationalist youth organization) committed the Maraş Massacre, killing 109 and injuring 176 Alevi Turks/Kurds in Kahramanmaraş.
- 1980: General Kenan Evren seized power, deposing an elected government led by Süleyman Demirel and his Justice Party in the 1980 **Turkish coup d'état**. Most of the PKK's leadership moved to Syria.





The Kurds in Turkey

1970s: Start of the PKK/Turkish Conflict

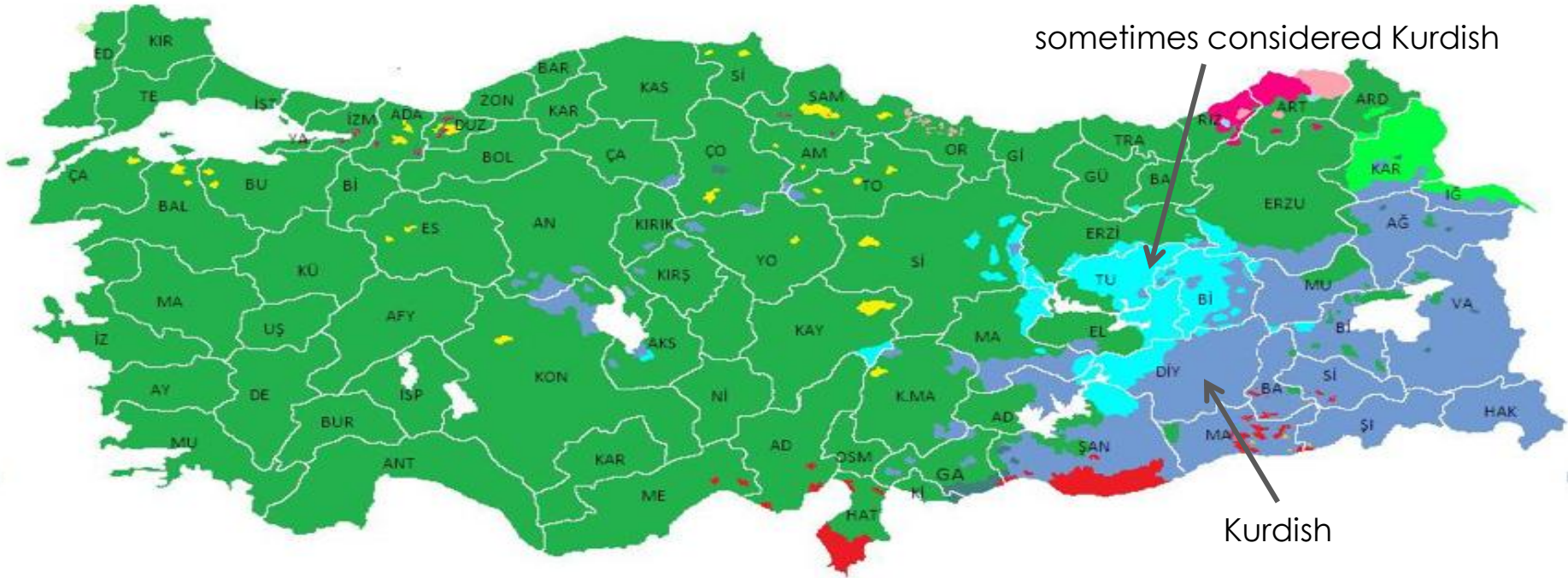
1974–1984: Rise of PKK

- 1980: The Turkish Consulate in Strasbourg, France was bombed causing significant material damage but no injuries. In a telephone call to the *Agence France-Presse* office, a spokesman said the blast was a joint operation and marked the start of a "fruitful collaboration" between the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Kurdistan Workers Party.
- 1981: The Turkish consulate in Paris was attacked by ASALA. Their demands included the release of five Kurdish revolutionary fighters.
- 1982: Imprisoned PKK leader Mazlum Doğan burned himself to death in protest of the treatment of inmates at the Diyarbakır Prison.





Language Map of Turkey



TÜRKLER

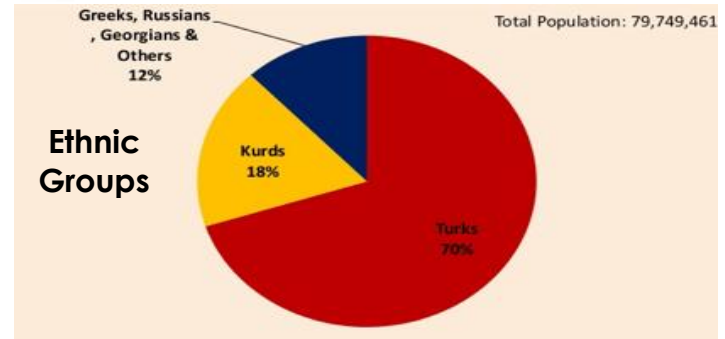
- TÜRK (53.500.000) %74
- AZERBAJCANLI (600.000) %0,8
- YÖRÜK (100.000) %0,1
- GAGAVUZ (20.000) %0,03

- KÜRT (10.400.000) %14,5
- ZAZA (2.500.000) %3,5
- HEMŞİNLİ(Ermeni) (13.000) %0,02

KAFKAS KÖKENLİLER

- ÇERKES (1.000.000) %1,4
- LAZ (85.000) %0,1
- GÜRCÜ (170.000) %0,2

- ARAP (900.000) %1,2
- SÜRYANİ (28.000) %0,04
- 3.000.000 (Köylerde yaşamayan etnikler (Boşnak, Arnavut, Roman, Ermeni, Rum, Musevi vs . ve yabancılar) %4,1



Not: Göçler dolayısıyla nüfus hareketlerini göstermemektedir.



The Kurds in Turkey

In 1978, **Abdullah Öcalan** established the **PKK**, which called for an **independent state**. Six years later, the group began an **armed struggle**, in which more than 40,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

After his capture and imprisonment in 1999, Öcalan had led the party to adopt his new political platform of **Democratic Confederalism** (influenced strongly by the libertarian socialist philosophy of [communalism](#)) and to cease its official calls for the establishment of a fully independent country. The PKK rolled back on its demand for independence, calling instead for **greater cultural and political autonomy**, but continued to fight.





The Kurds in Turkey

Kurdistan Workers' Party Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK)

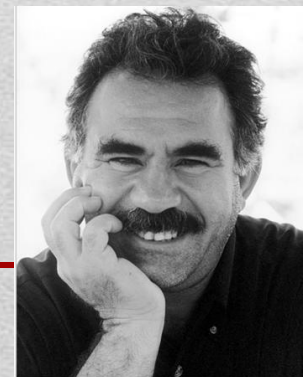


Leader	Abdullah Öcalan Murat Karayilan (<i>de facto</i>)
Founded	1978
Headquarters	Qandil Mountains
Paramilitary Wing	People's Defence Forces (HPG) Free Women's Units (YJA-STAR)
Ideology	Kurdish nationalism Libertarian socialism Libertarian municipalism Democratic confederalism Communalism Feminism
Political position	Far-left

In 2005, Öcalan described the need for a democratic confederalism and went on to say: *The democratic confederalism of Kurdistan is not a state system, it is the democratic system of a people without a state... It takes its power from the people and adapts to reach self-sufficiency in every field including the economy.*

In May 2007, former members of the PKK helped form the **KCK, an umbrella organization of Kurds from Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.**

In 2012, the prime minister of Turkey, **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, said the government was conducting negotiations with jailed rebel leader Öcalan.



Abdullah Öcalan



The Kurds in Turkey

2012 Peace Initiative

After months of negotiations with the Turkish government, Abdullah Öcalan wrote a letter to his people that was read in both Turkish and Kurdish during the Nowruz celebrations in Diyarbakır. The letter called for a **cease-fire** that included **disarmament and withdrawal from Turkish soil** and for an end to armed struggle.

The PKK announced that it would obey, stating that the year of 2013 would be the year of solution ... either through war or through peace. The PKK announced that it would withdraw all of its forces in Turkey to Northern Iraq but warned that the peace deal would fail if implementation of reforms were not begun within a month.





The Kurds in Turkey

Kurdish–Turkish conflict

Part of the **Kurdish rebellions and Civil conflict in Turkey**



Thematic map, general view over the Turkey – PKK conflict

Throughout 2014, the PKK fought to **protect Kurdish towns and areas threatened by Islamic State** in both Iraq and Syria, often with US air support. Despite PKK's engagement with Islamic State, **Turkey refused to allow border crossings or resupply** and eventually **commenced bombing** PKK positions in Iraq and Syria.

In 2015, the PKK finally **cancelled their 2013 ceasefire** with the Turkish state.

Date c. 27 November 1978–present
(37 years and 5 months)

Location Eastern and Southeastern Turkey, spillovers in Iraqi Kurdistan and Rojava

Status Ongoing:

- Peace process attempt during 2012–15
- Escalation since September 2014 due to Kobane crisis
- Renewed warfare since July 2015

Casualties and losses

5,347 soldiers, 283 police officers and 1,466 village guards killed, 95 captured (22 currently held)
Total: 7,230 killed, 21,128 wounded (Turkish claim)

Total: 22,374 killed, 1,480 captured (Turkish claim)

Total killed: 40,000–45,000

Civilian Casualties:

6,741 killed and 14,257 wounded (Turkish claim)
18,000–20,000 Kurdish civilians executed and 2,400–4,000+ villages destroyed by the Turkish government (Independent human rights reports and other estimates)
17,000 missing
3,000,000+ displaced

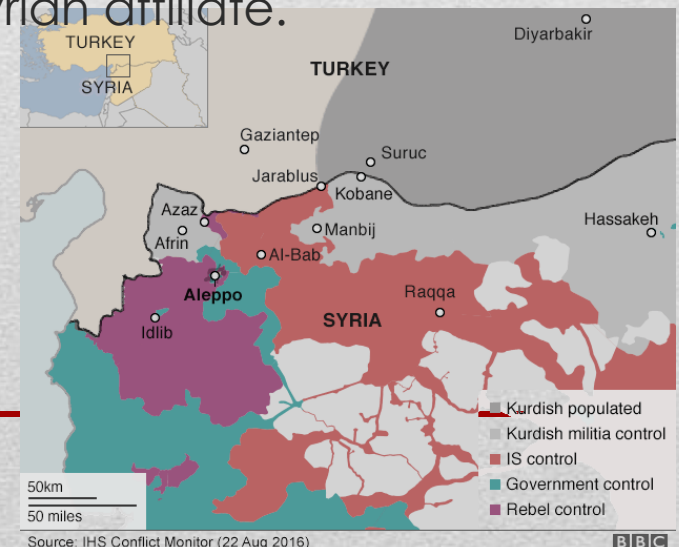


The Kurds in Turkey

Complicating matters, the Syrian conflict became intertwined with Turkey's domestic turmoil.

Turkey now sees itself as fighting the Kurdistan Workers' Party on three fronts: in Turkey, in northern Syria and in northern Iraq, where its members hide out in the mountains.

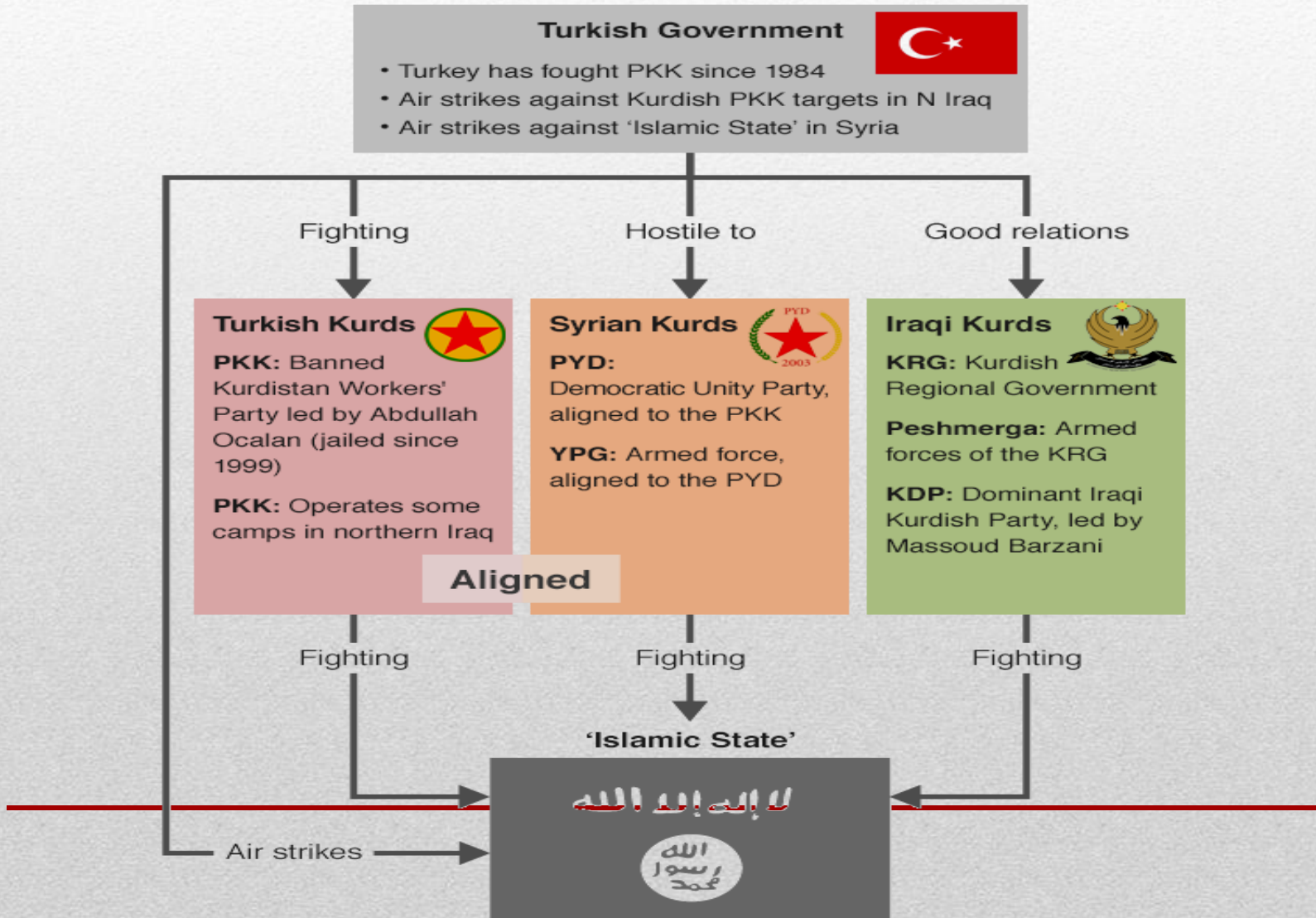
As a result, analysts now say that there can be no final settlement of the Syrian civil war without the resumption of peace talks between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, of which the Democratic Union Party is its Syrian affiliate.





The Kurds in Turkey

Kurdish groups, Turkey and the Islamic State

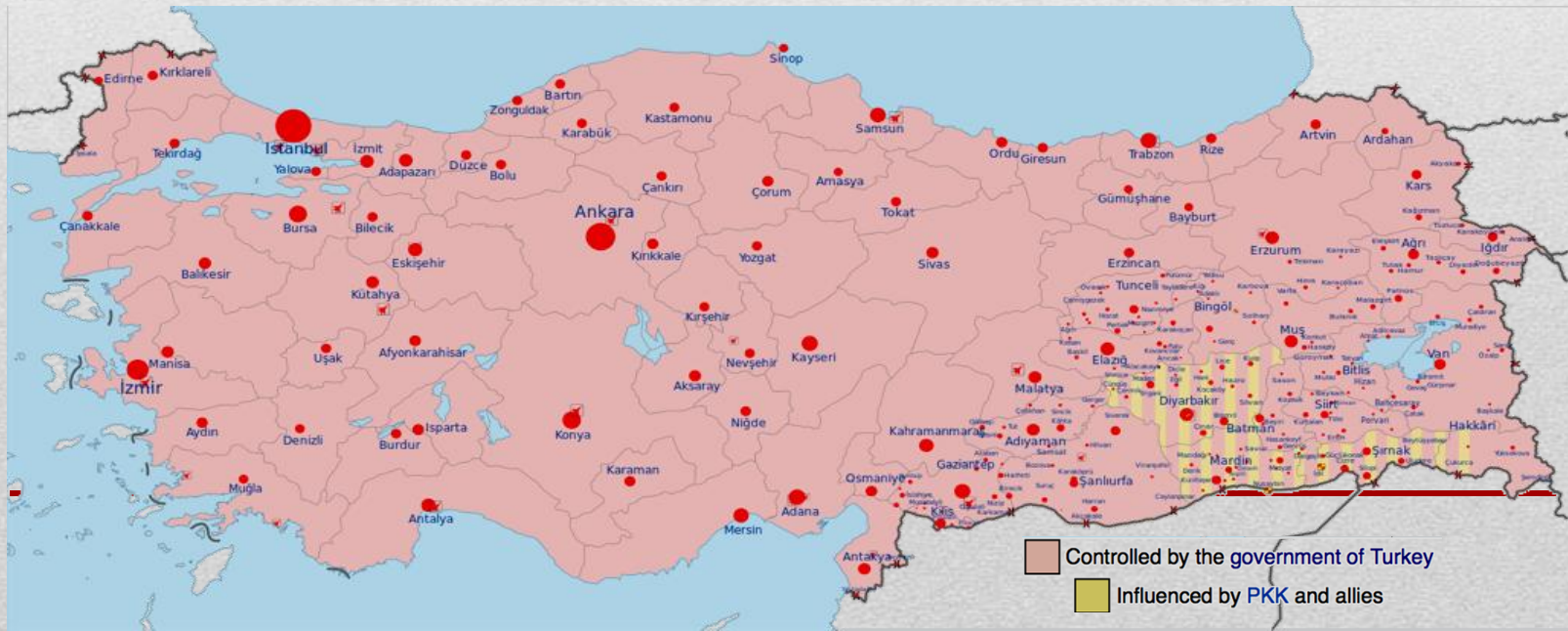




The Kurds in Turkey

2015 Renewed Hostilities

The 2015 conflict between Turkey and the PKK broke out following two years of peace negotiations, which began in late 2012, but failed to progress in light of growing tensions on the border with Syria in late 2014, when the **Siege of Kobane** created an unprecedented wave of Kurdish refugees into Turkey. Some Kurds accused Turkey of assisting Islamic State during the crisis, resulting in widespread Kurdish riots in Turkey involving dozens of fatalities.





The Kurds in Turkey

In July 2015, a suicide bomb killed 33 young activists in the mainly Kurdish town of Suruc, near the Syrian border. The PKK responded by attacking Turkish soldiers and police, and the Turkish government launched what it called a "synchronized war on terror" against the PKK and Islamic State.

Since then, hundreds of people have been killed in clashes in south-eastern Turkey and in air strikes on PKK camps in northern Iraq.

The Turkish authorities also blamed the **YPG** (Syrian Kurds fighting Islamic State) for a suicide bomb attack in Turkey in February 2016 that left dozens of people dead, and Turkish troops shelled YPG positions in north-western Syria to prevent it capturing the rebel-held town of Azaz.

Turkey's government says the YPG and the **PYD** (Syrian Kurds fighting Islamic State) are affiliates of the PKK, share its goal of secession through armed struggle, and are all terrorist organizations.

[The Turks, the Kurds and the Complicated Mix in Syria](#)

Kurds in Turkey celebrate their holiday of Nowruz





The Kurds in Turkey

Fighting raged on between Turkish security forces and Kurdish militants in southeast Turkey as the cabinet held an unprecedented meeting on the edge of the restive region to discuss ways of rebuilding its shattered economy.

The Turkish army said 39 members of the outlawed PKK had been killed in clashes in four towns across the region, adding to a death toll that had risen sharply since the collapse of the ceasefire.

Thousands of militants and hundreds of civilians and soldiers were killed after the PKK resumed its armed fight against the Turkish state. The government refused to return to the negotiating table and vowed to "liquidate" the PKK.

The screenshot shows the Reuters website interface. At the top left is the Reuters logo and the text "REUTERS" with "EDITION: U.S." next to it. On the right, there are links for "SIGN IN" and "REGISTER", social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and a search bar labeled "Search Reuters". Below this is a navigation menu with categories: HOME, BUSINESS, MARKETS, WORLD, POLITICS, TECH, OPINION, BREAKINGVIEWS, MONEY, LIFE, PICTURES, and VIDEO. The main content area features a photo of Peter Schiff with his hand to his face, a quote: "PETER SCHIFF: '2008 wasn't the crash, it was only a tremor before the earthquake'", and a "REAL TIME 2016" badge.

World | Mon Apr 11, 2016 9:56am EDT

Related: WORLD, TURKEY

Turkish cabinet meets in strife-torn southeast as fighting rages



The Kurds in Turkey

Turkish/Kurdish Clashes In Europe

Riot police had to use pepper spray and batons to end skirmishes that erupted as pro-Kurdish activists confronted participants in a rally supporting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Frankfurt.



Police, pro-Kurdish demonstrators clash in German cities

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Mon Apr 11, 2016 7:25/





The Kurds in Turkey

Feb 22, 2017: Eyewitnesses in Erbil Province revealed that **Turkish warplanes attacked the headquarters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party** in the Kandil Mountains, Iraq (on the border between Iraq, Turkey and Iran, and considered a main stronghold of the PKK).

One of the eyewitnesses said, "The attack lasted for more than an hour, but did not inflicted any losses among civilians."

One PKK member said that the border with Turkey was 8-10 days walk across the mountains. PKK fighters have their own way of measuring distance. They do not talk about how many hours drive away a place may be ... they refer to how many days it takes to walk there.

They live their lives in such a different way that **some appear to rule out a return to normal life**. "Once you go up to the mountains, you don't go back down again," one fighter said. "This is the Middle East - we will always need self defense," said another.





The Kurds in Turkey

Turkey, a key member of NATO, has so far chosen to sit out the war against Islamic State. Instead, **Turkey is at war with the Kurdish militias in Syria**, the only ground forces so far that have managed to take on Islamic State and win. The civil war in Syria has allowed the Kurds there to carve out a space of their own, which is what worries the Turks.

The Turkish establishment has been alarmed by the existence of an autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq since the day it was founded and has repeatedly threatened to invade if it declares independence from Iraq. And it's doubly alarmed now that the Kurds of Syria have cobbled together their own autonomous region, which they call **Rojava**.





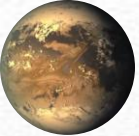
The Kurds in Turkey

There is **deep-seated hostility** between the Turkish state and the country's Kurds, who constitute 15% to 20% of the population. Kurds received harsh treatment at the hands of the Turkish authorities for generations. In response to uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, many Kurds were resettled, Kurdish names and costumes were banned, the use of the Kurdish language was restricted and even the existence of a Kurdish ethnic identity was denied, with Kurds designated "Mountain Turks."

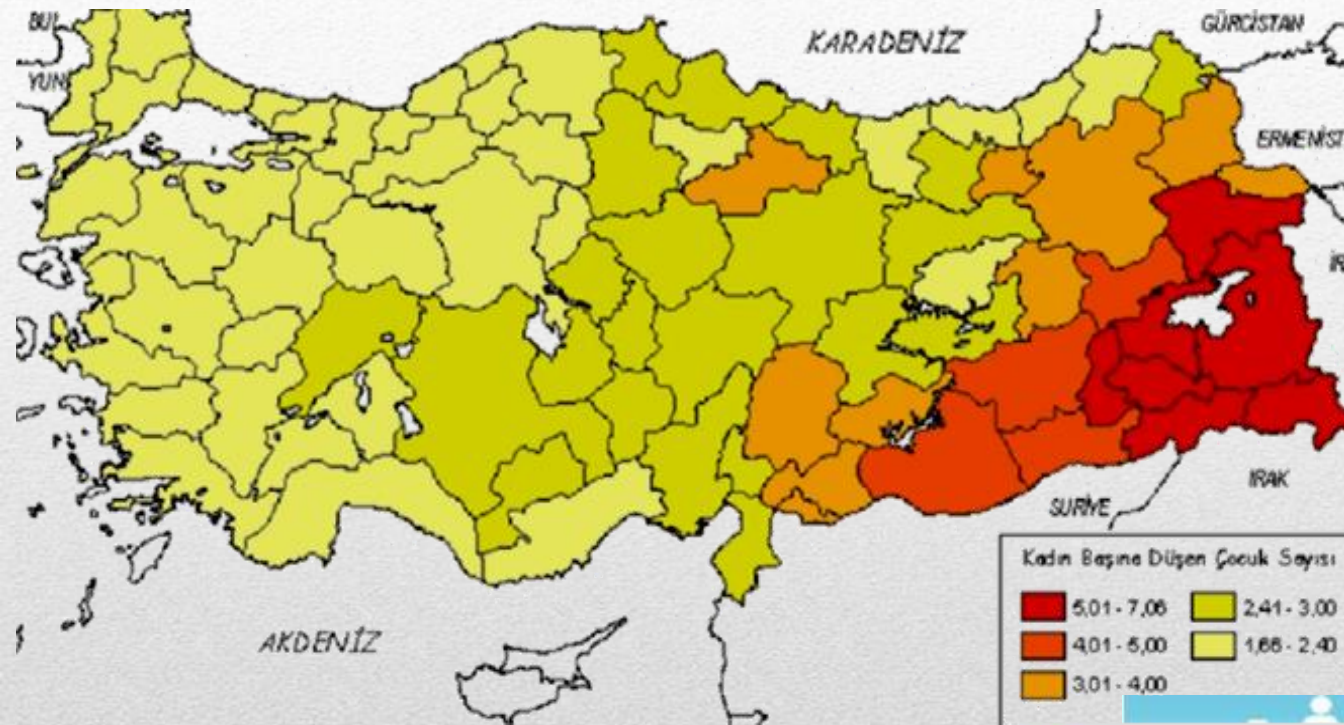
Despite the fervor of this repression, Turkey's problem with its Kurdish minority is more political than ethnic. It is less an inherent dislike for Kurds that drives state repression than the fear of institutional consequences and **loss of centralized power**.

Exacerbating the situation are four recent events in Turkey:

1. **riots and protest movements** in Istanbul Turkey
2. President Recep Erdoğan's **usurpation of power** from the prime minister
3. the **EU**'s reinforced position that 'Turks Need Not Apply' for membership
4. the re-emergence of the **Black Sea** as a pivot point for power and politics, including the strategic re-armament of the Black Sea (The **Montreux Convention** gives Turkey full control over the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles, the straits between the Black and Mediterranean Seas.)



The Kurds in Turkey



average number of children by province:
 western provinces have an average of 2 children
 eastern provinces (Kurds) have an average of 7 children

Turkish government's demographic concerns





The Kurds in Turkey

A Kurdish Majority In Turkey Within One Generation?

ANALYSIS

By [Palash Ghosh](#) [@Gooch700](#) on May 06 2012 1:32 PM





The Kurds in Iran

Iran's Kurds have received **less international attention** than their Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish brethren. Experts attribute this partly to internal disunity, but mostly to the Iranian **regime's political repression and limits on international media coverage**. In 2011, the government carried out a massive military campaign against the Kurdish guerrilla group **Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK)**, which left hundreds dead, including civilians. Iran has **routinely executed Kurdish activists**.

The United Nations has expressed concern at the "deeply troubling" number of executions in Iran and accused authorities of not honoring a **promise to protect ethnic and religious minorities**. Individuals seeking greater recognition for their cultural and linguistic rights risk facing harsh penalties, including capital punishment.

Iran's estimated six million Kurds live in some of the country's **most deprived regions**. "Every day the regime is killing our people for nothing other than seeking their rights, and the world remains silent." (Rezan Javid, co-chair of the political arm of PJAK in Iran)

Howraman-e Takht, Kordestan Province, Iran





The Kurds in Iran

The Kurds in Iran are less unified than those in other states. Among the Iranian Kurdish groups are:

Komalah - left-wing Kurdish nationalist political party and its *peshmerga* guerrilla force

Komala (CPI) - Kurdish branch of the Communist Party of Iran and its *peshmerga* guerrilla force

Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) - militant socialist ethnic party, exiled in northern Iraq, seeking either separatism or autonomy within a federal system, has denounced use of violence against civilians

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) - one of the main parties in Iraqi Kurdistan, founded in 1946 in Iranian Kurdistan and still active there

Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) - political party in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, seeks the attainment of Kurdish national rights within a democratic federal republic of Iran, and PAK's military **Kurdistan Freedom Eagles for East Kurdistan (HAK-R)**



هەڵبەژێرانی زانیاری



The Kurds in Iran

Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) - political and militant organization, waged intermittent armed struggle since 2004 against government to seek self-determination for Kurds in Iranian Kurdistan, some describe PJAK as an offshoot of the PKK, and PJAK's armed wing, the **Eastern Kurdistan Units (YRK)**

Khabat - Revolutionary Khabat ("struggle") Organization of the Iranian Kurdistan, nationalist opposition group seeking autonomy for Iranian Kurdistan

Kurdish United Front (KUP) - ethnic political organization, works within the framework of the constitution of Iran, eschews violence and separatism, while demanding democracy and minority rights





The Kurds in Iran

Iranian ayatollahs have perfectly good relations with Iraq's Kurds, warmed by discreet diplomacy and brisk cross-border trade. At the same time the ayatollahs still suppress the PKK's currently quiescent sister-movement, known by its Kurdish initials, PJAK, which has a haven in the mountain borderland of north-eastern Iraq.

PJAK is a Kurdish organization which fights against Iran and has similar aims to the PKK. Like its Syrian counterpart, PJAK tends to echo whatever the PKK says, so it too now demands only autonomy.

"I don't think the PKK will lay down its arms," said Shamal Bishir, the PJAK's foreign affairs chief. "It will be a long peace process. To lay down arms will be the *last* step in this process. The Kurds need a guarantee for the democratic rights we are fighting for. Until we get the guarantee, talk about laying down arms will just be useless discussion."



The Kurds in Iran

Iran knows that if they don't fight Islamic State in Iraq today, they will have to fight them in Iran tomorrow. The expansionist Sunni militants have clawed their way across Syria and Iraq, coming within 20 miles of the Iranian border.

To fight Islamic State, Iran has provided new weapons to Iraqi Kurdish forces. Indeed, Tehran claims to have had a direct hand in training Kurdish *peshmerga*. But some Kurds are skeptical about Iranian support.

Some worry Iran is sending arms simply to boost its influence in Iraq and in the region, even at the cost of exacerbating Iraq's sectarian divisions.

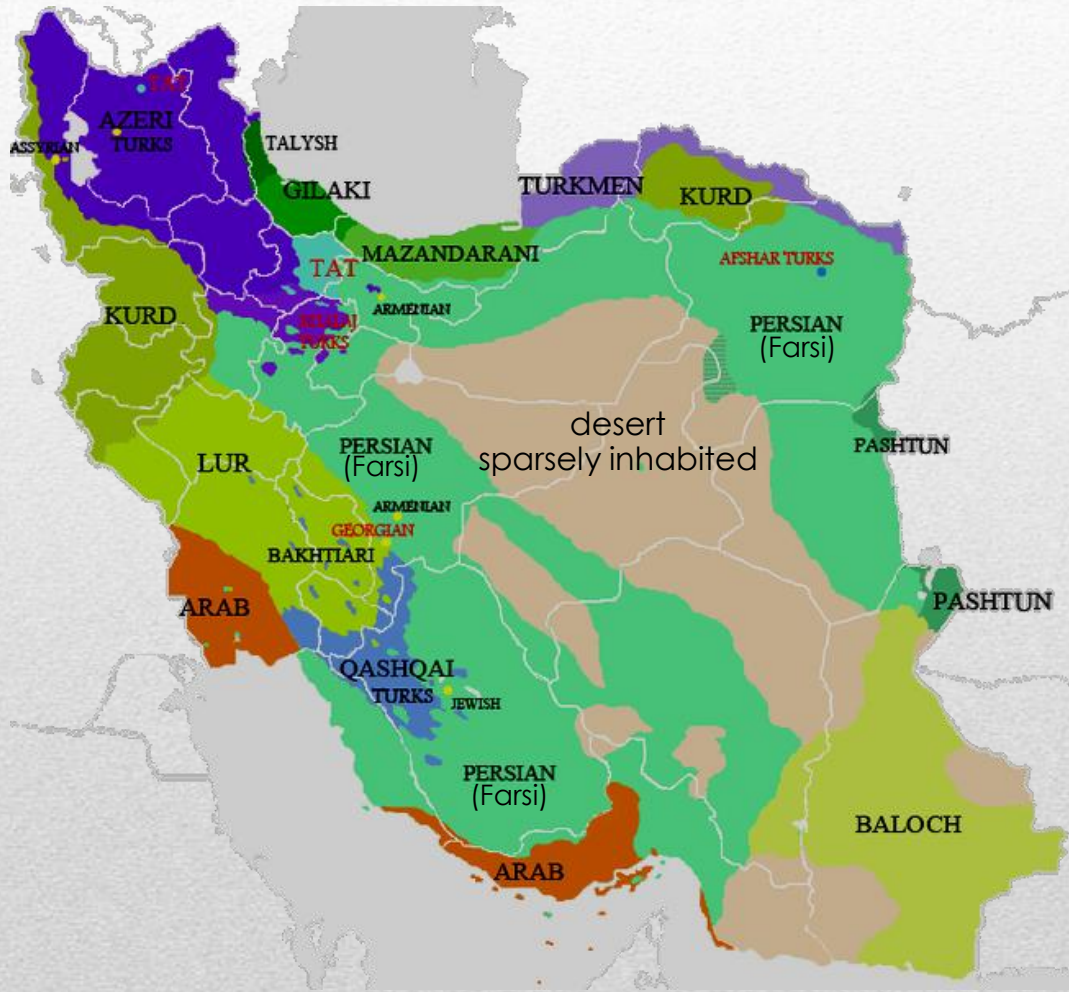
Meanwhile the Iranian Revolutionary Guard continues to plant blast mines in Iranian Kurdish areas. The Iranian authorities have also carried out waves of executions of Kurdish political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, besides killing Kurdish civilians on a daily basis.

Iran frequently puts pressure on political parties in the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq, asking them to put pressure on the Iranian Kurdish parties to bring an end to their political activities inside Iran.

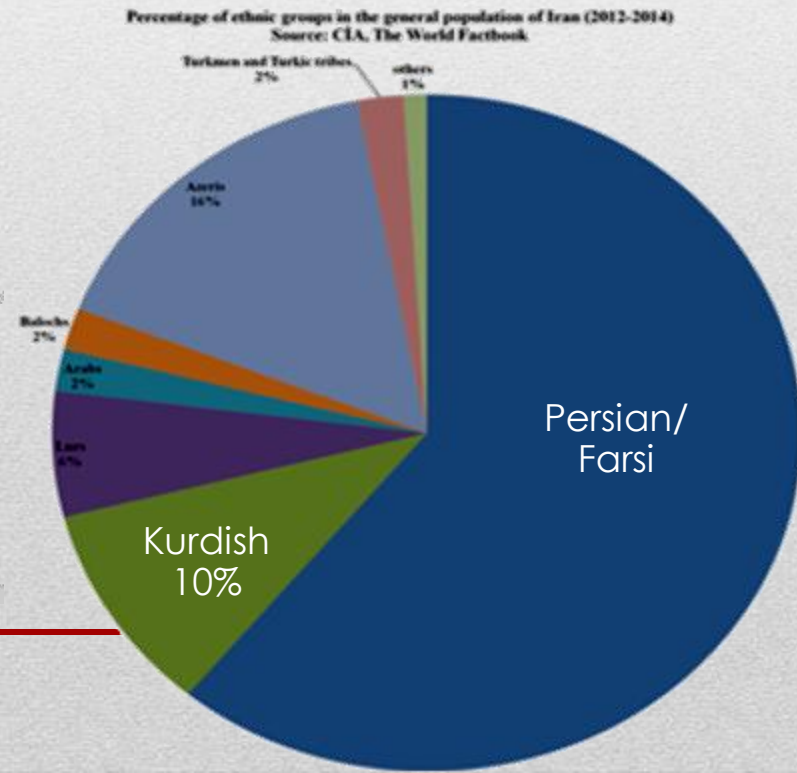




The Kurds in Iran



Iran's Language and Ethnic Groups





The Kurds in Iran

Iran-PJAK conflict

Part of Kurdish separatism in Iran



North West of Iran - the epicenter of PJAK insurrection.

Date	1 April 2004 – present (12 years, 1 week and 4 days)
Location	West-Azerbaijan, Kordestan and Kermanshah Provinces in Iran, Kurdistan Region in Iraq and Ağrı Province in Turkey
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cease fire established on September 2011, as Iran's government declared victory, while PJAK withdrew from Iranian territory. • PJAK redeploy their positions across the Iran-Iraq border. • Clashes renew in 2013.

Belligerents



Iran



Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK)

In line with the Turkish PKK's goals, PJAK leaders say their long-term goals are to **establish an autonomous Kurdish region within the Iranian state**. It is mainly focused on replacing Iran's theocracy with a **democratic and federal government, where self-rule is granted to all ethnic minorities** of Iran, including Sunni Arabs, Azeris and Kurds. Many, however, refer to PJAK as a **strictly separatist organization**, pursuing a complete disengagement of the Kurdish regions from Iran and alliance with neighboring Kurdish regions in Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

PJAK is considered a banned terrorist organization by Iran, Turkey and the US but not by the EU, UN or Russia. In 2015, PJAK claimed killing 33 Iranian soldiers. Iran killed 4 **YRK** members (**Eastern Kurdistan Units, PJAK's armed wing**) and arrested one.

Party of Free Life of Kurdistan Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê(PJAK)

پارتی ژێانی ئازادی کوردستان



Leader	Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi and Evindar Renas
Founded	2004
Armed wing	East Kurdistan Defense Units (YRK)
Women's wing	KJAR(HPJ)
Ideology	Democratic Confederalism Kurdish nationalism Democratic socialism Libertarian socialism
Political position	Left-wing



The Kurds in Iran

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Iranian Kurds appear targeted for arrests during Norooz

Source: Radio Zamaneh

A number of Iranian Kurdish citizens have reportedly been arrested in various regions of Kurdistan province during Norooz festivities. Political activists had warned earlier of the increasing security-laden atmosphere in the province.



Norooz celebration at the Kurdish village of Balak in Marivan, Western Iran

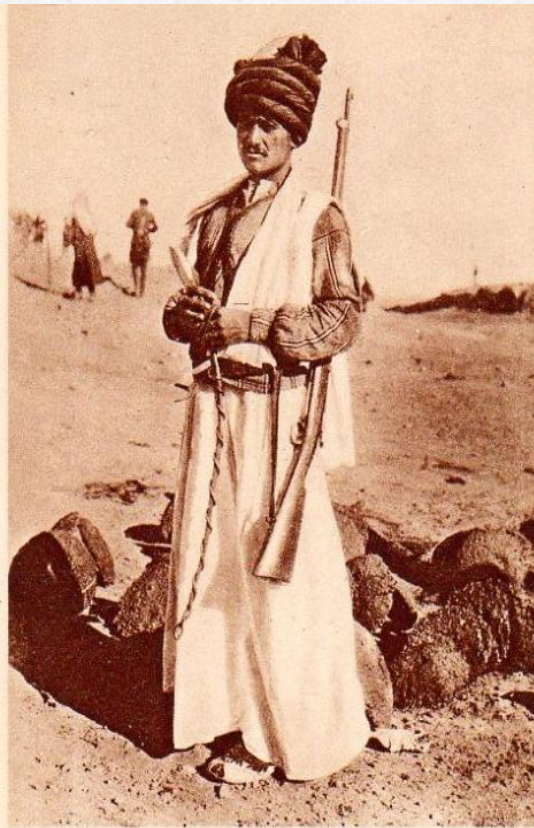
In 2016, a number of citizens were arrested in *Sanandaj*, after a large public Norooz celebration, for wearing Kurdish outfits and dancing folk dances during the festivities. The Iran Human Rights website reports that they have not been released despite posting bail. The report adds that three members of the Vakili family who had gone to the police to inquire about their kin were also arrested.

At least 15 people were arrested in *Boukan* following Norooz celebrations and their fate remains unknown so far.

In the past year, 735 activists (an average of two activists a day) have been arrested in Kurdistan. 63 of those cases led to prison sentences.



The Kurds in Syria



Cl. Poidebard

JEUNE HOMME KURDE

Western Kurdistan - Syria 1945

Kurds make up between 7% and 10% of Syria's population. Before the general uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in 2011 most Kurds lived in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, and in three, non-contiguous areas around **Kobane**, the north-western town of **Afrin**, and the north-eastern city of **Qamishli**.

Syria's Kurds have long been suppressed and denied basic rights. Some 300,000 have been **denied citizenship** since the 1960s, and **Kurdish land has been confiscated and redistributed to Arabs** in an attempt to "Arabize" Kurdish regions. The state has also sought to limit Kurdish demands for greater autonomy by **cracking down on protests and arresting political leaders.**

The main Kurdish parties publicly **avoided taking sides** during the first two years of the Syrian civil war and Kurdish enclaves were relatively unscathed. In mid-2012, government forces withdrew from Kurdish areas to concentrate on fighting rebels elsewhere, after which Kurdish groups took control.



The Kurds in Syria

**Federation of Northern Syria –
Rojava**

اتحاد شمال سوريا وروج آفا
**Federasyona Bakurê Sûriyê –
Rojava**

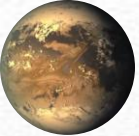


Flag

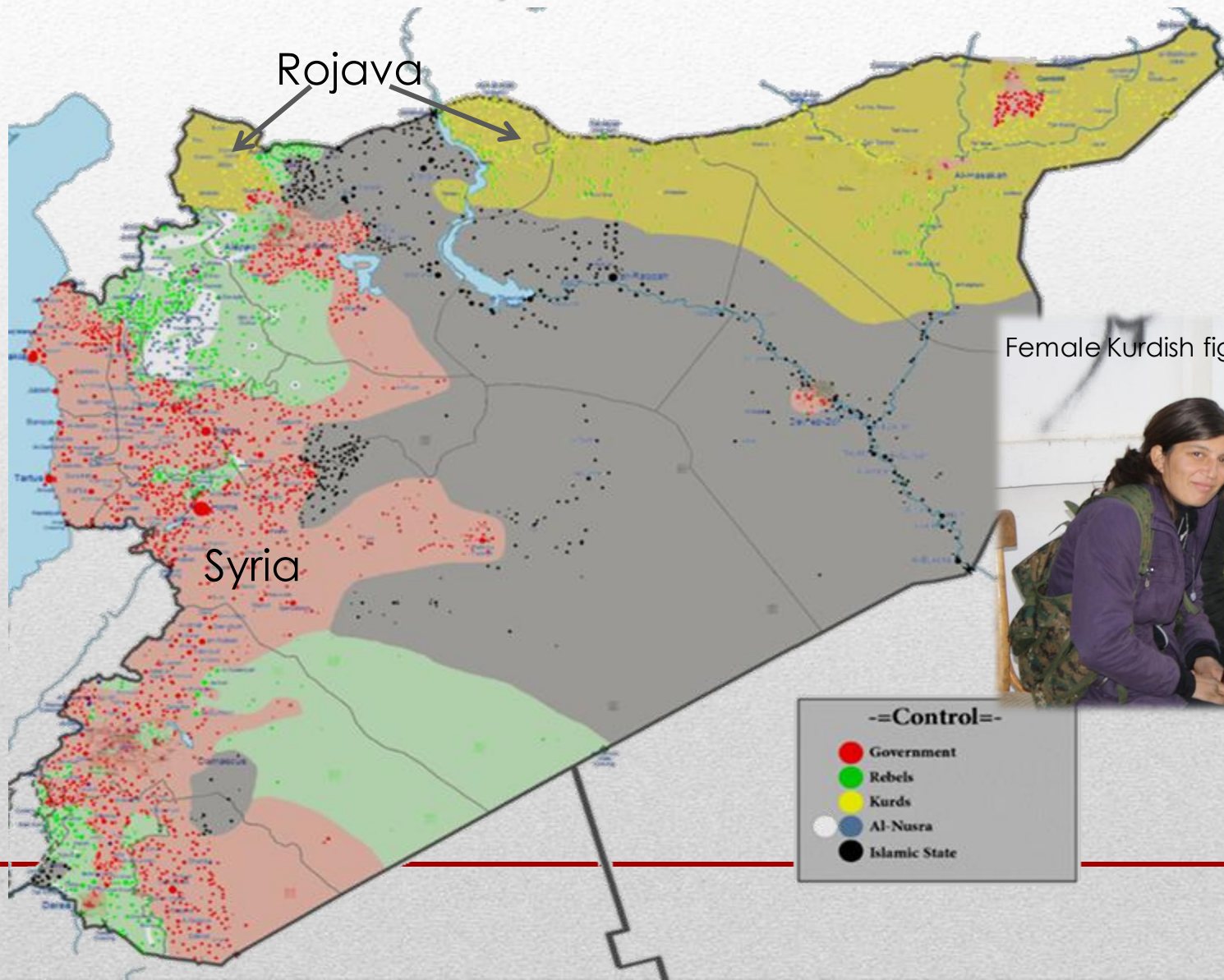
Status	<i>De facto</i> autonomous federation of Syria
Capital	Qamişlo (Qamishli)  37°03'N 41°13'E
Official languages	Kurdish Arabic Syriac-Aramaic
Government	Democratic confederalist
• Co-President	Asya Abdullah
• Co-President	Salih Muslim Muhammad

Rojava conflict	
	
PYD supporters at a funeral	
Date	19 July 2012 – ongoing (3 years, 7 months, 1 week and 5 days)
Location	Al-Hasakah Governorate, Ar-Raqqa Governorate, and Aleppo Governorate, Syria (<i>de facto</i> Jazira Canton, Kobani Canton, and Afrin Canton, Rojava)
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Confederalism • Direct democracy • Eco-socialism • Social ecology • Feminism
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Revolutions • Uprising
Status	Ongoing, the PYD controls parts of northeast and northwest Syria, Rojava leadership declared independent federation
Casualties	
Death(s)	17,215-17,241

The **Rojava Revolution** is a political upheaval, social revolution and military conflict taking place in Rojava in Northern Syria. During the Syrian Civil War, a coalition of Arab, Kurdish, Syriac and some Turkmen groups have sought to establish the Constitution of Rojava inside the *de facto* autonomous region, while military wings and allied militias have fought to maintain control of the region. The revolution has been characterized by the **prominent role played by women** both on the battlefield and within the newly formed political system, as well as the **implementation of democratic confederalism**, a form of grassroots democracy based on local assemblies.



The Kurds in Syria



Female Kurdish fighters in Syria





The Kurds in Syria

The **Democratic Unity Party (PYD)** quickly established itself as the dominant force, straining relations with smaller parties who formed the **Kurdistan National Council (KNC)**. In January 2014, they united to declare the creation of a democratic autonomous government, with branches based in the three Kurdish enclaves. The parties stressed that they were not seeking independence from Syria but "local democratic administration" within a federal framework.

PYD leader Salih Muslim has insisted that any political settlement to end the conflict in Syria will have to include **legal guarantees for Kurdish rights and recognition of Kurdish autonomy**. Muslim has also denied that his party is allied to the Syrian government, even though the YPG has fought against some rebel groups and avoided conflict with the army, stressing that President Assad cannot remain in power after any transitional period.



The Democratic Unity Party (PYD) is the dominant force in Syria's Kurdish regions.



The Kurds in Syria

People's Protection Units

Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG)
وحدات حماية الشعب



YPG flag

subsidiary force

Women's Protection Units

Yekîneyên Parastina Jin (YPJ)



YPJ flag

Syriac Military Council

Mawtbo Fulhoyo Suryoyo
Participant in the Syrian Civil War



Official flag of the Syriac Military Council

Active	2011–present
Allegiance	Rojava (2012-present) Democratic Union Party (2004-present)
Type	Light infantry militia
Size	50,000
Part of	Syrian Democratic Forces
Motto	YPG dimeşe, erd û ezman diheje (YPG is marching, and the earth and sky [or heavens] tremble)

Active	2012–present
Allegiance	Rojava, Syria (Democratic Union Party)
Branch	Female service units
Type	Light infantry (militia)
Size	7,000 –10,000
Part of	Syrian Democratic Forces

Active	8 January 2013–Present
Allegiance	Syriac Union Party
Leaders	Gewargis Hanna
Area of operations	Al-Hasakah Governorate Raqqa Governorate Nineveh Governorate, Iraq
Strength	2,000+
Part of	Syriac Union Party Syrian Democratic Forces
Allies	People's Protection Units Khabour Guards
Opponents	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant al-Nusra Front

main Rojava military force

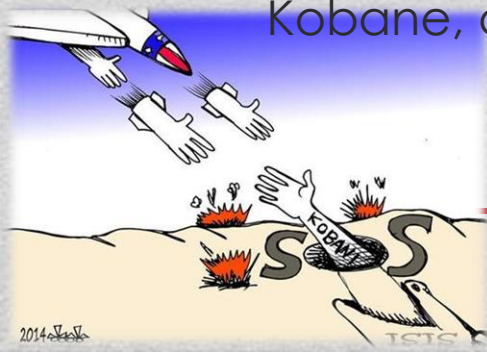
allied force



The Kurds in Syria

Although Islamic State's advances on Kurdish territory in Iraq were halted by the *peshmerga* and their allies, Islamic State did not stop trying to capture Kurdish enclaves in Syria. In mid-September 2014, Islamic State launched an assault on the enclave around the northern town of **Kobane**, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee across the nearby Turkish border.

Despite the proximity of the fighting and the threat posed by Islamic State, Turkey refused to attack the *jihadi* group's positions near the border or allow Turkish Kurds to cross to defend it, triggering Kurdish protests. In October, Turkey partially relented and agreed to allow *peshmerga* fighters to join the battle for Kobane, after US-led air strikes helped halt the Islamic State advance.





The Kurds in Syria

In January 2015, after a battle that left at least 1,600 people dead and more than 3,200 buildings destroyed or damaged, Kurdish forces regained control of Kobane.

After Kobane, the Kurds inflicted a series of defeats on Islamic State in northern Syria with the help of US-led coalition airpower.

They established **control over a 250-mile stretch of contiguous territory along the Turkish border** and advanced to within 30 miles of the Islamic State stronghold of Raqqa.

Fighting under the banner of the **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**, the **People's Protection Units (YPG)** emerged as a key ally of the US-led coalition, which considers it one of the few effective partners on the ground in Syria.





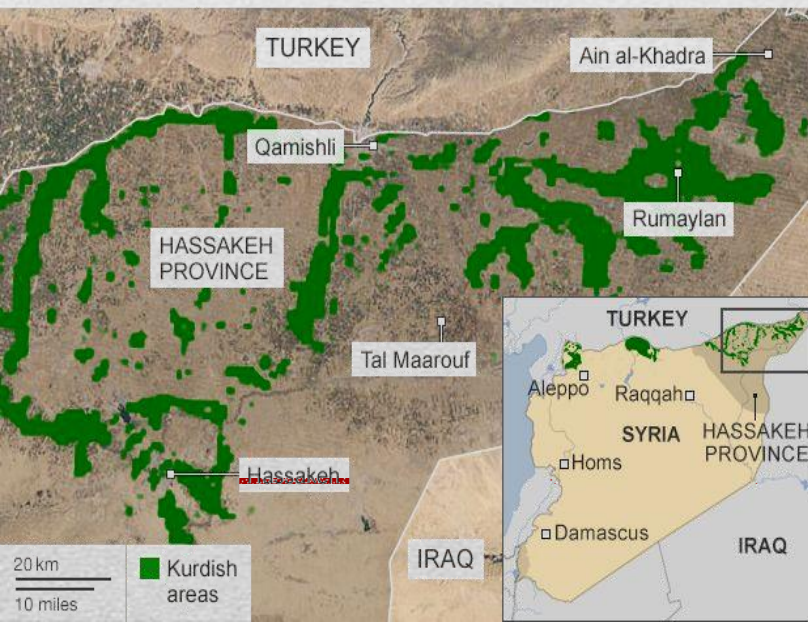
The Kurds in Syria

Though it has driven back supposedly superior armies in Mosul and Sinjar, **Islamic State's image has been tarnished in Kobane**, which it has been unable to capture despite heavily outgunning the defenders.

In contrast to the Iraqi army and the Kurdish *peshmerga* in Iraq, Syrian Kurdish fighters, both men and women, seem to have been unaffected by the fearsome reputation of the *jihadist* fighters.

Syrian Kurdish fighters also **turned the tide in favor of the Yazidi Kurds in Sinjar**, when Islamic State took over the town and massacred hundreds of civilians.

Kurdish tribal areas



Some of their battle-hardened commanders have had experience with guerrilla warfare against the Turkish army, before their PKK allies declared a ceasefire against Turkey in 2013.

The PYD and its affiliates announced the establishment of "democratic self-administration" in the three Kurdish-dominated cantons: al-Jazira in the north-east, Ain al-Arab (Kobanî in Kurdish) in the central sector, and around Ifrin in the far north-west.



The Kurds in Syria



Kurdish fighters in Syria

Emergence of Second Kurdish “Stateoid”

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Syrian Kurdish parties are working on a plan to declare a federal region across much of northern Syria, several of their representatives have said. Their aim is to formalize the semiautonomous zone they have established during five years of war and to create a model for decentralized government throughout the country.

If they move ahead with the plan, they will be dipping a toe into the roiling waters of debate over two proposals to redraw Southwest Asia, each with major implications for Syria and its neighbors.

One is the longstanding aspiration of Kurds across the region to a state of their own or, failing that, greater autonomy in the countries where they are concentrated: Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, all of which view such prospects with varying degrees of horror.

Syrian Kurds Hope to Establish a Federal Region in Country's North



The Kurds in Syria

Amnesty International accuses Kurdish YPG of war crimes

- Amid the bevy of armed groups fighting in Syria, none has received the sort of fawning heaped on the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and its political arm, the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Their prowess against the [Islamic State](#), embrace of secularism and non-Muslims and emphasis on gender equality have made them the darlings of the international media and top allies of the United States. So it may come as a shock that the London-based human rights watchdog Amnesty International is accusing the autonomous administration that runs the areas of northern Syria under Kurdish control known as Rojava of committing war crimes.

SUMMARY

Amnesty International is accusing the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Syria of committing war crimes.

AUTHOR

[Amberin Zaman](#)

POSTED

October 13, 2015



In a [38-page report](#), "We Had Nowhere Else to Go": Forced Displacement and Demolition in Northern Syria," Amnesty International catalogues allegations of forced evictions of Arabs and Turkmens and the destruction of their homes and property. "In some cases, entire villages have been demolished, apparently in retaliation for the perceived support of their Arab or Turkmen residents for the group that calls itself the Islamic State," Amnesty International noted. Villagers said

they were ordered to leave at gunpoint, their livestock shot at. The watchdog used satellite imagery and video footage to verify the claims.



The Kurds in Syria

The Kurdish YPG has said that researchers at Amnesty relied on images taken from websites associated with some Syrian Arab forces who have been hostile to the Kurds. In addition, the areas where the investigations were conducted have been experiencing constant fighting in the past by various militants groups and the central government army loyal to Bashar al-Assad.

“[We] assure the public that an organization similar to the YPG and its affiliates, whose members firmly believe in ethnic and religious diversity and fight against global terrorism to achieve peace and security, would never tolerate or condone violations or abuses [that] might be carried out by its fighters regardless of their position or rank.”



YPG forces at a training base in Rojava. Photo: AFP.



The Kurds in Syria

2017: Top **Turkish officials increased pressure on the US** to dissolve the American military partnership with Syrian Kurds in the battle against Islamic State, urging the US to drop its support of the Kurds and exclude the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from the assault to capture **Raqqa**.

Instead, they want the US to train and arm Syrian militias who have been fighting alongside the Turks in northern Syria in **Operation Euphrates Shield**, a months-long *Turkish* intervention in northern *Syria* west of Raqqa aimed at clearing both Islamic State *and* the YPG from territory close to the Turkish border.

Turkey sees the YPG as a terror group and an offshoot of its own outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging an insurgency in Turkey for more than three decades.

The Turks have publicly indicated their next target is the Kurdish-controlled town of Manbij - part of their bid to ensure **Syrian Kurds are blocked from linking Kurdish cantons along the border with Turkey**.



The YPG has emerged as a key ally of the US-led coalition battle against Islamic State.



The Kurds in Iraq

Kurds make up an estimated 15% to 20% of Iraq's population. They have **historically enjoyed more national rights than Kurds living in neighboring states**, but have also faced brutal repression.

Kurds in the north of Iraq revolted against British rule during the mandate era, but were crushed. In 1946, Mustafa Barzani formed the **Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)** to fight for autonomy in Iraq. After the 1958 revolution, a new constitution recognized Kurdish nationality. But Barzani's plan for self-rule was rejected by the Arab-led central government and the **KDP launched an armed struggle in 1961.**

In 1970, the government offered a deal to end the fighting that gave the Kurds a *de facto* autonomous region. But it ultimately collapsed and fighting resumed in 1974. A year later, divisions within the KDP caused Jalal Talabani to leave and form the **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).**



Early 1970s, Saddam Hussein negotiating with Kurdish Democratic Party leader, Mulla Mustafa Barzani



The Kurds in Iraq

Iraqi-Kurdish conflict



Kurdish refugees in camp sites along the Turkey-Iraq border, 1991

Date	1918 –2003 (main phase: 1961–1991)
Location	Iraqi Kurdistan
Result	Formation of Kurdish autonomous region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraqi withdrawal from Kurdish territory in 1991; Kurds gain <i>de facto</i> autonomy • Kurdish Civil War from 1994 to 1998 with Iraqi involvement in 1995 • Peshmerga assist coalition forces during 2003 invasion of Iraq; overthrow of Ba'ath regime • Kurdistan Regional Government recognized by the Iraqi central government in 2005 • Further tensions between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi central government

Casualties and losses

139,000–320,000 killed

Millions of Kurds displaced and turned refugees

The **Al-Anfal Campaign**, a genocidal campaign against the Kurdish people (and other non-Arab populations) in northern Iraq, was led by Ali Hassan al-Majid in the final stages of the Iran-Iraq War. The campaign took its name from Surat al-Anfal in the *Quran*, and was used as a code name by the former Iraqi *Ba'athist* government for a series of systematic attacks against the Kurdish population of northern Iraq, conducted between 1986 and 1989. The campaign also targeted other minorities in Iraq including Assyrians, Shabaks, Iraqi Turkmens, Yazidis and Mandaeans. Many villages belonging to these ethnic groups were destroyed.

Sweden, Norway and the UK officially recognized the Anfal campaign as genocide.

Al-Anfal Campaign

Part of the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict and the Iran-Iraq War



Anfal campaign area

Date	1986–1989 (In strict sense February 23, 1988 – September 6, 1988)
Location	Iraq
Result	Insurgency weakened but not quelled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of 4,500 villages and massacre of civilian population



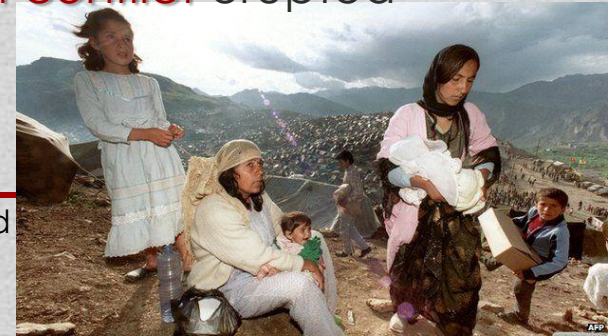
The Kurds in Iraq

In the late 1970s, the government began **settling Arabs in areas with Kurdish majorities**, particularly around the oil-rich city of **Kirkuk**, and **forcibly relocating Kurds**. The policy was accelerated in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq War, in which the Kurds backed the Islamic republic.

In 1988, Saddam Hussein unleashed a campaign of vengeance on the Kurds that included the **poison-gas attack** on Halabja.

When Iraq was defeated in the 1991 Gulf War, Barzani's son, Massoud, led a **Kurdish rebellion**. Its violent suppression prompted the US and its allies to impose a **no-fly zone** in the north that allowed Kurds to enjoy self-rule. The KDP and PUK agreed to share power, but tensions rose and a **four-year internal conflict** erupted in 1994.

Some 1.5 million Iraqi Kurds fled into Iran and Turkey after the 1991 rebellion was crushed .





The Kurds in Iraq

Iraqi no-fly zones

Part of the aftermath of the [Gulf War](#) and the [Iraqi–Kurdish conflict](#)



No-fly zone detail

1991 Gulf War: US and Allies vs. Iraq
Kurdish Uprising: No-fly zone allowed real Kurdish autonomy

The **Iraqi no-fly zones** were a set of two separate no-fly zones (NFZs), and were proclaimed by the US, UK and France after the Gulf War of 1991 to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shiite Muslims in the south. Iraqi aircraft were forbidden from flying inside the zones.

Date

1991–2003



The Kurds in Iraq

Iraqi Kurdish Civil War

Part of the [Iraqi-Kurdish conflict](#) and the [Iraqi no-fly zones conflict](#)

But Kurdish Civil War Followed



The [Iraqi Kurdish Civil War](#) was a military conflict that took place between rival Kurdish factions in Iraqi Kurdistan during the mid-1990s, most notably between the [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan](#) and the [Kurdistan Democratic Party](#). Over the course of the conflict, Kurdish factions from Iran and Turkey, as well as Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish forces were drawn into the fighting, with additional involvement from American forces.

In September 1998, Barzani and Talabani signed the US-mediated [Washington Agreement](#) establishing a formal peace treaty. In the agreement, the parties agreed to share revenue, share power, deny the use of northern Iraq to the PKK, and not allow Iraqi troops into the Kurdish regions. The US pledged to use military force to protect the Kurds from possible aggression by Saddam Hussein.

Date	May 1994-November 24, 1997
Location	Iraqi Kurdistan
Result	Washington Agreement, cease-fire ; creation of two Kurdish regional governments, one in Sulaymaniyah and one in Erbil

- The [PKK](#) was moved to [Qandil mountains](#) from [Bekaa Valley](#).



The Kurds in Iraq

The two parties co-operated with the **US-led invasion of Iraq** in 2003 that toppled Saddam Hussein and have participated in all national governments formed since then. They have also **governed in coalition in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)**, created in 2005 to administer the three provinces of Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaymaniyah, and sought to maximize Kurdish autonomy by building a pipeline to Turkey and exporting oil independently.



Massoud Barzani's KDP and Jalal Talabani's PUK share power in Iraqi Kurdistan .



The Kurds in Iraq

In mid-2013, Islamic State turned its sights on three Kurdish enclaves that bordered its territory in northern Syria. It launched repeated attacks that until mid-2014 were repelled by the Popular Protection Units (YPG) - the armed wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party (PYD). The turning point was an offensive in Iraq in June 2014 during which Islamic State overran the northern city of **Mosul**, routing the Iraqi army divisions and seizing weaponry later moved to Syria.

The *jihadists'* advance in Iraq also drew that country's Kurds into the conflict. The government of Kurdistan sent its *peshmerga* forces to areas abandoned by the army.

For a time there were only minor clashes between Islamic State and the *peshmerga*, but in August 2014 the *jihadists* launched a shock offensive. The *peshmerga* withdrew in disarray, allowing several towns inhabited by religious minorities to fall, notably **Sinjar**, where **Islamic State militants killed or captured thousands of Yazidis**.

Alarmed by the Islamic State advance and the threat of genocide against the Yazidis fleeing Sinjar, a US-led multinational coalition launched air strikes in northern Iraq and sent military advisers to help the *peshmerga*.

The YPG and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), previously active in Turkey, also came to their aid.



The Kurds in Iraq

2014: Advance of Islamic State and collapse of Iraqi military allows Kurdish advance

The speed of the *jihadist* advance shocked the Iraqi government and its Western allies. The fall of Mosul, the country's second city, to the Islamists sent shockwaves across Southwest Asia. But as the Iraqi army fled, the **Kurds took full control of Kirkuk**. "The whole of Kirkuk has fallen into the hands of *peshmerga*," Kurdish spokesman Jabbar Yawar said. "No Iraq army remains in Kirkuk now."





The Kurds in Iraq





The Kurds in Iraq

RUDAW

Kurdistan Middle East World Business Interview Opinion Culture & A

Kurdistan

More French arms for Peshmerga in June, minister promises in Erbil

By Rudaw yesterday at 01:14

Tags : Fran armament, Peshmerga

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3173 v

Kurdish Peshmerga forces have been fighting ISIS since August 2014.

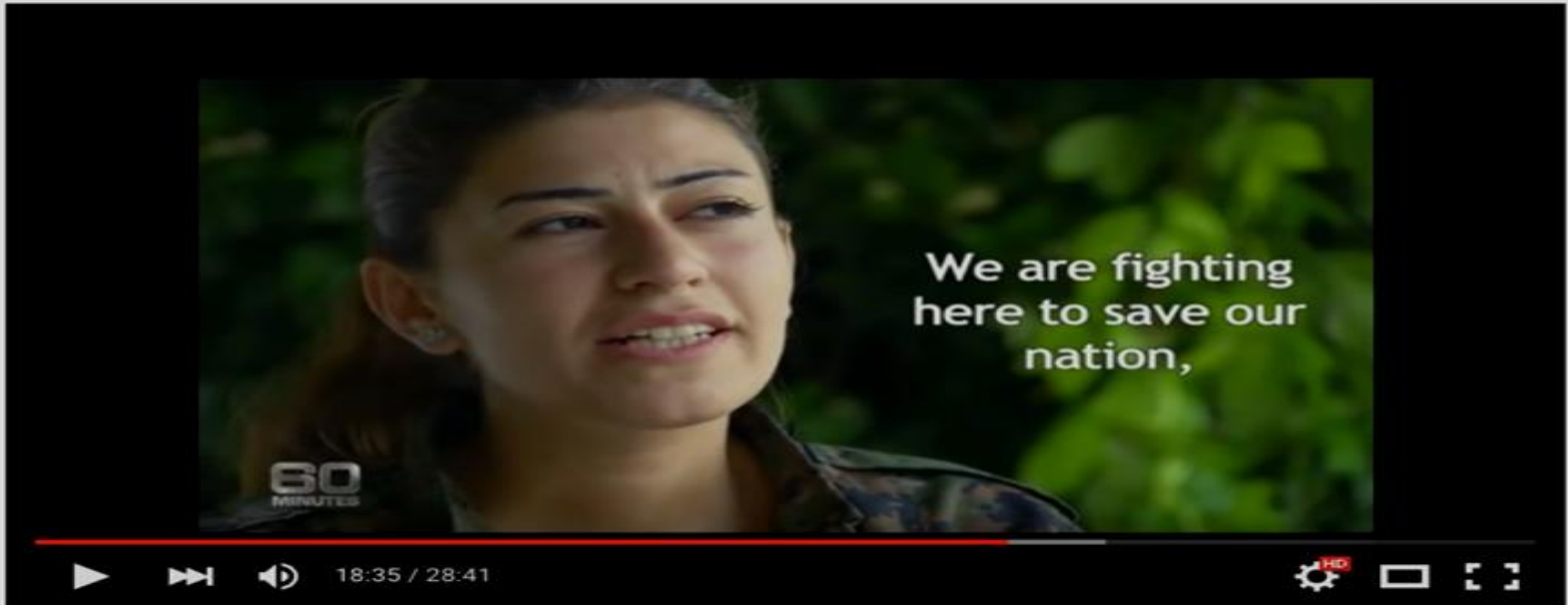
The *peshmerga* arsenal is limited and confined by restrictions because the Kurdish Region is not an independent state. Due to disputes between the KRG and the Iraqi government, the arms flow from Baghdad to Iraqi Kurdistan has been almost nonexistent, as Iraq fears Kurdish aspirations for independence. *Peshmerga* forces instead largely rely on old arms captured from the old Iraqi Army during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, in which *peshmerga* forces were active. Following the retreat of the new Iraqi Army during the June 2014 Islamic State offensive, *peshmerga* forces reportedly again managed to get hold of some weapons left behind by the Army.

After August 2014, *peshmerga* forces captured some weapons from Islamic State and multiple governments decided to arm the *peshmerga* with light weaponry such as light arms, night goggles and ammunition. However, Kurdish officials stressed that they were not receiving enough. They also stressed that Iraq was blocking even small arms from reaching the KRG, emphasizing the need for weapons to be sent directly to the KRG and not through Baghdad.



The Kurds in Iraq

YouTube



FULL 60 Minutes: Kurdish Female Fighters against ISIS - FEMALE STATE (extended un-aired footage)



mark m

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<https://youtu.be/tIV7hwnYWxU>

149,034

Add to Share More

907 49

Published on Sep 29, 2014

60 Minutes Australia documentary on Kurdish Female Fighters against ISIS (YPG / YPJ) 28/09/14 - (Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O57eD...>)



The Kurds in Iraq

After Islamic State captured large parts of northern Iraq in 2014, the KRG sent the *peshmerga* into disputed areas claimed by the Kurds and the central government, and then asked the Kurdish parliament to plan a **referendum on independence**.

In February 2016, Massoud Barzani - who became president of Kurdistan in 2005 - reiterated the call for a referendum. However, he stressed that it would be non-binding and would simply allow Kurdish leaders to "execute the will of the people at the appropriate time and conditions."

It's beginning to look as though the Kurdish people of the region are quietly working to build a new state here which would represent a challenge to the borders created at the end of WWI. For all intents and purposes they have their own state in northern Iraq.

The main square in Irbil





The Kurds in Iraq



US consul pays tribute to Peshmerga with visit to frontline, stresses importance of a united Iraq

By Rudaw 2/4/2016



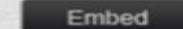
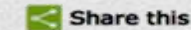
MAKHMOUR, Kurdistan Region – Dressed in a traditional Kurdish outfit, US Consul General in Erbil Matthias Mitman paid tribute to Peshmerga forces on Saturday by visiting the Makhmour front where Iraqi forces are locked in an offensive against the Islamic State (ISIS).

"We're here actually to pay tribute to the Peshmerga," Mitman told Rudaw on the frontline that is some 50 kilometers south of Erbil. "They are brave, they're courageous, and they are fighting so the people in Kurdistan Region can live in peace."

Asked about a proposed Kurdish referendum – which could take place in October on whether the Kurds should break away from Iraq and declare their own nation – Mitman underscored the importance of unity in the war against Daesh, the derogatory Arabic name for ISIS.

"Right now it is important that Iraq be united – the threats that they are facing with Daesh, the financial threats," he said, referring to a severe economic crisis in the Kurdistan Region. "It's important that Iraq be unified."

Tags : **Financial crisis, Referendum, ISIS, Peshmerga**



3086 Views

Related Stories

- » Iraqi troops killed in ISIS rocket attack near Makhmour
- » US Marines gave fire support to Makhmour offensive
- » Peshmerga commander: We are planning for future operations



The Kurds in Iraq



RUSSIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES

WORLD | BUSINESS | POLITICS & SOCIETY | EDUCATION | SCIENCE & TECH | **DEFENSE** | OPINIO

Russia delivers first weapons supplies to Iraqi Kurds

March 18, 2016 NIKOLAI LITOVKIN, RBTH

The Russian Federation has supplied the first batch of five anti-aircraft guns to Kurdish forces in northern Iraq. According to Russian analysts, by announcing it officially for the first time, Moscow has decided to change its Middle East policy and to underline the importance of the Kurds in the region.

"Russia has decided to change its Middle East policy and state it openly," Fyodor Lukyanov, chief editor of the Russia in Global Affairs magazine, told RBTH, commenting on the developments in Iraq.

"In terms of the content of cooperation, intelligence services in Europe and Southwest Asia knew about our interaction with the Kurds long before the official announcement. There is nothing wrong in cooperation with the forces fighting against Islamic State." As Lukyanov noted, Russia is saying with this move that it has extensive connections and interests in Southwest Asia.

He noted that transportation is carried out with the consent of the Iraqi leadership. The weapons include not only anti-aircraft guns, but also grenade launchers. "We do not supply the Kurds with portable anti-aircraft missiles or heavy weapons, which requires additional training. It is entirely possible that we will start to supply light armored vehicles. No more."



The Kurds in Iraq

Destroying Homes for Kurdistan

Diplomats and human rights workers claim that America's closest ally in Iraq is engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing designed to push Arabs out of the future Kurdish state.

Are The Kurds Engaged in Ethnic Cleansing?

IRBIL, Iraq - War is an ugly business, but in some northern villages scattered near the front line between Kurdish fighters and the *ihadis* of the Islamic State, there is growing evidence of a far uglier crime perpetrated by America's closest allies in Iraq. For months, humanitarians working in areas wrested back from the Islamic State have quietly documented a pattern of Sunni Arabs, who were displaced during the *ihadis'* advance, being denied the right to return home. Witnesses - including a half-dozen aid workers, a European diplomat and a terrified resident of the affected area - say the Kurdish *peshmerga*, the military force of Iraqi Kurdistan, has an agenda that goes beyond fighting the Islamic State: establishing the boundaries of a future Kurdish state and moving the Arabs out.



The Kurds in Iraq

Iraqi Kurdistan's security forces capture ISIS sleeper cells in Kirkuk, Zakho

🕒 April 8, 2016 📍 Middle East & World



IRBIL – Security forces of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq arrested several Islamic State members in Kirkuk and Zakho, showing the effectiveness of the Kurdish security forces.

“In Zakho, our forces arrested a network of 12 terrorists,” Hemin Hawrami, head of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Foreign Relations Office, told ARA News, adding that local people have helped the security forces in finding and arresting members of the Islamic State sleeper cell. “People are extremely helpful, they have excellent experience and are dedicated.”

The suspects were Arabs and Kurds from Mosul, security sources told ARA News. The Kurdistan Regional Security Council forces also released the photos of three Islamic State members who were recently captured in Kirkuk.



The Kurds in Iraq

Women fighters putting fear of death into ISIS in Iraq

Norma Costello | The Independent | Apr 11, 2016, 10.21 AM IST



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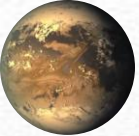


HIGHLIGHTS

- Thousands of women were taken captive as ISIS seized control of Sinjar in north-western Iraq. Many now want revenge for this.
- Most women are part of YBS - a Kurdish civil defence militia. They say eliminating ISIS is their sole objective.
- The women fighters live in separate quarters from the men,

belief that heavenly rewards not available for *jihadis* killed by a woman

A Kurdish female fighter from the People's Protection Units (YPG) gestures as she carries a weapon towards her... Read More



The Kurds in Iraq



April 2016

KRG: Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq: virtually independent "stateoid"

Even while asserting their autonomy, Iraqi Kurds are still considered by policymakers as the [glue](#) that holds the country together amid sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia Arabs.

Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga* fighters have been fighting Islamic State in northern Iraq.

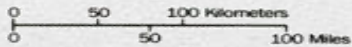




The Kurds in Iraq

Ethnoreligious Groups

- Sunni Kurd
- Sunni Arab / Sunni Kurd
- Sunni Arab
- Shia Arab / Sunni Arab
- Shia Arab
- Turkoman
- Yezidi





The Kurds in Iraq

Economic Collapse of Iraqi Kurdistan (April 2016)

The Kurds face a real economic crisis. If this situation does not improve soon, Islamic State will be the least of its problems. As a result of the crisis, Iraqi Kurds are now found among the deluge of refugees and economic migrants from Southwest Asia to Europe.

Beginning in 2014, Kurds were hit with an **economic crisis** that came in four waves. The first of these came in February 2014, when the Iraqi government in Baghdad, which has been in dispute with the Kurds over a number of issues, **unilaterally cut the KRG's share of the federal budget**. This was followed by the emergence of Islamic State and its foray into Iraq in June 2014, which led to **increased security and military spending** and was followed by **a massive influx of two million refugees and internally displaced persons into Kurdistan**. The final hit was the **global drop in oil prices** that began in mid-2014, which the KRG failed to plan for in 2006-2014 when the price of oil was around \$100 a barrel.

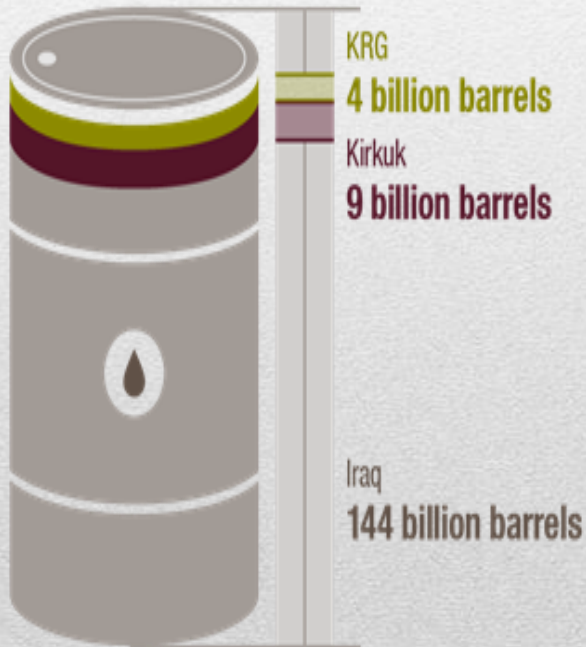
Kurdistan's two ruling parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), sustained a **system of patronage** that, among other things, involved providing superfluous jobs in exchange for political support. This form of artificial job creation – a small village school or hospital, for example, may have up to 40 government-paid guards - has had a devastating impact on the economy.



The Kurds in Iraq

Iraqi Kurdistan

PROVEN CRUDE-OIL RESERVES



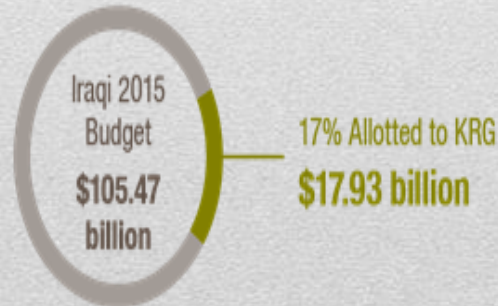
TROOP LEVELS



TERRITORY



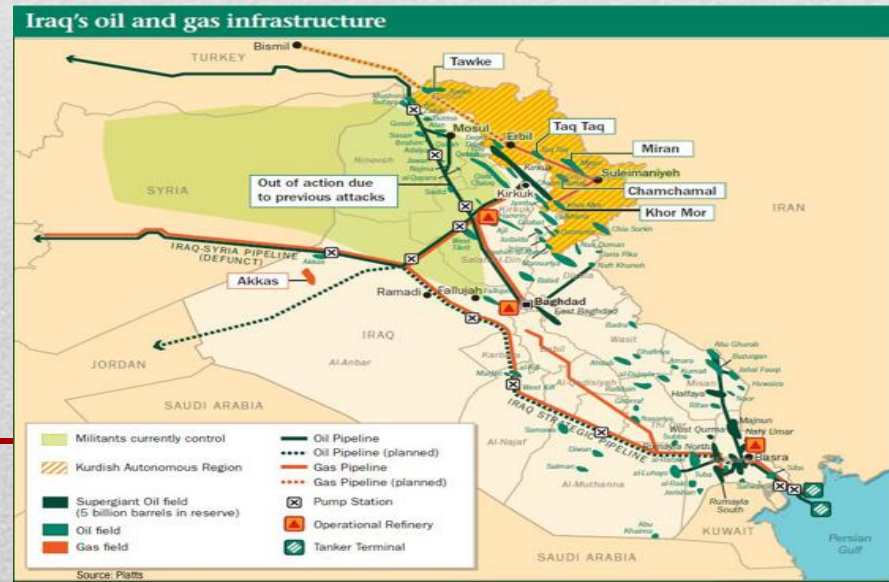
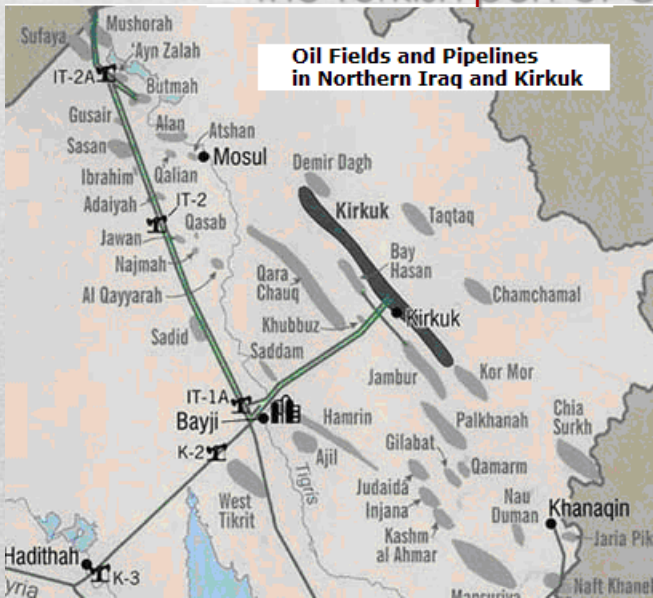
FUNDING





The Kurds in Iraq

Kirkuk Field is an oilfield near Kirkuk, Iraq. It was discovered by the Turkish Petroleum Company at Baba Gurgur ("St. Blaze" in Kurdish) in 1927. The oilfield was brought into production by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1934 when 12-inch pipelines from Kirkuk to Haifa and Tripoli (Lebanon) were completed. It has since remained the most important part of northern Iraqi oil production with over 10 billion barrels of proven remaining oil reserves in 1998. After about seven decades of operation, Kirkuk still produces up to 1 million barrels per day, almost half of all Iraqi oil exports. Oil from the Kirkuk oilfield is now exported through the **Kirkuk-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline**, which runs to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean Sea.





The Kurds in Iraq



KURDISH OFFICIAL: KERRY REASSURES KRG OF U.S. SUPPORT IN ECONOMIC CRISIS

Sulaymaniyah — US Secretary of State John Kerry said the US and the international community would support the Kurdistan Region with the economic crisis the region is facing.

Kerry met the Kurdish delegation headed by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in the US Embassy in Baghdad on Friday to discuss the region's economic crisis and the liberation of Mosul.

Iraqi Minister of Culture Fryad Rawanduzi, who is Kurdish, told reporters in Baghdad that Kerry reassured the Kurdish delegation there would be American and international assistance to the region.

Rawanduzi said Kerry reassured the delegation that the region would have a share of the assistance given to the Iraqi central government.

Following his meeting with the KRG delegation, Kerry tweeted, "With KRG PM Barzani affirmed US support for the *peshmerga* and strengthening cooperation with Baghdad."



The Kurds in Iraq

South

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Yekîtiya Nîştîmanîy Kurdistan یەکێتی ی نیشتمانی کوردستان

Kurmanji name	یەکێتی نیشتمانی یا کوردستان Yekîtiya Nîştîmanî ya Kurdistanê
President	Jalal Talabani
Founder	Jalal Talabani
Founded	June 1, 1975; 40 years ago
Split from	Kurdistan Democratic Party
Headquarters	Silemani, Iraqi Kurdistan
Ideology	Secularism Kurdish nationalism Social democracy Democratic socialism Civic nationalism
Political position	Centre-left
International affiliation	Socialist International, Progressive Alliance
Colours	 Medium sea green
Council of Representatives of Iraq	21 / 325 
Kurdistan Parliament	18 / 111 

Party flag



North

Kurdistan Democratic Party پارتی دیموکراتی کوردستان Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê



Arabic name	الحزب الديمقراطي الكردستاني
President	Masoud Barzani
Founder	Mustafa Barzani
Founded	August 16, 1946; 69 years ago
Headquarters	Erbil (Hewler), Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Ideology	Kurdish nationalism Self-determination Populism Conservatism
Political position	Big tent
International affiliation	None
Colours	 Yellow
Council of Representatives of Iraq	25 / 325 
Kurdistan Parliament	38 / 111 

Party flag






The Kurds in Iraq

Current Political Situation

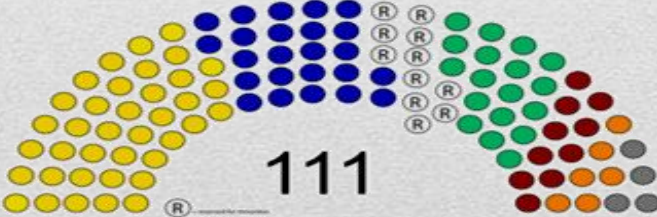
Kurdistan Parliament
پەرلهمانی کوردستان
Perlemanî Kurdistan



Type
Parliamentary

Leadership
Speaker of Parliament Yousif Muhammed, Gorran Movement, Since April 28, 2014
Deputy Speaker of Parliament Jaafar Emniki, KDP Since April 28, 2014

Structure
Seats 111 Seats in the Assembly



Political groups

Parties Represented in Parliament

- KDP (38)
- Gorran (24)
- PUK (18)
- Yekgirtû (10)
- KIK (6)
- Others (4)
- Reserved for minorities (11)

Ideology
Secularism
Kurdish nationalism
Left-wing

Political position

Islamist Groups

Annotations:
Gorran: Official Opposition (arrow pointing to Gorran in the list)
A red line is drawn under the list, with a bracket on the right side labeled "Islamist Groups".

Now in alliance:
The **Kurdistan List** represented a coalition of the two main ruling parties in Iraqi Kurdistan, namely the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Kurdistan List
Lîstî Kurdistanî
لیستی کوردستان



Logo for the list as used in the Kurdistan Elections in 2009

Leader	Barham Salih
Founded	2009
Dissolved	2013
Preceded by	Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan
Ideology	Kurdish nationalism
Seats in the Council of Representatives of Iraq:	43 / 325
Seats in the Kurdistan Parliament:	59 / 111



The Kurds in Iraq

Despite **corruption**, **nepotism** and **feudal habits**, Iraqi Kurdistan enjoys a level of democracy that should be envied in most of the Arab world. The two main parties - **the Barzanis' Democratic Party** and **the Talabanis' Patriotic Union** - currently rule in coalition, but remain rivals for power and influence.

A third party, **Gorran**, meaning “change,” which recently emerged from the Talabanis' party, promises to increase choice, though it has now **joined the ruling coalition**, somewhat blunting its purpose. Two Islamist parties have been brought into the government, too.





The Kurds in Iraq

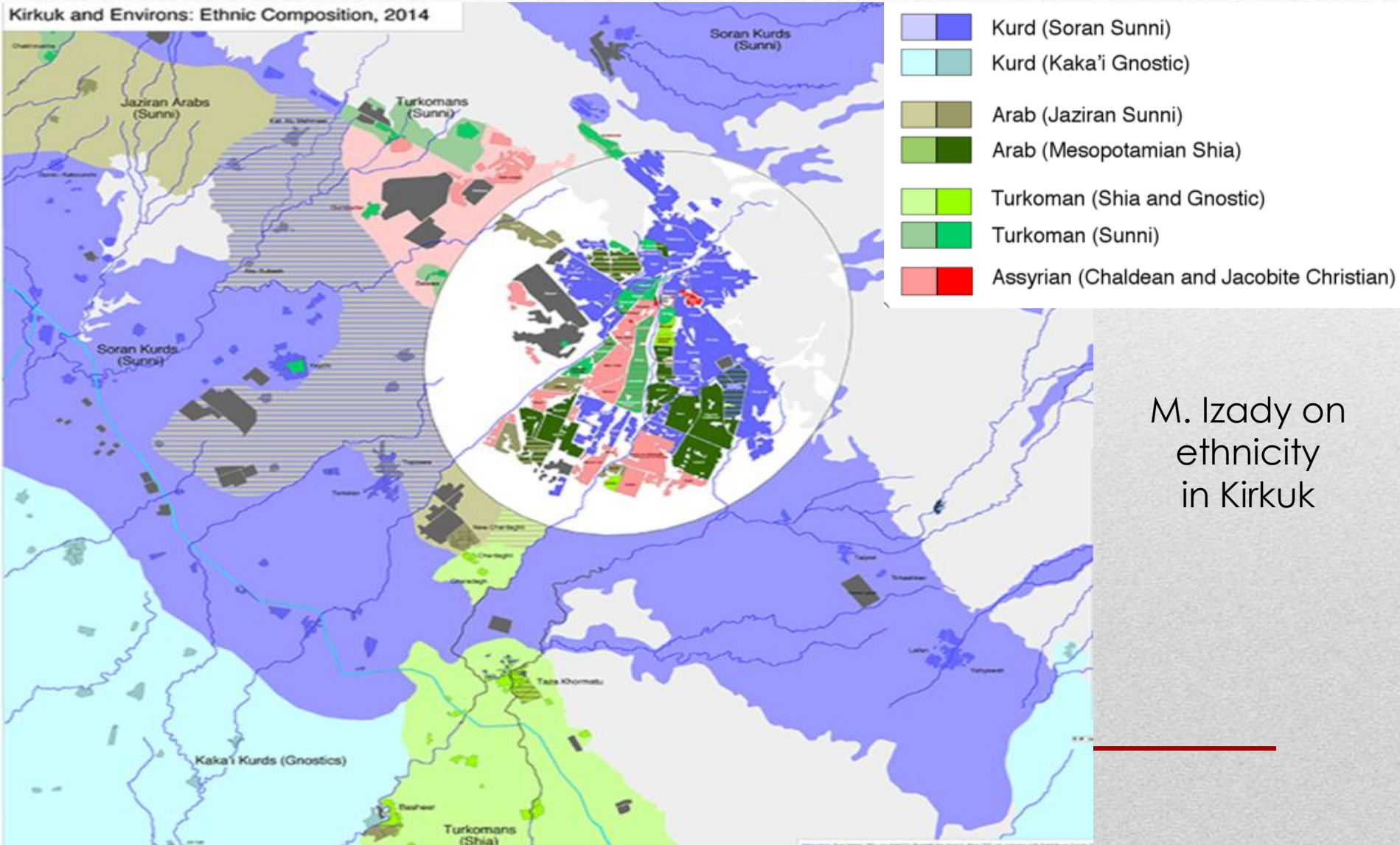
Kurds and Turkmen have claimed **Kirkuk as a cultural capital**. It was named the "capital of Iraqi culture" by the Iraqi ministry of culture in 2010. The city currently consists mainly of people who self-identify as Kurds, Arabs, Iraqi Turkmen and Assyrians. With changes in population after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the US invasion and the advent of Islamic State, most experts believe that the Kurds make up the majority of the population.





The Kurds in Iraq

Kirkuk and Environs: Ethnic Composition, 2014



M. Izady on ethnicity in Kirkuk



Kurdish Diaspora

The Kurds who inhabit this land have suffered from persecution for centuries and, although the majority of Kurds still live in Kurdistan, many Kurds have left the region as a result of continued persecution. While there is no recent, accurate census of the Kurdish diaspora, widely accepted figures estimate around 1.2 million Kurds living outside Kurdistan, with around half of those living in Germany.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Estimated Population</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Estimated Population</u>
Germany	650,000	Greece	25,000
France	120,000	United States	20,000
Netherlands	80,000	Denmark	10,000
Switzerland	70,000	Canada	7,000
Belgium	60,000	Norway	5,000
Austria	60,000	Italy	4,000
Sweden	30,000	Finland	3,000
Great Britain	25,000	Totals	1,169,000



The Future of Kurdistan

The Kurdish movement, in contrast to many other national liberation movements, has experienced a persistent contradiction between its **traditional leadership** and the relatively **developed society** it seeks to liberate. Today, about half the population lives in urban centers, and feudal relations of production in rural areas have almost disappeared. Yet the **politics and ideology of much of the leadership can hardly be distinguished from the worldview of landed nobles of the past**. Only to the extent that this may be changing does the future hold some promise for Kurdish aspirations.





The Future of Kurdistan

Experts point to three unfolding developments that could significantly affect the Kurds and the region.

1. Kurdish **secession from Iraq to form an independent state** would likely trigger conflict with Baghdad and exacerbate sectarian conflict between Iraq's Sunni and Shia Arabs.
 - Neighboring Iran, Syria and Turkey are concerned that independence for Iraq's Kurds could **inspire Kurdish uprisings in their own countries** and that an independent Kurdistan might harbor militant Kurdish groups.
 - If Kurdish independence **follows rather than precedes** Iraq's dissolution, it may be met with less resistance.
 - **International and regional support** are seen as critical to the viability of an independent Kurdistan since it would be landlocked and reliant on its neighbors for the passage of goods and people.





The Future of Kurdistan

2. **Further gains for Islamic State** could lead the US and other international actors to expand their support for the Kurds in both Iraq and Syria. Experts say the Kurds have proven to be the most effective ground forces against Islamic State.
 - risk of **backlash by authorities in Iraq**, who are wary of further empowering their autonomous Kurdish region
 - risk of **backlash by authorities in Turkey**, who are concerned that support for PKK-affiliated Syrian Kurds may lead to international legitimization of the Turkish terrorist organization
3. A **resumption of fighting between the Turkish government and PKK** forces either resulting from or leading to a failure of the on-going peace negotiations could hamper Turkey's economy and lead to a reversal of moves toward Kurdish cultural recognition and political autonomy.

Alternatively, a **negotiated resolution of the Turkish-Kurdish civil war could be transformative for Turkey**, affording it greater stability, further economic prosperity and increasing its ability to project power in the region.



The Future of Kurdistan

Former Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, to his surprise, wrote that “a defensive nationalism turns into an aggressive nationalism and a struggle for freedom becomes a struggle to dominate others,” often in the name of progress, modernity, mission of civilization, even freedom. That is what appears to have happened in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria in their quests to dominate the Kurds. Drawing on history, Kurds see themselves as the playthings of world powers, used in proxy fights when it serves someone's interest and then discarded.



Victim of their geography, history and of their own leaders' lack of clear-sightedness, the Kurdish people have been the ones who have paid the heaviest price and who have suffered the most from the redrawing of the Southwest Asia map. Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, has said, “The time has come to decide our fate, and we should not wait for other people to decide it for us.” But if there is to be an independent Kurdistan, the Kurds cannot achieve it alone.



The Future of Kurdistan

Kurdistan is a land-locked country dependent on governments that oppose independence for access to markets for both imported supplies and exported oil - Kurdistan's main economic resource. Given the history of the region and the geographic significance of Kurdistan as one of the crossroads of Southwest Asia, the potential for continued conflict is extremely high. If Kurdistan hopes to survive as an independent state, it must prove to be strong enough to defend itself against inevitable threats and must establish peaceful relationships with its neighbors despite a history of conflict, distrust and grievances.

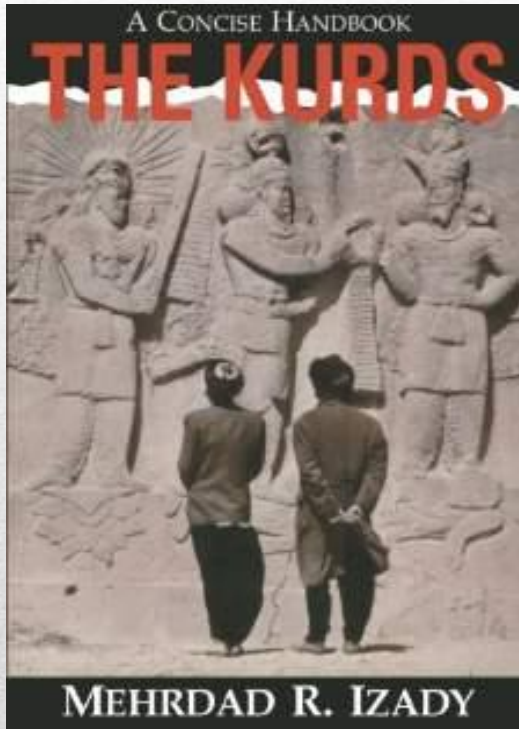


What may be the key that has been missing in Kurdistan's quest for autonomy, is the support of a superpower. Other minorities who have established their own states in the region have done so with that support: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan had the former Soviet Union; Israel had Great Britain and the US.

What is now at stake in Southwest Asia is crucial to US interests – the survival of the Kurdish region. The Kurds want to fight for their freedom, for their independence. They have a strong, well-trained army. Their leaders are popular and legitimate, they have been close allies of the US. Now they urgently need America's help.

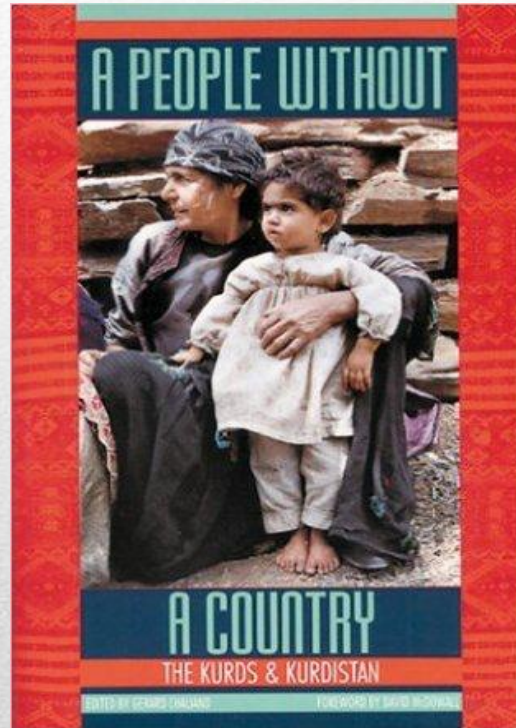


Further Reading



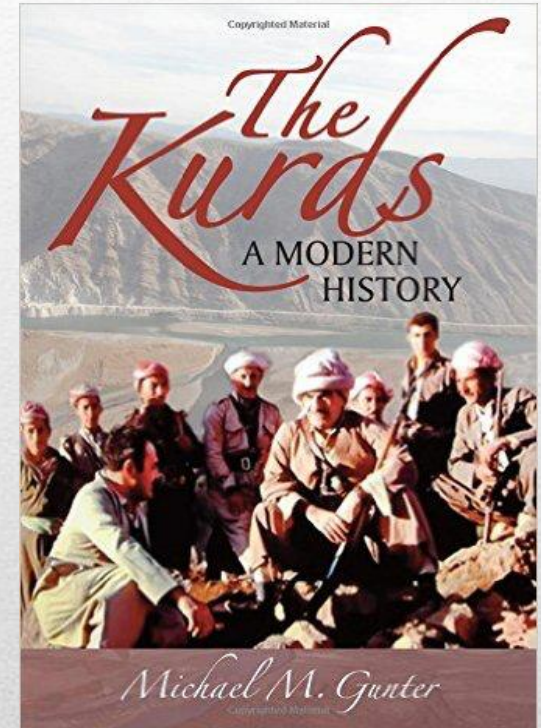
Taylor & Francis; First Edition edition (September 3, 1992)

Comprehensive, somewhat idiosyncratic, Izady is probably the world's best cultural cartographer



Author: Chaliand, Gerard (EDT)/ Pallis, Michael (TRN)/ McDowall, David (FRW)
Publisher: Interlink Pub Group Inc
Publication Date: 1993/01/01

Translated from French, detailed

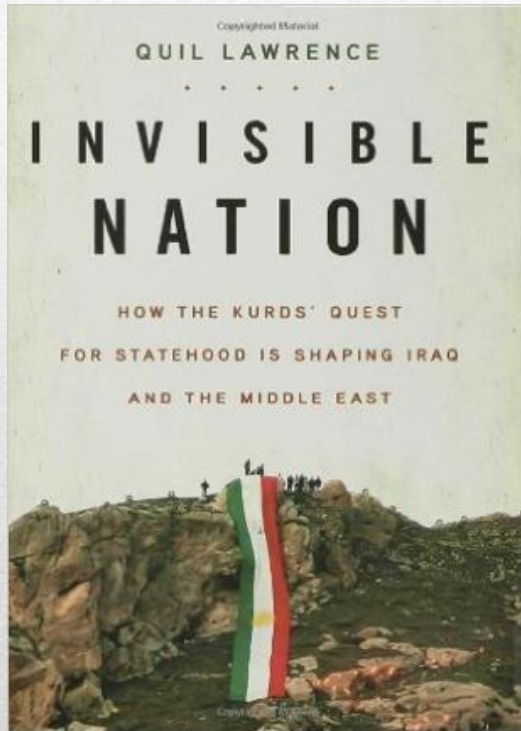


Markus Wiener Publishers; 1st edition (October 21, 2015)

Recent, readable, short, personal

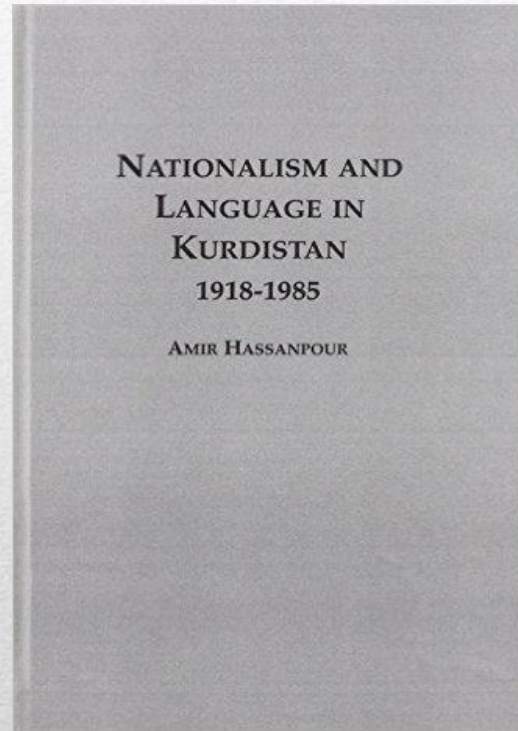


Further Reading



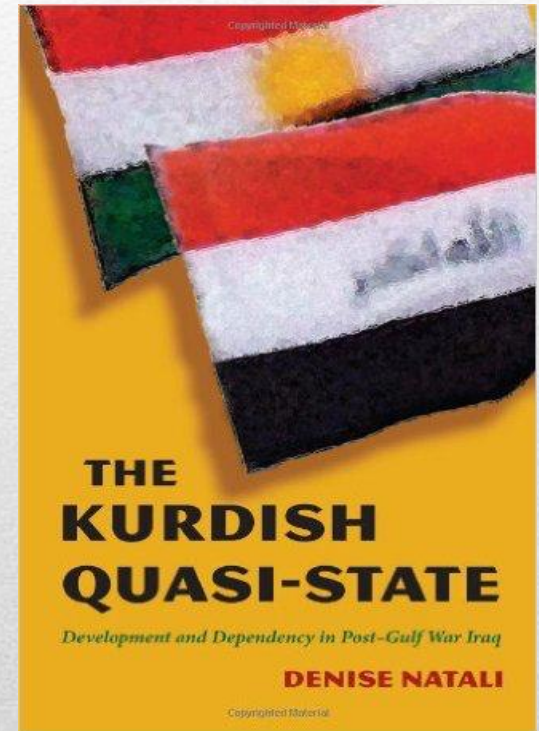
Walker Books; First Edition edition
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Journalistic



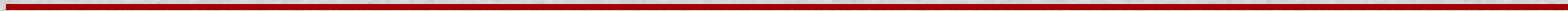
Edwin Mellen Pr; illustrated edition
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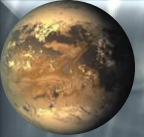
Scholarly



Syracuse University Journalistic Press
(August 6, 2010)

Scholarly





The End

Kurdistan

